

## FROM THE EDITOR

---

The Keynote Lecture of the Annual Conference of the Scottish Educational Research Association (SERA), is always thought-provoking: that given by Professor Stephen Ball at the Annual Conference in 2004 was exceptionally so and, therefore, we are delighted to follow tradition by publishing the paper as an article in SER. Entitled *Educational Reform as Social Barberism: Economism and the End of Authenticity*, Professor Ball addresses the impact of recent educational reforms on teacher professionalism. He notes that with professionalism seeming, now, to have little relevance to ethical-cultural practice, his narrative is one of despair, of loss, pain and betrayal; his title, an angry comment on the nature of the ‘professional’ advice to the Prime Minister. He argues that on one side of the professionalism discourse there is ‘moral reasoning and proper uncertainty’ on the other rule following and the meeting of externally-imposed judgements. Through an examination of the two primary policy technologies of educational reform, ‘performativity’ — the performances and silences of individuals and organisations at ‘moments of promotion or inspection’ — and managerialism, Ball draws attention to a shift from bureaucracy and micro-management to the setting of the overall framework and ‘devolved environments’ by managing bodies. In their pressure to re-professionalise, de-professionalise, post-professionalise, Ball argues, such bodies actually ‘unprofessionalise’ so that teaching becomes rule following rather than moral and cultural engagement. In this discourse, he asks, where is the ‘authentic’ teacher: this is a question the reader also discovers and reflects upon. For most of us, teaching, and education generally, are moral and social enterprises informed by research and acted out in community. Yet through the insights provided by Ball, we come to see that education, and teaching specifically, is wedded to the mire of political expediency and managerialist organisational ethos. Rather than teaching being about moral uplift and fulfillment it becomes a politically charged engagement.

The impact of research on educational policy may be one way in which education is seen as being relevant to current practice and not just an aspect of the political war of jargon. In Pamela Munn’s article, *Researching Policy and Policy Research*, she argues that although there has been a government commitment to education policy being informed by research (with ESRC being given 115% greater cash grants in 2001/2 than in 1991/2) it becomes important for research to be relevant and robust if it is to be of real use for policy makers. For research to be of use, she argues, it needs to be timely and methodologically uncontested; with the findings having strong advocates and with the users of research being partners in the generation of evidence. In the culture of devolved government in Scotland, with the Parliament and its committees, the Executive, non-governmental bodies, such as the Scottish Qualifications Authority and Teaching and Learning Scotland, it is heartening that educational research is seen as central to informed policy making and is welcomed.

This theme is also central to the article by Mark Priestley entitled, ‘Making the most of the Curriculum Review: Some reflections on supporting and sustaining change in schools’. He notes that educational policy reform — for example, the Assessment is for Learning programme — calls on teachers to take forward the policy initiative in imaginative and proactive ways. By drawing on theoretical and empirical literature on curriculum change, he notes that the Scottish Executive’s Curriculum Review (2004) seems to promote curriculum development which actively engages practitioners but also urges readers to understand the possibilities of ‘brutal restructuring’ when policies are delivered in ignorance or defiance of teachers’ beliefs and missions. Whilst the Curriculum Review, impacting on 5–14 years in particular,

presents opportunities, and comes at a time when re-structuring of the teaching profession is being addressed, post-McCrone agreement, Priestley notes that the flatter structures of school organisations create, potentially, an environment where curriculum innovation and especially new forms of provision may thrive. He suggests that this is a timely opportunity for policymakers to drive forward participation, social justice and inclusion agendas, these made possible by ensuring teachers and educational professionals are included in the policy process.

The role of the Scottish Parliament in introducing legislation for social justice and inclusion is the theme of the article by Jean Kane and Pauline Banks. In 'Co-ordinating Support for Pupils with Additional Support Needs: A Staff Development Perspective' they draw attention to inclusion policies of New Labour administrations that give impetus to local and national initiatives for policies of social justice for children, young people, families and old people but not explicitly for disabled children. With one fifth of the adult population in Scotland being disabled, there is a pressing need for interagency policy development. With reference to evidence accumulated through findings from a research project in one local authority in Scotland, the authors note that many staff work with children with additional needs, yet the staff have had little understanding of these needs or training in how to work with such children. They define staff development and work-based learning as key features of successful policy implementation. It is suggested that, as with health workers, staff development for teachers should work through team-based and multi-agency approaches and with current interdisciplinary concerns for children and their families.

The relevance of a specific research project is also the basis of the article by David Raffe, Cathy Howieson and Teresa Tinklin. Like Kane and Banks and also Priestley, the authors suggest that educational policy is most properly addressed through coherent and robust empirical research. In the case of Raffe *et al*, the four years since the implementation of Higher Still have provided the basis for questioning whether the reform has addressed 'opportunity for all' by introducing a 'unified system of post-compulsory education in Scotland'. Throughout the article, the authors refer to the 'climbing frame' of vocational and academic qualifications, of Intermediate and Higher qualifications and of the possibilities of 'climbing' vertically as well as horizontally. For there to be 'opportunity for all' such interwoven approaches and possibilities must not only be an integral part of the climbing frame but also evident in practice. The authors conclude that, thus far, there are limitations to the impact of the reform: middle and lower achieving learners continued to have relatively low success rates whilst high achieving learners climbed the frame more quickly both horizontally and vertically. They suggest that this is, in part, the result of differential take up by college and school sectors.

Another example of the relevance of the findings of small scale research projects on policy is evident in the work of Jim McKechnie, Karen Dunleavy and Sandy Hobbs in their study of Student employment and its educational impact. Through reference to a number of students at their own university, they indicate almost two thirds of students are working during term time and focus upon the likely, perhaps detrimental, impact such employment may have on their final degree results. They note that the seeking of and undertaking employment seems to cut across gender and social class of students: with an increasing number of students working to support themselves, social class has become a less obvious feature of term time working. Further, through this small scale research, they posit the view that working does not act detrimentally on students as they progress into years three and four. Indeed, it may even assist them as they develop specific coping skills. But they do suggest, also, that as many first years drop out of, or fail their courses, it may be that those with coping skills are, indeed, able to cope in and beyond year one, whereas those without these skills fail. If that is the case, they argue, then universities would be

well advised to monitor employment of their students especially in terms of the numbers of hours worked and in their first year of study.

Once again, Mark Priestley draws attention to the work of the Scottish Parliament as it debates education issues and develops policy. Through a detailed outline of the discussions of the Education Committee, on school education, child protection, the inquiry into the school curriculum, the 2005–2006 education budget process and the long awaited Stage 1 of the Gaelic Language Bill, readers will come to understand the breadth and growing importance of the Education Committee as part of the Scottish Parliamentary process.

The subjects of our book reviews indicate the interest and commitment of the continuing vibrant education community here in Scotland. Not only are excellent books published but impressive reviews are being written by a wide range of practitioners and academics throughout the UK. We welcome a wide circle of reviewers and interested readers are invited to contact the Reviews Editor, David Miller.

As usual, we invite all readers, in notes of up to 2,000 words, to raise points of debate suggested by articles in this issue. These may be submitted to the editors for possible publication.

Finally, an important development for the SER is the Board's decision to add an electronic archive to the Journal. This will be established from 1997 to one year before current publication. Authors of all articles published throughout this period will be contacted for permission. Access details will be announced in SER 37(2).

GARI DONN  
Editor