



# The Vocational Aspect of Secondary and Further Education

ISSN: 0305-7879 (Print) (Online) Journal homepage: <https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rjve19>

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To cite this article: Ann R. Dryland & L.R. Halliday (1963) The cultural background of prospective teachers in further education, *The Vocational Aspect of Secondary and Further Education*, 15:32, 200-205, DOI: [10.1080/03057876380000231](https://doi.org/10.1080/03057876380000231)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/03057876380000231>



Published online: 30 Jul 2007.



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# THE CULTURAL BACKGROUND OF PROSPECTIVE TEACHERS IN FURTHER EDUCATION

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MUCH CONCERN has been expressed recently about the narrowing effects of specialisation and about the need for every teacher in further education, whatever his discipline, to contribute, both directly through his subject-matter and indirectly by his attitude and choice of instances, to the liberal education of his students. In December, 1962, a survey was conducted at Garnett College among students on the one-year full-time course, virtually all of whom would be serving in further education from the beginning of the 1963-4 session, with the aim of acquiring a general impression of the breadth of their interests.

## *The Test*

The test was based in design and technique on the general information test which forms part of the battery devised in 1950 by W. A. Skinner, the Deputy Principal of Garnett College, for selection for admittance to the course. Skinner's cultural test, like G. W. H. Leytham's Arts and Science Information Test at Liverpool,<sup>1</sup> derives from the General Information Test introduced by E. Anstey, R. F. Dowse, and M. Duguid,<sup>2</sup> in which the subject, when presented with the names of 120 famous persons and fourteen professions, has to 'match' each name with that profession in connection with which its owner is well-known. Skinner's profile considerably modified this, reducing the names to 100 and increasing the professions to twenty, viz: Actors (and actresses) on the stage, Actors (and actresses) on the films, Chefs, Composers, Dress Designers, Economists, Educators, Engineers, Historians, Mathematicians, Novelists, Painters, Philosophers, Playwrights, Poets, Scientists, Sculptors, Singers, Statesmen, Travellers. Chefs and Dress Designers were deliberately included since both needle and food subjects are important elements in further education. The writers further modified Skinner's test by combining actors (stage) with actors (film) and introducing a new category, Instrumentalists. This, it was felt, eliminated one source of ambiguity and gave a fairer balance between literature and music in that each was now represented by three categories (novelists, playwrights, poets; composers, instrumentalists, singers, respectively).

An arbitrary number of names (in fact 209) was given and each subject required to indicate the profession or occupation with which he associated each name.

The test was given in three stages, each lasting roughly half-an-hour, in three successive weeks. In the first week the first seven categories were tested, with

sixty-nine names to be classified; in the second the second seven, with seventy-four names; in the third the remaining six, with sixty-six names.

### *The sample*

For the first test the sample comprised 164 students, for the second 162, for the third 158. These students came from homes all over Great Britain, with those in Southern England predominating. Some thirty men and women from the Commonwealth and other countries of non-British cultural background took the test, but their answers have not been included in the findings. With the exception of teachers of building, all the major subject groups in further education were represented in the sample, in the following proportions: engineering 33 per cent, business studies (professional and secretarial) 29 per cent, general subjects (prospective teachers of English, social studies, mathematics and four future tutor-librarians) 15 per cent, food subjects (cookery, catering, baking) 6 per cent, science 5 per cent, nautical subjects, needle subjects and printing groups 4 per cent each. The average age was 33 years.

### *Presentation*

As in Anstey, Dowse and Duguid's test, scoring was objective, but a discrimination factor over and above chance was present (e.g. David Ricardo, the economist, and H. R. Ricardo, the engineer, appeared in the same test; Lord Acton, the historian, figured in the second test, Lord Anson, the traveller, in the third, a week later). Names were presented with or without Christian name or initials according to normal usage (e.g. Sibelius—surname only, but Benjamin Britten in full; Givinchy—but Hardy Amies; Pestalozzi—but A. S. Neill) except where, whatever the usual practice, a prefix was essential for clarity (e.g. the Ricardos; Graham and Joan Sutherland; Brook and A. J. P. Taylor; Roger Bacon; *T. H. Huxley*).

### *The results*

The order of 'popularity' of the twenty categories proved to be as shown in Table 1.

The predominant interest in music shown by a sample which was weighted on the scientific, but not specifically on the mathematical, side would appear to be significant, and that 'Scientists' came in the lower half of the table is a little surprising.

Of all names in the 209 proffered only two, Louis Armstrong and Sophia Loren, were correctly identified by 100 per cent of the sample. All the following, however, were correctly labelled by over 90 per cent of the sample: Terence Rattigan, Chaucer, Caruso, Ella Fitzgerald, Maria Callas, U Thant, Charles de Gaulle, Captain Cook, Cole Porter, Dior, Marconi, Yehudi Menuhin, Eileen Joyce, Jane Austen, Pythagoras; and over 80 per cent were right on Naunton Wayne, Rod Steiger, Sarah Bernhardt, Stravinsky, Elgar, Benjamin Britten, Vaughan Williams, Sibelius, Sir Percy Nunn, Pestalozzi (both these last had been recently mentioned in lectures on the course, though not as yet studied in any depth), George Stephenson, Fritz Kreisler, Dave Brubeck, Leon Goossens,

TABLE 1  
The percentage of each category correctly identified

Category	The number of names correctly identified in each category (expressed as percentage)
Instrumentalists	67
Composers	64·5
Singers	63·5
Actors	60
Playwrights	54
Statesmen	53
Poets	51·5
Engineers	49
Novelists } Painters }	46
Scientists	45
Educators	44
Travellers } Mathematicians }	43
Dress Designers	41
Economists	32
Historians	31
Philosophers	25
Sculptors	21
Chefs	17

Euclid, Cézanne, Dylan Thomas, Arthur Miller (association with poor Marilyn?), Brendan Behan, John Osborne, Darwin, Faraday, Joan Sutherland, Woodrow Wilson, Marco Polo and Sir Ernest Shackleton. Again the prevailing musical interest will be observed.

The names receiving the lowest correct scores are given in Table 2.

TABLE 2  
Names receiving least identification

Name	Percentage of sample correctly identifying
Ella Maillart (traveller)	3
Brook Taylor (mathematician)	
Elizabeth Frink (sculptress)	4
Edward Alleyn (actor)	6
A. S. Makarenko (educator)	7
Jean Froissart (historian)	
Eugene Ysaye (instrumentalist)	
Zeno (philosopher)	
William Wycherley (playwright)	9

As well as Eugene Ysaye's poor showing in the category which on average was the most successfully answered, Jacqueline du Pré collected a mere 21 per cent, and in the second most highly scored classification, Composers, only 23 per cent were right on William Byrd and 26 per cent on Michael Tippett. Among the names in the third highest, Singers, that of Richard Lewis was correctly identified by only 14 per cent.

At the other end of the scale, while it is hardly surprising that the Chefs category finished last in 'popularity', a remarkably high proportion (viz. 49 per cent) of all subjects identified Auguste Escoffier. The frequent use of his name in connection with culinary products may have helped here. He was muddled by only 3 out of the total of 164; these labelled him a composer, a dress designer and an economist respectively—verdicts that would seem to suggest bad guessing rather than real confusion. Among the sculptors Henry Moore was an easy winner with 77 per cent but his runner-up, Reg Butler, received a score of only 20 per cent, and, although the average for the category of Philosophers was higher than those of the last two, only one name, that of Hegel, was correctly classified by more than 40 per cent of the sample.

It was a slightly saddening reflection on the course at Garnett to date that while A. S. Makarenko (7 per cent) might understandably have been comparatively unknown, Rudolf Steiner received a score of only 12 per cent. That R. M. Rilke was correctly identified by only 15 per cent is hardly odd, but Wilfred Owen's 18 per cent seemed a meagre response when one recalls that the General Subjects group alone constituted 15 per cent of the sample. Can some schools still be classing him as a Georgian and therefore someone to be dismissed? Certainly few anthologies below sixth form level carry much of his work.

The champions of television as a source of popular culture might be dismayed not only at the poor performance already mentioned on Elizabeth Frink, who had a 'Monitor' spot not very long before the test, but also at the mere 25 per cent collected by A. J. Ayer. Conversely, it might be argued that the familiarity of his fellow panel-personalities A. J. P. Taylor and Alan Bullock might well have contributed to their scores of 58 per cent and 48 per cent respectively, and that the big response to the name of Elgar might have been influenced by the B.B.C. programme devoted to him only a fortnight before the first test.

### *Names most frequently muddled*

Twenty-one names were more wrongly than correctly identified. These are given in Table 3 with relevant percentage figures.

It will be seen that no fewer than five out of the twenty-one were travellers, although on *average* (see Table 1) this category came only 12th in order of 'popularity.' An unforeseen ambiguity was manifest in the name of the composer Bartok. Although 63 per cent of the sample put him in the intended category, those who did not totalled 23 per cent and the vast majority of these classified him under 'Actors/Actresses', presumably taking us to mean his more publicised

TABLE 3  
Names most frequently muddled

Name	Percentage of sample giving correct answer	Percentage of sample allocating name to wrong category
Roger Bacon	16	44
Thucydides	12	40
Marino Marini	5	36
Apollonius	31	35
Peter Fleming	25	35
Reg Butler	20	32
Sir John Franklin	21	29
Franz Kafka	20	29
Gorki	25	28
Rudolf Steiner	12	27
Lord Anson	21	23
H. R. Ricardo	18	23
Pirandello	15	21
Edward Alleyn	6	19
D. H. Robertson	11	17
William Wycherley	9	17
Sholokhov	12	16
Elizabeth Frink	4	16
Sidney Nolan	13	15
Ella Maillart	3	10
C. M. Doughty	4	9

namesake Eva. We were also somewhat chastened by the revelation of our own 'squareness' in never having heard of a frequent Top Ten tenant with the same name as that of the sculptor Marino Marini. Of the 36 per cent who got him (in our view) wrong, only a handful classified him as anything but a singer. Thucydides and Apollonius both drew a high poll as philosophers, probably on the score of their classical names, while Roger Bacon, the most frequently misplaced personality of the lot, was labelled by almost all the 44 per cent in Table 3 as a poet. The confusion with Francis was not unexpected but whether this designation was the nearest they could find to essayists or reflects a high proportion of Baconians in the sample remains obscure.

### *Conclusion*

We have already referred to the conflicting evidence about the influence of television. It would be interesting to know why appearance on the T.V. screen seems to lead to greater recognition of some names but not to affect others.

Since the profile was not conceived as a Science versus Arts test we were not concerned when, in its final form, eleven of the twenty categories could be labelled 'Arts', three 'Science' and six, we thought, did not fit into the Arts/

Science categories, however broadly based. These six 'general' categories were: chefs, dress designers, economists, educators, statesmen and travellers. Of these six, economists and chefs scored low and came sixteenth and twentieth on the list setting out the average correct in each category. The other four scored in the middle ranges with scores between 41 and 53 per cent.

Finally, one fact did emerge, which, though not new, was of interest to us at Garnett College. In spite of the fact that 46 per cent of the students were not 'Arts' people the first of the three categories with a scientific slant did not appear until the eighth place, with a score of 49 per cent. on the list showing the average correct in each category. The other two came eleventh and thirteenth on the list with scores of 45 and 43 per cent. These figures seem to bear out the widely held supposition that 'scientists' know more of the arts side of the two cultures than do 'Arts' students of the science, even though the test did not involve the understanding of theories but merely the *recognition* of names.

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(Script received: May 8, 1963)