

A new PSE series for schools on BBC radio

Geoff Marshall-Taylor

Producer, BBC Schools Radio

This autumn, at the request of the Schools Broadcasting Council for the UK, the BBC will be transmitting a series of programmes on Radio 4 VHF/FM. They are offered as tutor-group starters in the area of Personal and Social education for upper secondary pupils. This article is taken from the producer's first draft of the Teachers' Notes.

The series will consist of 12 ten-minute programmes, the themes of which were chosen after extensive consultation with teachers and advisers who are directly involved in tutorial work with the 14-16 age group. All agreed that recorded material could play a significant part in stimulating discussion and reflection in PSE courses, even though, in the preparation of this series, a constant concern has been that the 14-16 age group is not accustomed to listening to speech on radio. Was the idea, therefore, doomed to failure before the first transmission?

Teachers and pupils were, nevertheless, surprisingly positive in encouraging us to go ahead. They rightly pointed out that the effectiveness of the series depends on two factors:

1. The impact of the material itself.
2. The way in which it is presented in the classroom.

Using the material

The impact We have chosen a wide range of situations and concerns, which will be presented through drama and interviews. The intention is to reflect these in a variety of social and regional settings.

The presentation Very often, educational radio material is an extension of the

teacher: it is seen in an authoritative role. But these broadcasts are conceived much more as pupils talking to other pupils, and they should be presented as such.

Because of this, the layout of the room is important. An informal setting, such as a small semi-circle, would enable the cassette player to become just another member of the group rather than a voice 'out there' in front. In one school we visited, the teacher actually placed the cassette player on an empty chair to make the point!

Recordings of the programmes can also be used for individual activities.

Finally, it is important to realise that each 10-minute broadcast is made up of small sections. The teacher may only want to use a small part at any one time, perhaps playing a short scene or interview, and asking "What would you have thought or done next?" or "Were you surprised by anything anyone said?" Other questions may be more specific.

Support material Teachers' notes are available, to provide background information for the series. In addition, a pupils' pamphlet containing worksheets is also available. It is hoped that these will encourage interaction and will stimulate further interest and discussion. The cost

of each of these is 40 pence, and they may be photocopied for use in schools without restriction. Refer to the BBC Publications annual order form, or the autumn 1986 supplement.

The broadcasts

The series of 12 programmes will be broadcast, for taping by schools, at 11.00-11.40 on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday, September 15-17, according to the following schedule:

Monday, September 15:

MYSELF

Coping with self-consciousness
Coping with misunderstanding
Coping with rejection
Coping with aggression

Tuesday, September 16:

FAMILIES AND FRIENDS

Anorexia Nervosa
The pressure to drink
Téenage pregnancy
Facing terminal illness

Wednesday, September 17:

DECISION-MAKING

Facing new situations
Using time
Leaving school
Facing criticism

A sample programme

The following notes relate to the first programme: *Coping with self-consciousness*. They are not necessarily representative of the final form of the broadcast.

General comment This is the first of four broadcasts concerned with self-image and coping skills. One common source of anxiety amongst young people is the view that other people have of them. Something small can become, as one boy put it, 'a mega-worry'! The dramatic scenes and interviews in this programme explore such reactions.

Situation A boy is unable to look people in the face because he thinks he has spots. In fact they are few and hardly noticeable, but his anxieties build up until, one day, he decides not to go to school rather than face his friends.

Related issues There may be many similar causes of acute self-consciousness. For example: (a) Worries about appearance arising from such factors as hair, unfashionable clothes, or from medical conditions such as eczema; (b) Worries about family circumstances arising from such factors as perceptions of one's social or racial background or from one's financial situation.

Discussion How do we see ourselves? How do others see us? What do they notice? How would one like to be seen? If the boy in the play was your friend, what would you say to him to stop him worrying? Could he help himself? Does fashion matter? What if one can't afford to dress in fashion? An important part of such a discussion is to enable pupils to realise that they are not alone in having these or similar anxieties.

Looking ahead

Another series of radio programmes for this age group is planned for the academic year 1987-88. Readers (and listeners!) are urged to contact the planning team with views about the developments they would like to take place; any feedback from this article would also be welcome. Please write to me at BBC Schools Radio, 1 Portland Place, London W1A 1AA.