

## FROM THE EDITOR

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Scottish education in the year 2001 has been dominated by attempts to redefine the professionalism of teachers. The agreement which followed the long-awaited McCrone Report into pay and conditions of service has set the scene for teachers to enjoy significantly enhanced professional status. The advent of the designation, "Chartered Teacher," is intended to provide genuine opportunities for promotion other than by the traditional management route. Continuing professional development is now to be given a central position both as a professional entitlement for all teachers and as focus for the accountability of the profession. Meanwhile the quality of initial teacher education (ITE) is coming under renewed scrutiny.

Volume 33, Part 1 of *Scottish Educational Review* opens with Walter Humes' stimulating analysis of the conditions for professional development in the post-McCrone era. Humes despairs of the tendency he detects among teacher educators to construe professionalism as conformity and is scathing in his appraisal of the way in which the discourse of officialdom, with its guidelines, benchmarks and competences, has been adopted without protest. Conformity (along with complacency) can indeed be identified as being among the chief failings of Scottish education. However, it might be argued that the collaborative review procedures currently being developed at least offer the teaching profession and teacher educators the opportunity to shape the framework and to be involved in the processes of quality assurance in initial teacher education. This will take place in Scotland under the auspices of the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, putting ITE into the same peer review system as all other university degree subjects in the United Kingdom, but with the additional positive feature of the collaboration of all the relevant stakeholders. This is in sharp contrast to the situation of teacher education in England and Wales where the Government's Teacher Training Agency has complete control over both defining and monitoring standards in the sector. These arguments notwithstanding, Humes concludes that this is a time of opportunity for the profession and provides some very useful pointers to the kinds of conditions we should be aiming to create in order to foster worthwhile professional development.

Meanwhile, the importance of the quality of learning and teaching is being emphasised across all sectors, from pre-school to the universities. Volume 33, Part 1 of *SER* reflects this spectrum. New curricular guidelines with clear expectations for children's learning are well already well established in the pre-school sector. Attempts to measure the attainment of children and provide a basis for accountability in the pre-school years are described in the article by Eric Wilkinson and his colleagues, which evaluates the pilot procedures for Baseline Assessment in Scotland. As a result of this research and further developments in the field, changes have already taken place, including the removal of the problematic term "baseline" from the new title for the output of these procedures, which is the "Transition Record". The article by Lyn Tett and her colleagues explores the now widely accepted dimension of the ethos of schools, namely, partnership with parents, by examining closely the attitudes and experiences of staff and parents in primary schools involved in an early intervention programme.

In Universities, there is much activity among academics grooming their applications for the soon-to-be-obligatory membership of the Institute of Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (ILT). There has been an interesting response to this new requirement among established members of Faculties of Education, some of whom have expressed the view that, as fully GTC-registered teachers, they should not be required to submit their cases for scrutiny by ILT. Is this another unfortunate

example of complacency inherent in Scottish Education System, referred to above, or is it to be celebrated as an instance of “non-conformity”? Processes of learning and teaching in higher education come under examination in the article by Tony Anderson, Rebecca Soden and Simon Hunter whose study of the way psychology undergraduates evaluate and use evidence in their everyday reasoning raises questions about the value of a peer learning approach.

Among those *not* to benefit from the McCrone agreement, are the local authority educational advisers, whose role is examined closely in the article by Hamish Ross. Ross draws interesting comparisons between the nature of the advisory service before and after the reorganisation of local government in Scotland and analyses trends within the conceptual framework of school improvement. He concludes that there remains a need for external support systems if educational change is to have a coherent strategy. David Gavine provides a timely and authoritative review of the recent history of the assessment of special educational needs in Scotland and argues persuasively for a shift in terminology from “Needs” to “Entitlement”. The final article in this issue by Janet Powney and Kevin Lowden deals with the perennially controversial topic of drug education, by exploring the dilemmas facing educators along the spectrum of functions spanning information to moral issues.

Gari Donn’s fourth report on Education in the Scottish Parliament incisively shows the wide range of educational issues being addressed by the two main committees dealing with educational matters. The contents of this issue of SER also reflect a healthy degree of diversity, in terms of the areas of interest represented and in terms of the conceptual framework and methodological approaches adopted. The Editorial Team are both keen and confident that this will remain the case in future and would take this opportunity once again to thank all our contributors and all those who have acted as referees for their support.

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