

The Scottish Council for Research in Education 1928-2003: a Short History

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ABSTRACT

This article provides a short and accessible account of the whole life-span of The Scottish Council for Research in Education (SRCE), an institution that played a key role in developing educational research in Scotland and setting standards for it. It began through the efforts of many voluntary workers and developed into an organisation operated by professional researchers but governed by a Council representing all aspects of education in the country. Accounts are given of its growth and development, of the policies of each of its six successive directors, of some of its more notable projects, and of some of the factors that contributed to its final decline. The article has drawn on not only published matter but the first-hand knowledge of two “insiders”, J G (Ian) Morris at the Scottish Education Department (SED)’s Research and Intelligence Unit and the present writer at SCRE.

INTRODUCTION

For much of the period of its existence, the Scottish Council for Research in Education (SCRE) was the centre for educational research in Scotland, though its mode of operation evolved in fundamental ways over that time. It was the first such educational research institution to be created in the UK and its structure was in later years acknowledged as a model for equivalent research organisations set up in Australia, the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER), and in New Zealand, the New Zealand Council for Educational Research (NZCER). This article seeks to record for today’s educational researchers and educators both what it achieved and how it did so. Short accounts of selected projects are presented in sections related to each of its Directors. Factors that contributed to its growth and others that led to its eventual closure are identified.

EARLIER HISTORIES

The Council’s history is most comprehensively described in J G Morris’s unpublished Edinburgh University 1994 PhD thesis, *The Scottish Council for Research in Education 1928-1993* (Morris 1994). Morris was himself, as an HMI (Her Majesty’s Inspector), a Scottish Education Department (SED) assessor on the Council from the 1960’s and was later, as a HM Chief Inspector, the head of the SED’s Research and Intelligence Unit (RIU). He thus had an insider’s knowledge and a vast range of relevant personal contacts to add to his meticulously kept records when, following his retiral in 1983, he undertook the preparation of this thesis, a work that stands as a monument to the man himself. An earlier history by James Craigie (Craigie 1972) covering the years 1928-1972 had been published by the Council itself.

THE FOUNDATION OF THE COUNCIL

The Scottish Council for Research in Education was founded jointly by the Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS) and the Association of Directors of Education in Scotland (ADES). The Council was constituted to be operated by a council representative of the educational system throughout the land - education authorities, directors of education, teachers, universities, training colleges, the British Psychological Society, school medical officers - and from 8th December 1932 was registered as a company limited by guarantee (Company Number SCO17067). Each Council member was liable for up to £1.

THE EARLY YEARS

Robert R Rusk, the Council's first Director, argued that its position as a company enabled it to demonstrate its independence and absolved any public funder such as the Scottish Education Department (SED) of any responsibility for views that the Council might express (Rusk 1952). Rusk, at the time of his appointment as part-time Director, was Principal Lecturer in Education at Jordanhill College of Education in Glasgow and later (1946-51) Reader in Education at Glasgow University in the years immediately preceding the establishment of that University's first Chair of Education. Those who were his students at the University, including the present writer, heard him talk with enthusiasm about the Council, his contempt for those who espoused educational practices without evidence to support their prejudices, and his fear of accepting funding with unseen strings attached. It was for this last reason that he was particularly happy that the Council's earliest work was undertaken by volunteers and run and conducted in their own time by some of the leading educationalists in Scotland, including such commanding figures as Sir Godfrey Thomson and William McClelland and an eminent teacher, Sir J J Robertson, the author of the influential 1947 Report on Secondary Education.

Of course, secretarial backup was required and this had to be financed. In fact, it was provided by the EIS, which made available without charge some of its own accommodation and staff and gave a grant of £750 per year. Additionally, the Scottish Local Authorities agreed to donate to the Council annually at the rate of one farthing per pupil in its schools (a rate doubled on two occasions in later years). From 1946, the SED itself provided an annual approved deficit grant of £1000 to £3000 and required simply that it be kept informed of the Council's work.

The link with the local authorities was particularly valuable throughout the Council's life since, whenever it wished to conduct work in schools or have teachers administer tests on its behalf, it could be assured that the relevant Director of Education would send to the headteachers concerned a request for cooperation.

Despite its limited regular funding and its dependence on voluntary work, the Council did seek and secure special funding where possible and undertook some major projects, typically involving the collection of much data over a considerable period of time. The most celebrated of these was the Scottish Mental Survey.

THE COUNCIL'S MEMBERSHIP

The size of the Council's membership varied from time to time as additional bodies, such as the Scottish Secondary Teachers Association (SSTA), were given representation. However, a membership of around 60 made it necessary early on to form an Executive Committee, usually of around 20 members, the full Council meeting only twice a year. Though an important function of the larger body was to communicate information to the bodies it represented, some of its members became frustrated by their distance from the decision-making process and, in 1972, the decision was made to reduce the Council in size such that it could operate as its own executive while still retaining its representative link with its nominating bodies. At the same time, a limit of two consecutive three-year periods for

individuals serving as members was introduced. Sub-committees for Finance and Publications were appointed to report to the full Executive. (A sub-committee for research was not added until 1979).

PUBLICATIONS POLICY

From early in its history, the Council saw it as desirable not only to issue its own in-house reports but to undertake the publication in book form of other research undertaken in Scotland that might not achieve commercial publication, the choice in the case of each item being entrusted to its Publications Committee. Those chosen included reports on research on left-handedness (Clark 1957 & 1959), histories of education in a number of Scottish counties and cities, and Bone's history of the School's Inspectorate in Scotland (Bone 1968). Though reports written by non-staff members were continued into the 1970s, the publication of histories was discontinued, though not before James Craigie's two-volume Bibliography of Scottish Education constituted a fitting climax. (Craigie 1970 and 1974).

The reports on the Council's own research projects were almost all published in book form and published at a subsidised price to encourage purchase by teachers as well as professionals, though the perceived need to provide the latter with the details of statistical analyses may perhaps have obscured the desired communication with many of the former. Great care was taken to ensure that copies were lodged in all five copyright libraries, not only to meet a legal obligation but to ensure their permanent availability.

FEATURES OF THE RUSK YEARS (1928-1958)

NOTABLE PROJECTS

The Scottish Mental Survey

By 1932, there was a widely held belief that general intelligence (Spearman's *g*) was an important determinant of mental performance and therefore a valuable predictor of cognitive capacity that could be used to direct young, possibly hitherto under-performing, children into whatever type of educational institution was most suitable to meet their needs¹.

Special aptitudes (mathematical, linguistic, spatial, etc) were recognised but it was noted that test measures of them were inter-correlated to a degree that suggested there was indeed something common to them all, a general factor (Spearman, C. E. 1904). It was further noted that IQs derived from verbal intelligence tests such as the Stanford-Binet and non-verbal ones, such as Raven's Matrices (all of which depended more on working memory and reasoning skills than, as in most school tests, on recall of specific learning) correlated substantially with them all to a degree that suggested that performance on them might represent that general factor. Factor analysis of inter-correlation matrices gave support to this.

The survey that took place in 1932, which proved to be just the first, involved the testing, using an intelligence test (the Moray House Test No 12²), of an almost complete age group of 87,498 eleven-year-olds - an undertaking still unparalleled throughout the world. As the *group* test used did not give an assessment of intelligence in terms of an Intelligence Quotient, it was decided that an *individual* intelligence test should be included in the 1932 survey. Thus a thousand children selected by their scores to be representative of the whole group were individually tested using the 1916 Stanford Revision of the Binet Test - a task undertaken by volunteer teachers. As this sample was found to be slightly biased, the same

¹ Such tests were already employed by some local education authorities at the age of transfer to secondary education. Selection for secondary education was the subject of a separate enquiry conducted within a few years (McClelland 1942).

² This test had 71 items related to various types of mental task: following directions (14 items), same-opposites (11), word classification (10), analogies (8), practical items (6), reasoning (5), proverbs (4), arithmetic (4), spatial items (4), mixed sentences (3), cipher decoding (2), other items (4).

individual test was administered in 1937 but on this occasion to a sample of 874 children selected on the basis of their having been born on four dates in 1926 - 1st February, 1st May, 1st August, and 1st November - all to be tested by a single tester no matter where situated in Scotland. (It has been hailed as the most perfect sample ever achieved anywhere.) The work was supervised by a committee, the SCRE Mental Survey Committee (Chairman, Godfrey Thomson), and reported in Thomson (1940).

A second Mental Survey on similar lines was undertaken in 1947 at the request of the Population Investigation Committee, which, with others, financed the operation. Reflecting the attitudes of the time, this request developed out of an interest in the possible decline of the nation's intelligence level, suggested as a result of differential fertility, that is, the suggestion that there might be a tendency for the children in large families to have, on the average, lower intelligence than those in small families. A Royal Commission on Population was sitting, and the Population Investigation Committee associated with it felt that the only certain way of answering this question of declining national intelligence was to put it to a direct test. This meant the comparison of national intelligence at two points with a considerable interval of time between them, to see if the level of intelligence was rising, falling or remaining constant. For this the 1932 survey offered a base line for comparison. In the event, there proved to be no sign of a decline. Indeed, there was a marginal increase. The Committee gave extensive consideration to what extraneous factors might have given rise to this apparent increase. This is described in both of the Committee's reports (SCRE Mental Survey Committee (Chairman, Godfrey Thomson) 1949 & 1953).

The 1947 Survey collected additional information, including data of a sociological nature, from two sub-samples - known as the 36-day-sample and the 6-day-sample. These formed the basis for a follow-up over many years. The later group consisted of 1208 children born on the first day of each second month (February, April, etc) of 1936, all of whom had been individually tested using the Terman-Merrill Binet Test. Contact was maintained with many members of this sample through a system of returns and home visits over many years and form the basis for a number of publications both by the Council itself and by others: SCRE Mental Survey Committee (Chairman, N T Walker) (1958), MacPherson (1958), Maxwell (1961 & 1969) and Hope (1984).

Deary *et al* (2000) and Deary *et al* (2009) have more recently been investigating cognitive aging and have been able to study people in Lothian born in 1921 or 1936 who were tested in the Mental Survey and whose performance at that time can, with their consent, be used as a base-line. Deary comments that Scotland is "the only place that has ever tested a complete nation for IQ." (http://genome.wellcome.ac.uk/doc_WTD020901.html assessed 08.10.12)

Selection for Secondary Education

This research was undertaken just before the outbreak of the 1939-45 war and the report was published in 1942 in the midst of that war. Moreover, it constituted the first example of the Council operating in an international environment, for it was part of an international examinations enquiry initiated by the Carnegie Foundation of America and the International Institute of Teachers' College, Columbia University and funded by the Carnegie Corporation and the Carnegie Foundation.

The Committee guiding the Council's participation was chaired by James Drever Snr, Professor of Psychology, Edinburgh University, and its membership encompassed very many of the leading figures in Scottish education including Godfrey Thomson, then Professor of Education, Edinburgh University and the author of its subsequent report, and William McClelland, Executive Officer of the National Committee for the Training of Teachers and formerly Professor of Education in the University of St Andrews. The data was collected in the City of Dundee and related to pupils that had been presented for the local Qualifying Examination in 1935-36³. The findings included not only the details of the statistical analysis

³ Allocation to courses in secondary schools was based on results in this examination along with teachers' estimates. The fact that in this investigation only 14.3% were found to have entered senior secondary courses -

but profiles of individuals such as “a borderline reject but a clear success” and failures attributable to home conditions, health or emotional factors. It recommended as an objective the raising of the percentage admitted to senior secondary schools to 30.1% but recognised that the achievement of this would require both “a far-reaching improvement in social and environmental conditions” and “an increase in the variety and attractiveness of the senior secondary courses” (McClelland 1942: 220).

FEATURES OF THE WALKER YEARS (1958-1970)

On Robert Rusk's retiral in 1958, the Council appointed its first full-time Director, Dr David A Walker, hitherto Depute Director of Education for Fife. The Council's President, Douglas M McIntosh, the then Director in Fife, knew Walker as a sound administrator and skilled statistician, both of which were to be exemplified during his term of office, as indeed were his diligence - he was the unacknowledged principal author of reports published in the name of project committees - and the high integrity which won him the respect of staff at all levels. David Walker was cautious by nature, but none the less initiated two major undertakings, the research project, Assessment for Higher Education, and participation in an international project seeking to compare educational achievement throughout the world (IEA). He also oversaw a gradual expansion of staff as greater funds became available from SED and a fundamental change in the way the Council's research was undertaken. Hitherto, most projects had been conducted by committees made up largely of members of the Council who gave of their own time. They had brought to their work a wide range of knowledge and skills but most were dependent on the Director for specialised research skills. Walker and indeed the Council itself recognised that the development of its activities would depend on greater professionalization. Accordingly, he secured not only the employment of some temporary research officers and research assistants but the appointment of Gerard J Pollock in 1964 as Assistant Director (Depute from three years later) and in 1967 of the present writer, John L Powell, as Assistant Director. While both had responsibilities for undertaking and supervising research, Pollock was given specific charge of the IEA project and of surveys (work where securing representative samples was of particular importance) and Powell was given special responsibility for improving communication with teachers. In 1968, the permanent research staff was further increased by the appointment of Malcolm Corrie as a research officer with permanent status.

This expansion in staffing, which marked the beginning of a gradual change from reliance on voluntary effort to operating a fully professional organisation, was of course dependent on increased funding, much of which came from the SED (£31000 in 1968). The willingness of the Department to provide this increase reflected the fact that it regarded the Council's work as important in developing its policies on the basis of independent advice, a fact underlined by the willingness of three successive Chief Inspector of Schools (John S Brunton, David Dickson, and James Bennett) to be one of its Assessors on the Council and to attend its meetings in person.

MECHANISATION

The later part of this period was marked by the advent of mechanical and electronic means of recording and analysing data. Indeed, the analysis of the AHE data (see below) could not have been carried out without the aid of the computing power of the newly available mainframe machine operated by the Edinburgh Regional Computing Centre (ERCC), since the full data set, recorded on approximately 59000 Hollerith cards, was extremely large. Walker welcomed all these additional facilities and encouraged both

the only route to university entrance - was not, however, the result of the selection process alone but of the fact that all such schools required the payment of fees unless a free place was won in an extra examination. 62.2% had entered junior secondary schools, 11.1% been allocated to special education classes and 10.6% retained in primary school for another year. (McClelland 1942: 7)

Pollock and Powell to attend short courses to give them the necessary skill to program in Fortran.

COMMUNICATING WITH TEACHERS

In 1967 the Council's Executive Committee became increasingly aware that its reports in book form were not reaching the generality of teachers and therefore saw it as a high priority to remedy this situation. The achievement of this end was indeed one of the purposes of appointing an Assistant Director whose duties would include undertaking the task. Accordingly, Powell was instructed to institute a series of newsletters. He was told that, although the text might contain opinions and judgments, it would be necessary to make clear when these might not be necessarily those of the Council by ensuring that any such articles were signed.

Powell undertook this commission, naming the newsletter *Research in Education, the Newsletter of the Scottish Council for Research in Education*. He decided that a journalistic approach was required, avoiding technical terminology, using curiosity-arousing headlines, and choosing topics of interest to teachers that could be discussed, drawing on research findings not only by the Council itself but by others at home and abroad. (To achieve the required style throughout, he wrote most of the text himself.) He further decided that this newsletter should be produced cheaply enough for personal copies to be available to every teacher in Scotland and to every final year student in teacher training. This led to his choosing a simple two-column, four-page (29 x 22 cm) format for printing commercially but cheaply on a web off-set machine. As the number of copies to be distributed exceeded 60,000 per issue, there was a not inconsiderable problem in respect of distribution, but this was overcome by securing the support of the local education authorities, whose staff arranged delivery to schools. (Powell continued this policy until he demitted office in 1985. Thereafter, subsequent editors commissioned most articles and produced a larger, more expensively produced newsletter, which was, of necessity, distributed in much smaller numbers. The final issue was in 2002)

NOTABLE PROJECTS

Participation in the Testing Programme of the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA)

Walker enthusiastically supported this international project and was a member of its international committee. The Council represented Scotland in the studies in Reading Comprehension and in Mathematics. He also was the author of the report on whole six-subject survey (Walker 1976). The tests were administered to 10-year olds, 14-year-olds, and pupils in their final year of secondary education (represented in Scotland by Secondary 5) in 1964. The management of the data was entrusted to Pollock, who was subsequently sceptical about the value of the findings, particularly in mathematics, since he believed that there was evidence that some participating countries had, for reasons of national prestige, exaggerated scores achieved. As a former member of the Scottish IEA Reading Comprehension Advisory Committee, Powell was sceptical in respect of the Reading Comprehension findings because the translation, and in some cases retranslation, of the passages had eliminated all the subtleties of expression, comprehension of which it was desirable to test.

Assessment for Higher Education (AHE)

With the rapid increase in the number of students and of universities as advised by the Robbins Committee, anxiety was expressed at the time that some students admitted would be less able than hitherto and that wastage would become a problem. Thus the system of selection and its relation to subsequent student success became a major issue. An investigation was set up in collaboration with James Drever Jnr, then Professor of Psychology in the University of Edinburgh. Access to student records was granted by all the

relevant institutions in a way that would no longer be permitted⁴. However, with all information coded and stored on computer under case numbers, no private information was ever even momentarily known by anyone other than the very small number of individuals who undertook the coding. Data collection was begun in 1962 and completed in 1970. It was supervised by Malcolm Killcross of the Applied Psychology Unit, Edinburgh University until 1968 when, upon his resignation, it was passed to Powell to analyse the huge volume of data already referred to.

Selection for university at that time depended on performance in the Scottish Leaving Certificate. This examination, operated at the time by the Scottish Education Department (SED), was related to performance in the courses offered by senior secondary schools. Since there seemed to be a possible advantage in making an assessment of ability *not related to curriculum*, an arrangement was made with College Entrance Examination Board in Princeton, New Jersey for the Council to use its Scholastic Aptitude Tests in English and Mathematics as an additional measure for testing all Scottish pupils sitting the SLC for the first time in 1962. Students' performance in both types of test was then related to their subsequent performance in their respective university courses, details of which were supplied by the universities.

In fact failure rates were found to be very low. There was very little wastage and early drop out was found to be largely for non-academic reasons such as health. For this reason both types of test had limited though similar prognostic value other than in predicting the *level* of achievement such as class of honours. It was, however, clearly established that the current standards of selection were not giving rise to avoidable wastage. Further it suggested that some modest lowering of admission standards to increase student numbers was unlikely to give rise to significantly higher levels of wastage (Powell 1973).

CHANGES OF LOCATION

In 1970, the enlargement of staff and the prospect of more to come led the Council to move its offices from 46 Moray Place, where the EIS had for 42 years provided it with a number of rooms, to 16 Moray Place, where, with financial support from the SED, it took on the rental of the whole house. This move was one of the last responsibilities undertaken by David Walker before his retirement.

After a further ten years, at the request of the SED, there was a second relocation, this time to vacant accommodation at Moray House College in the modern Charteris Land Building, St John Street. At the end of a twenty year lease there, the Council and its by then small staff moved to temporary accommodation in Dublin Street for the last three years of its existence.

RECONSTITUTION OF THE COUNCIL (1971)

In 1971, the Council amended its Articles of Association to permit of a change in the size of its membership. It had been operating with its Executive Committee reporting twice a year to meetings of the full Council of 50-60 members. Some members of the latter had complained that its function had in practice been no more than to rubber stamp the decisions of the former. A smaller Council (of approximately 21 members), with fewer representatives of each nominating body, therefore seemed desirable, since it could then act as its own executive Board. At the same time it was agreed, at the request of the SED, that the Secretary of State for Scotland should appoint the Council's Chairman and the Chairman of its Finance Committee as well as five other members. The purpose of this was to include representatives of the wider community, including business. The first Chairman appointed in this way was R B Forbes, at that time Director of Education for the City of Edinburgh. He

⁴ Today, the requirement to obtain the permission of each student involved would make a repetition of this research wholly impracticable.

took up office in 1972, replacing Douglas M McIntosh, who had been Chairman of the Executive Committee since 1950 and President of the Council since 1960.

FEATURES OF THE DOCKRELL YEARS (1971-1986)

W Bryan Dockrell was appointed Director in 1970 but did not take up office until July 1971, eight months after Walker's retiral. During the interregnum, Gerard Pollock served as Acting Director.

Dockrell, a graduate of Manchester, Edinburgh, and Chicago, had spent most of his career in Canada, most recently as professor of special education in the Ontario Institute of Education (OISE). His work there included the supervision of doctoral students and this served to influence his style of working when he came to SCORE. Indeed, he often chose to describe himself as a "facilitator".

Whereas Walker had been a hands-on administrator, Dockrell delegated responsibilities (finance to Pollock and all aspects of information services and publications to Powell) as well as other tasks to each from time to time on an *ad hoc* basis. Both were given considerable authority in their own spheres and each reported directly to him. (A corollary of this was their having less time for their own research.) Meetings of the three for discussion of topics of general interest were often held. It was therefore apt to describe his style of leadership as collegiate. Informality in relationships amongst staff of all ranks was encouraged, for instance by tea breaks being taken together.

Dockrell saw his own role to be one who, familiar with current trends in research, could widen the Council's programme. To this end and to promote the image of the Council, he read and contributed to journals extensively and travelled often in the UK and overseas, visiting others research centres. The latter, a task well suited to his convivial personality, involved his being absent from the office not infrequently. However, Professor John D Nisbet, Chairman of the Board from 1975 to 1978, writing shortly after Dockrell's retiral, strongly commended him for what had been achieved in this way (Nisbet 1986).

Dockrell's interest in maintaining contact with the researchers worldwide was matched by his concern to have close links with those working in Scotland and it was this that led to his encouraging Pollock to take steps to initiate the foundation of an association for educational researchers and teachers in Scotland, something that Stanley Nisbet, Professor of Education in the University of Glasgow, had suggested during Pollock's time as Acting Director (Morris 1994:200-01). This Pollock did and the Scottish Educational Research Association (SERA) was formed in 1971 with Pollock himself as its first chairman and SCORE providing secretarial support. Attendance by SCORE staff at its annual conferences was encouraged and financially supported.

Dockrell was fortunate in that the seventies was a period when finance for educational research was increasingly available and he was able to obtain funding for many new projects and facilities. By the end of the 70's, research and support staff (including many on fixed-term contracts) averaged approximately forty.

PUBLISHING

During his period in office, Walker had zealously discharged the oversight of all forthcoming publications in order to be assured that standards of writing and statistical competence - and thus the Council's good name - were maintained. This responsibility now fell on Pollock in respect of projects that he had conducted or supervised and on Powell for all the rest.

From 1973, cheaper, soft back versions of books were to be produced as well as hardback ones - which were, however, retained to meet the requirements of libraries. By 1977, Hodder and Stoughton, which had taken over the University of London Press, had replaced the latter as the Council's publisher, in which role it continued to provide editing services. However, during 1978, Hodder and Stoughton having withdrawn from the role, the Council became its own publisher and all existing stock of past publications was transferred to it. From this point, therefore, commissioning cover design and printing, and the sale and

distribution of a rapidly increasing number of books had to be undertaken internally, thereby adding to the calls on Powell's time. Sales, mainly postal, were invoiced and despatched by his secretary.

From 1974, a series of booklets, internally printed and bound, was added. After 1985, publication in book form was discontinued.

SOME NOTABLE PROJECTS

Formation of a Research Services Unit

An important measure initiated by Dockrell was the establishment in 1973 of this unit to serve both internal projects and to provide technical support to outside organisations that sought it. It offered expertise and facilities for the collection of large volumes of data from surveys and its subsequent analysis and continued the methods of representative sampling of larger populations that had been characteristic features of the Council's work in earlier years. It ran under the control of Pollock and was operated by Graham Thorpe (who was appointed to fulfil this role).

Pupil Profiles

This was the first major project in which Bryan Dockrell was directly involved, though it was one of a few that continued to follow a long-established practice of having a committee to decide matters of policy. The committee in fact grew out of a working party established in 1972 by the Headmasters' Association of Scotland to consider what needed to be done to provide an objective for pupils who would otherwise leave school at 16, or shortly after, without a national certificate and for whom the Scottish Certificate of Education (SCE) O-grade was educationally irrelevant. SCRE and the Scottish Education Department were invited to assist and given representation on the working party.

It was decided that there was a need for pupils to have a *cumulative* record of their progress in their secondary courses that would be useful contemporaneously as a source of self-knowledge and later as a basis for guidance and for a final report in a form useful to potential employers or institutions of further education. It was further decided that the record should not be confined to performance in subjects studied but should cover behavioural characteristics such as diligence, self-confidence and reliability. However, it was at the same time recognised that, as the information would have to be recorded by every teacher with whom a pupil had individual contact, it would be essential to develop a system that did not impose an undue burden on teachers but that would provide also a simple way of consolidating all the information so that separate profiles could be provided for each pupil in a suitable format.

The research to be undertaken by the Council had to include finding ways of doing this, either manually or on computer. In addition, it had to monitor both its experimental application and its acceptability to teachers.

Patricia Broadfoot was appointed as a research assistant to conduct the operation of the project under Dockrell's guidance. She later drafted the research report that provided part 2 of the publication, *Pupils in Profile* and a users' manual (SCRE Pupils in Profile Working Party (Chairman, A B Russell) 1977a & b).

Diagnostic Assessment in the Classroom

Later, Dockrell followed his long-term interest in assessment by initiating a programme of research to be conducted under his guidance by H D Black, which involved using criterion referenced assessment for diagnostic purposes. Three subject areas - Geography, Technical Subjects, and Home Economics - were chosen for investigation. The task was to work with teachers in a number of schools to define intended learning outcomes for each course and to create a system whereby the attainment or partial attainment could be recorded succinctly. In this way, it was hoped that pupils would be motivated by having clear objectives and that teachers would be made aware of required remediation. The aimed-for learning outcomes were to be defined in terms of what the pupils were able to do.

Detailed work was conducted with teachers in a substantial number of schools with a view to the teachers acquiring a continuing skill in defining learning outcomes and creating tests thereof. As well as the final report (Black and Dockrell 1984), booklets were produced for each subject area (Black and Dockrell 1980a,b & c).

In Search of Structure

Dockrell displayed his openness of mind by engaging David Hamilton to work on this new project. He was aware that Hamilton had recently edited a book, *Beyond the Numbers Game* (Hamilton 1977a) - which questioned the value of research based primarily on the collection of statistical data - and that he would be keen to take the opportunity to conduct an "illuminative" study in a new open-plan primary school during its first days of operation, when both staff and pupils would find themselves in a new and unfamiliar environment.

When he undertook this task, Hamilton sought to answer questions such as "What are the conditions necessary for the translation of an untried idea into the realm of educational practice?" (Hamilton 1977b: 99) when it is not possible to untangle the relative effects of measured variables. His approach was, while observing a class, to make detailed notes of every event, action and spoken word and subsequently to write a commentary on them, drawing inferences about the purposes of all those involved. Thus objective data collection was swiftly followed by the "illuminative" interpretation reported in *In Search of Structure* (Hamilton 1977b).

An Evaluation of the Lothian Region Home Educational Visitors Scheme

Dockrell soon after supported another "illuminative" study, one which had been commissioned by this scheme's administrator, Ian McFadyen, and financed by the SED. The scheme involved weekly visits to the mothers of children in five schools in areas judged to be socially disadvantaged with the objective of encouraging the mothers to play a more prominent part in the educational development of their children and to reinforce their feelings of competence and pleasure in so doing. The experienced researcher engaged to undertake the evaluation was John Raven, who brought to the task his own well developed rationale for such an investigation. The work was in fact "illuminative" in one part only, for the other was statistical and concerned with the attitudes of the mothers who had been visited as contrasted with a comparable group who had not been visited. Whereas many of the interviews were structured, others were open-ended in order to pick up as wide a range of information as possible with a view to its being later used as a means of collecting quantifiable data. Raven reported his orientation and theoretical perspective in Chapter 3 of his final report on the project (Raven 1980).

Some Projects relating to Post-15 Education

These projects were initiated by Pollock and operated under his general direction. Pollock was himself a former lecturer in a college of further education. All related to pupils who left school at the end of compulsory schooling or shortly thereafter, with particular reference to what further education or training, if any, they were securing either by attending courses in colleges of further education or by securing apprenticeships. They typically involved the structured interviewing of the young people shortly before or after entering such courses or training, though often combined with the collection of statistical data. Three of the main projects were conducted by a team led by A C Ryrie. (Ryrie and Weir 1978; Ryrie 1981; Ryrie 1983). A central concern of all these projects was what guidance was available and given in schools and thereafter and how appropriate it was found to be by the young people themselves. When apprenticeships were involved the cooperation of employers had, of course, to be secured. One of these projects, subsequently reported in *Just the Job* (Pollock and Nicholson 1981), was commissioned by the Manpower Services Commission, which provided part of its funding.

Teaching Strategies in the Primary School: Part 1: The Creation of the SCOTS Schedule (1973-76)

This project, planned and conducted by Powell, was designed to identify empirically the many and varied skills employed by teachers in their daily work and to explore the diversities often hidden by over-simple classifications such as a teacher-centred or pupil-centred. While accepting the limitations of what Hamilton had called the numbers game and his contention that a skilled observer could subjectively interpret events in a classroom more usefully, Powell regarded the techniques that Hamilton had employed as being very significantly liable to distortion by the individual observer's personal standpoint. He therefore adopted for his own work a compromise, namely one where observers were to draw inferences but only within the bounds of prescribed criteria.

Work was undertaken to devise an observation schedule, SCOTS (System for the Classroom Observation of Teaching Strategies). His approach was one which required numerous small, narrowly focussed subjective judgments - such as on whether a question required pupils to think, not just recall - rather than a few wide-ranging ones. A full account of the rationale of the schedule is given in Powell (1974).

The project was much aided in its early stages by the paid secondment by the Tayside Region Education Department - at the instigation of its then Director, David G Robertson - of Mabel Scrimgeour (now Cruikshank) and Christine Darroch to work on the project. Scrimgeour played a major role working with Powell on the detail of the SCOTS schedule. Jointly they observed a sample of teachers from schools in Dundee that were known to promote different approaches to teaching and learning and noted their characteristics in detail. This enabled them to identify many ways - initially 55 but later reduced to 43 - in which teachers could be said to differ and to describe the range of these differences, each variable on a five-point scale. All the variables were descriptive and did not involve making value judgments. The resulting descriptors were laid out for each variable in a format resembling that of a multiple-choice test.

In later trial observations of a larger sample of teachers drawn from a wider geographical area, each teacher was rated on these dimensions at the end of each of five quarter-day observations such that single consolidated ratings could be arrived at later. The full text of the SCOTS schedule can be found in *The Teacher's Craft* (Powell 1985a: Appendix A).

Teaching Strategies in the Primary School: Part 2: The Application of the SCOTS Schedule

The team that conducted Part 1 was no longer available and so, although Darroch was granted unpaid secondment for part of a further year, it was necessary to recruit and train a new team (Ann Proctor, Graham McAvoy and Finlay Coupar) for the second phase of the project (1976-78) when the SCOTS schedule was to be used to provide the project's main set of data, data which was to be processed using cluster analysis. In the course of the 1977-78 school session, 128 teachers in a fresh sample were observed, each during five separate quarter-day periods by one observer (or, in 20% of the cases, by two observers, to provide evidence of reliability). Powell himself was present for one of the observation periods to enable him to understand and discuss the nature of any specific problems of coding the observers were experiencing.

Unfortunately lack of further finance after the completion of these observations made it impossible to retain this second team for more than three months and consequently the cluster analysis of the data⁵ and the writing of the final report fell to Powell alone to undertake in such limited time as he was able to allocate. The result was a long delay in the completion of the final report.

The cluster analysis produced 17 clusters of teachers, each having in common major characteristics of approach and practice that can be regarded as empirically established

⁵ The cluster analysis undertaken was a long and multi-stage procedure. Powell (1985a: 67) points out that clusters are *not* pre-existing entities that we simply have to recognise. The shape and size of clusters depend on criteria laid down. He describes in detail (pp 253-258) the procedures followed to produce clusters as homogeneous as possible.

teaching styles. None of them offers an ideal or any sort of prescriptive model but jointly they provide a basis for teachers to look again at their objectives and the ways in which they might seek to attain them.

The final report, *The Teacher's Craft* (Powell 1985a), includes a detailed discussion of each cluster and a booklet, *Ways of Teaching* (Powell 1985b), describes the various ways in which the teachers observed had sought to achieve their ends and does so with the purpose of encouraging teachers who read it to "question their own objectives and practices" and aid them "in finding for themselves ways of improving their teaching" or, alternatively, of providing topics for discussion in teacher-training, either initial or in-service.

Writing Across the Curriculum

This project sought to address the fact that writing is not an activity that in secondary schools is confined to English departments but is employed for many purposes in others. It was commissioned and funded by the SED and two local authorities, the latter also seconding some staff. Ernest Spencer was appointed to head a team to conduct the research under Powell's supervision. The team first conducted a survey in a number of schools to ascertain what the pupils were writing across departments and later a more detailed examination, in a smaller sample of schools, of the written work of pupils in the middle years of their secondary courses, with particular attention being paid to its function in each subject. The work with teachers of the subjects involved attempted to assist them in teaching their pupils the skills required. The findings are reported in *Writing Matters Across the Curriculum* (Spencer 1983).

Teaching Writing for Learning

This project, a sequel to *Writing Across the Curriculum*, was conducted by Spencer with a fresh team. It operated in the belief that many of the skills required in writing involved the very sort of thinking required when learning new matter and relating it to existing knowledge and that it was therefore a concern of all teachers. Work with teachers in a number of schools aimed to help them develop in their pupils relevant learning and writing skills such as accuracy of definition, paraphrasing, note-taking and organisation of ideas and information.

Responsibility for the project in its final year - after Spencer left to join HM Inspectorate of Schools - passed to Angela Roger. The findings are reported in *Teaching Writing for Learning* (Roger and MacDonald 1986).

FUNDING

The way in which the Council was funded underwent some considerable changes during the period when Dockrell was in office, though it continued to receive a "deficiency grant" - one which could be drawn on to meet expenditure up to an annually set maximum but any part of which unspent within the government's financial year was lost. This grant was intended to meet fixed overheads including the salaries of permanent staff, the maintenance of a library, the cost of the newsletter and a subsidy for the printing of publications in book form. However, the SED no longer continued to fund more than a few projects and therefore most new ones were dependent on funding being secured from elsewhere. One such source was the Social Science Research Council, a UK government-funded body and indeed an increasingly important one.

By the beginning of the 1980's, government research policy was directed to providing research on matters determined by the government itself to inform or monitor general educational policy. It further established a policy of putting such projects, including ones initiated by itself, out to competitive tender, where both the detail of how the research would be conducted and its cost would be put forward by the bidders, who were likely to include university departments as well as the Council itself. Although this policy was aimed at securing value for money, it tended to ignore the cost of preparing a bid and the fact that multiple proposals gave rise to multiple costs. For the successful bidder, there was some recompense; for the others there was none. Furthermore, since the projects funded typically

had short-term aims, the research projects themselves tended to be shorter ones, which in turn led to the researchers required to conduct them to be engaged with contracts extending for just two or three years, something that, save in a few cases where it was possible to offer employment on another suitable and immediately available project, limited the build-up of expertise.

THE FUTURE ROLE OF THE COUNCIL

For many years the Council had been seen by the SED as a preferred provider, but this ceased in 1983 on the retirement of J G Morris as the HMCI in charge of its Research and Intelligence Unit (RIU). Morris, as a long-term Assessor attending Council meetings, had become convinced of its value and had therefore championed it. His successors did not necessarily share his view and, moreover, the policy of the Thatcher government was to question the value of quangos (quasi-independent non-governmental organisations).

In 1981, even before Morris's retiral, reviews had been initiated. The first of these, a so called Raynor review⁶, although primarily directed at the RIU itself, also took in its client bodies such as the Council. The procedure was simply to interview staff at all levels. For the Council, it proved to have no serious repercussions, but this was not the case in respect of the conduct during the same period of a review of its salaries.

The Council had hitherto had its own salary scales, though, to facilitate routine cost-of living updates, these had been tied, in the case of research staff to teaching scales and in that of support staff to local government ones. The Thatcher government was however suspicious of quangos overpaying staff and it therefore required such scales to be replaced by appropriate civil service ones. For the Council, the first step was for each member of staff to write a job description, which had to be approved by his or her line manager. These were submitted to a job-evaluator from the civil service to select the new scales. The possible outcomes of this procedure had an unsettling effect on staff, which Dockrell sought to lessen by encouraging all to join a trade union - which all did - and by deputing Powell to monitor developments as they occurred so that staff would feel reassured that management was supporting them. In the event, the new scales, ranging from Executive Officer to Assistant Secretary, proved uncontentious, the civil service job evaluator having found the level of the existing scales satisfactory and having consequently merely substituted for each staff member a civil service scale very similar in level and incremental range. Placement on them was done by selecting the nearest incremental point at or immediately above each existing one. Pollock and Powell were placed at two fixed points (top-and-mid) on a single scale, that of Senior Principal.⁷

By the beginning of 1984, most staff must have felt that they had suffered enough investigation, but they were none the less exposed to a third one, a so called Pliatzky review⁸, which involved further interviews and further large diversions of time. Morris (1994: 237-8) states that the government "wished to reduce the size of the civil service, eliminate quangos, and hive off government functions to the private sector" but that although "these stated aims were mutually antagonistic, they were pursued in the belief that activity, any activity, could be construed as firm action." This review was undertaken by a Principal from the Scottish Office Central Research Unit. Morris goes on to report that the reviewer's remit included his finding out whether the functions performed by the Council were "essential and financially worthwhile", whether they were "best performed by the Council", whether these functions were "carried out economically", and whether "there would be a substantial loss if

⁶ Raynor chaired a committee tasked with finding methods of best identifying which quangos should have their state funding ended.

⁷ Morris (1994: 235) is uncharacteristically inaccurate, having overlooked the civil service rank of Senior Principal. It was SCRE Senior Research Officers that were placed on the Principals' scale. Research Officers (1), who typically were in charge of single projects, were graded as Senior Executive Officers, Research Officer (2) as Higher Executive Officers, and Research Assistants as Executive Officers.

⁸ Sir Leo Pliatzky, a senior Treasury official, was commissioned by Thatcher to make further recommendations. He advocated interviewing not only educationalists but "users" such as industrialists.

the Council were wound up” (pp 238-9). The Civil Service reviewer interviewed not only all staff but the chairman and members of the Council and persons external to the Council judged to have an interest in its function and performance.

The reviewer’s report was not published but Morris, by then himself retired from the RIU, was given access to it and was able to quote from it in his thesis (Morris 1994: 243). The report concluded, *inter alia*, that management was “top-heavy”, that the Board’s three sub-committees were “unnecessary”, that the supply of supporting staff was “over generous”, and that there was “a lack of a rolling programme”. It recommended the addressing of these issues and, in particular, the abolition of the posts of Depute and Assistant Directors.

Morris (p245) comments, “After what can only be seen as a damning report, there is the surprising conclusion that ‘the Department should consider using the Council as a consultative body for the totality of its research programme even though part of that programme will be located within the Council’.”

The Council did, of course, have to make a clear and constructive response. Gordon Kirk, in his Chairman’s Report for 1985-86, stated that the Council had “undertaken a comprehensive reappraisal of its role, its structure and its central purposes” and that this had led to a “restructuring of the Council’s staffing” (SCRE Annual Reports 1928-2002). This had in fact involved, in 1985, the retiral of the Depute Director, Gerald J Pollock and of the Assistant Director, John L Powell - terminating service of 21 and 18 years respectively - and, in 1986, that of the Director, W Bryan Dockrell, who had been in office since 1971. He went on to announce the appointment of a new Director, Dr Sally Brown (from the University of Stirling) and the appointment, at a senior level (Senior Research Officer), of Harry Black (from the Council’s staff) and Pamela Munn (from the University of York). A new post of Administrative Officer was also announced.

Pollock and Powell and, later, Dockrell had all accepted early retirement with appropriate compensation packages, the not inconsiderable cost of which was met by special grants from the SED and by early call on pension funds. Skills were not entirely lost, however, Dockrell undertaking British Council assignments in Nepal and Sri Lanka and Powell, over the next five years, undertaking for the RIU commissions such as literature reviews relevant to current policy issues. Unhappily, Pollock suffered ill health and died in 1994. Dockrell lived until 2010.

THE BROWN YEARS (1986-1990)

In 1986, Sally Brown, an experienced and highly respected researcher from the Education Department of Stirling University, was appointed as the new Director. Soon after, to take charge of finance and related issues, David Gilhooly was appointed to the new post of Administrative Officer. Graham Thorpe remained in post, and Rosemary Wake, hitherto librarian/Information Officer, was placed in charge of Information Services. However, in or about April 1986, a further consequence of the 1984 review recommendations was the early retiral of Corrie and of two very long-serving research assistants.

Brown accepted the current funding situation, seeking and obtaining grants for many small projects, typically lasting for one or two - occasionally three - years and even some of only a few months’ duration. These were conducted by staff many of whom were on fixed-term contracts. Topics covered included media education in Scotland, provision for pupils with learning difficulties, several evaluations of TVEI (Technical and Vocational Training Initiative) in various places, monitoring pilot school boards, opportunities for adult students, and discipline in schools. Her approach met with official approval: a policy review conducted in 1988/89 by an independent reviewer on behalf of the SED (quoted on page 7 of the Council’s Annual Report for 1989/90) stated that the Council provided “a national research facility of quality” that provided “information, understanding and critical analysis of the educational process and system, [was] well managed, [and] made effective use of its resources.” It concluded that “no alternative deployment of these resources would achieve the same results.”

Morris (1994: 274) praises Brown's achievement in rebuilding staff morale after the major changes that had occurred. Brown remained at SCRE only until 1990, when she returned to Stirling University to become its Professor of Education.

THE HARLEN YEARS (1990-1999)

Wynne Harlen, then Professor of Science Education in the University of Liverpool, was appointed to succeed Brown. On taking up office, she immediately re-designated Black and Munn as joint Depute Directors, thus restoring Walker's original administrative structure. When Morris interviewed her, she explained that she regarded this re-designation as important in giving them appropriate status when dealing with outside bodies (Morris 1994: 262). However, after the resignation of Munn in 1994 (on her appointment as Professor of Curriculum Research at Moray House Institute of Education) and the sudden and untimely death of Black in 1994, Bridget Somekh was appointed sole Depute Director in 1995. Somekh remained for only two years and thereafter Harlen decided not to replace her but instead to give permanent appointments to six Programme Managers, each of whom had responsibility for a number of projects in which, along with other researchers, they were personally engaged (SCRE 69th Annual Report 1996-97).

By the time Harlen took over, the nature of the support provided by the SED had fundamentally changed. Instead of an annual deficiency grant, contracts laid down what specific services were to be supplied for agreed sums of money. Moreover, projects funded by the SED were usually commissioned by it or its political masters.

Harlen continued Brown's policy of taking on many short projects. Indeed she went further and even accepted some with a duration of only two months and, for example, in 1995/96, no less than 48 projects were undertaken or were in process. One of the longer ones that extended over two years was in Harlen's specialist field: *Primary Teachers' Understanding of Concepts in Science and Technology*, but others, such as one enquiring into the Vocational Training of Dentists broached new ground. Not all of these were based in Scotland, commissions being taken on in other parts of the UK and indeed overseas. A result was that it was common for researchers to be simultaneously engaged in two or more projects. The Council often provided technical assistance in data collection and/or analysis to others running their own projects but even projects that it conducted alone were seldom entirely of its own choosing. The type of research that this policy permitted, much of it based on either interviewing providers and recipients or working with institutions tackling problems of their own, was clearly very different from that which had been customary in earlier times and remote from what Rusk had originally conceived. It did, however, secure funding that enabled the Council to continue to exist.

In 1999, Harlen decided to retire. In her final report (SCRE 71st Annual Report 1998-99: 5) she not unreasonably concluded that the forthcoming Scottish Parliament would have education as a priority and that "as Scotland's national independent institution dedicated to educational research and to the provision of research information from all sources, SCRE [was] in an ideal position to provide the services" that MSPs would require.

THE WILSON YEARS (1999-2003)

Valerie Wilson, who had been a Programme Manager under Harlen before working for a time at the Scottish Education Department's Educational Research Unit (formerly the Research and Intelligence Unit), was appointed to succeed as Director from the beginning of August 1999. Though initially as optimistic as her predecessor, she was speedily disappointed. As she wrote in her report for 1999-2000,

"The year started and continued with hopes and planning for the future, because it was believed that the establishment of the Scottish Parliament had created a high demand for educational research and accessible information. However the end of the year was dominated by the devastating news in March 2000 from the Scottish Executive Education

Department (SEED) that the Scottish Ministers wished to end their 'special relationship' with SCRE, would withdraw the HMI Assessor from the Board immediately and end core funding. In short, SCRE was expected to become self-funding by March 2003. Moreover, its dissemination and information activities, vital parts of its rationale, would be put out to tender by the SEED from the same date."

It is ironical that this decision, which, had it been taken the previous year by the London government, would almost certainly have provoked an outcry in Scotland, now passed almost without comment when taken by a Scottish Education Minister, Jack McConnell, and approved by an administration headed by Donald Dewar. The sole protest, and that in vain, came in a letter to a number of Scottish newspapers signed by many leading figures in the field of educational research including Professor John D Nisbet (Chairman of the Educational Research Board of the Social Science Research Council, 1972-75, editor of the *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 1967-74, and Chairman of the Board of SCRE, 1975-78), the Professors of Education in the Universities of Cambridge, Edinburgh and Stirling (Mcintyre, Entwistle and Brown), and the former Head of Research in the Research and Intelligence Unit of the Scottish Office Education Department, J G (Ian) Morris. In the letter, they described the change as "ill-considered" and as "far too serious to be accepted without challenge". They went on to point out that "SCRE has provided a national research organisation which has worked closely and successfully with the Department's own research personnel over the past 25 years" and that "on the international scene, SCRE is highly respected" and "is part of an international network of research organisations which discuss trends in educational research." (The Herald, Glasgow (4th April, 2000: 18).

To this situation there was added the expiry of the lease of the Council's offices in the Charteris Building, which was not available for renewal. Consequently, alternative accommodation was sought and secured in an open-plan attic flat at 61 Dublin Street, on a three year lease for the remaining period of the Council's guaranteed survival. In April 2001, both Gilhooly and Wake retired, their posts having been abolished. Short-term projects were continued and others sought, but, as it was clear that the Council would lack any basic income after March 2003, it was decided to seek a link with another organisation.

This was found in the Glasgow University School of Education, to be effected in 2003, from when, since it would no longer be governed by a Council, it would be renamed the Scottish *Centre* for Research in Education, a title that enabled it to retain the acronym SCRE. Wilson herself retired but the few other remaining staff members, including some on contract for on-going research projects, were able to retain employment though at the cost of either moving to Glasgow or commuting there daily. In January 2011, the Centre had five employees, of whom three were engaged in research and one each in dissemination and in administration, but now this would seem to be no longer the case.

The University of Glasgow School of Education did a service for the few remaining Council staff, who had reason to be grateful for continued employment over the next few years, but it would be wrong to suppose that the Council rose from the dead under a new name in Glasgow. Nothing but its acronym survived. The Scottish Centre for Research in Education is - or was - a different sort of organisation, one *not* governed by a body of representatives of a very wide range of educational bodies and interests throughout Scotland and *not* a free-standing unit staffed by full-time researchers. Instead, it is - or was - an integral part of a school of education that conducts its research in much the same way as do the other schools of education in Scotland, its staff members conducting research along with their other duties related to teaching and learning. Indeed, the Centre no longer has a web-site of its own and the University of Glasgow School of Education web-site (www.gla.ac/schools/education/research) now gives information on its research without mentioning the very existence of a Centre.

The registration of the Scottish Council for Research in Education has, in fact, not been cancelled, though its last accounts were made up to March 31st 2005, at which point they were recorded as dormant.

EPITAPH

The ending of the role of the Council as an independent national body guided in its choice and conduct of research by representatives of all elements in the Scottish educational system constituted the abandonment of an ideal so fervently promulgated by Rusk at the time of its foundation. It was, however, an outcome that had been foreshadowed during the preceding twenty years when, by a steady erosion of its preeminent position, it was reduced to being a mere competitor for short-term projects chosen by others.

Rusk's primary aim of underpinning national educational developments by having research to replace prejudice or blind assertion with independently established facts is no longer *systematically* fulfilled other than by government deciding what it chooses to fund. His fears of accepting government money, which had proved unjustified for the many years during which the Council had received enlightened support, were in the end shown to be not unfounded.

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ARCHIVED RECORDS

The National Archives of Scotland have papers relating to SCRE throughout its history. They are listed on its website and include the following:

Minutes of meetings: Council, 1928-44
 Executive, 1928-72
 Board of Management, 1976-2002
 Finance and General Purposes Committee, 1922-85
 Publications Committee, 1929-71
 Communications Committee, 1980-85
 Research Committee, 1979-84
 Joint meetings with EIS, 1949-71

Minutes of Project Committees 1930-73

Publications 1930-2002