

The Editorial Board wishes to inform subscribers of a change in status of the journal. For some years now SER has been produced without the services of a publisher and will continue so to be in the foreseeable future. In order to formalise our business arrangements and to clarify our status with SERA, we applied for, and were granted, limited company status. Any profits from the business will be ploughed back into the journal.

This issue carries a varied and lively set of articles. We are delighted that once again we have been able to print the SERA Annual Lecture so soon after the annual conference. In the lecture, which we print in its entirety, David Reynolds submits a robust defence of schools' effectiveness research and researchers. Reynolds puts the case for an epidemiological model of schools' effectiveness study and argues that the research might better be focussed upon the 'sick' schools rather than upon the 'well'. Clinical metaphors have been used in education before — the terms 'remedial education' and even 'remedial pupils', for example, have been current — and they have not always been well received by educationists, yet it is plain that Reynolds is seeking to alleviate the pressing problems of school failure and to improve conditions for those who fare least well in the system. There is, of course, a two-way exchange of terms between the disciplines of education and medicine: medicine adopted the word 'doctor', in its original Latin meaning to teach, and still the academic title for the highest qualification for teaching, for its own profession. Reynolds quotes strong words on both sides of the controversial schools' effectiveness debate, matching the sideswipes and jibes of his detractors with trenchant rebuttals and concludes with insightful self-criticism.

There is controversy, too, in Rae Stark and colleagues' paper on the end of an era for the Assessment of Achievement Programme in Science as they knew it. They argue that the newly determined conduct of the AAP Science monitoring exercise, using short-term, part-time staff, as distinct from a coherent, consistent and independent team, is likely to fragment and dissipate the research base. SER acknowledges and reinforces the point that one of the benefits of the continuity of the research heretofore has been the possibility of research papers being written above and beyond the requirements of the research funders since these papers have formed an important contribution to this journal and others like it. Such articles can best be produced by research staff with some stability and continuity in employment beyond the end of a short-term research contract.

The increasing casualisation of research jobs of which this is but one example is to be regretted as much for the effects on staff as on the research expertise which is squandered. The research community inevitably looks to the government education departments to provide a climate conducive to high quality research — and this is not it. The Scottish Higher Education Funding Council, to take another example, took the issue of short-termism in research seriously this year by launching its contract research staff initiative. Specifically, the SHEFC intention was to find ways to mitigate the deleterious effects of 'constant and directionless upheavals in staffing which caused adverse effects on the research base'. The Concordat recently signed by the CVCP, the Research Councils, the Royal Society and the British Academy testifies to the most prestigious research funders' public commitment to improve the lot of contract researchers. We should note, however, that the SOEID is not yet a signatory to the Concordat, nor is any other government department.

Finally, I am frequently criticised for privileging feminist analyses of the education system above others. In defiance of this criticism, my regret is that there are not more women contributors to this issue. Articles are reviewed in a gender blind way and are selected on merit and so women authors are neither discriminated against nor favoured. I intend nevertheless to monitor the publication rate of authors by gender in relation to the numbers of articles received. Of course, women contributors do not necessarily provide, and men are not precluded from offering, analysis of education in a feminist vein.