

FROM THE EDITOR

The 1996 SERA lecture by James Calderhead leads this issue of the journal. The lecture is in two parts: first, an argument for more research into teacher education which might have more influence upon policy and practice; second, a consideration of research into beginning teachers' attitudes and experiences. In making the case for more research, Calderhead regrets the tendency for educational research to have little impact on policy or practice. He does, however, identify a growing number of European networks of researchers which enable them to share analyses and create a valuable critical community.

This is a theme which Walter Humes develops, with his focus on Scotland. Humes points out that the policies pursued by the Conservative government have prompted critical commentary on the policy process and have given it new impetus. There are many opportunities to participate in these debates. This journal is an obvious forum. The Scottish Educational Research Association (SERA) has also worked diligently to provide opportunities, ranging from the annual conference to the support for teacher researchers, and to the development, of a code of practice for research in Scotland. The recent and very successful seminar on research which SERA arranged addressed such critical questions as 'Is educational research in Scotland any better now than it was 10 years ago?' The Scottish Council for Educational Research (SCRE) organises the Forum for Educational Research in Scotland which encourages parents and others with an interest in education to participate. The ESRC has recently agreed to support the Forum on Educational Policy-Making at Moray House Institute enabling a searching debate. Although several of the university education departments have come under unprecedented pressure to curtail their activities in recent months, they still provide an unparalleled critical community of researchers. For example, a lively and acute research seminar group meets regularly in the University of Dundee. Other centres may be able to provide similar opportunities (contact your local university department of education). Scottish researchers also contribute regularly to the conferences and seminars organised by the British Educational Research Association and the 1996 European Conference for Educational Research (ECER), the most recent addition to the calendar, attracted a sizeable contingent from Scotland.

It is gratifying but not surprising that these opportunities seem to have multiplied. As both Humes' and Paterson's articles in this issue testify, the response to the policies of the Conservative government, substantially influenced by the New Right, has been robust. As we go to print, just after the general election, it is a politically sensitive time. Nursery and higher education in particular will be prominent on the agenda of the new government. New Labour has started to make a distinctive mark and we are entering a new era for education in which key decisions are about to be made. These decisions must not be made in a theoretical vacuum. Educational research must make its voices heard in the public arena as never before.