FROM THE EDITOR

This second edition in our themed series on Education in Scotland and the Commonwealth, takes note of the problems for education in many Commonwealth countries, but also of the immense and exciting possibilities for change. It has become commonplace to note that in the Commonwealth there are 75m children with no access to primary school and that 4 out of 5 countries with the largest number of children not in school are in the Commonwealth. To improve education, therefore, there is a need to build on policies for access, inclusion and achievement.

The articles in this edition address aspects of access, inclusion and achievement and, in so doing, contribute to the international discourse on ways of addressing policies for education, as well as implementing improvements in structures and processes.

Nothing in education comes without a cost implication. In his article on Education Spending in Scotland, Arthur Midwinter draws attention to the record of New Labour. In detailed examination of statistical data, Midwinter argues that the figures for education spending have actually declined as a percentage share of total Scottish expenditure from 1997 to 2002. The paper shows that although education spending is planned to grow by 1% pa faster than the Scottish budget as a whole, the increases are mainly in the Executive's education and children programme which contains specific and special initiatives and national priority programmes rather than in core services of local authorities, further or higher education. The 'band aid' approach to educational implementations is worrying as this occurs at a time when all three sectors are under pressure to maintain and enhance improvements in inclusion and achievement.

We introduce the Commonwealth theme with an article on qualifications frameworks, a key issue for achievement. David Raffe provides a timely analysis of the development of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework and draws attention to the philosophical and sociological justifications for such frameworks. He argues that certification through qualifications frameworks must take account of 'national language' so that processes of implementation respond to local and national as well as international demands.

The article presented here emerged out of a paper presented at a Commonwealth seminar on qualifications frameworks, held in Wellington, New Zealand in early 2003 and attended by representatives of Ministries of Education, qualifications authorities and academics. It became apparent that although many countries have established frameworks—New Zealand, South Africa, Scotland—there are many other countries wishing to move in this direction. Botswana, Malawi, Fiji and Zambia, for example, were all represented and acknowledged that although the costs may be high, there are profound benefits for inclusive education and achievement in developing qualifications frameworks.

Local and national dimensions of policy making were evident in the development of the Chartered Teacher programme, note Maclellan and Soden in their article on this innovation. They suggest that although there had been considerable informed debate and consultation on the status and mechanics of the programme for the Chartered Teacher, policy documents indicate that there was little understanding of knowledge of learning theory, styles of teaching and learning and, most importantly, of constructivism. They argue that constructivism provides the theoretical basis on which teachers can make sense of, and coherently 'ground' the many different views of knowledge, understanding and learning. Without such underpinnings, knowledge, understanding and learning become 'ad hoc', piecemeal and inconsistent: achievement through education becomes less focused, less universal and, indeed, less possible.

Language is another factor we address in terms of access, inclusion and achievement. Nicholson outlines the results of a study of four different student groups, some with one and some with four languages, to indicate that perceptions of the utility of their language/s are shaped by family, peers and education. She argues that understanding different languages is also about understanding diversity. In a devolved and culturally diverse Scotland, support for many languages, Gaelic Medium Education in particular, may come to be seen as the hallmark of political success. Indeed, she notes, in a modern and devolved Scotland, this should be a key policy objective. The linguistic diversity of Scotland is also discussed by Rowena Arshad, in her review of Nigel Grant's Multicultural Education in Scotland. Grant's thesis is that diversity in Scotland should be viewed as an asset to equip young Scots to live in a modern world.

Gender and the 'gender gap' have frequently been cited as key factors in achievement: since 1975, Croxford, *et al*. argue in their article on Gender and Pupil Performance, studies have indicated that gender has been influential in levels of attainment. Over the past thirty five years, female and, more recently male underachievement, has been the focus of many research-based studies. They draw attention to a thorough literature review and to the findings of their small-scale research study, all of which indicate that gender differences predominate from pre-school onwards, but there has been relatively greater progress by males than females in post-compulsory schooling. Nevertheless, there is a preponderance of boys referred to learning and behavioural support. Achievement and attainment, therefore, are not necessarily easy to delineate just on gender grounds: after all, gender groupings are not homogeneous. They suggest that although gender still influences subject choice which is then reflected in gender differences in careers, the concept of a 'gender gap' may best be replaced with the understanding of a 'gender jigsaw' in which the major determinant of male and female attainment is social class.

But such educational and political concerns are not unique to this time or to the devolved system of Scottish education. As Lalage Bown reflects in her memoir as a key player in Scottish education, there have been many changes in policies and practices in all sectors of education. As Professor of Adult and Continuing Education at Glasgow University, during the 1980s, and as Professor Emeritus in the 1990s, she has been well-placed to witness these changes and the financial pressures producing and resultant from policy imperatives. However, Professor Bown has also been a key player in the field of education in the Commonwealth and, even whilst working here in Scotland, never lost her love of understanding international educational initiatives and working with colleagues from adult and continuing education in many countries of the Commonwealth.

Like Bown, Brenda Gourley has been a key player in education in the Commonwealth, having been Vice Chancellor at the University of Natal, South Africa before taking up her current post at the Open University. In her presentation to a Commonwealth audience at the House of Lords, Brenda Gourlay delineated the possibilities for development through greater use of ICT: "it is my hope that by spending some small time reflecting on the possibilities for development which harnesses the power of technology, we will, once more contribute to a demonstration that the human race is indeed capable of so much more."

These were also the aspirations of Ministers of Education when they met for their Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers which was held in Edinburgh in October. The theme of the Conference was Access, Inclusion and Achievement: Closing the Gap. And one of the key issues addressed was the importance of all member states working with each other to harness the power of technology for the benefit of all. Their discussions and those of academics and representatives of the Commonwealth NGO community will be reproduced in a variety of fora and in

various publications. However, it was good to know that each Ministerial delegation received copies of the Scottish Educational Review so that as we traverse these first few years of devolution, they too may learn of innovations and developments in education in Scotland and see the relevance for and resonance with education policy making in their own countries.

GARI DONN
Editor

The editors welcome discursive and critical responses to articles so that academic educational debate can be developed through these pages. Usually, such responses should be in the form of 'think pieces' of not more than 2000 words.