

## FROM THE EDITORS

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As 2002 draws to a close, the National Education Debate has been heralded as a success, having yielded 1,500 responses. The initial collation of views, which has been carried out by Professor Pamela Munn and her team from the University of Edinburgh, does not indicate any widespread desire for radical change in our system of schooling (Munn, 2002). However, the balance of the curriculum was an issue, with some respondents seeking greater emphasis on 'soft skills', such as coping with change, personal and social relationships, enterprise and creativity. The need for more resources for education was indicated in the significant number of comments seeking better quality school buildings and smaller class sizes. Other issues to emerge included concerns about poor discipline and the need to motivate pupils who were 'switched off' by the academic curriculum. Respondents suggested these issues might be addressed by providing more flexibility and choice in the curriculum, perhaps, by offering young people more vocational courses. This all sounds somewhat familiar to anyone who has had anything to do with Scottish education over the past twenty years. The response of the Executive to the debate, due sometime in spring 2003, is awaited with interest, though, perhaps, with only muted expectation. It remains to be seen whether the original aim for the National Debate, expressed by the Minister at its launch, namely, to address fundamental questions about our education system, will ultimately lead to any significant shifts in educational policy.

Some of the developments initiated by the Scottish Executive since its inception are reaching the stage when it is possible to begin to evaluate their effectiveness. A notable example is the flagship New Community Schools (NCS) programme. This issue of *Scottish Educational Review* carries a significant article by the team based at the Institute of Education, University of London examining the perceived impacts over the first year of the pilot NCS programme. This is complemented by an article by Mary Smith and Lyn Tett exploring the particular implications of the introduction of the New Community Schools for pupils who have social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.

We are also fortunate to be able to publish the SERA Lecture delivered at the SERA Annual Conference 2002. Professor Jean Rudduck addresses an issue which has recently been given a central place in the legislative framework for education in Scotland, namely, the right of children to be consulted and to express their views on educational matters. Professor Rudduck's compelling argument eloquently sets out the transformative potential of consulting young people about their experiences of teaching, learning and schooling. Brian Boyd and Mary Simpson also draw considerably on their conversations with school pupils, as well as teachers and school managers, in their account of one local authority's attempt to develop a framework for effective learning and teaching in its secondary schools.

Valerie Wilson and John Hall address the available evidence and prevailing ideas surrounding the concept of teacher stress in a systematic review of the research literature. This brings to mind the frank admission once made by Ralph Dutch, former head of educational studies at Aberdeen College of Education, that not giving due warning to student teachers about the potential stress they would face as qualified classroom teachers was akin to the failure of the generals in World War I to warn troops going into front-line action about the casualty figures. While the issue of stress has been a recurring topic of interest for academics, it is an immediate daily concern for very many teachers for whom the demands of the job appear increasingly unbearable. Finally, Mathias Pilz takes an outsider's perspective in his appraisal of the process of modularisation of the Scottish education system. It is pleasing that again

we have a broad selection of research topics as well as a variety of methodological approaches represented in this issue of *SER*.

It has been challenging and personally very satisfying to have had the privilege of being Editor of *Scottish Educational Review* for the past four years. I would like to express my sincere thanks and pay tribute to Joan Menmuir, for all her invaluable work as Depute Editor during that time. I would also like to express my appreciation of the unstinting efforts of Ian McPherson as Business Editor. However, I am now delighted to be passing editorial responsibility for the journal to Dr Gari Donn of Edinburgh University who takes over as Editor in January 2003, with Jill Duffield as Depute Editor. I am sure the journal will flourish over the years to come in their very capable hands.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish Dr Robert Glaister well as he takes over as Chair of the Editorial Board. It is fitting, however, that this editorial should close with a tribute to Professor Tom Bryce who is standing down as Chair of the Editorial Board after 14 years. During that time he was called upon to steer the journal through periods of considerable difficulty, even being faced at one point with the distinct possibility of closure. Under his wise and careful guidance *Scottish Educational Review* has maintained and enhanced its role as the leading journal for research in education in Scotland. All of us who count ourselves as members of the Scottish educational research community are indebted to Tom Bryce for his immense commitment over the years. Relieved of this responsibility, we can be sure he will nevertheless continue to be at the heart of developments in the field of Scottish education.

#### REFERENCE

Munn, P. (2002) *National Debate on Education: The best for all our children – Emerging Views*.  
Edinburgh: Stationary Office. (Available at [http://www.communicata.co.uk/scottish\\_executive/files\\_nd/summary.pdf](http://www.communicata.co.uk/scottish_executive/files_nd/summary.pdf))

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