

Free Books for Schools - An inquiry into the commercial sponsorship of school resource materials (The hidden curriculum of big business in schools).

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Abstract

The following study is the result of an exploratory inquiry into the commercial sponsorship of school resource materials. It focuses on the recent and highly publicised *Free Books for Schools* campaign, championed by Walker's Snack Foods and News International. This provided the impetus for the primary aim of the research which was to illuminate and illustrate the attitudes and opinions of professionals and others working in the field of education.

The research took a highly qualitative approach and was based on a multi-site case study, being Sheffield City schools. The main method for data collection was through semi-structured interviews undertaken over two weeks in the month of July 1999. Interview participants included School Librarians, Library assistants, and teachers with responsibility for the library and a senior representative of Sheffield's School Library Service.

Data collection through the aforementioned interviews provided valuable narrative and anecdotal data, which was supported by an extensive review of the relevant literature and current documentation available in the field of interest. Much of this was media coverage, journal articles and official publications by relevant authorities (e.g. National Consumer Association, C.A.S.E, Educational Publisher's Association and DfEE).

Unlike previous research the written report for this study outlines the main issues and concerns associated with the topic of the commercial sponsorship of educational resource materials and more particularly the attitudes and opinions of interviewees regarding their participation in such a sponsorship campaign, that being *Free Books for Schools*. By focusing on this current sponsorship initiative the research provides a context for wider implications to be considered.

The wealth of narrative data from interviewees forms a large part of the discussion in each chapter, complemented by the dispersed literature review. Attention focuses on three major areas of concern, making up the chapters, which cover: Practical Issues, Professional Judgement and, Politics & Ethics. In the final chapter the researcher points to a number of recommendations that have emerged out of the research.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Commercial activity in schools has become accepted practice in the 1990s (Marginson, 1997) and yet remains the subject of conflicting opinions. Whilst the present government continues to see business involvement as an excellent opportunity to forge partnerships between the state and the private sector, as well as providing essential resources in the area of education thus contributing to their 'best value' philosophy; others see it as the exploitation of a largely captive audience of young consumers (Whitehead, 1998). The current *Free Books for Schools* partnership between News International and Walker's Snack Foods, on the back of the National Year of Reading, in particular, begs closer examination of the question of commercial sponsorship in schools. This scheme, in which tokens are collected in return for books, will serve as focus for an inquiry into the implications of big business in schools. The research will be concentrated in the city of Sheffield.

The backdrop to this study encompasses the many changes seen in education policy over the last 15 years, most noticeably; modifications to the national curriculum with increased focus on standards and targets, and the continuation of funding restraints imposed on the public sector by successive governments. In order to have some understanding of the present situation facing schools with regard to the provision of resources the researcher must consider existing areas of relevant research and subsequent findings.

Recent news coverage has focused on the lack of educational resources in British schools, namely text and course books needed for

curriculum studies (Gallagher, 1999; Judd, 1999). The educational charity the Book Trust has established recommended figures of between £64 and £96 to be spent on national curriculum textbooks per pupil per year, depending on the student's age (Betts, 1999). Judd, (1999), comments on the fact that the UK were found to be bottom of the international league table for spending on schoolbooks per head of pupil in 1997, spending an average of just £23.02 per pupil compared with £172 in Norway and up to £132 in the Netherlands. It is such disparity of figures across Europe that led The Educational Publishers Association to commission a report by Keele University (1998). The research findings of which underlined their concerns regarding the use and availability of text or course books in schools and recommendations made urged the government to support its commitment to improving learning standards by ensuring the provision of at least one book per pupil per subject.

Further research carried out by Keele University (1999) looked at the relative value placed on books in schools and the attitudes of parents, pupils, teachers and heads. Some significant findings of the report concluded that almost half the parents responding (49%) believe that schools do not have sufficient funding for books and most parents (69%) do not believe that they should be expected to pay for textbooks. Despite the belief that they should not have to, researched showed that parents feel that in order to support their child's learning they have had to buy books. Other findings revealed the lack of awareness amongst teachers and head teachers of existing benchmarks, which relate to per capita expenditure on text/course books and subsequent results indicate that such benchmarks would be welcomed. Finally 81% of head teachers perceive that there is a significant link between access to text/course books and levels of attainment amongst pupils.

Such research goes some way to explain the current situation in our schools with regard to the provision of, and relative value placed upon, books as educational resource materials. Despite stressing the value of school libraries and books as vital educational resources, (DES 1888, quoted in Eyre 1998), National Curriculum recommendations have not been met by

adequate funding from the public purse. This has led to schools needing to accept and, moreover, having to attract sponsorship from outside. Indeed this has been actively encouraged by a government in recent years whose idea of improved funding looks towards alternative sources and partnerships involving the private sector, i.e. Business in the Community, Public Private Partnerships. According to the *New Statesman* (Beckett, 1999) the present political agenda has given us the most centralising and most private-sector friendly education secretary we have ever known. Encouragement from central government of such activity means that,

Companies are now going in for advertising and sponsorship in schools on a scale considered anathema only a few years ago. (Whitehead, 1998)

The current National Year of Reading is a perfect example of government initiatives in education and lifelong learning. Designed to involve families, businesses and the whole community the News International/Walker's *Free Books for Schools* promotion appears to be exactly the kind of innovative partnership advocated. Asserting the present government's support for such partnerships and the presence of business in education David Blunkett (*The Guide*, 1998:3), the present Secretary for Education and Employment, has said of the *Free Books for Schools* scheme,

[it] is an excellent example of how business can get involved on a national scale.

More recently, however, there seems to have appeared a conflict of ideologies; whilst giving *Free Books for Schools* his full backing and urging business to step into the school arena (Kingston, 1998), Mr. Blunkett is now calling for the school to foster 'citizenship' by introducing the concept to the national curriculum (Carvel, 1999). Can the school be both a place to encourage consumerism and foster the qualities of citizenship?

The literature often leads us to question the motives of companies that provide school resource materials. For example, Roszak (1994:47) warns of

the effort made by businesses to 'prime the pump' for future sales of its product. To the commercial business schools can be seen as captive targets,

The computer industry, promising the moon, has been willing to endorse any use of its product, no matter how frivolous or misconceived. Teachers have been left to pick their way through the claims as best they can. Some may hit upon beneficial applications, but there has been no overarching pedagogical philosophy to guide their improvisations.

Roszak also identifies the importance of professional judgement, exercised here by the teacher who must consider the ethical implications of entering into a sponsorship deal, without the existence of educational guidelines. In schools where resources are scarce can the professional – both teacher and librarian, without the choice of more suitable providers, consider the ethical dilemma of accepting sponsorship deals, or are they forced to show the gratitude of the pragmatist? This gives rise to the question of 'education or exploitation'? Sponsorship in schools has been defined as a 'win-win' situation (Nash, 1999), using the *Free Books for Schools* initiative as the main focus the researcher intends to explore this notion. Do those working in the field of school librarianship fear a hidden curriculum?

In the current climate concern for the potential exploitation of schools for commercial gain has been the focus of research carried out by the National Consumer Council (Whitehead, 1998:2),

The youth market is worth a huge amount of money... Commercial interests are constantly looking for ways of targeting young people and schools are a good way in.

Margaret Tulloch, general secretary of the Campaign for the Advancement of State Education (C.A.S.E), working in association with the NCC, is also concerned that creeping commercialism in the classroom - American style, may get out of hand, quoted in the same article she explains,

The problem is that we don't have any guidelines or safeguards on using children as a captive market, which is what schools are.

The National Consumer Council, in fact, has gone some way in providing good practice guidelines for schools faced with potential sponsorship opportunities (National Consumer Council, 1996). The guidelines state that materials or activities used in a school setting must reach the high standards of quality, balance and integrity expected of educational resources. Today they stand as the only authoritative advice for both sponsors and schools, but despite attempts to raise the profile of the issue further the NCC has failed to have their guidelines endorsed by the government.

The concern that business involvement in schools is less about educational objectives and more about product promotion is one shared by both the National Consumer Association and C.A.S.E, who also question whether schools are educating young people to be citizens or consumers. In light of the issues raised by the literature, and the intended focus upon the *Free Books for Schools* campaign, it was considered by the researcher desirable to investigate the attitudes and opinions of those responsible for providing educational resource materials. Such research will illuminate the key issues as seen by professionals and para-professionals working in the field of school librarianship.

1.2 Research objective

The nature of the existing literature predetermined very much the structure of the research. The themes that dictated the research instrument were those shown to be important in the literature and in previous research carried out on behalf of the National Consumer Association (Wells, 1997; Atherton & Wells, 1998; Atherton & Middleton 1999), Campaign for State Education (Whitehead, 1998) and The Educational Publisher's Council (Judd,

1999). More importantly perhaps was the focus of the study, which was directed towards those currently, working in the field of school librarianship. Whilst the attitudes of parents and impact on pupils have been investigated (Atherton & Middleton, 1999) those of librarians and teachers had, so far, been neglected by researchers. This lack of research, coupled with the present trend towards more and more initiatives involving commercial donors reinforces the need to investigate the topic area and discuss the central issues raised. Ultimately, the proliferation of current literature appeared to suggest the timeliness for such a study to be formally undertaken in the field.

The methodology chapter explains in detail the steps taken in the execution of the research, here both the rationale behind the data collection methods and selection of participants are discussed. An attempt has been made to comment upon the level of success of the chosen methodologies whilst considering the limitations of the study. In order to meet the research objectives the main findings are based on data collection from a multiple-site case study, made up from 8 Sheffield schools: 7 secondary schools, 1 primary school, and an interview with a professional representative for Sheffield's School Library Service.

Following on from the Methodology, the main report consists of three chapters containing the research results presented and discussed in the context of the literature review. Each chapter deals with a particular section of findings under Sub-headings identified during data analysis. Chapter Three deals with the 'Practical Issues' of participating in such a campaign as *Free Books for Schools*, discussion is focused on the time and effort need to take part in the token collecting; was this sufficiently rewarded on receipt of free books? Chapter Four looks at the issue of 'Professional Judgement' and considers whether the exercise of this has been compromised in any way by participation in the scheme? Chapter Five considers the 'Politics & Ethics' involved; do such initiatives contribute to government policies and targets set for education? Finally, Chapter Six provides the report with a conclusion the study and suggests possible recommendations.

Clearly, in such a relatively short study, there is only so much ground that can be covered by the researcher in the time given. However every effort has been made to examine the central issues identified in the existing literature and discuss these in relation to the primary data collected through the interview process. A further purpose of this study, intended by the researcher, is that it will go some way to illuminate emergent issues which, in turn, may point to future research in the field.

2. Methodology

The purpose of evaluation research is to provide information that is useful, information that permits action, and information that is relevant to the needs of decision-makers and information users. (Patton, 1980:282)

2.1 Introduction

This chapter considers the research method adopted in order to achieve the aims of the study. The research design is important; Oppenheim (1992:6) sees it as the strategy of the research to be carried out and the logic behind it, which will make it possible and valid to draw more general conclusions from it. It is through this methodological approach that the researcher justifies the choice of methods and their suitability to the research aims. The definition of the research question to be investigated emerged from a detailed examination of the existing literature in the field of interest. From the initial literature review it was decided that the research question for this study would be defined as an inquiry into the commercial sponsorship of educational resource materials, focusing on the current *Free Books for Schools* campaign championed by News International and Walker's Snack Foods. The inquiry would take the form of a multiple site case study, employing an exploratory, qualitative approach through the conduct of semi-structured interviews with school librarians across the city of Sheffield and a representative from Sheffield School's Library Service.

2.2 Research purpose

The purpose of this study is to investigate the augmentation of commercial sponsors in schools. The 'celebrated' *Free Books for Schools*

campaign will act as a central focus, illustrating a particular and topical case of commercial involvement in education. However, it will also serve as a reflection of the increasingly common partnerships being forged between the education sector and commercial business in order to satisfy resource requirements, namely books and ICT. More specifically, through data collection and analysis, the research will seek to illuminate and discuss the main issues raised by those operating in the field of education and resource provision, in the prevailing climate. Our ultimate aim, as identified by Foddy (1993:192) should be to provide useful, relevant, worthwhile research in our particular field of study.

2.3 Research approach

One of the specific aims of the study is to seek the perspectives and opinions of 'professionals' hitherto neglected by any formal research. This being the case, the form of approach adopted will 'exploratory' in nature, rather than designing a study in order to test a previously constructed hypothesis. The research question calls for an 'inquiry', thus flexibility of approach is essential in order to allow for all possible avenues of investigation to be discovered. Without a hypothesis there are no boundaries or limits set to the scope of research from the start, however according to Toyne (1998) the path of study may in turn lead to the forming of a hypothesis to be tested by subsequent studies in the field.

The research techniques are the methods used for data generation and collection, whether by interview or questionnaire. The question that needed resolving in this study was 'how to measure attitudes'? When the research requires detail and a richness of narrative information from which to increase knowledge in a particular area of interest the choice to be made by the researcher must be that of gathering qualitative data (Dey, 1993). Thus the aims of this study require qualitative, rather than quantitative results.

This approach is generally accepted as being the best method for what Stone & Harris (1984:7) refer to as,

...gaining an understanding of an event or behaviour from the actor's perspective.

The 'actor' in question being the librarian or teacher to be interviewed.

2.4 Multiple-site case-study

Multiple site studies are especially appealing because they can positively sample, and thereby make claims about a larger universe of people, settings, events or processes than can single site studies. (Miles & Huberman in Toyne, 1998:16-17).

Since we were unable to conduct an 'all encompassing' exploratory study given the time limitation, the next best thing was to undertake a case study approach. According to Bryman, in Toyne (1998:174), the case study can be employed in a somewhat exploratory manner in order to achieve insights into a previously uncharted area. The choice of the multiple-site case study was deemed most appropriate when it was desirable to contact a broad base of participants; data were collected from eight School Libraries and one Schools Library Service. This allowed the useful identification of common attitudes and enables scope for comparability as well as illustrating unique features. In this way the strengths of the case study approach are maximised to suit specific research needs.

Bouma & Atkinson, (1995:110), feel that the strength of the case study lies in the fact that it can answer the question 'What's going on?' in a single situation. The added usefulness of the multiple-site case study being able to answer the question 'What's going on?' in more than one isolated situation. The multiple-site case study, then, allows the researcher to identify relationships and begin to form generalisations. The case study is an ideal

research instrument when we are dealing with an exploratory study, as no hypotheses have been identified. The purpose of research in this case is generally is to take a broad look at the phenomenon under study; to gather information so a description of what is going on can be made. Such a study can be most useful in that it may lead to further research being carried out.

2.5 Data collection

This study has sought for detail, in the form of descriptive, narrative data and the most advocated way to achieve this is the interview. It is certainly more conducive to the qualitative approach taken by this study. Mellon, in Eyre (1998:3) points to the particular benefits to researchers wishing to study perception and attitudes. She asserts that for studies in the field of librarianship the pertinence of qualitative methods is that they allow us to be involved with people. Thus, if we agree with his description, we can be convinced of its usefulness in helping us discover the motives, behaviour, perceptions and attitudes of those participating in the study.

As the chosen research instrument the interview allows the researcher to be sensitive to nuances, observe the respondent when conducting interviews face-to-face, and to pick up on unanticipated areas of interest, valuable to the research at hand. Foddy (1993:1) describes the verbal data collected during the interview as containing 'beliefs, values and attitudes', that is 'subjective variables that cannot be measured directly'. He qualifies the value of this approach to data collection because it indicates to the researcher not only the respondent's level of information and what is salient in the respondent's mind, but also the strength of the respondent's feelings.

Dey (1993:10-12) tells us that qualitative data deal above all with meanings, and is generally mediated through language. Thus qualitative data serve the purpose of conveying meaningful information in a form other than numbers, allowing the researcher to embrace an enormously rich spectrum of cultural and social experience,

By comparison with numbers, meanings may seem shifty and unreliable. But often they may also be more important, more illuminating and more fun!

Dey (1993:37) also describes how qualitative data may sometimes be produced through snapshot methods. This is the case in the current study where the qualitative data gathered provides the research with a snapshot of a topical situation and current reactions to it in the form of attitudes and opinions.

When it was decided that the type of data required for the study was to be that of attitudes and opinions of those working in the field of School Librarianship it was felt that the most appropriate way of data collection would be the face-to-face interview. This was the research instrument chosen over and above the questionnaire. Interviews also have greater degree of response rate success (Oppenheim 1992:81) and this was proved to be the case; of the 11 potential respondents contacted by letter 9 replied with a positive response, giving a 82% response rate.

Stone (1984:9) advocates the semi-structured interview schedule when the research requires that you reduce the rigidity of structured interviews and allow for probing areas of interest. This schedule still allows the formulation of questions in advance, ensuring the same ground is covered by all participants, whilst remaining conducive to flexibility and exploration of issues.

Finally, Toyne (1998:15) argues that despite any criticism qualitative techniques can be applied with as much rigor as quantitative methods, and have a particularly useful contribution to make in the field of research. Above all, the great strength of this approach is that its central focus is people situated in the real world as it brings to the surface the participant's viewpoint

2.6 Sample selected for interview

Exact representativeness is not usually necessary, but we need a good spread of respondent characteristics so that we can reasonably hope to have tapped probable respondents of every kind and background. (Oppenheim, 1992:68).

Early on in the study some difficulty was experienced in obtaining the relevant information regarding the take up of the *Free Books for Schools* initiative in the Sheffield area. Despite the fact that contact was made with scheme fund-raiser and co-ordinator Jenny Lucas in London, efforts to acquire the desired data proved fruitless. This led to the need to reconsider the approach to gathering primary data in order to commence the fieldwork. Instead, it was decided to send out a short letter of introduction and questionnaire to a random sample of ten schools across the city, addressed to the school librarian or teacher with responsibility for the library, as appropriate. From the sample it was hoped to identify those taking part in the *Free Books for Schools* campaign and more importantly who would be willing to take part in an interview on the subject. It would also have been useful to interview establishments who have decided against joining the initiative, however, all schools contacted had signed up.

Introductory letters were sent to ten schools at various postal addresses across the city: three Primary and seven Secondary. Because of the desire to interview School Librarians it was felt appropriate to have a sample weighted with Secondary schools. It is not usual to find librarians in Primary schools; therefore it was decided to approach teachers with particular responsibility for the library. A Special school was also contacted as it has been indicated that such educational establishments lack vital resources (Brooks, 1999) and are often under-represented when it comes to sponsorship deals aimed at schools in general.

Oppenheim (1993) notes that we may find it extremely valuable to conduct in-depth interviews with 'key informants'. In this study it was felt that Andrew Milroy of Sheffield's Learning and Young People's Unit, representing the Schools Library Service, would be an invaluable source of information and opinion with regards to the research question at hand. It should be noted that Andrew Milroy in particular had indicated his interest in participating in the research from an early stage. Interview requests were sent by post to Andrew Milroy and another senior librarian from the Schools Library Service.

Replies to requests were received promptly from nine potential participants. The sample for data collection consists of one Primary school, seven Secondary schools and finally, one representative from the School's Library Service. Individuals approached for participation chosen on the grounds of their knowledge and direct experience in the field of school librarianship. Professional status was not the most important feature, from the sample of eight schools selected two participants were teachers, three were chartered librarians and four unqualified library assistants responsible for the running of the school library.

Oppenheim (1992:104) tells us that we can hope to increase the response rate to requests for interviews by advance warning. By this he advocates the use of a letter, personally addressed to the potential participant, informing of the study and inviting participation. He goes on to state that the letter should also include the background of the researcher and origin of the research. It is preferable that the researcher does not give the potential interviewee too much information, reducing the risk of giving them the opportunity to prepare a script in advance. Oppenheim (1992:69) is decided on this when he advises the researcher that,

The respondents should be given only a vague idea of the central topics of the interview. It is spontaneous responses that are wanted, not carefully thought out positions.

Thus the introductory letter sent out in the first instance contained only a brief outline to the theme of research (appendix 1).

Another important factor when contacting potential participants, according to Oppenheim (1992:82) is to explain why they were chosen, that is what their value is to the research. He states that the rewards are intrinsic to the subject of the research, whose results will certainly be of interest to the respondent in a professional capacity. This is most definitely the case in the study with which we are concerned. The response of participants was such that the majority of them have requested a copy of the final report. It is important that the topic of study should be of intrinsic interest to those potential respondents in order to guarantee participation. This will also reinforce the validity of the research to the researcher.

The letter was accompanied by a mini questionnaire (see appendix 2).

The aim of the questionnaire was to ascertain whether,

- a. The potential participant had taken part in the Free Books for Schools, or similar sponsorship campaign.
- b. The potential participant would be willing to take part in an interview.

In order to overcome possible apprehensions the letter and questionnaire carried an explicit promise of anonymity.

Contacts, by telephone, email and post were made with members of recognised bodies concerned with the research purpose, and both published and unpublished reports were received making a valuable contribution to the literature review. These were as follows: The National Consumer Council, Campaign for the Advancement of State Education (C.A.S.E) and the library supplier Cyhper Group Ltd. Representatives of the *Free Books for Schools* initiative from the Media and commercial sector were also approached for comment in the course of the research.

2.7 Interview design

An interview is not an ordinary conversation, although the exploratory interview appears similar in some respects. (Oppenheim, 1992:65).

Because of the research purpose and approach called for already discussed it was felt that a 'semi-structured' interview schedule would be the most appropriate research instrument, recorded and carried out 'face-to-face' in participating schools. The interview schedule was informed by the initial review of literature, which yielded information in the field of interest, highlighting current trends and issues. In the case of the research at hand three dominant areas emerged dictating the themes of exploration thus: Practical Issues, Professional Judgement and Politics & Ethics.

Oppenheim (1992:67) believes the exploratory interview to be essentially heuristic, he adds,

It is concerned with trying to understand how ordinary people think and feel about the topics of concern to the research.

Such method also allows for rich response gathering whilst still adhering to a structure predetermined by themes indicated in the existing literature. This made it possible to achieve a holistic picture of the situation as it stands both in the literature reviewed and the data collected on the opinions and attitudes of those involved in the study. Ultimately the interview schedule aids the final process of data analysis and discussion by enabling a thematic style to develop, resulting in researched conclusions and possible recommendations to become apparent to researcher and ultimately the reader.

It was decided that some form of contextual and personal/comparable questions would be asked of the participants in order to highlight similarities or otherwise. The contextual questions were asked at the beginning to put the participant at ease, allowing them to get used to the sound of the

interviewer and tape recorder. These consisted of closed-questions dealing with issues such as the status of the school, the library budget, and use of the Schools Library Service. As for the personal/comparable questions Oppenheim, (1992:132), advises us that they should come at the end, by which time the researcher can hope to have convinced the respondent that the inquiry is genuine. Information elicited at this stage dealt with the professional status of the interviewee, gender, age group, and political preference.

The main body of the interview schedule, being exploratory in nature consisted of predominately open-ended questions, arranged by themes relating to the inquiry. Enelow & Swisher quoted in Shipley & Wood (1996:53) argue that open-ended questions tend to elicit information that is more accurate and thought out than responses given to closed questions. Because the themes and subsequently, questions that made up the exploratory interview schedule were predetermined by the literature and researcher in advance it was felt necessary to allow the interviewee the opportunity to raise any other issues at the end of the interview not previously discussed.

Every attempt was made to produce neutral questions, writing and often rewriting individual questions and attitude statements to avoid bias in the wording or in the way that they might be asked. Also attempted to limit the eliciting of 'Yes/No' answers, neither of these outcomes were deemed to be conducive to the purposes of qualitative research. Finally, Stone (1984:13) encourages the researcher to keep the interview schedule as short as is possible, without compromising the aims of the study.

2.7.1 Attitude Statements

As part of the interview design it was decided to allow for the measurement of attitudes by the direct use of the Likert Scale. This allowed

the research to incorporate evidence from the literature review, in the form of attitude statements, by presenting it to the interviewee and allowing them to respond by way of placing themselves on an seven point 'attitude continuum' ranging from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree' with variants in-between. The Likert Scale, in the words of Oppenheim (1992:200), performs very well when it comes to a reliable, rough ordering of people with regard to a particular attitude. Its strength also lies in the fact that,

It becomes possible to include items whose manifest content is not obviously related to the attitude in question, enabling subtler and deeper ramifications of attitude to be explored.

The Likert Scale statements were arranged in topic sections, following on from related questions, allowing the respondent to reflect on the topic further and indicate their attitude to aspects of it. Oppenheim (1992:207) comments upon the fact that,

Many researchers, will, however not follow the Likert procedures step by step, but will use whatever techniques of item analysis they find convenient.

In this case no particular weightings were used, rather data collected from the attitude statements was tabulated and converted to charts, using the excel program. In this way comparisons were clearly visible and generalisations about attitudes to the issues under discussion became very apparent.

Foddy (1993:162) reminds us of the limitations of using attitude statements like the Likert Scales. He notes the possibility that different respondents can interpret the categories in different ways,

When respondents are asked to indicate whether they 'Strongly agree' right through the scale range to 'Strongly disagree' with the item, the researcher can neither be sure that the same answers from different respondents have the same weights, nor that similar answers to different items given by the

same respondent carry equal weights. Thus, there is no guarantee that when one says 'Agree' with something he/she is not making as strong a statement as another who says 'Strongly agree'.

However, Oppenheim (1992:116), tells us to place these limitations in perspective.

2.8 Conduct of interviews

Every effort must be made to get the respondent to express their own ideas spontaneously in their own words. (Oppenheim, 1992:73).

Indeed this was the aim of the researcher and data recorded in this fashion was subsequently transcribed verbatim. Such narrative data can be found in the following chapters discussed, in the context of the literature review, under the main themes of the study. Every attempt was made not to restrict nor interfere with the potential flow of information from the interviewee to interviewer. It is interesting to note, however, that some of the questions were pre-empted by the respondents. This indicated the topical nature of the study and the similar concerns of participants. The length of individual interviews varied, on average 30 – 40 minutes, with the exception of 1 hour for the interviewed carried out with the representative from Sheffield's School Library Service. Response and feedback at the end of the interviews were encouraging. Participants claimed to have enjoyed taking part and generally commented on the appropriateness of the interview schedule, which they felt enabled them to voice their opinions and concerns.

Despite the notion that people tend to be more guarded and communicate 'closer to the vest' when being interviewed, (Shipley & Wood 1993:39). The decision was taken in advance that the interviews would be recorded, this was felt the most efficient and convenient way to capture the essence of the interview. Permission to do this was sought of the

participants in the initial letter; all agreed to be recorded. Oppenheim (1992:67-68) tells us that it is essential for the exploratory interview to be recorded on tape, for,

Interview tapes will produce a rich store of attitudinal and perceptual expressions, on which discussion can be based.

Recordings also allow the researcher to analyse in detail the narrative data afterwards, as there is much that will have escaped during the stress of the actual interview. Garrett, in Shipley & Wood (1996:38), explains that,

Attention should not be focused on record keeping during an interview.

Indeed, emphasis is better-placed on encouraging open and honest communication, listening carefully and guiding discussion. Shipley & Wood (1996) add that any note taking should be done in an open manner, not hidden from the interviewee as this could engender mistrust and negative feelings.

2.9 Data transcription & analysis

The transcription of recorded interviews took place as soon, as was possible after the event. Each was transcribed verbatim with the exception of School 8, whose recording was unsuccessful, instead notes were added to from memory. Systematic scrutiny of transcripts to identify themes and patterns took place in the weeks that followed.

Patton (1980:268) tells us that there are no formal, universal rules to follow in the evaluation of qualitative data. He does, however, identify three key stages to the process: analysing, interpreting, and evaluating. The first brings order to the data 'organizing what is there into patterns, categories, and the basic descriptive units'. The second involves 'attaching meaning and

significance to the analysis', here we are concerned with explaining patterns and identifying relationships. Thirdly, we are ready to make any judgements and assign value 'to what has been analyzed and interpreted'. This illustrates the course taken in attempting to make sense of the narrative data collected during interview.

Patton (1980:306) goes on to note how analysis must be inductive, that is themes, patterns and categories must be allowed to emerge out of the data rather than being imposed on the data by the researcher prior to collection and analysis. Dey (1993:40) also stresses the importance of not letting assumptions blind you to the evidence in the data. And Foddy (1993:192) says that the researcher must accept that 'we do impose either our own view of reality, or our guesses about our respondent's views of reality, upon our respondent's answers' whether we chose to admit it or not.

Indeed, House in Patton (1980:337-338) warns the researcher away from being neutral to the research at hand; claiming it may have a negative affect upon those being interviewed. The key is to be impartial rather than objective, (which must prove near impossible for most researchers who find passion in their subject),

The [researcher] must be seen as caring, as interested, as responsive to the relative arguments. He must be impartial rather than simply objective.

The basic purpose of qualitative data, in the words of Patton (1980:327), is 'to provide useful, meaningful, and credible answers' to the research question. The research relies upon a lot of subjective data in this case and we must remember, as Patton (1980:336) reminds us, that subjective data implies opinion rather than fact; intuition rather than logic; impression rather than confirmation. This is most useful when the aim of the research is to ascertain the attitudes and opinions of certain people.

The interviews were analysed in accordance with the themes, identified early on, that constituted the logical structure of the interviews.

Transcripts were studied individually and compared collectively. A content analysis was carried out and data were coded into emerging themes. Attitude statement responses were compared with the literature and revealing quotations highlighted. Common attitudes were identified and some generalisation was deduced. Part of the data collected was conducive to tabulation and graphical representation, and this was carried out using the excel program.

2.10 Data presentation

Description and quotation are the essential ingredients of qualitative inquiry, sufficient description and direct quotations should be included to allow the reader to enter into the situation and thoughts of the people represented in the report. (Patton,1980:343)

The present study takes a predominately thematic approach to the presentation of data. Data are presented in the form of narrative description, graphical representation, and tabulation of findings. Quotes are lifted directly from the transcriptions verbatim wherever possible although some editing did take place when repetition or hesitation disrupted the flow of conversation. In the interest of anonymity interviewees and schools are not individually identified by name, instead the schools they represent are labelled from a to h. According to Patton (1980:275) once data analysis has come together in discussion what you've got is good descriptive information about the major findings in your study. The chapters that follow incorporate both narrative and analytic elements, and strive for an optimum balance between the two.

2.11 Background data collection

In the words of Fink (1998:3) the literature review is the 'systematic, explicit, and reproducible method for identifying, evaluating and interpreting

the existing body of recorded work' in any given field of study. The review has many uses. Again, Fink (1998:5-7) sees its value to the researcher lying in its usefulness to justify the need for study; to support a hypothesis; in identifying methods of research; finding out where to look for support. It must be carried out when you require understanding about what is currently known with regards to the research question.

Sources used throughout the study included: library catalogue that led to the identification of relevant books, periodical and newspaper articles in print; internet searches using keywords to illicit relevant sites and sources; electronic data bases for retrospective newspaper articles and reports. Consultation with relevant organisations and agencies complimented the literature review. Contact by telephone was made initially, and subsequently email correspondence was set up from which I requested published and unpublished sources. These in turn were sent via the post.

A systematic search and review of both print and non-print matter was conducted in the onset of the study and continued right up until the final report writing. This was not solely because the amount of sources were exhaustive, rather that the up-to-date topical nature of the central issue meant that articles were and continue to be published in the National papers and educational journals. This being the case it was necessary that the literature search, review and discussion continued throughout the study and this in turn is reflected in the dispersed nature of the literature review. Care was taken when considering the feasibility and quality of sources consulted and subsequently referenced in this study. Referencing of sources found in the bibliography follows the recognised Harvard System throughout.

2.12 Limitations of the research design

Time constraint can be identified as a limitation on the number and choice of participants involved. It could be argued that more significant

results could have been achieved if more interviews had taken place with a wider base of interviewees. Another particular area that could have, in retrospect, been altered was the use of a seven-point scale for recording the results of the attitude statement. Giving respondents the extra choices of slightly agree and slightly disagree were not particularly useful when analysing results and could be said to have been superfluous to the objective of the attitude statements as a research instrument?

2.13 Summary of chapter

This chapter has methodically explored the stages of research design and considered their place in the overall research purpose. The research method can be summarised as exploratory in nature, requiring the collection of qualitative data and employing the semi-structured interview as the research instrument. It has taken into account limitations imposed on the study and sets the scene for the subsequent chapters concerned with the presentation of research findings.

3. Practical Issues



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3.1 Introduction

In this initial chapter of data analysis and presentation examination is made of all things practical in relation to the participation of schools in the *Free Books for Schools* campaign. Corresponding to the sequence of questions that made up the interview schedules (Appendix 2 & 4) this section looks at the issues raised from the respondent's comments recorded as narrative data, and discusses them in the context of existing literature. Discussion leads to general areas of opinion and consensus, whilst highlighting disparities, and explores issues that have arisen incidentally outside the interview schedule. The researcher has identified the following key areas of interest: Responsibility for participation; involvement of pupils, staff, parents; organisation, time and effort; overall satisfaction. Related attitude statements are considered separately with the aid of graphical representation of results. The chapter is concluded with a summary of main findings.

3.2 Presentation and discussion of findings

Commercial campaigns that offer resources in exchange for the collection of tokens require the very active participation of the schools that sign up. *Free Books for Schools* is no exception. In order to receive your free books tokens must be collected, cut out, and sent away. As in similar schemes tokens were linked to certain products which, to be collected, must be purchased. In the case of *Free Books for Schools* tokens 1 billion tokens were printed, and could be found either on Walker's Snack Foods products or News International Ltd national newspapers, which comprise: The Sun, The Times, The Sunday Times and News of the World. The books themselves were provided by Collins.

It was found to be almost always the interviewee, whether librarian, library assistant, or teacher with library responsibilities who instigated the school's participation in the scheme. One exception was a school where the Parent's Association took the initiative to start the collection and maintained control for the duration. Nevertheless, it was revealed that in all cases the decision to participate was made almost automatically and despite getting a nod of approval from the head the school's participation was not discussed with other members of staff, parents or governors. One teacher commented,

I don't think it was really discussed, we were just doing it, don't think there was ever any question.

This apparent lack of consideration over the school's intended participation points to the fact that schools are not questioning the individual sponsorship schemes they put their names to. Research revealed that participating schools were not new to the game of collecting token for resources,

We've done ASDA, Tesco's Computers for Schools, Jacob's club biscuits, and there was one, I can't remember the name...where we got loads of musical instruments – that was a really good one.

Schemes offering free educational resources as a reward for shopping at a particular store or purchasing a particular product have been on the increase over the last few years. Sports equipment, computers and software and now quite naturally, during the National Year of Reading, books have all found their way into the classroom thanks to companies, who for their part have seen the benefits of increased sales and prestige in promoting education (Cox, 1995). By receiving sponsored resources schools help to raise the profile of individual products and the companies that own them.

When asked whether they felt their school had given the *Free Books for Schools* Campaign high profile the general response concluded that although the posters and collection boxes, sent out by the organisers, had been placed in the library and around school, (the canteen was an obvious choice to catch the crisp packets), interviewees felt the school had not gone overboard on publicising the collection in any overt way. One librarian asserted,

I tried to tell the kids that they were to bring the tokens in if they bought crisps, and not to go out and buy them deliberately for the collection, the same with the newspapers.

Another noted,

I put a letter in the newsletter that goes out to parents, staff and pupils because I didn't think it warranted spending a lot of money on.

It was generally felt unnecessary to give the scheme a high profile within school. This was mainly due to the fact that the organisers had done a very thorough job of advertising the scheme themselves. Prime time television advertisements accompanied the launch of *Free Books for*

Schools, using well-known actors and personalities to endorse the campaign. Every school who registered was sent an information pack that contained all the promotional materials required: a token collection; accumulator wall chart and pointer; posters; Walkers product information; personalised parents letter to send to your pupil's parents. The campaign was also endorsed by the National Year of Reading and received coverage in many related publications. It is not hard to appreciate that helping emotive education initiatives such as literacy is good public relations. Whalley (1994) makes the assumption that parents are quick to join in such campaigns as they,

...feel that they are contributing to the quality of the children's education.

The interviewees were asked to comment upon the pupil's response to the campaign. Despite the high media profile of *Free Books for Schools* a slow start was suggested by most. Two schools ran a competition to stimulate interest and encourage collection, in each case the winning class was allowed to choose which books they wanted,

It had a slow start so we had a competition with year 7s for one week to see which tutor group could collect the most, to get it off the ground. The class that collected the most I let them choose the first lot of books and put stickers in to say who chose them.

We've had tutor group competitions with prizes for who could collect the most, organised by one of the first year teachers. When I got the books I got them a set of dictionaries and thesaurus because they had collected so many.

Another school linked the collection in with its own assertive discipline scheme,

There has been a hard-core number of students who have been very enthusiastic because I tied it in with the school reward system where they

can have credits - so for each token the children brought in I'd give out a credit.

The current literature available to advise schools participating in sponsored gifts, awards, voucher schemes and other promotional activities warns against offering the sponsor's products as prizes or rewards for pupils' everyday academic performance or behaviour (National Consumer Council, 1996). In these instances, notwithstanding the best intentions of the staff members responsible, pupils have been actively encouraged to participate in token collection. On this point Whalley (1994) concedes,

It will seem in appropriate to many people that 'pester power', as it has become known, should be a quality that schools unwittingly encourage.

The stated aim of the *Free Books for Schools* campaign is to help schools to have many more books in their classrooms. The campaign is offering a total range of 150 individual titles to school for pupils aged from 5 to 16 years. The books can be 'bought' in exchange for bundles of 100, 250 and 500 tokens. Some in the library profession have been very vocal on this aspect of the scheme. Newman (1999:1-2) has a particular point to make regarding exchange of tokens for books,

Using £5 as an average paperback cost, then each token is worth c1.8p. Let us assume that around half the UK population (30 million) were to donate 1 token per week from a packet of crisps for the 11 weeks of the campaign. This would bring in 330 million tokens or 1.2 million books for schools (£6 million worth). On average this would give 40 books to each of 30,000 schools (or 1 book for every 8 pupils). Thank you Walkers. Is this many more books?

In consideration of this point each of the interviewees were asked to disclose how many tokens in total their school collected, and more importantly how many 'free' books this had entitled them to. These figures are very revealing when presented in graphical format (Fig.1). Respondent schools collected

between 9,900 and 25,000 tokens entitling them to between 23 and 80 books. Employing the simple bar chart the stark contrast between tokens collected and books received is immediately appreciated.

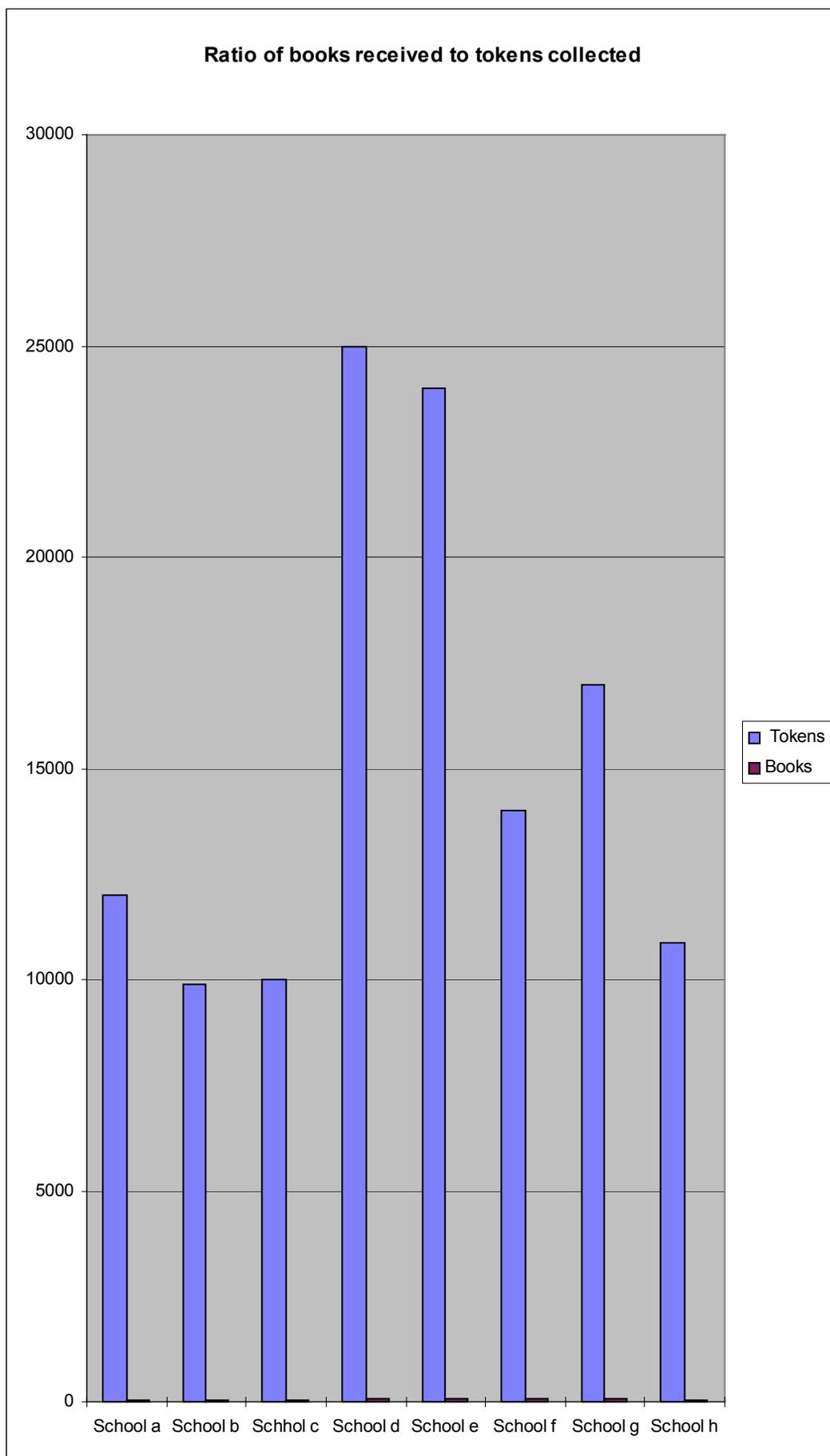


Figure 1.

It has already been noted that in all cases, bar one, the organisational requirements for the *Free Books for Schools* collection in school was met by the librarian or teacher with responsibility for the library. This revelation leads us to question the time and effort spent in the organisation of collection and cutting by staff, working in a professional capacity, which is wasted on such 'non-professional' tasks. In general interviewees regretted the amount of time they had spent cutting and sorting tokens for what turned out to be very poor returns, leading one librarian to exclaim,

I don't ever want to see a crisp packet again in my life! Umm... the fiction for secondary schools is appalling, absolutely appalling, if we wanted it we've already got it in paperback. The actual books themselves were so child unfriendly so I used all the tokens after that for dictionaries, English, German, French...

Considering the amount of time needed to organise the token collection in school librarians and teachers felt they were not sufficiently rewarded for their efforts. When asked directly whether they were satisfied that time and effort spent had been sufficiently rewarded one librarian answered without hesitation,

No, the arithmetic... you know, the cost of a packet of crisps, I think I worked it out... it's about £67 for a book.

Newman (1999) is quick to address this issue,

If the same 30 million people actually gave up one packet of crisps for one week and put the money directly into books for schools then there would be £7.5 million available immediately. Schools could spend this money on books of their choice; they could get the benefits of any discounts; invest in the School Library Service; and the focus would be on books not snacks.

It is important to note that it was not only the librarian or teacher who was disappointed by the number of books received for their efforts, pupils

who had been busy collecting were equally disappointed. Nowhere was this felt keener than by one school, which educated children with special needs. In this particular school, the researcher discovered, pupils had built up false expectations. The *Free Books for Schools* campaign promised that the school who collected the most tokens would receive a visit from the popular footballer David Owen. According to the teacher interviewed,

When they saw they had collected 6,000 tokens on the accumulator chart they thought this was a huge amount, as they have no concept of the relative value of the tokens. The children believed they would collect enough tokens to have the footballer come to school...

Although this resulting disappointment perhaps could not have been avoided, it is indicative of the type of outcome that bodies, such as the NCC and C.A.S.E, hope to discourage. Their advice to schools is not to endorse schemes that offer an inducement to the school who can collect the most tokens (National Consumer Council, 1996). Ultimately, when this is the case, the reward is bestowed upon the school with pupils and parents capable of purchasing the greatest number of targeted products.

The second half of the interview schedule concerned with Practical Issues was made up from attitude statements. Figure 2 gives a graphical representation of the results and reveals the level of agreement with each statement as indicated by the respondent. This instrument of attitude measurement, based on the Likert Scale method, provided some very interesting results for analysis.

The first statement deals with the notion that relying on commercial donation can be a dangerous precedent and could become a regular substitute for adequate funding (Hudson, 1999). The majority of the interviewees, seven out of nine, placed themselves in agreement with this statement. One in particular voiced the fear that,

Possibly Heads could turn around and say you are getting resources this way and cut expenditure in your department the following year.

This response seems to indicate a strong awareness that funds can not be taken as guaranteed in the current climate.

For the statement suggesting that commercial sponsorship is not always a question of trying to develop a market amongst young consumers there was more variation in opinion. Just over half the respondents (five out of nine) put themselves as slightly disagreeing, whilst two slightly agreed, of the remaining two one neither agreed or disagreed, and one disagreed with the statement. This reveals that attitudes to the motives of commercial companies are not straightforward. Some of the interviewees commented on how it depended on which company was under scrutiny - as some are believed to be more credible than others. It was also dependent on previous experience, one respondent recounted a successful partnership with Whitbread that she believed to have been mutually beneficial and where the company's interest lay beyond simple sales figures.

There was no disagreement to the statement proclaiming commercial sponsorship encourages the 'pester power' factor. Half of the respondents put themselves as agreeing with the statement, and half as slightly agreeing. All interviewees were familiar with this term of reference. The notion of cause-related marketing was also commented upon by one librarian as a way in which certain companies encourage parents in supermarkets to choose one product over another. A recent Business in the Community survey (Pike, 1998) showed that,

86 per cent of people are more likely to buy a product if it is associated with a cause or issue, with an equally large proportion having a more positive image of a business if they see it doing something to make the world a better place.

The next attitude statement, children feel proud that they have collected these books and are excited at the thought of reading them (Ward,

1999), was greeted with mixed opinion with respondents split across the continuum. It was noted by several interviewees that they perhaps identified more with the first half of the quote, in that those pupils involved in collecting were proud to be doing so. One teacher commented on how her children like to think they are doing something for school, this was thought to be more especially the case with primary school children. However, the suggestion that pupils were excited at the thought of reading the books was met with more reserve, one librarian was quick to point out,

Although the children were excited when the books first arrived they were disappointed by the selection, none have left the library.

Next, respondents were asked to consider the suggestion that it does not matter how we get pupils to read and enjoy books, as long as we do. It was with some surprise that the researcher recorded fairly high levels of agreement with two thirds either strongly agreeing or agreeing with this statement, only one respondent disagreed. Perhaps this attitude statement would have produced different results had it been placed in the context of quality and professional judgement; where it is possibly more suited. One professional saw it as a particularly problematic issue,

I think that's an argument that we've carried too far – I mean what I didn't say is, perhaps it's just my personal opinion, but is The Sun a newspaper we would want to be actively promoting to the kids? Yes, I can see it from the point of view of giving them something to read is better than nothing, but maybe we could have a better link up with a better paper. But no, I suppose all newspapers are biased in one way or another.

On this point results indicate that the majority of librarians and teachers interviewed felt that getting children just to read in the first instance is to be prioritised before going on to consider the type of material they are reading.

Focusing on the idea that collecting tokens in exchange for resource materials unfairly pressurises pupils and parents into purchasing particular

products the majority choose to agree with the statement. This echoes the general agreement already discussed with regard to the issue of 'pester power' and the seduction of cause-related marketing commented upon by one respondent.

A path of action strongly recommended by the NCC and C.A.S.E (Whitehead, 1999) is that schools need to develop an appropriate policy on the use of business sponsored materials and resources based on the needs of the school and its pupils. With the exception of one respondent who said they had not given the subject any thought, there was a strong consensus in favour of producing such a policy. The researcher considered this to be a positive response on the part of schools.

The final statement asked the interviewees to reflect on the statement *Free Books for Schools* is an illustration of the positive influence that the National Year of Reading is having on a. the media and, b. the commercial sector. Liz Attenborough (1999:80), reporting on the campaign in the Library Association Record asserts that the influence the campaign will have cannot be overstated,

This is all good news and shows the positive influence that the National Year of Reading is having on the media and the commercial sector, who having been made aware of the issues surrounding reading are now responding in the spirit of the Year.

Reflections on this produced interesting results, whilst some preferred to neither agree or disagree the majority placed themselves in agreement with the aforementioned statement. However, several of those in agreement felt the need to discuss what was meant by a 'positive influence'. It was concluded that almost certainly the National Year of Reading had provided the impetus for the *Free Books for Schools* campaign. It was also agreed that the consequent raising of awareness with regard to literacy issues could be said to be positive. Yet there was a slight reservation on the behalf of some who felt perhaps the companies involved were benefiting a great deal

from the campaign, and that the positive influence was felt by them more in terms of increased sales and credibility.

Practical Issues

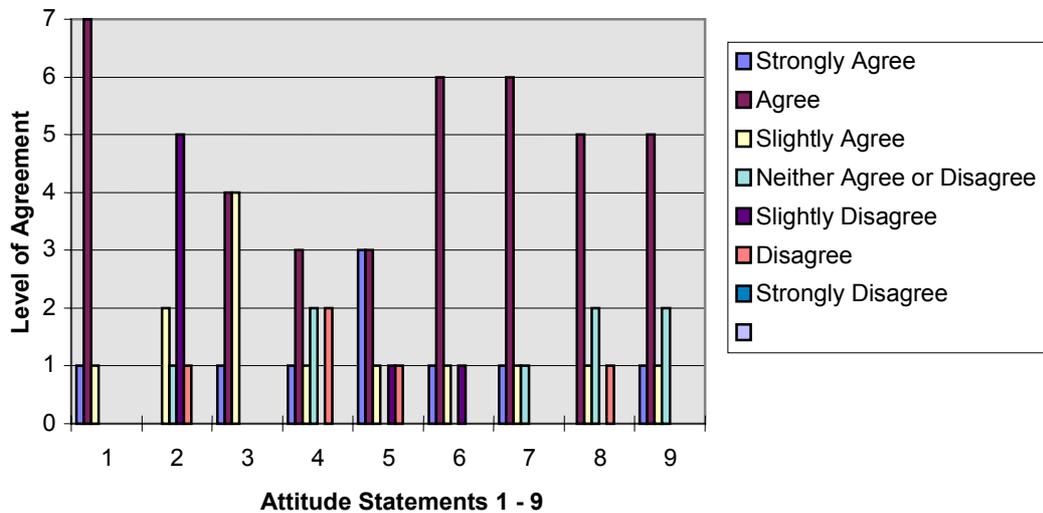


Figure 2

Attitude Statements

1. Relying on commercial donation is a dangerous precedent and could become a regular substitute for adequate funding.
2. Commercial sponsorship is not always a question of trying to develop a market amongst young consumers.
3. Commercial sponsorship encourages the pester power factor.
4. *"Children feel proud that they have collected these books and are excited at the thought of reading them".*
5. It does not really matter how we get pupils to read and enjoy books - as long as we do.
6. Collecting tokens in exchange for resource materials unfairly pressurises pupils and parents into purchasing particular products.
7. Schools need to develop an appropriate policy on the use of business-sponsored materials and resources based on the needs of the school and its pupils.
8. *Free Books for Schools* is an illustration of the positive influence that the National Year of Reading is having on the media.
9. *Free Books for Schools* is an illustration of the positive influence that the National Year of Reading is having on the commercial sector.

3.3 Summary of chapter

This chapter has considered the practical issues at play when schools participate in sponsorship campaigns such as *Free Books for Schools*. Analysis of data collected has revealed that despite their active participation those interviewed were not satisfied that the time and effort required was sufficiently rewarded. The collecting, cutting and sorting of tokens was extremely time consuming and staff felt their time could have been better spent. In some cases it was felt necessary to encourage pupil involvement by added incentives introduced by members of staff, this is something the National Consumer Council strongly advise against. Initial enthusiasm was often lost once the books began to arrive, and staff commented upon the general disappointment of pupils.

4. Professional Judgement

4.1 Introduction

The concept of professional judgement and the integrity it represents is an important aspect of the role those working in education play. Whether qualified or otherwise, all interviewees were asked to consider the issue of professional judgement in the context of their job and the impact that sponsorship campaigns such as *Free Books for Schools* have had on their service delivery. Underlining their commitment to the government's current priorities for literacy *Free Books for Schools* boasts its aims as being to provide a range of free, quality books to schools (The Guide 1998/99). This section of the interview schedule looks at the issue of quality; concentrating on the selection of books available, and the contribution that the additional resources received have made to standards of literacy in school.

4.2 Presentation and discussion of findings

The campaign offered a selection of 150 individual titles, made up of both fiction and non fiction. Experts in the field of primary and secondary reading advised the selection. The book list sent out to participating schools gives fiction a central place, but there are also information texts on a range of subjects and a variety of reference books which support learning in English and foreign languages. According to The Guide (1998/99),

In general, these HarperCollins books have been chosen because they can be read independently by pupils, but many are also suitable for use in the classroom.

The opening question asked whether interviewees were satisfied with the choice of books available, followed with a question asking whether the

selection included books they would have chosen themselves for the school library. Interviewees were unanimous in their response declaring that no, they were not satisfied with the choice of books made available through the scheme. Whilst most responded with a simple negative one librarian qualified his feelings thus,

Not particularly no, they weren't particularly varied; especially the fiction wasn't suitable, quite a few of the students have lower abilities. I ended up spending a lot of tokens on dictionaries which, ok, are very useful but are the most expensive and not the most enticing to the students.

When asked as to whether they would have chosen similar titles for their own library the interviewees had more to say. The overall tone was negative again and individuals had particular comments to make,

I get the feeling they were books they couldn't sell; there were a few good classics but not what we want. I ended up spending a lot on dictionaries as they are always useful, but you can only have so many.

The monopoly of HarperCollins did not go unnoticed,

It's obviously a commercial thing that the only ones you are going to get are Collins, the secondary selection was very poor. The junior school selection was better because Collins does very good junior schoolbooks but they are not renown for their secondary school selection.

The representative from Sheffield's School Library Service voiced this particular concern,

I think the other thing that I've not mentioned is it's one publishing house and for school libraries one of the things we try to push them away from is seeing the publishers rep. on the doorstep. We actively want them to look at suppliers with a range of material because if they are planning their library

properly they need to make those informed choices for the subjects they're doing.

Another librarian, echoing the last sentiment, bemoaned the general lack of new titles available from the participating publisher,

No, because they were books we had anyway, I'm not decrying the selection rather it's a selection that any decent library should already have.

There were also criticisms made with regard to the medium of titles available, hardback fiction is not bought as a general rule in most school libraries as the pupils prefer the more reader-friendly paperback copies,

Also, I don't reckon much to the pocket sized books, they get lost on the shelves and are very easy to slip into your pocket! I don't feel that they are appropriate books for libraries.

As the study was investigating the attitudes and opinions of those working in the field of school librarianship, it was decided to make contact with a representative from the library suppliers Cyher; used by schools and the Schools Library Service in Sheffield. Consequently, a short impromptu telephone interview was conducted with the Young People's Services Manager at the Cyher Group, Leeds. When asked whether the *Free Books for Schools* campaign has had any significant effect on supply patterns the response came back as no, it hadn't appeared to have a quantifiable effect. Instead it was felt that more organised and bigger campaigns (in terms of resources on offer) could mean that money allocated by schools to resources could be allocated elsewhere. However this was not the case with regard to the campaign under consideration,

Walker's crisps had limited selections and an awful lot of tokens to collect, which prevented impact on library suppliers like us.

Nevertheless, he went on to comment that *Free Books for Schools* was a well thought out media campaign that tied in with the National Year of Reading and constituted an excellent marketing exercise.

The dissatisfaction voiced by teachers and librarians interviewed mirrors the comment made by the representative from Cypher. The library supplier did not feel threatened by the Free Books for Schools campaign simply because it did not compete directly with what they were capable of supplying to schools. A similar response was evoked from the representative interviewed at Sheffield's School Library Service. The main concern here was that the provision of resources via sponsorship schemes can end up cutting across what the School's Library Service is trying to do in its capacity as a professional body providing not only materials to schools but help and advisory work,

The range of materials available to schools on any promotion may not be the same as what they want, perhaps can even duplicate what they want. And to be perfectly blunt it may be just what the promotional organisation wants to provide.

One of the most concerning aspects of the *Free Books for Schools* campaign was the distinct lack of co-operation with educational and library professionals. This point was felt most keenly by the representative from Sheffield's School Library Service,

I think in a number of commercial sponsorship ideas the SLS is not consulted on the issues before, if you like, they are put on the market. The Walkers Crisp project is one good example of this, and we've certainly not been circulated with any commercial material. That's not always the case, but it is often the case, and yet the SLS is often in a good position, not only to promote projects, but also to actively talk about projects from possible sponsors with groups of teachers in regular meetings.

This apparent lack of collaboration detected from the results of the data collection was typical of many schemes run in conjunction with the National Year of Reading according to the literature. Monahan (1999:4) notes how forging commercial links was the dominating concern for the literacy campaign,

Jonathan Douglas, who promoted the year in the City of Westminster, says its rushed arrival precluded some significant business involvement but not collaboration between teachers, librarians, publishers, booksellers and arts organisations on his patch.

The *Free Books for Schools* campaign has championed the literacy issue in its promotional materials. Interviewees were asked whether they believed such initiatives were indeed making a valuable contribution to raising the standards of literacy in participating schools. For many this was a difficult question to answer,

I would find it very difficult to actually measure that, I don't think there's a particularly valuable contribution, I presume if you have extra books there is a minimum contribution but not much. I would imagine that because I bought multiple copies of the French and Spanish dictionaries it would make easier French and Spanish lessons because not everyone is charging for the few dictionaries, so it might in that case.

Not from a secondary school point of view, no, except that what I'm trying to do is get an English dictionary into every classroom as part of the Literacy Project - and this is the one thing that has really helped.

One librarian suggested,

That depends on how people use what they get. I wouldn't like to say no, I've a feeling in some schools, particularly primaries where they've been under resourced for so long they may well finish up with half sets of decent texts.

Others were more decisive in their opinion,

No, it's too small a contribution; not every child is going to get access to the books.

Unsuitability of available material was felt to be a major factor when addressing the standards of literacy issue, producing such comments as,

I considered it a narrow, limited choice. There weren't many books from other cultures or factual, reference books. The non-fiction range was especially narrow.

For those working in a school with pupils who have special learning needs the unsuitability of materials was more a more acute problem; leading one teacher to comment,

I would have liked to have seen more non fiction texts as for us they are more age appropriate, and you can find things in a suitable reading age that appeals to the children. In fiction it often follows that a low reading age text is coupled with baby pictures and storyline and I'm not prepared to buy those or our kids.

This is an indication of the importance professionals place on providing students with a wide range of quality materials, and more especially in the case of secondary school pupils suitable texts. Unless the pupils desire to take the books from the library and read them there can be no conclusion made as to whether the scheme is indeed helping to raise literacy standards in schools. It is interesting to note that despite the fact many librarians complained about having to 'waste tokens' on dictionaries, when they would much rather have had a better choice of fiction to choose from, it is these reference texts that may well have gone some way in raising literacy standards in the classroom.

Free Books for School will return next year in support of the National Year of Numeracy, although fiction titles will still be available the book list is expected to be extended to incorporate some maths texts. Interviewees were asked whether they would participate in a similar scheme again. Most replied that they had already received the promotional material concerning the follow-up campaign, and would most likely be participating again. Few commented that although they would be signing up it was almost against their better, or indeed professional, judgement. When pushed on this point one librarian felt propelled to rationalise,

I would like to say no I wouldn't but I've a feeling that yes, I will, or the school will, and it will probably be better organised. I guess it's a personal professional judgement attitude to say no, but you need to be pragmatic. Another explained,

I'd have reservations, but I think the school would definitely because the parents are very supportive of such initiatives, so the school would.

One particular teacher felt that she had learnt from experience,

Yes, although I now feel the danger of creating false expectations. In our school, like I said before, the children believed they would surely collect enough tokens to have the footballer come to the school.

There appears to be an interesting play between notions of professional judgement and pragmatism identified in the responses recorded.

Keeping to the same format as the preceding chapter this next section explores the results of the attitude statement analysis. In order to measure attitudes and opinions the researcher asked the respondents to consider the statements presented to them in the context of professional judgement. Figure 3 provides a graphical representation of results recorded.

The first statement asked the interviewees to consider whether professionals working in education, not unlike themselves, who raise questions over business-school links may be portrayed in a negative way. Only two placed themselves in disagreement with this statement, whilst six agreed and one strongly agreed. This then, was felt by many to be a particularly pertinent concern with regard to *Free Books for Schools* due to the huge amount of positive advertising produced by the companies involved. It was noted that coverage for *Free Books for Schools* has been extensive, both in the tabloids; *The Sun* and *News of the World*, (Ridley, 1999a; 1999b), and the broadsheets; *The Times* and *The Sunday Times*, since the launch of the campaign, with success stories focusing on individual schools across the country, (Betts, 1999a; 1999b; 1999c; 1999d). One teacher felt that despite any reservations she might have, many of her pupils and parents regularly took *The Sun* newspaper,

The Murdoch connection is a bit scary, I mean that's really big business and I don't know what the agenda is.

Therefore, although she believed it important to provide pupils in schools with a wide range of quality materials, and did not take the tabloid newspapers in the library, it was not her place to pass comments on what the parents of her pupils read at home.

Statement two asked them to consider whether the educational value of the *Free Books for Schools* campaign outweighed any marketing message. One interviewee agreed in contrast to five who were in disagreement and one who strongly disagreed, believing that the marketing message had a fairly obvious presence. These results suggest the campaign to be in direct conflict with one of the fundamental recommendations made by the National Consumer Council (1996) who urge schools not to endorse sponsorship deals which overtly market particular products.

Considering this point one teacher went on to explain her personal dislike of campaigns that encourage the increased consumption of fast and snack foods,

It's just the eagerness of the children to collect the tokens, it may sound silly, but I hope they are not eating more crisps than they would have done otherwise.

The health issue is something that BBC Watchdog have covered in a segment on sponsorship and advertising in schools (29.03.99). The programme dealt with the concern, voiced by the British Nutrition Foundation, that children are not eating enough fruit and vegetables, let alone the recommended five portions a day. With one of the sponsors a major snack food producer, *Free Books for Schools*, like Pringles' promotion for sports equipment, actively encourages the consumption of crisps. Big brands have big budgets for glamorous advertising and star appearances, but one nutritionist interviewed by the programme asks, *With little cash how could the marketing people sell healthy but boring broccoli to children?*

Responding to accusation of overtly marketing crisps to school children Walkers told programme researchers that they believe the majority of the population see the free books initiative as worthwhile.

The other sponsors of *Free Books for Schools* are News International, the proprietor of which is Rupert Murdoch, media baron. News International Ltd also own the publisher HarperCollins involved in providing the free books. Connections to big business were stressed as a serious concern by the representative for Sheffield's School Library Service,

I think it is a perfect example of all the wrong things going into a project. Commercially it looks really good for Walkers etc. because it's about supporting literacy, it's about education, it's about schools – those are obviously buzz words that must appeal to them... But the number of tokens

and the number of bags of crisps that you will have to eat to obtain a book which comes from a select list from one of the other partners, organised by the parent organisation – that to me really needs looking at if any school is actively going to be involved.

Clarifying this point, Professor Bob Usherwood (1998:639) has written,

Our role in making professional judgement is about giving people the opportunity to come into contact with the best. It is not to restrict choice but to make sure that a real choice is accessible. The breadth of choice will not be available if we leave things entirely to the market and the media moguls.

Interviewees were asked to consider the statement suggesting that commercial sponsorship amounts to companies buying children's loyalties. All agreed that this was the case, with five agreeing and four slightly agreeing. Results suggested that although this is felt to be generally the case, some sponsorship campaigns were less threatening than others. The next statement was similar in that it asked respondents to agree or disagree with the suggestion that commercial sponsorship in schools is nothing more than the exploitation of young people in an under resourced education system. Responses were mixed, although several agreed on the point that the exploitation of young people occurred, it was not felt that this necessarily a consequence of the current political climate. As a result four agreed, three slightly agreed, one neither agreed nor disagreed and one slightly agreed with the statement. All, with the exception of one, were in agreement with the statement that children at school are potentially vulnerable consumers.

When asked whether presenting commercial messages in an educational setting increases a company's credibility most responded in agreement. One interviewee choose to slightly disagree, commenting that they would like to think that people were not so naïve. In response to the final statement suggesting that endorsed commercial involvement may have negative implications for the trust placed in librarians/teacher the majority agreed with only one in disagreement. Two interviewees placed themselves

as neither agreeing nor disagreeing; both explained that although they had not given any particular thought to such an idea they didn't expect it to be a future concern.

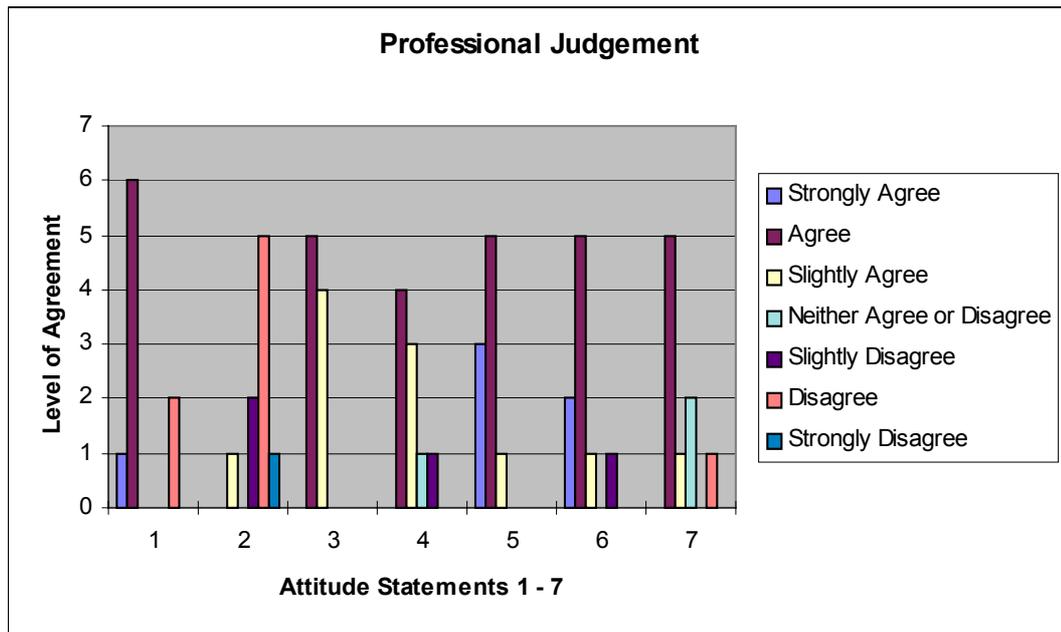


Figure 3

Attitude Statements

1. There is a danger that professionals who raise questions over business-school links may be portrayed in a negative way.
2. The educational value of the *Free Books for Schools* campaign outweighs any marketing message.
3. Commercial sponsorship amounts to companies buying children's loyalties.
4. Commercial sponsorship in schools is nothing more than the exploitation of young people in an under resourced education system.
5. Children at school are potentially vulnerable consumers.
6. Presenting commercial messages in an educational setting increases a company's credibility.
7. Endorsed Commercial Involvement may have negative implications for the trust placed in librarians/teachers.

4.3 Summary of chapter

By entering into educational arena commercial sponsorship has definite implications for the exercise of the professional judgement of educators and librarians. This chapter focused on the important issue of professional judgement to those working in the field of school librarianship. The analysis of the data gathered through interviews with teachers and librarians has highlighted central concerns. General consensus revealed the dissatisfaction of interviewees with the regard to the selection of books made available through the *Free Books for Schools* campaign. The main reason given for this dissatisfaction was the limited choice of books, including old titles and unsuitable texts. Many voiced the opinion that the selection was more about what the sponsor wanted to provide than what schools required in terms of titles and medium.

It was noted with some concern that the library profession was neglected in the consultation stage of the campaign. However, results revealed that *Free Books for Schools* did not pose a particular threat to the professional role of stock selection and purchase in the eyes of those interviewed. This had much to do with the fact that the campaign did not meet the necessary requirements of material provision for school library collections. It was felt that it would take a bigger, more impressive campaign and a harsher economical climate to achieve this. Despite the reservations the majority believed they, or at least their schools would continue to participate in such campaigns as certainly public opinion encouraged it.

5. Politics & Ethics

5.1 Introduction

This section examines the combined issues of politics and ethics relating to the increased presence of commercial sponsorship in the school domain. Following on from the examination of professional judgement the analysis of data regarding the question of politics and ethics looks at the impact of commercial sponsorship on service delivery, highlighting both the advantages and disadvantages, as seen by the participating interviewees. The results of the attitude statements that accompany the interview questions shed light on the politics participants and their reactions to the current government's agenda for education.

5.2 Presentation and discussion of findings

The initial question that was asked of interviewees in this final section sought to shed light on the personal experience of teachers and librarians with regard to commercial sponsorship in the school environment. In particular the focus was on the Free Books for Schools campaign, but interviewees were encouraged to discuss their experience of other schemes they had been involved in over the last few years.

According to the participating interviewees the presence of the sponsor in the case of *Free Books for School* was not particularly notable in their library,

I don't like to make too big a thing of it because I think if I am I'm pressurising the kids. Although I had posters up for Free Books for Schools I didn't go around saying 'are you all collecting your tokens' - type of thing.

Many felt that in real terms such campaigns had relatively insignificant effects on the school environment and that the impact on the delivery of their library service was minimal. With regards to particular campaign under consideration one teacher was not convinced that the impact could be any more than a token gesture,

It just pads out the reading scheme, nothing more significant than that.

Another responded more bluntly,

There has been no significant impact on the delivery of my library service to the kids.

Whilst it has already been determined that *Free Books for School* has had limited success in raising literacy standards, some felt it had helped to raise the profile of the school library. One librarian pointed to this benefit arising from pupils' initial interest in the campaign,

I think that overall it's been positive, because it has encouraged students to come into the library itself.

It was established by the researcher that the participating teachers and librarians were not convinced such a campaign as *Free Books for Schools* had any major implications on the delivery of their school library service to pupils. On the other hand it was felt that more impressive sponsorship, offering much larger amounts of materials in terms of monetary value, definitely have the potential to make a difference, and give rise to more serious concerns,

I suppose I don't really think it has much impact on the small scale. However it happened with another Catholic school in Sheffield that officially became a City Technology College because of a massive grant for I.T and it made a big division. Whereas we'd always worked in conjunction with other Catholic schools this made quite a bit split and I don't think that was very good. I think there is a danger that some schools, perhaps in better areas getting better funded by businesses, so I think there could become inequalities in

education. I mean you don't have equal education, I don't think you can but as far as possible you should try.

Many of those interviewed believed that this was the path education was moving down and despite any reservations they might have on a personal level the presence of sponsorship in schools is inevitable, if not already a reality,

I think we're just in line to get a massive amount for I.T in the school so I think it's happening whether we like it or not, I mean I think it's something that's going to have to happen if we are going to educate the children properly.

Having recorded the general feelings with regard to the infiltration of business into education via the sponsorship of important resources the interviewees were asked to consider what they felt the main advantages and main disadvantages of commercial sponsorship for school resource materials were. Analysing the data gathered the researcher can conclude that more disadvantages were recorded than advantages. A graphical representation of the results can be found in figure 4 and figure 5.

The participants offered a total of just three main advantages. Unsurprisingly the majority stated the main advantage to be 'increased resources', though even that was not achieved in such great numbers as to have any significant impact. The remaining advantages suggested were 'raising the profile of the library' and 'working in partnership'. One librarian explained this last potential advantage,

For us business partnerships in the local community have helped our work experience relations with local employers, it has been valuable to us to have our kids taking part in work experience which can prove difficult with a special school in a community.

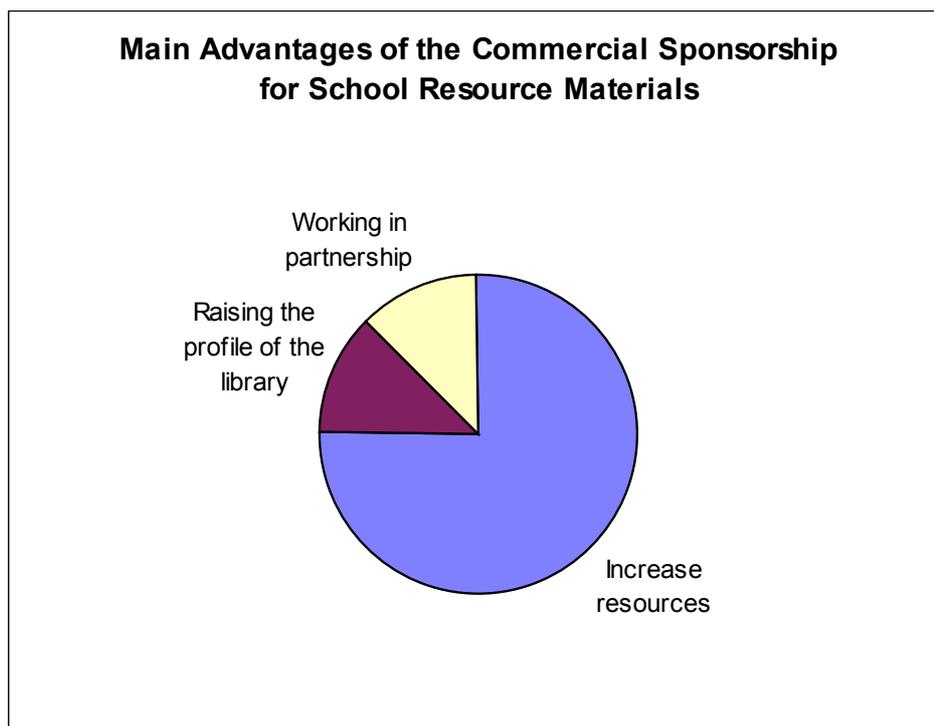


Figure 4.

Main advantages were significantly out numbered by suggestions offered forward for the main disadvantages. These results indicate that those interviewed were aware of the strong potential for conflict in such situations. The majority decided the main disadvantage to be the amount of time and effort required when participating in such campaigns,

I think the main disadvantage is it's hard work – almost you've got to be constantly doing it and I think sometimes that the work doesn't justify the effort, sorry, the results don't justify the effort you put in.

Agreeing with this sentiment, another says simply,

Well, it's a lot of hard work for not a lot of return.

One librarian attempted to explain her feelings in more detail,

Again I think it's the smaller sponsorship that takes up far too much time, nobody actually recognises the time that is being spent on it for the amount you're getting in return. It's different, I don't know how much the books are

worth that I've got - I think that's another point, perhaps if I'm talking a couple of hundred pounds then it probably is a bit more than if you had to go out and buy the books. But then you're talking about whether someone is prepared to give 40 grand for I.T it's a different league altogether - it's worth spending the time on that. I think it's time to the value you need to look at really. Well, the other reps that have come round said it's probably only costing HarperCollins a pound a book and I find that a little bit niggly I suppose.

Another main disadvantage recorded by the researcher was the potential to reduce/remove budgets,

Possibly Heads could turn round and say you are getting resources this way and cut expenditure the following year.

Fortunately for the librarian who had feared this outcome it was not to be the case. In the space of one academic year his school library benefited not only from its regular annual injection from the school budget, but the additional government money (Russell & Judd, 1999) and *Free Books for Schools*.

Other respondents alluded to the potential for the sponsorship involvement to interfere with schoolwork, both in terms of the time needed to dedicate to it and in terms of the conflict of values between school and company. One librarian warned,

You need to be really careful about who is providing resources.

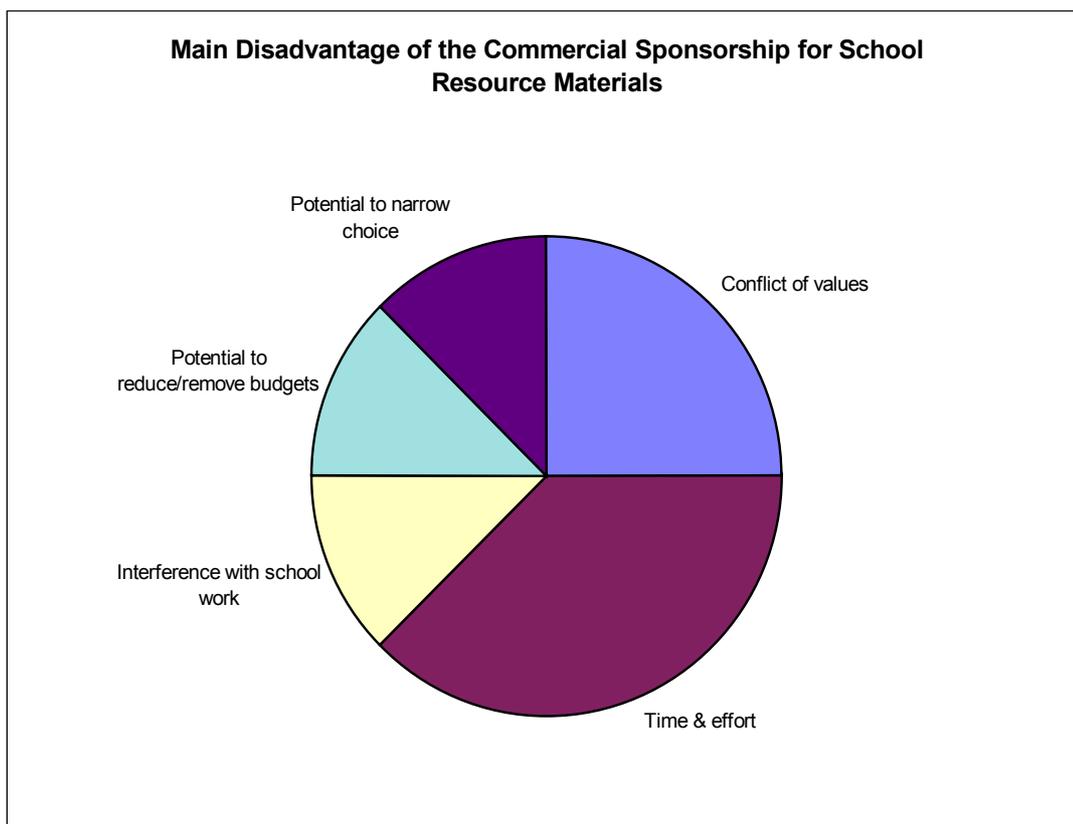


Figure 5.

None of the interviewees could think of an instance when their participation in the Free Books for Schools campaign was questioned or objected to by stakeholders. One librarian, however, recounted an experience of one such case,

*No, there's been no objection inside or outside of school. Interestingly though, my sister-in-law in London works in a school library as well and one of the teachers who takes responsibility for the library with her wouldn't let them do it - he said because the children might be reading *The Sun*! If people are reading *The Sun* newspaper you're not going to stop them by this but whether you're condoning it - but then you may say well, it's better to read *The Sun* than no newspaper at all?!*

Over half of the interviewees, when asked by the researcher claimed they would prefer to see less commercial sponsorship in schools. Nevertheless, interviewees were pragmatic in their responses,

I'd like to see less but whether that is practical in the present climate or whether more can be done in a less overt way.

Less, but that's a very personal response, I think there will be more, it's a growth industry.

Of those remaining that wished to see more commercial sponsorship in school *Free Books for Schools* was not necessarily a good example of how it should be done,

I'd like to see more, but not in the way it has been done here, cutting tokens has been extremely time consuming, could have been simplified, organised, managed better and if the choice of material was increased it could be a positive way forward.

I'm not sure I want to see more of the smaller sponsorships, and again I think it's because I don't know how you equate, I don't know how you work out whether it's value for time. I mean I've done this and I'm saying well how many hours have I spent cutting out tokens - is it really worth it?

There was also the concern that schools might be forced to rely on commercial sponsorship in the place of adequate funding in the future,

As long as they see sponsorship as an extra and not a replacement.

Reflecting on past experience and the present challenges facing state education in general, another librarian explained how she felt on a personal level towards the increasing presence of commercial and private interests in her school,

At one time I think I would have completely turned my nose up at it, but I think it's one of the very main changes in education, certainly since I was at school... I think it's probably becoming necessary.

It is evident that societal change over the last two decades has, in general, led to the increased acceptance of commercial values entering into the public domain. People are indeed less resistant to the idea of the private sector being involved in public concerns. An especially topical and controversial example of this is the current debate over the 'dumbing down' of the BBC (Toynbee, 1999) and public reaction to the proposed increase in the licence fee. Results of a recent Guardian poll (Ahmed, 1999) have led to the questioning of the very basis of publicly funded broadcasting and suggest a major shift change in public opinion with regards to the idea of advertising and sponsorship. When faced with the potential increase in licence fees some 65% of those polled felt that the BBC should accept some advertising. When asked whether the BBC should allow companies to sponsor BBC programmes 77% supported the idea. Such results are a revolution and appear to illustrate a general shift in the way in which society regards publicly funded ventures.

The interviewees were given the opportunity to comment on any other concerns they have regarding commercial activities involving schools and some interesting points of view were recorded. One librarian was particularly concerned with the issue of impartiality,

I think there is a danger that you are promoting one thing as opposed to something else, schools should be impartial, not endorsing one product... Impartiality is important especially in schools, I don't want to be seen giving the wrong message.

Another also felt that the narrowing of choice was dangerous and that this is something her profession is in place to prevent, especially in school where children are particularly vulnerable,

I worry that kids are not getting a wide choice, not being told what is available. An example of this is when Midland Bank goes into schools, they have a very unfair advantage over a child who doesn't know what banks are about, and doesn't know what other options there are to choose from. Once the bank's got the kid hooked they've got them for life.

The extreme differences between the values of the public and the private sector were an issue for one teacher, who explained,

Businesses are out to make money and they don't have the same concerns, don't have the same values as education.

These different concerns stated by each respondent have been presented as a pie chart for the convenience of the reader in figure 6.

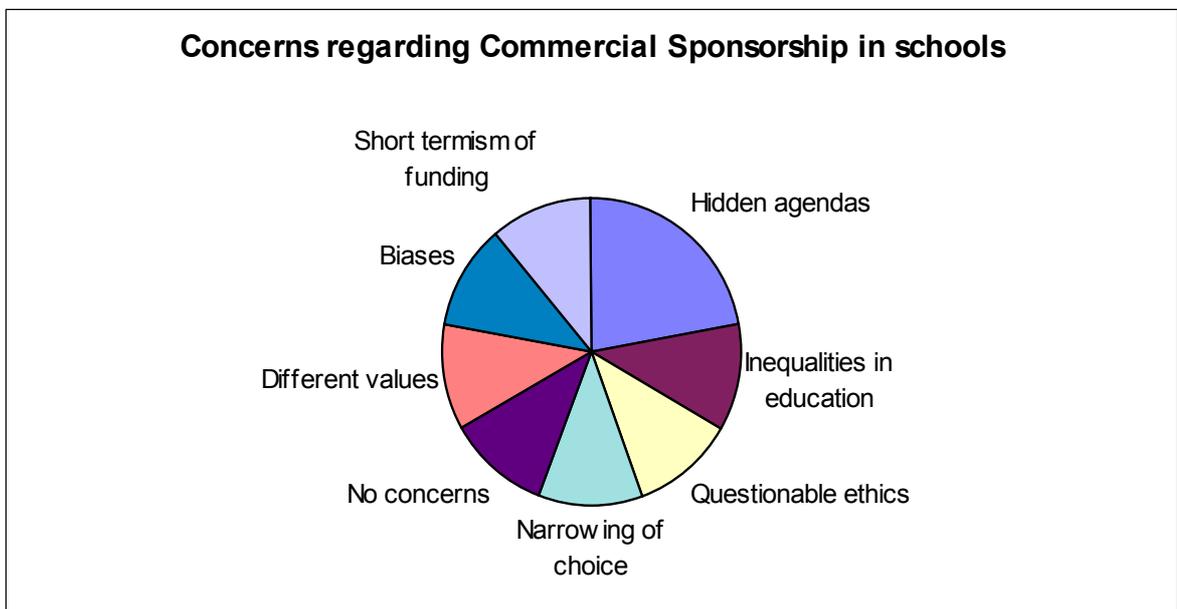


Figure 6.

All the interviewees were asked if they had approached any outside agencies for advice before entering in any commercially sponsored schemes. Librarians and teachers alike responded that they had not, and it was also disappointing to hear that none were aware of any guidelines set down to help schools in such cases. The guidelines that the researcher referred to in the interview were those drawn up by The National Consumer Council (1996). Having been made aware of the existence of such guidelines there was a general consensus that a set of guidelines would indeed be useful,

Yes I think that...well it would certainly be useful or helpful. I would be interested to see them... before we started collecting.

Yes, it would be helpful to think about the pros and cons.

One in particular made a very perceptive comment about the difficulties of a school librarian working in isolation,

Yes I would. I think knowing what you are doing is reasonable and that there aren't going to be any detrimental effects from doing it, I mean you make the assumption that there aren't but I suppose you don't know. This is the problem when you're on your own and there is only you there to make the decisions.

Despite the fact that seven out of eight schools sampled used the Schools Library Service the representative from Sheffield interviewed revealed that they had not been approached by any school asking for advice with regards to Free Books for Schools. Advisory work is an important role of the SLS professionals and there is great potential for the Schools Library Service to help individual schools make, what can be crucial decisions about the suitability of commercial partnerships and sponsoring schemes.

The attitude statements for this section concentrate on different aspects of the political debate regarding the private sector in education and ask the interviewees to reflect on the individual statements before placing

themselves on the continuum of agreement. As with the previous two chapters a graphical representation of results recorded for this section can be found in figure 7.

The first statement asks the respondents to consider the suggestion that commercial disciplines and competition will ensure that education is run better (Tooley, 1999; Redwood, 1999). This statement elicited a strong consensus of disagreement from those interviewed; eight out of nine disagreed this figure includes two who strongly disagreed. Only one respondent placed herself as slightly agreeing that education would be better run under commercial disciplines. This notion of the private sector taking over from the public is not new; the last Conservative government championed it. However, Professor James Tooley, author of a recent paper on the virtues of profit believes that even the Tories did not take it far enough. Discussing Tooley's recent speech to the Business of Education Forum Redwood (1999:5) comments,

He claims that the Conservative party 'lost its nerve' following the market-style reforms of the 1980s and he praises the Labour government for allowing private companies to bid for Hackney and other failing LEAs.

In contrast, the second statement, still emotionally loaded, expresses the concern that if we hand education over to business we will betray our children. The response to this was not so unanimous and several respondents commented on the emotive use of language. In retrospect the researcher could have better prepared this statement. Nevertheless, whilst two strongly agreed, four agreed and one slightly agreed only two interviewees slightly disagreed with the statement. The results suggest that of the sample interviewed the majority are not in favour of the private sector taking over from and replacing the public in the area of education.

The third statement looks at the issue from the other extreme. Due to the negative response so far recorded with regard to the private sector moving in on the domain of the public the researcher anticipated that the

following statement would be met with a positive one. However, when asked to consider whether the public sector alone should provide for schools two agreed, one slightly agreed, two neither agreed nor disagreed, two slightly agreed and two disagreed. Such disparity of agreement suggests that the issue is not clear cut; interviewees were reluctant to place themselves as either for the private sector or for the public sector when it came to the question of education. When asked if he was in favour of centralised public funding from the government, the professional librarian representing Sheffield's School Library Service explained his own position,

No, because that's taking it to the other extreme really, that's expecting it and that's not having to work for it. But I am somebody who believes that you should be in the position to let projects speak for themselves and for work to be recognised and funded accordingly.

What many find most frustrating is the inability of some local authorities to match the funding provided by private companies to sponsor educational initiatives like the National Year of Reading,

I think really that government initiatives like NYR and other things around book sponsorship generally is a difficulty because it sounds good, and the ideas are good but then you've got to make commitments to make it work. And yes, the NYR has had limited money attached to it but it was also about getting partners and sponsors and matched funding... and in Sheffield it wasn't something being matched from the council.

Next, the interviewees were asked whether they felt that business-school links should not be denied for ideological reasons. Although there wasn't a general consensus the majority placed themselves in agreement with the statement. Only one respondent strongly disagreed, believing that such links should indeed be denied for just such reasons as political ideology, claiming,

It shouldn't be necessary to find direct financial involvement from the private sector. Funding should be sorted out centrally, should be equal.

Instead of this, however, the government is urging companies to pump money into education. Schools it would appear are the new charity of the time (Bentham, 1999).

Back in 1992 Neil Kinnock, (Sherman, 1992:11), the then leader of the opposition stated that in Britain, under the Tory government, schools were,

More and more dependent on funds raised by parents and more and more divided by schemes that favour a tiny minority and disadvantage the rest.

This is a particular concern of Margaret Tulloch, of C.A.S.E, who today is campaigning for the government to make better provision for state schools in terms of educational resources (Lightfoot, 1999). A recent article from the Independent (Coyle 1999) revealed the results of a recent report that claimed,

The long-run impact of modest changes to public education expenditure on the inequality of earnings is likely to be substantial.

During the 1980s and early 1990s inequality was on the increase, and although there is evidence in the most recent figures that the dispersion has stopped getting worse the warning is there. Public spending on education reduces inequalities and increased spending on educational resources has the potential to raise standards of education (Rafferty, 1999) for the benefit of all.

The present Labour government however, elected on policies such as 'education, education, education' (Smith 1997) do not appear have the same concerns regarding the funding of schools as their former party leader Mr. Kinnock. The ideologies of the former Labour party have been relegated to what the press affectionately calls Old Labour priorities. New Labour Prime

Minister Tony Blair (1999) has no such concerns over the inequalities in education caused by the involvement of commercial values. He clearly invites the private sector to embrace the opportunities laid out for them by his government in this piece written for the launch of the *Free Books for Schools* campaign,

But promoting reading and books is far from exclusively the property of the Government. That's why I welcome this Free Books for Schools campaign, to which many people I know have already pledged their support and which is already benefiting so many children. It is precisely the kind of initiative which companies in the private sector can foster, and from which can help children and schools can draw real help.

This leads the analysis neatly on to the final attitude statement that suggests that the present government appears to be taking a slightly ambiguous approach to the potential conflicts of business-school links. All respondents asked to consider this statement were in agreement with its suggestion, out of nine participants two strongly agreed, six agreed and one slightly agreed.

Politics & Ethics

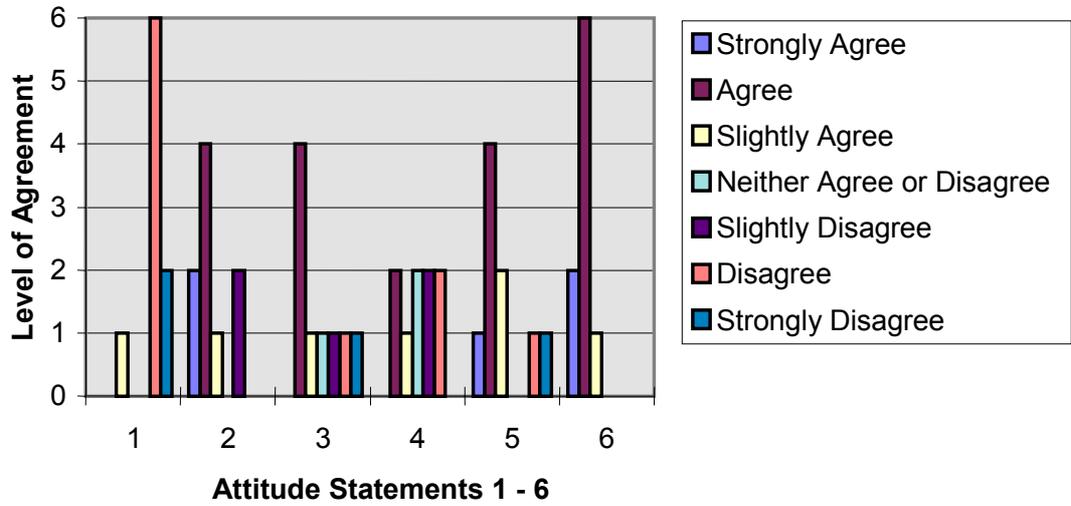


Figure 7.

Attitude Statements

1. Commercial disciplines and competition will ensure that education is run better.
2. If we hand education over to business we will betray our children.
3. Business is interested only in insuring a future market for sales.
4. The Public Sector alone should provide for schools.
5. Business-school links should not be denied for ideological reasons.
6. The present Government appears to be taking a slightly ambiguous approach to the potential conflicts of business-school links.

5.3 Summary of chapter

This chapter examined the results of the final section of the interview schedule in which interviewees revealed their concerns regarding the commercial sponsorship of school resource materials in the context of politics and ethics. Much of the discussion focused on the public/private sector debate that has surrounded education over the last ten years. Results indicated that from the personal experience of the respondents commercial sponsorship has so far had little impact on the school environment.

The main advantage of such campaigns as *Free Books for Schools* was, according to the majority of interviewees, the fact it increase the number of books on shelves, saying nothing about the quality or suitability of titles. Other advantages were given as raising the profile of the library in school and the potential to work in partnership. The disadvantages recorded were more numerous with the majority of respondents stating the time and effort involved and the potential conflict of values as two of the main disadvantages.

Five out of the eight interviewees asked said they would prefer to see less commercial sponsorship in schools and of the three that would like to see more the general consensus was that Free Books for Schools and similar campaigns were not the way forward. Not one of the respondents had attempted to seek advice on participating in the campaign, however they indicated to the researcher that a set of good practice guidelines would be useful.

The attitude statements indicated that respondents were not convinced that the way forward for education lay exclusively with the private sector. It can be said that most accepted that the future must involve the co-operation of the two sectors. With regard to the current political agenda participants felt that the present labour government was indeed taking a slightly ambiguous approach to the potential conflicts of business-school links.

6. Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

The aim of this research was to conduct an inquiry to the commercial sponsorship of school resource materials and to cast light on the present attitudes of the library and teaching profession towards forging such partnerships with the private sector. The main impetus of the study was the recent *Free Books for Schools* campaign sponsored by Walkers Snack Foods Ltd and News International. The particular focus was on the attitudes and opinions of those working in the field of school librarianship, both professional and para-professional. It was established that this focus had hitherto neglected by previous research in the field.

The intention of the researcher was not only to illuminate the key concerns of those working in school librarianship with regard to the commercial sponsorship of school resource materials but also to make some recommendations for schools intending to participate in future campaigns.

This final chapter of the report provides a brief summary of the main findings and conclusions reached from the researcher's analysis of the data collected in the field. At the end of the chapter some recommendations are made.

6.2 Summary of main findings

Chapter one set the stage for the research by providing a background to current events in education. From the literature the researcher discussed existing research and was able to identify a need for further research in order to increase the understanding of the potential conflicts of commercial sponsorship in education. More important was the intention to illuminate and

illustrate the major concerns of those working in the field of school librarianship.

Chapter two concentrated on the instruments required in order to carry out such a piece of research. The research approach was deemed to be exploratory in nature as the focus was the examination of viewpoints. A qualitative method of data collection was decided upon and a multiple-site case study was employed along with the semi-structured interview. The sample selected for interview totalled nine; six school librarians, of which three were qualified librarians; two teachers with responsibility for the school library; one representative for Sheffield's School Library Service.

The interview schedule was determined by the existing literature and arranged into separate, dominant themes. The narrative data collected was recorded and subsequently transcribed by the researcher before being coded and presented in the main chapters of the written report.

Chapter three began the research discussion proper. The theme of the chapter was the practical issues concerned with participating in commercial sponsorship. All respondents had direct experience of participating in the *Free Books for Schools* campaign and this was used as the focus for the data collection. Through the analysis of data the researcher revealed that the interviewees were not satisfied that the time and effort required for the participation in such a campaign as Free Books for Schools was sufficiently rewarded by the selection of material available. Particular grievances were recorded as being narrow choice of texts, too many old titles and texts of unsuitable medium (hardback fiction, pocket-sized non-fiction). Despite the National Consumer Council warning against it, several schools felt the need to actively encourage participation in the first instance by offering incentives.

Chapter four examined the concept of professional judgement valued by many working in the field of education. General consensus revealed that the selection of materials was more about what the sponsor wanted to

provide than what schools required. This point is further aggravated by the revelation that library profession was neglected in the consultation stage of the campaign. This led the researcher to come to the conclusion when this is the case participation cannot be recommended. Despite the reservations the majority believed they, or at least their schools would continue to participate in such campaigns as certainly public opinion encouraged it.

Chapter five considered the political and ethical arena with regard to commercial sponsorship entering the school domain. The majority of interviewees indicated that they would prefer to witness less, not more commercial sponsorship. The main disadvantages of commercial sponsorship suggested by the respondents were noted by the researcher to greatly outnumber the main advantages. Not one of the respondents had attempted to seek advice on participating in the campaign and all were ignorant of the NNC's good practice guidelines. Data recorded indicated that the interviewees were not convinced that the way forward for education lay exclusively with the private sector. It can be said that most accepted that the future must involve the co-operation of the two sectors.

6.3 Recommendations

By way of recommendations for the future the researcher would recommend that schools watch this space. The research has indicated that commercial sponsorship is on the increase in schools and that the present government is actively encouraging schools to attract sponsorship from private companies in order to fund both special projects as well as meeting essential resource requirements.

The existence of the National Consumer Council good practice guidelines had gone unnoticed by all interviewees. It is recommended that the government be encouraged to officially endorse these guidelines in order to safeguard the interest of education in the face of increased commercial involvement.

Few schools have any written policy on how to enter into commercial sponsorship deals. The researcher recommends that individual schools write such a policy based on the educational objectives and needs of the school and its pupils.

The *Free Books for Schools* campaign was another example of the lack of direct consultation going on between professionals in the field of school librarianship and the commercial sponsors. It is greatly recommended by the researcher that every effort is made for such consultation to take place in the interest of participating schools and successful, lasting partnerships.

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Appendix 1

Joanna Waller
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Department of Information Studies
The University of Sheffield

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Tel: 0114 2679736
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Librarian
King Edward VII Upper School
Glossop Road
Sheffield
S10 2PW

Re: *Free Books For Schools* participation.
Date: Monday 14th June 1999.

Dear

I am a postgraduate student of Librarianship, in the Department of Information Studies at the University of Sheffield currently undertaking research for my dissertation. I am writing to request your assistance in my dissertation research.

The purpose of my research is an inquiry into the commercial sponsorship and provision of school resource materials focusing on the current *Free Books for Schools* News International / Walker's Snacks campaign.

I am interested in the first instance to find out if your school participated in the aforementioned campaign or decided against it, and secondly, if you would consider being interviewed at a convenient date so as to gauge your professional opinion of such initiatives. I would therefore be very grateful if you could answer the short questionnaire enclosed and return it to me at the above address by Friday 26th June, or as soon as is possible thereafter.

I would like to stress at the outset that responses will be treated as confidential, and that no individuals will be identified in the final report. Thanking you in anticipation

Yours Sincerely

Joanna Waller

*Free Books for Schools - An inquiry into the commercial
sponsorship of school resource materials.
(The hidden Curriculum of big business in schools)*

Questionnaire

Please tick the appropriate box

- 1.a. Has your school participated in any commercial sponsorship initiative for the provision of resource materials, for example the recent *Free Books for Schools* campaign, run by News International/Walker's Snack Foods Ltd.?

Yes No

- 1.b. If you have participated in any other programme of commercial sponsorship could you please identify which scheme(s)

2. As the second part of this research, a short interview will be carried out. Would you be willing to be involved in such an interview? It is estimated that the interview will last approximately 30 minutes and will be conducted at your school.

Yes No

Signed: _____

Name: _____

Job Title: _____

Contact number: _____

Thank you for your time in completing this questionnaire and I look forward to meeting with you in the near future.

Appendix 2

**Free Books for Schools - An inquiry into the commercial sponsorship of school resource materials.
(The hidden curriculum of big business in schools)**

Interview Schedule 1:

My name is Joanna Waller. I am a masters student of librarianship at the University of Sheffield. The research I am carrying out will form a vital part of my dissertation to be submitted at the end of the summer. I am concerned with the issues surrounding the commercial sponsorship of school resource materials and my study concentrates on the recent News International/Walker's Snack Food *Free Books for Schools* token collection scheme, which many schools have participated in. I particularly want to research the opinions and attitudes of professionals in the field of School Librarianship and Educational Resource Management. I stress that this interview and any recorded information arising from it will remain confidential, by which I mean no individuals or establishments will be identified in the final report. I would however, for the purpose of detailed analysis, like to tape-record the interviews, if the participants are in agreement. If the participants have any questions about the interpretation, or any remarks concerning the research as a whole, they are invited to interrupt the interview process at any moment.

Name of Interviewee: _____

Name of School: _____

A. Contextual Information

A.1. What status is your school?

LEA Independent Private Other _____

A.2. As provider of Library and Information resources do you sit on the school's Management Board?

A.3. What percentage of the school's annual budget is given over to Library and Information resource provision, approximately?

A.4. A.1. Does your school use The Schools Library Service?

Yes No

B. *Practicalities*

B.1. Who was responsible for the school's decision to participate in the Free Books for Schools campaign?

B.2. Was the school participation discussed with the Headmaster, School Governors and Teaching staff?

B.3. Has the school given the scheme a high profile?

B.4. What has been the response from the pupils?

B.5. What has been the response from parents?

B.6. What has been the response from other teaching staff?

B.7. How many tokens did the school collect?

B.8. How many Free Books did this entitle you to?

B.9. Are you satisfied that time and effort spent has been sufficiently rewarded?

B.10. Likert Scale Statements

Using this scale can you respond to the following statements:
Strongly Agree Agree, Slightly Agree, Neither Agree or Disagree, Slightly Disagree, Strongly Disagree.

- Relying on commercial donation is a dangerous precedent and could become a regular substitute for adequate funding.
- Commercial sponsorship is not always a question of trying to develop a market amongst young consumers.
- Commercial sponsorship encourages the pester power factor.
- *“Children feel proud that they have collected these books and are excited at the thought of reading them”.*
- It does not really matter how we get pupils to read and enjoy books - as long as we do.
- Collecting tokens in exchange for resource materials unfairly pressurises pupils and parents into purchasing particular products.
- Schools need to develop an appropriate policy on the use of business sponsored materials and resources based on the needs of the school and its pupils.
- *Free Books for Schools* is an illustration of the positive influence that the National Year of Reading is having on:
 - a. The media
 - b. The commercial sector.

(Can you tell me why you chose to strongly agree/disagree etc.?)

C. Professional Judgement

C.1. Where you satisfied with the choice of books available?

C.2. Were they books you would have chosen for your library?

D. *Politics & Ethics*

D.1. From your experience what has been the effect of commercial sponsorship in the school environment?

D.2. How significant, or otherwise, has sponsorship been in the delivery of your school library service?

D.3. What is the main advantage of commercial sponsorship for school resource materials?

D.4. What is the main disadvantage of commercial sponsorship for school resource materials?

D.5. Has there been any objection to entering such partnerships from other parties/stakeholders?

D.6. Would you like to see more or less commercial sponsorship in schools?

D.7. What are your views regarding the current government agenda regarding business partnerships in schools?

D.8. Are you concerned about commercial activities involving schools?

If so, can you explain in what way you are concerned?

D.9. Have you attempted to seek advice from outside agencies i.e. The National Consumer Association before entering in any commercially sponsored scheme?

D.10. Are you aware of any guidelines set down to help schools in such cases?

D.11. Would a set of guidelines be useful to you?

(Can you tell me why you said that?)

D.12. Likert Scale Statements

Using this scale can you respond to the following statements:
Strongly Agree Agree, Slightly Agree, Neither Agree or Disagree, Slightly Disagree, Strongly Disagree.

- Commercial disciplines and competition will ensure that education is run better.
- If we hand education over to business we will betray our children.
- Business is interested only in insuring a future market for sales.
- The Public Sector alone should provide for schools.
- Business-school links should not be denied for ideological reasons.
- The present Government appears to be taking a slightly ambiguous approach to the potential conflicts of business-school links.

(Can you tell me why you chose to strongly agree/disagree etc.?)

E. *Personal/comparable data:*

In order to compare data collected I would like to ask you a few personal questions. Please feel free to decline to give any information you would rather not disclose.

E.1. Gender: M F

E.2. Age Group: 20-30 31-40 41-50 51-60

E.3. Professional Status: Librarian Teacher
 Qualified Unqualified Chartered

E.4. Political Preference: _____

Is there anything concerning the commercial sponsorship of school resource materials which has not been covered by this interview and you would like to discuss?

Thank you for your valuable participation in this interview.

Appendix 3

Joanna Waller
Postgraduate: MA Librarianship
Department of Information Studies
The University of Sheffield

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Andrew Milroy
Group Manager
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Re: *Free Books for Schools* campaign.
Date: Thursday 17th June 1999

Dear Andrew

I am a postgraduate student of Librarianship, in the Department of Information Studies at the University of Sheffield, currently undertaking research for my dissertation. I am writing to request your assistance.

The purpose of my research is an inquiry into the commercial sponsorship and provision of school resource materials focusing on the current *Free Books for Schools* News International/ Walker's Snack Food campaign.

I am requesting your participation in a short interview on the aforementioned topic at a convenient date so as to gage your professional opinion of such initiatives and how you see them affecting the delivery of Sheffield's Schools' Library Service.

If you are in agreement I would be grateful if you could notify me by ** ** **** and we can arrange a suitable time for me to visit you. I anticipate the interview to last approximately 30 minutes and would like to stress that responses will be treated as confidential.
Thanking you in anticipation.

Yours Sincerely
Joanna Waller.

Appendix 4

Free Books for Schools - An inquiry into the commercial sponsorship of school resource materials. (The hidden curriculum of big business in schools)

Interview Schedule 2: The Schools Library Service, Sheffield.

My name is Joanna Waller. I am a masters student of librarianship at the University of Sheffield. The research I am carrying out will form a vital part of my dissertation to be submitted at the end of the summer. I am concerned with the issues surrounding the commercial sponsorship of school resource materials and my study concentrates on the recent News International/Walker's Snack Food *Free Books for Schools* token collection scheme, which many schools have participated in. I particularly want to research the opinions and attitudes of professionals in the field of School Librarianship and Educational Resource Management. I stress that this interview and any recorded information arising from it will remain confidential, by which I mean no individuals or establishments will be identified in the final report. I would however, for the purpose of detailed analysis, like to tape-record the interviews, if the participants are in agreement. If the participants have any questions about the interpretation, or any remarks concerning the research as a whole, they are invited to interrupt the interview process at any moment.

Name of interviewee: _____

Name of organisation: _____

General questions:

1. Please outline your thoughts on the commercial sponsorship of school resource materials in relation to the Schools Library Service?

2. What are, in your opinion, the implications for service delivery?

3. Do you feel threatened in a professional capacity of such initiatives?

4. Have you had any direct experience with commercial sponsors?

5. If yes, can you tell me more about your involvement and subsequent outcomes?

Likert Scale Statements:

Using this scale can you respond to the following statements:

Strongly Agree Agree Slightly Agree Neither Agree or Disagree
Slightly Disagree Disagree Strongly Disagree

Practical Issues:

- Relying on commercial donation is a dangerous precedent and could become a regular substitute for adequate funding.

- Commercial sponsorship is not always a question of trying to develop a market amongst young consumers.
- Commercial sponsoring encourages the peer power factor.
- *“Children feel proud that they have collected these books and are excited at the thought of reading them”.*
- It does not really matter how we get the children to read and enjoy books - as long as we do.
- Collecting tokens in exchange for resource materials unfairly pressurises pupils and parents into purchasing particular products.
- Schools need to develop an appropriate policy on the use of business sponsored materials and resources based on the needs of the school and its pupils.
- *Free Books for Schools* is an illustration of the positive influence that the National Year of Reading is having on:
 - a. The media
 - b. The commercial sector

Professional Judgement:

- There is a danger that professionals who raise questions over business-school links may be portrayed in a negative way.
- The educational value of the *Free Books for Schools* campaign outweighs any marketing message.
- Commercial sponsorship amounts to companies buying children’s loyalties.
- Commercial sponsorship in schools is nothing more than the exploitation of young people in an under resourced education system.
- Children at school are potentially vulnerable consumers.
- Presenting commercial messages in an educational setting increases a company’s credibility.

- Endorsed Commercial Involvement may have negative implications for the trust placed in librarians/teachers.

Political and Ethical considerations:

- Commercial disciplines and competition will ensure that education is run better.
- If we hand education over to business we will betray our children.
- Business is interested only in insuring a future market for sales.
- The Public Sector alone should provide for schools.
- Business-school links should not be denied for ideological reasons.
- The present Government appears to be taking a slightly ambiguous approach to the potential conflicts of business-school links.

(Can you tell me why you chose to strongly agree/disagree etc.?)

Thank you for your valuable participation in this interview.