

One of these is assessment by students, not through a popularity poll, but through a carefully drafted questionnaire. Another indication of quality is the examination performance of students. It is the threat of students having a say in the quality and hence the pay of their teachers which has incensed the AUT. Professors will also qualify for distinction awards of 4 per cent, but in their case these would be judged by assessment committees sponsored by the UGC.

All these recommendations apply only to non-clinical university staff. As for university medical teachers, the board says "we cannot blink the fact that there exists in this country a state medical service", and the pay of university medical teachers has to be linked with that of NHS doctors and dentists. Thus a university clinical teacher becoming a consultant should be put on the NHS consultant scale at a point determined by his university. But the board recommends no increase for medically qualified teachers without consultancies, who are already paid in line with NHS staff. Pre-clinical teachers should be placed on the non-medical scales at appropriate points, and not—as the BMA recommended—receive at least 90 per cent of the pay of their clinical colleagues.

The Department of Education and Science has accepted all the proposed changes in wage scales, but

it is looking to discussions and advice from the UGC, who will consult in turn the interested parties, before accepting the recommendations on increasing efficiency. The Committee of Vice-Chancellors has welcomed the pay awards, especially the substantial improvement at the lower end of the scale, but has raised major objections to some of the other recommendations. First, it feels university salaries, unlike those in the Civil Service and medical professions, have been singled out for continuous review by the PIB and that the board has only one, not two or three, academic members, as promised. Second, it resents the encroachment of the PIB into spheres of university policy traditionally the concern of the UGC alone. It does not believe the rises in professorial and readers salaries are related to movement of salaries in associated and comparable fields. Finally it rejects the board's categorical assertion that university career structure is biased to research, claiming the PIB has made no systematic enquiry. It is sceptical of the over-simplified view of how teaching merit can be assessed or rewarded distinct from research merit—the roles of university staff cannot so simply be separated. For those reasons the vice-chancellors have welcomed the DES's decision to consult the UGC and the universities before any of the board's proposals are put into practice.

TOPICS IN EDUCATION

Curriculum Reform at Last?

THERE seems at last to be a glimmering of hope that British schools and universities can make progress with the reform of the sixth form curriculum. Last week two bodies closely concerned with the problem, the Standing Council on University Entrance and the Schools Council, released a joint statement which does something to clear the air. (To establish the exact pedigree of the statement, it originates from two committees; the Standing Council on University Entrance/Schools Council Joint Working Party on sixth form curriculum and examinations, and a second working party from the Schools Council on the same subject. The chairman of the first is Professor C. C. Butler of Imperial College, and of the second Dr E. W. H. Briault of the Inner London Education Authority.)

The statement reiterates the now familiar plea for a wider and more liberal curriculum for sixth formers—"We are agreed that our first aim is to identify ways in which all sixth formers can receive a balanced education suited to their needs as young people of 17 and 18 years of age"—a sentiment unlikely to offend even the most blinkered defender of sixth form standards. The second aim, the statement announces, is to "enable young people to avoid commitments which unduly limit their choice of career or higher education". The feeling is that the choice is being limited by decisions often taken long before entrance to the sixth form. However these pressures are being introduced into the system—and it is clear that university entrance requirements are the villain of the piece—the statement considers that they are blighting the lives not only of those who are going to universities,

but also of those who are not. This second group, the statement points out, is much the larger of the two.

The statement goes on to consider ways and means of reducing the pressure to specialize. The two areas of greatest difficulty, it believes, will be in languages and science, both of which ask too much of the child. The possibility of postponing a choice until the sixth form depends, the statement says, on "some moderation of the demands of science and languages". In detail, this means that the practice of taking three language courses or three science courses up to O-level should be modified, and that in both these subjects "two will come to be regarded as a maximum". This change, the authors believe, will delay specialization for long enough.

The proposal is open to criticism from both the schools and the universities. The university criticism—that the change would make it impossible to bring a student to a good first degree standard in three years—is hard to sustain, but that is unlikely to prevent people from trying. The school criticism is much more substantial. It will be argued that the schools are being asked to de-specialize without any reciprocal action by the universities. In this sense, the statement treats the symptoms rather than the disease, although it covers itself by emphasizing that "in a competitive situation schools cannot be expected to make such a change unless the universities modify their entrance requirements so as to encourage the schools to take the action recommended". Despite this, the statement still appears to be asking the schools to take the first step; many are likely to want some evidence of good faith from the universities before they do so.