

THE VANISHING ADVISER: PERSPECTIVES ON EDUCATION AUTHORITY SUPPORT FOR IMPROVEMENT

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SYNOPSIS

Education Authorities' support for innovation has changed because of, reforms for school improvement, the diminished capacity of some, government fiscal policy and their increasing accountability to the Scottish Executive. Reduction in size, however, has not deflected authorities from attempting to be self-sufficient but support for developmental work has been curtailed or switched to quality assurance. This trend has been matched by a change in emphasis on the part of those which have been unaffected in the scale of their operation. Based on interviews, spanning five years, with education directorate, this article reviews developments in Scotland within the wider school improvement field and concludes that, while the increased autonomy of schools to manage change is important, there is still need for external support systems as part of a coherent strategy for change.

INTRODUCTION

For over twenty years, particularly during the period of the Regional Councils, advisory services in Scotland have been part of the education authorities' support mechanisms for innovation. In the two years preceding the reorganisation of local government in 1996, The Open University in Scotland, as part of its strategy of marketing the School of Education, commissioned the writer to interview directors of education, to ascertain the future role of education authorities and their support for teacher development.

The first part of the survey took place in late 1994 after the passing of the Bill creating 32 unitary authorities. The writer interviewed by telephone a senior member of the education directorate from each of the 12 regional and island councils. What legacy of support for teacher development did these authorities leave to their successors; what options were being put to them and, in the case of authorities which were not to be disaggregated, would existing systems of support continue? Stage two of the information gathering took place in late 1995 before the Local Government Act came into force. The writer interviewed 24 Directors of Education to find out about their proposed structures for educational development. Four of these authorities were to remain as they were. They could more firmly speak about the future and whether or not there was to be continuity with previous practice. The remaining 20 were new and the directors were planning for the future within their budget limits. Finally, in 1999/2000, the writer contacted again those same 24 authorities to discuss their arrangements in the light of the changing context.

There are problems in dealing with the policy maker level, particularly when the writer was a former colleague: blinkered vision on the part of the interviewer and shared assumptions with interviewees. On the other hand, in dealing with a former colleague, they knew that the writer knew enough about the processes and problems and were frank. There are also problems with telephone discussions. Some other method could be more reliable and retrievable. However, the difficulty with other methods is that the research might not happen. Helen Simons (1987) attempted to interview chief education officers in connection with a research project on local authority support for curriculum. It had to be abandoned because chief education officers were too preoccupied with the myriad local and national pressures to

engage with the researcher, “reflective though they were in conversation” (Simons, 1987, pp 218-219). As a cross-check on the accuracy of my notes of the telephone conversations with the 24 directors in stage two (1995) I repeated the notes to them, or their colleagues, in stage three conversations (1999/2000) and used these notes as the starting point for the discussion on present policies.

EARLY STRUCTURES FOR INNOVATION

Burgeoning of interest in child development and curriculum development in the 1960s and early 1970s led to the formation of support structures for teachers. There was, what the *Primary Memorandum* (Primary Education in Scotland, 1965) called, “growing realisation that the teacher’s pre-service training is not sufficient in itself” (p 221). Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs) recognised that they had a role in promoting in-service training for teachers. For years the Scottish Office funded a number of full time equivalent posts in the TEIs to carry out in-service training. Local structures and networks for teachers were also felt to be needed and Her Majesty’s Inspectors of Schools promoted among the authorities local development groups of teachers focusing on curriculum development (Gatherer, 1989; Ross, 1996)

The development of local authority advisory services in Scotland, in common with those in England and Wales, followed a common pattern of response to pressure:

During the 1960s and early 1970s there was a growing emphasis on curriculum development, and pressure was exerted on LEAs to employ expertise in the more academic areas (Stillman and Grant, 1989, p 2).

In Scotland, HMI actively encouraged directors of education to create specialist support (Ross, 1993). Authorities responded and fairly rapidly advisory services expanded and the process was given impetus by the build up to reorganisation of local government in 1975 after which the importance of advisory services reached its zenith (Cameron and Casteel, 1999).

Within a few years of advisory services reaching their peak numbers, Rendle (1981) in his report, “Scrutiny of HM Inspectors of Schools”, concluded that authorities were failing to capitalise on their advisory services. According to Rendle, the work and effectiveness of the service was fragmented and was particularly weak in the policy areas. Humes (1986) painted a picture of a cadre of staff concerned with its own status and anxious about its tenuous links with the directorate. Lothian Region whose Chief Adviser was a senior member of the directorate and whose advisory service was integral to policy development, according to Humes, was an exception. But in general, Humes observed that advisers tended to carry little clout and were too isolated to constitute an effective pressure group. If anything the teachers’ unions were their redoubt and this may have underlined their separateness from the directorate. For example, Strathclyde Region directorate, in 1975, under pressure from teachers’ unions, withdrew from an attempt to reorganise its advisory service and, thereafter, in large measure, ignored it until the early 1990s (Ross, 1996).

In those early years, the education directorate’s expectation of their advisers were not always articulated. The experience of David Menzies, an adviser in English, appointed to Lanarkshire in the early 1970s, was typical of some who stepped into the role.

Menzies: The Director ... saw us very much as his representatives, his ambassadors, if you like, in the schools. He treated us with considerable professional respect ... What was missing, to be honest, was a specific job specification: there was none, you were simply told, “Get out and get into schools” (Ross, 1993, p 185)

Viewed a quarter of a century later, it is clear that assumptions on how educational

innovation should best proceed were very different from those held in the present policy climate: teacher commitment was felt to be important and teacher involvement in development and implementation had to be supported from outwith the school. How this was best done was a matter for the judgement of specialists and teachers. Improvement was expected to come about through external support not through external evaluation: education authorities, at the time, did not follow the practice south of the border of creating local inspectors (McPherson and Raab, 1988).

MANAGEMENT'S CHANGING CULTURE

Local authorities received a jolt in the late 1980s when the government set the pace of educational change in England. Reforms included a national curriculum for schools, a qualified and diminished role for LEAs, the ability of schools to opt out of local authority control and a shift to school-site management. The Department of Education and Science commissioned a firm of management consultants, Coopers and Lybrand, to provide independent advice on the implementation of financial delegation. Its terms of reference included paying attention to the implications for the LEA in relation to the range of its responsibilities.

Coopers and Lybrand noted great variation among LEAs in deploying advisers and inspectors: in some authorities the emphasis was on inspection and advisers/inspectors monitored standards; in others, the emphasis was on the advisory function and support for schools; in most, however, advisers/inspectors carried out both functions (Coopers and Lybrand, 1988). Arguing that the government's proposals required a new culture and philosophy of the organisation of education, the report viewed advisory services in customer/contractor terms and recommended that:

...the LEA inspection role should be a central overhead borne by the LEA; the responsibility for school support should be delegated enabling schools to "buy in" the type and amount of service they deem appropriate (Coopers and Lybrand, 1988, paragraph 2.61).

Devolving finance and management responsibility to schools allowed choice of provider and a corresponding change in the nature of the local authority. No longer was it to be seen as the sole provider of services: its role was to be that of "stimulating, facilitating, enabling and monitoring" (Brooke, 1989, p 8).

Options were devised in England and Wales to create opportunities for schools to acquire the services which hitherto had been the sole provision of the local authority. One was the idea of joint boards where two or more local authorities own a service which is then shared among them. An alternative had the LEA contracting another provider while retaining control through specification of the contract and monitoring results. Another could be an agency at arm's length, financed by the local authority initially, for whose services schools paid and whose viability relied on schools' perception of its worth. A partnership between the local authority and another organisation might also be feasible.

While the government did not introduce corresponding legislation on the curriculum in Scotland, reform did not stop at the border and a redefinition of the role of the local authorities in relation to the schools took place. Guidelines from the Scottish Office for education authorities to devolve budgets to schools brought a more limited form of school site management than exists south of the border (Munn, 1997). In addition, however, on the wider scale, a shift in the balance between central and local government took place. Reorganisation of local government in Scotland from twelve regional and island authorities into 32 unitary councils was devised and implemented within a timescale not attempted south of the border. It was against the background of devolved school management and the impending reorganisation of local government that the Open University in Scotland in 1994 began a marketing

exercise of its School of Education in anticipation of creating new networks and exploring different ways of working.

POLICY DEVELOPMENT 1994-2000

Options - 1994

In November and December 1994, the writer undertook a telephone survey with the Director or a Depute Director of each of the twelve Regional and Island Councils to ascertain the recommendations that the outgoing authority (in the case of five regions) would make to its successors and the legacy it would be leaving. Four of the Regional and Island Councils were to retain their existing size but become unitary authorities (the Island Councils already had a unitary function).

Directors were asked about:

- planning with regard to the future management of the education development service or advisory service;
- whether an agency model for educational support might emerge - if so what form it might take;
- extent of authority's devolving staff development budgets to schools;
- anticipation of new arrangements for quality assurance.

Of the seven authorities which were not to be reduced in size by reorganisation, the (then) Director of Education for Dumfries and Galloway (there have been three different Directors in post over the period of these surveys) was alone in the view that the need for local advisers would be minimal: an agency model would likely come into being and schools could buy in support for educational development from whomsoever they chose. The other directors felt that they would continue with a support service and in the case of both Orkney and Shetland, a strengthening of the number of advisers who, in addition to their traditional developmental function, would assume a quality assurance role. The advisory service in Fife Region had recently been restructured and it was anticipated that the councillors elected to the unitary authority would continue with that arrangement. Borders would retain its advisers. The Director of Education for Highland Region envisaged a reduction in number because of budget cuts and according to the Director of Education for Western Isles, the authority's policy was that as staff development budgets were devolved, schools would be charged for advisory input.

All seven directors foresaw advisers playing some part in their authority's quality assurance mechanism. The form varied from a prime role, a joint activity with directors, a subsidiary role to that of directors and, in one case, membership of a unit comprising an adviser and seconded headteachers. All believed that the education authority would continue to have a strategic role for curriculum policy, mirroring national priorities, but giving a clear direction locally.

Directorate in the five local authorities which were to be dismembered, Strathclyde, Lothian, Grampian, Tayside and Central Regions, were more tentative in assessing the form of future support for educational development. Some of the new councils emerging from the reorganisation might be of different political colours: joint working in these circumstances was problematical. Nonetheless, education directorates, at the time of the interviews, were drafting options for the incoming administrations. Strathclyde Region had earlier separated its development and quality assurance responsibilities, creating an inspectorate and retaining an advisory service which was renamed Education Development Service whose budget had been devolved to schools. The Strathclyde Directorate found it difficult to anticipate what form future support services might take. At the time of the interview, its view was

that there might be joint boards or a lead authority might emerge.

Grampian Region anticipated that a market-led scenario was likely and, at the time of the interview with the Depute Director, five options were being costed to be put to the new councils. It was intended that more of the staff development budget would be devolved and schools would have the freedom to buy support from whomsoever they chose. However, directorate in Lothian, Tayside and Central Regions, did not anticipate that an agency model would emerge in their successor authorities. Joint working in the four new authorities succeeding Lothian Region was thought to be a possibility but in Tayside Region the likelihood of different political allegiances among the three new authorities suggested that this sort of arrangement was less likely. Central Region's Director of Education intended recommending to the three successor authorities that one development service remain whose management might be through a joint board or a lead authority.

Planning for the impending watershed presented a mixed picture. Those authorities least affected by local government reorganisation tended to view their future role as a continuation of the past, affected less by devolving budgets to schools than by government's fiscal policies on public spending. The incoming authorities were being offered a variety of options for the management of their developmental services some of which required new ways of working.

Proposals - 1995

The second part of the Open University's information gathering took place one year later in November and December 1995. In the intervening time directors or chief officers of education had been appointed in the new authorities. On this occasion, the writer had discussion by telephone with directors of education of 24 local authorities: Aberdeen City, Angus, Argyll and Bute, Clackmannanshire, Dundee City, Dumfries and Galloway, East Dunbartonshire, East Lothian, East Renfrewshire, Edinburgh City, Falkirk, Fife, Glasgow City, Highland, Inverclyde, Midlothian, North Ayrshire, Perth and Kinross, Renfrewshire, South Ayrshire, South Lanarkshire, Stirling, West Dunbartonshire and Western Isles.

The discussion embraced areas of specific concern to the Open University but included the following:

- management of staff development resources
- whether these services would continue and what form they would take

Four of the authorities contacted retained their previous scope and scale, twenty were the disaggregation of larger organisations. Directors of education of these new councils operated in a shadow capacity at the time of the interviews: the vesting date of the councils was still months away — April 1996 — but some had already had meetings with headteachers and plans for education support structures were informed by these consultations.

All the directors of education, no matter how small their council, said that the authority had a strategic and support role. Most directors of smaller authorities spoke of having a small team of advisers, one of modal advisers (in terms of the curriculum design in Scottish schools which groups knowledge and understanding within a number of modes) and some used the expression, generic role in the sense of general adviser not subject specialist; two authorities used the title, education development officers. East Renfrewshire, having consulted with its headteachers, had decided not to have an advisory service but a small team for development. Its neighbour Renfrewshire, on the other hand, had consulted with its headteachers who wanted an advisory service, not Strathclyde Region's model of Education Development Service.

Glasgow's Director of Education and also Argyll and Bute's, having consulted with

head teachers, said that the traditional strengths of advisers — specialist expertise, experience of the system, networked links and status — were being sought rather than short term secondments. Glasgow headteachers had expressed scepticism about external consultants. Argyll and Bute would have a core team and intended to contract for some subject specialisms after negotiation with headteachers. South Lanarkshire, wanted advisers to support curriculum development, the corporate policies of the authority and to have knowledge of research findings in their field with a view to their affecting policy and implementation. Glasgow's ruling political group had stipulated in its manifesto that the respective support and audit functions of the advisers and inspectors it was to inherit from Strathclyde Region would be integrated.

Several directors said that advisers would not themselves deliver courses but rather broker staff and curriculum development. Strategic objectives, for example, Higher Still developments, early intervention, increasing levels of literacy, would probably be funded by the authority and most likely bought in or acquired through a partnership with another authority or an establishment of higher education. Buying outside specialists or consultants was also mentioned. Two directors were very clear that the adviser's role would not be inspectorial. The Director of Education for Stirling, at the time of discussion, had not had committee approval for its support structure, but he felt that the pendulum had swung too far towards performance indicators; he wanted to reinstate an interest in self-evaluation and subject networking.

Most directors of education said that the support service would also have a quality assurance role. Supporting school development planning was usually mentioned. However, it was often difficult to see that what was proposed was very different from their colleagues who emphasised a purely developmental role. In some cases different hats would be worn. Edinburgh City, for example, proposed a separate team in principle for quality assurance, which would include headteachers, but its membership would be augmented by advisers and there would be flexibility of role. Several said that there would be no external inspection role for advisers. The successor authorities to Tayside Region adopted similar approaches to support and evaluation roles: Perth and Kinross augmented their proportion of the disaggregated Tayside advisory service arguing that the value added the education authority provides is largely made up of its support services. Dundee City proposed continuing with an advisory service whose members would have zonal responsibility and who would support school development planning and school self-evaluation. Angus Council's Director of Education did not have Committee approval for his proposals at the time of discussion but he wanted advisers whose role would support school development planning, staff development and review. The Director of Education for Clackmannanshire expressed the view that the traditional role of the adviser was no more: financial pressures meant that schools would shop around to fulfil their own needs. Midlothian's Director of Education saw advisers having an enlarged role, adviser-cum-education officer.

What of the four education authorities, among the 24 surveyed, which were unaffected in scale by local government reorganisation? They, like the others, were of course affected by devolving budgets to schools. But they too had been forced to re-examine their intentions of the previous year because of the government's financial policies in relation to funding of local government — “non-disaggregating” authorities were expected to make savings. Highland Council's Director of Education speculated on the budget cuts being in the high teens of millions; in the case of Dumfries and Galloway it was known to be £10 million. Western Isles' Director of Education was worried about cuts in revenue expenditure recurring. Of the four authorities, only Fife was continuing with its plans unchanged from the previous year, anticipating it would have the largest advisory service in Scotland.

Reorganisation of local government and devolved management to schools in

Scotland did not bring about a transformation of outlook on the part of the authorities or the schools. Schools did not appear to want to be cut adrift from their authority and the authorities, for the most part, perceived their role in terms of provider of services, cut according to their new cloth. Neither joint boards nor lead authority had emerged as a solution to the problems associated with authorities with reduced capabilities.

Position - 2000

Part three of the survey took place in 1999/2000 when the writer contacted staff from the same 24 authorities whose directors gave information in 1995. The Scottish Parliament had been created in the meantime. The Scottish Executive had produced the first Education Bill to be presented to the Parliament. In addition, in some authorities, the writer was able to contact an adviser or support officer. Policy documentation was received from East Dunbartonshire, East Renfrewshire, Glasgow, Perth and Kinross, and Renfrewshire. Additionally, discussion took place with officers in four authorities not included in the 1995 survey: Aberdeenshire, North Lanarkshire, Moray and Scottish Borders. Documentation was received from Aberdeenshire. Drafts of Best Value Reports from Clackmannanshire, North Lanarkshire and Perth and Kinross were read.

Among the new authorities, most confirmed that the pattern planned four years earlier was being followed. Two of the three authorities succeeding Tayside Region, Dundee and Perth and Kinross had increased the number of permanent development service staff. Of those following on from Strathclyde Region, North Ayrshire had slightly increased its permanent support staff. East Dunbartonshire, had developed a framework for Promoting Professional Learning, *School Improvement Handbook* (1999). East Renfrewshire continued as planned with no advisory service. It was the first authority to be inspected by HMI, (*The Management of Quality Development in East Renfrewshire Council Education Department*, 1998). HMI recommended that the authority should establish networking with principal teachers groups. However, the directorate respondent to this survey, indicated that the education authority has not accepted the recommendation: the authority's framework is that of school-site management and headteachers are the authority's quality managers. Stirling's Director of Education, on the other hand, felt that the decision four years earlier not to put all resources to schools but retain an authority capacity was vindicated.

Argyll and Bute has not been able to sustain the advisory service that had been intended in 1995. The Director of Education said that the authority's budget had been reduced by £7.5 Million in four years. The authority had to cease full-time area co-ordinators in the primary sector. However, it funds the release of principal teachers who act as part time subject development co-ordinators. Aberdeen City's Director of Education had received mixed messages over time from schools: four years earlier schools had been saying that they did not want advisers and could themselves lead development; more recently, the message was that they were not receiving enough support. Similar comments were repeated by the respondent in Edinburgh City.

Among the authorities in this survey which are undiminished in size by local government reorganisation, a shift has taken place from subject specialist advice to generic support for schools and quality assurance. Dumfries and Galloway dropped the word 'support' from the earlier title Education Support Officer. The Director of Education said that the authority is not able to offer subject specialism: subject panels and lead officers have been created for which the authority provides a co-ordinating role. It now has fewer support staff than when it was a Region. Highland has an advisory service but it is reduced in number. As advisers leave they are to be replaced

by temporary staff. Advisers now have a commitment of between 50% to 65% of their time to quality assurance; secondees carry out additional support work. The Director of Education said that these changes have come about recently, reflecting the Scottish Executive's increasing requirement of a quality assurance role on the part of authorities. The earlier fears of Western Isles' Directorate about recurring financial cuts were realised. In the early 1990s the authority had an establishment for 7 advisers and 3 staff tutors. Now there are 4 in total.

Fife, which four years earlier anticipated having the largest advisory service in Scotland, has still a sizeable service but its role has been changed and it is moving into area structures and a quality assurance role. Secondees are being used to help with curriculum development. Fife is an example of an education authority with a long continuity of governance and its own particular ethos. It remained unchanged by local government reorganisations in 1996 and 1975. The Director of Education said that the shift in focus in the advisory service was not so much driven by financial considerations but by a change in thinking. Financial restrictions play a part, however, and while headteachers ask for more help from outside the school, when it comes to the crunch, they prefer scarce resources to go into schools.

Networking among schools and subject principal teachers, in some authorities, is said to have increased. A common pattern, for example, is an enhanced role for some principal teachers to co-ordinate subject networks. West Lothian Council was not one of the authorities in the present survey but it too has been inspected by HMI (*The Management of Quality Development in West Lothian Council Education Service*, 1999). HMI indicate that the principal teachers who were surveyed in that authority responded positively to the quality of support they had from lead subject specialists. A contrary view was taken in some of the authorities in the present survey where difficulties are said to arise when principal teachers are involved in leading curriculum advisory groups: some principal teachers look on this as additional work to their main responsibilities.

Some collaboration among authorities is reported. Midlothian carries out joint development work with East Lothian and Borders. Clackmannanshire has a joint staff development catalogue shared among Stirling, Perth and Kinross and North Lanarkshire. While no joint board or lead authority was reported in the survey, the Director of Education for South Ayrshire said that the authority has reached a formal agreement to buy expertise from North Lanarkshire, which has an advisory service. This has come about as a result of strong messages from schools that receiving devolved budgets to get on with their own development is not adequate.

At the other end of the spectrum, Glasgow City has maintained a team of about 25 advisers plus seconded staff. The Education Development Service Manager reported that secondary schools, in the preliminary stages of a Best Value exercise, wanted more contact with advisers. In addition to modal coverage, the authority tries to identify areas of expertise, such as learning and teaching or learning to learn, and provide support to schools. Courses in this area when delivered by external consultants are often oversubscribed; thus the authority attempts to take responsibility and deliver to its schools.

Best Value, according to the *Improvement in Education Bill* (1999) is described as a search for continuous improvement and is underpinned by four principles: accountability, transparency, continuous improvement and ownership. It is a process taken forward in partnership between the Scottish Executive and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and local authorities are expected to apply a best value approach to the management of their services. One authority in the survey had already undergone a Best Value exercise and found that while primary schools were happy with the service they receive, secondary schools were not and wanted subject advisers. Perth and Kinross had also undertaken a Best Value exercise. Its review

of the Education Development Service found that in response to the Performance Target of 70% of EDS time in schools and 30% on strategic areas,

most respondents indicated that time allocated for support in schools was inadequate. They clearly believed that this was due to an overload in the responsibilities of EDOs and in particular to their wide strategic remit. Schools were careful to point out that they did not relate lack of time working for schools to any inefficiency on the part of EDS staff (Perth and Kinross Council, Education and Children's Services Committee, 2000, p 4).

Directors' perceptions of how these changes are felt in schools vary. Some have reservations. One Director felt that secondary schools are not getting a good deal out of the present situation. Another, having worked with advisers for many years, felt that schools might not agree with the direction taken. A third, whose authority before 1996 had been part of a larger region, thought that while the present arrangement in his authority works well, they have lost expertise in curriculum development. One Director said that some schools look back to an adviser in every subject but "no one can afford that any longer". An officer, a former adviser, acknowledged and praised the authority's school networking strategy but said that the schools now feel that they are on their own. A Director, who earlier in his career had been an adviser, accepted that authorities focusing on the school's capacity for development is important but, he said, "It does not have to be an either/or situation". There should be, in his view, both education authority support for the schools' capabilities to develop their staff as well as specific subject expertise. An adviser, formerly one of a regional team of advisers, who now worked in an authority with a small permanent core of support staff, thought that while the reasons for the present situation are mainly financial, there are now directorate staff who do not know about the functions that advisers perform and who are more concerned with administration and structures.

Some feel that the new arrangements with few specialist advisers, or none at all, are an improvement on what went before. A respondent in an authority which has a small team providing generic support, with specialist expertise being delivered through school and departmental networks, felt that the approach to staff development in the past through central planning had been paternalistic: devolving budgets to schools promoted a "philosophical shift" to support school development. An officer in an authority which had been part of Strathclyde Region described the previous regime with advisory services as breeding "a dependency culture". A respondent in an authority with no advisers said, "The same principal teachers who were not happy about the service provided by advisers, are still not happy with the new arrangements". Another, in an authority with no advisers, claimed that development planning is a sophisticated tool which enables schools to tailor staff development to their particular needs. Some schools, in that authority, are involved in a co-operative learning initiative.

Scottish Borders Council, however, not one of the authorities included in the 1995 sample, has an advisory service whose establishment is 12 advisers and 8 assistant advisers. The Director of Education, in discussion with the writer, indicated that the authority's strategy is to direct advisers into three main fields of support activity: one providing curricular expertise, another specialising in matters of learning and teaching, management development and analysis of test and exam data, while the third has its main focus on quality assurance.

Financial restraints, devolved resources to schools, increasing accountability of local authorities to the Scottish Executive, diminution in scale of some authorities and their reluctance to work together, are powerful factors influencing external support for schools. Of these "under funding is at the root of the problem" (Cameron

and Casteel, 1999, p 177). It impacts on all aspects of the education authorities' provision. However, when council budget cuts are debated, the position of advisers is vulnerable. Questions concerning the effectiveness of support staff are raised to which some would add the efficacy of the role. Yet some succeed in providing a cadre of support staff. Two authorities' Best Value Reviews offer a cost analysis of a day's input from education authority personnel, TEI staff and external consultants which favour authority personnel. However, the bases of the costing are not provided.

A fuller picture of education authority support would have to include the detail of the directorate structure. Some appear to have directorate staff in closer touch with schools than, say, the directorate structures in regional authorities permitted. Adviser, educational development officer, education officer, subject development officers, support officer and quality development officer appear to cover broadly the same territory. Whatever the term, adviser has come to mean education adviser not subject specialist adviser as in the time of the regional councils where there tended to be specialists in English, Mathematics, Science and Modern Languages etc. Now advisers may have a modal role; they tend to broker curriculum development activities; they may also convene meetings of subject principal teachers. But discernible among those authorities which still have advisers is an increasing emphasis on quality assurance rather than innovation. Authorities report an increasing reliance on seconded staff to provide subject specialist networking.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSIONS

The role of the district or local authority, according to Fullan (1992 p 24), is to provide "the combination of pressure and support needed to influence and co-ordinate teacher development and school development". Over the six years covered by the survey, in most parts of Scotland, the role of the education authority has been undergoing a sea change. Pressure is emerging as the principal component. However, what has been happening in education has to be seen within the wider context of policies for the management of other public services. Governments, pursuing greater efficiency and effectiveness in these services, have adopted lessons from industry and commerce: breaking up governmental bureaucracies into smaller units accompanied by central specification of outcomes and delegating responsibility for their achievement to sub-units and measuring outcomes.

Reforms in education in the UK reflects this approach. The policy strategy, according to Baker, the Head of Standards and Effectiveness Unit, DfEE (2000), is to create a structure for continuous improvement. The key features of the new framework are, the creation of standards (centrally defined), responsibility for their attainment delegated to schools, and the introduction of benchmarking data. It is expressed in terms of school effectiveness and school improvement.

Now in the Scottish context, central direction is not new: the traditional and accepted role of the Scottish Office Education Department had been to provide leadership. The Scottish Parliament has not changed that. The *Improvement in Scottish Education Bill* (1999) proposed an Improvement Framework in which,

Scottish Ministers should have the power to identify national priorities for education and that local authorities should be required to prepare a statement of improvement objectives built around those objectives (p 20).

While devolved school management was introduced in 1993, as we have seen, it is more limited in nature than LMS south of the border. But what has emerged as the dominant strategy in reform has been the introduction of target setting and performance indicators. The consequences of this strategy have helped to reshape education authority support for school improvement. But what are the strengths and weaknesses of this approach in achieving school improvement?

A performance indicator, according to Cuttance, (1992) is simply a statistic describing some feature and no new phenomenon. Data, if valid and reliable, provide useful feed-back to professionals and managers. And indeed the introduction of data into the system can be said to be an advance on the lack of empirical evidence for school effectiveness in the past. In Scotland, the publication of *How good is our school?: self-evaluation using performance indicators* (1996) is widely used by schools and promoted by education authorities. Its impact has been felt further afield on the International Network of Innovative School Systems (INIS) which is co-ordinated by the Bertelsmann Foundation.

The provenance of performance indicators, according to Lauglo (1996) is the field of management by objectives and Lauglo finds them used in public services, including education systems, in a number of countries:

At least in some modified form that stresses micro-level planning, specification of tangible objectives and management information systems (p33).

Nor need indications of performance be imposed or threatening. For example, Grampian Region commissioned the Centre for Educational Sociology at Edinburgh University to carry out a three year study on secondary school effectiveness, based on data from the Scottish Young Peoples Survey. Surveys were confidential to each school and described the characteristics, experiences and post-school destinations of school leavers to which was linked data on attainment at national examinations. The intention of the initiative was to lead to self-evaluation and improvement initiatives.

There was a recognition by schools, elected members, parents and officers of a need to pursue more meaningful measures of school performance (Croxford and Robertson, 1996).

But in the absence of a local commitment to fund the development of meaningful measures of school performance, there is little alternative but to adopt the received standards and indicators from government agencies. And implicit in the data, if published, are echoes of the market place and competition. This can be damaging for morale to some and encourage complacency in others, particularly if schools are compared against national norms. Instead, as Brighouse puts it.

Far better that everybody competes, if they must compete, to improve at a faster rate against their previous best (1996 p 123).

Management by objectives can mean a sense of ownership of standards and their indicators. In industry the use of devices such as Quality Circles, for example, drawn up at site or section level, can lead to greater commitment and effectiveness and can be anything but a soft option. Something of this, it may be said, exists in the Scottish targets: overall targets are set nationally, education authorities set theirs and schools theirs. However, the trend is to define standards and indicators centrally. According to (Ozga, 2000), although the policy makers rhetoric use terms such as partners, surveillance and control of monitoring lie with central authorities.

Senge *et al* (2000) refer to this approach as “industrial-age control thinking” where external authorities mete out rewards and punishment.

There is nothing inherently wrong with tests of performance. They are fragmented measures and limited in their validity, but they can be useful indicators for students and teachers alike. It is their context that is problematic. Rather than students and teachers setting their own aspirations, performance standards are mandated from above (p. 44).

And the logic behind the approach, according to Senge, is that of management by objectives which has been the dominant system of management in industry for years. It is the application of such tools for external control that Senge *et al* think inimical to the idea of learning organisations and in particular, schools that learn.

Application of industrial practices to the management of services such as health care and education is questioned by Mintzberg (1996). Mintzberg suggests that the conclusion “capitalism has triumphed” has driven the societies of the west, particularly those of the USA and UK, into the current approach to the management of what were previously organisations under state control. Under this approach of privately owned corporations, management panaceas abound. One of them, he refers to as the myth of measurement, “an ideology embraced with almost religious fervour”. While not denying that things have to be measured, particularly costs, Mintzberg’s position is that measurement often misses the point and that many activities are in the public sector precisely because of measurement problems.

Policy makers, however, have not confined themselves to the world of commerce and industry: the structure of target setting and performance indicators is buttressed by terms from research in a number of educational fields. School Effectiveness, School Improvement and School Self- Evaluation may be seen as discrete disciplines, (Riddell and Brown, 1991, Cuttance, 1994, Hopkins and Reynolds, 2000). Increasingly the adaptation of findings in these fields is being used by policy makers.

For those of us in the disciplines of school effectiveness and school improvement, there is so much to take note of. Whether we wished it or not, our work has been used to support managerially oriented policies (Hopkins & Reynolds, 2000, p vi).

These three elements, each with a tradition extending over two decades, have come in contact with the catalyst, school development planning. Stoll and Fink (1996) put it.

The school development planning process is the vehicle that blends school effectiveness research findings with the school improvement process (p 188).

School development planning in Scotland is seen by policy makers as the mechanism through which greater effectiveness would be delivered (MacBeath, 1999).

However, school development planning, was initially a process and structure to cope with the complexity of managing multiple innovations simultaneously (Hargreaves and Hopkins, 1994). Selective use by policy makers of older material on school effectiveness research in schools, according to Clarke (2000), is accompanied by their reluctance to engage as the research moves on, revealing new complexities.

The school as “the unit of change” is a complex and much misunderstood term, according to Fullan (1992). And as school-site management extends across a number of countries (Dalin and Rust, 1996), there is increasing interest into insights from the world of organisational development and, for example, the notion of the learning organisation. Organisational learning presents new challenges for senior management and a reconception of leadership, whether in the world of business (Senge, 1990, Sadler, 1999) or in school systems (Fullan, 1993, Stoll and Fink, 1996, Clarke, 2000 and Senge *et al*, 2000). And the reality is that school-site management brings particular pressures on senior staff of a school, especially the headteacher. Thomas (1996), reporting on the survey of a number of secondary headteachers in England, suggests that local management of schools refocuses the tension in the role of headteacher, characterised by Hughes (1973) as two-fold “Leading Professional” and “Chief Executive”. According to Thomas,

What LMS (local management of schools) does is alter the balance between those two aspects of the role by enhancing those powers which reside with the chief executive (1996, p 187).

Differences between the ways school management and external support staff lead change are referred to by Fullan and Stiegelbauer (1993) with regard to a study by Hall and Hord (1984) who looked at the role of headteacher and district-level facilitator in shaping change in the school. They observed that the headteacher,

Intervenes quickly, simply and in a direct manner; the second CF (change facilitator) intervenes more interactively with more complex and involved interventions (p 280).

Are there lessons to be learned from other educational systems? Such were the questions of the Bertelsmann Foundation research into *Innovative Schools Systems in an International Comparison* (1996). Interested in determining the ideas and impulses from international research which could help develop the German school system, the Bertelsmann Foundation wanted to know how,

...other democratic states create framework conditions which promote and foster a continuous innovative development process in all schools (p 8).

Seven countries were nominated for the research. And the international Working Committee who supervised the research developed eight criteria which provided guidelines for the inspection and assessment of selected school systems. Two of these criteria are particularly relevant to the findings of the survey.

Criterion 6: Co-operation between individual schools and external decision makers, includes,

The education authority provides advice and consultancy for school improvement. Offering support services to schools features prominently among its tasks (Bertelsmann, 1996, p 17).

Criterion 7: Evaluation and quality assurance, includes,

The outcomes of the quality audit together with other relevant data provide the basis for improving quality congruent with ideas of a learning institution and for the agreements with the educational policy makers (Bertelsmann, 1996, p 18).

According to the Bertelsmann research, both components are necessary. However, reduced levels of local support is not confined to the Scottish context. Joyce, Calhoun and Hopkins (1999), reviewing the international school improvement field over the last decade, observed that local districts were making cuts in the personnel who support schools and teachers.

Policymakers at all levels have made the assumption that district "middle management" support personnel are not needed, and this is a mistake of a very serious sort. Districts need a full complement of curriculum personnel who can provide the most direct sort of support to teachers and school administrators (p 222).

Reorganisation of local government in Scotland has had additional implications for professionalism and support for professionals. The Local Government (Scotland) Act 1994 did not require local councils to appoint directors of education. Corporate ways of working were envisaged; several councils have subsequently restructured departments encompassing education along with other client centred services. Others

have set up committees embracing services to children. The school sectors have become blurred as community schools and learning communities are established. Presciently, Fairley (1996) suggested that there might be reductions to advisory services.

Authorities, according to this survey, are for the most part, striving for self-sufficiency. And, as Cameron and Casteel (1999) put it.

The refusal or inability of the unitary authorities to share resources may prove regrettable (p 177).

There are difficulties with joint working, particularly where councils are of different political colours and, according to Fairley (1996), many councillors dismiss the idea of the enabling authority as coming from a particular ideological stable. But sensitivity to local responsibility and priorities has a long pedigree in Scotland: Walter Scott's Mrs Mailsetter in *The Antiquary* put it succinctly, "We maun gie our ain fish-guts to our ain sea-maws".

Assumptions about roles and capabilities need to be reassessed. The time seems opportune: the Scottish Parliament is well into its stride; the Inspectorate's role in educational development has been curtailed. Does adherence by the local authorities to the new framework for school improvement require apostasy from the professional support role? A role that they began to take seriously only in the last quarter of the twentieth century.

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