

I 特別寄稿論文

EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION IN BRITAIN: A CASE STUDY OF CHANGING RELATIONSHIPS

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Introduction

I begin this paper by briefly describing the three main interests involved in the administration of education in Britain, or more simply in England, in order not to become involved in complications in relation to the Scots, Northern Irish or the Welsh - even though I myself am a Welshman! In England then there are three main participants in administering education: central government, local education authorities and the teachers in the schools.

The relationship among these three interests has been described as a partnership. Whether or not that was ever a very accurate description, the relationships involved were very loose and flexible, and can appropriately be given the designation 'loose coupling'. By examining recent developments in relation to the control of the school curriculum and recent studies of educational expenditure, I propose to show that in many respects there has been a tightening of those relationships in recent years, though at the same time more devolution to the individual educational institutions is also proposed. In these circumstances the management training and development of school principals and other educational administrators may be seen to assume considerable importance and the paper ends by noting the tensions between theory and practice in this area.

I begin then with the three protagonists, central government, the local education authorities and the teachers in the schools. It has been claimed on many occasions that education in England is a partnership among these three groups. It was never, of course, an equal partnership but it could be argued that in the early postwar era there was some aptness in the description, for the big changes which took place in achieving educational advance at that time would not have been possible without a large amount of voluntary co-operation among the three interests inspired by a common purpose.

I would want to argue that, though there is still a large measure of decision-making at local and institutional level, the balance has shifted significantly towards the centre over the last decade. Without going into too much detail, I would like to describe how this has occurred, but I must begin by briefly describing the three main levels of central government, the local authorities and the schools and colleges.

Central Government

Within central government there is a Department of Education and Science (DES), the political head of which is called the Secretary of State for Education and Science and is usually a member of the Cabinet. The Secretaries of State for Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland in varying degrees also have some responsibility for education in those parts of the United Kingdom, but the DES has full responsibility for all aspects of education in England, so it will be simpler for me in this paper to confine my remarks to the position in England.

The Department of Education and Science's responsibility is a general one and is almost wholly concerned with policy. It is responsible for the broad

allocation of resources for education, for the rate and distribution of educational building, and for the supply, training and superannuation of teachers. Advised by a professional inspectorate, it is concerned with the maintenance and improvement of educational standards, but has not, and still does not, exercise direct control over the content of education or over teaching methods.

Local Education Authorities

England has 97 Local Education Authorities. These bodies are directly elected multi-purpose authorities. Though the major part of their spending is on education, they also have responsibility for other services; for instance, for housing, for parks and for social services. Local authority expenditure is financed partly by a local property tax known as 'Rates' and partly by grants from central government, the major element being a "block grant" which is not earmarked for a specific service. The priorities of a particular local authority may be quite different from those of national government. It is thus largely true that education has to compete with other local services for its share of the resources available, but subject to the proviso that every local education has a legal obligation to provide basic educational services at an adequate level.

Being publicly elected, local authorities usually have a political complexion. It quite frequently occurs that this political complexion is different from that of national government, giving rise to conflict from time to time concerning policies and levels of expenditure and support.

It is the Local Education Authorities which have responsibility for the provision and day-to-day running of schools and colleges in their area and

with the recruitment and payment of the teachers who work in them. They are responsible for the provision of buildings, materials, equipment and the advisory services to back-up the teachers.

The one major exception to what has been stated relates to the universities. These are financed nationally by government through an intermediate body called the University Grants Committee, which includes some membership from the academic community. Post-school education of an advanced nature is also provided, however, in Polytechnics and Institutions of Higher Education, which do come under the jurisdiction of Local Education Authorities.

Schools and Colleges

Schooling is compulsory from 5 to 16 years of age and is mostly arranged in maintained schools in two phases, primary (up to the age of 11) and secondary (11 and over). There are about 23,000 maintained primary schools and about 5,000 maintained secondary schools in England, most of them comprehensive. In some areas students transfer at the age of 16 to sixth form colleges or technical colleges, while in others schools have students up to the age of 18. Most maintained schools are established and run by local education authorities, but about a third of the primary schools and a fifth of the secondary schools were established by the Churches (mainly Anglican and Roman Catholic), their running costs being paid by the LEAs. These are called 'Voluntary' Schools.

Each school has a governing body which includes LEA representatives together with parents and teachers. An Act of Parliament has recently been passed which increases the formal responsibility of governing bodies for the school curriculum and other matters, and the government is keen to increase the influence of parents in this way over the education provided in the schools. The effective control from day to day for the organisation, discipline and

the curriculum of a school rests with the Head, who may be assisted by deputies and other senior staff. To varying extents general meetings of academic staff have some influence over the running of schools.

At this point I will also briefly mention that there is also a non-governmental sector of private independent schools. Numerically this sector is quite small, about 5 per cent of secondary pupils attending non-maintained schools, but it is very influential. A select number of these schools, the so-called Public Schools, are held in high regard socially as well as academically, and place great emphasis on their traditions. Inevitably they are also the subject of some controversy because of the privileges and advantages associated with them.

For those over 16 there is a very flexible system of further education in the maintained sector on a full-time and part-time basis, and a wide range of further education establishments. Government at the present time is attaching great importance to achieving more effective links between education and the world of industry and commerce, and is doing so, not through the Block Grant to local authorities but by specific grants for special projects distributed through a body called the Manpower Services Commission within the Department of Employment, not the Department for Education and Science. Education and training for the 16-19 year olds is also becoming an important public issue, all the more so because of the high rate of unemployment, particularly among the young.

Such then is a hurried and brief description of the educational system, in which the main actors are central government, local education authorities, and the teachers in the schools and colleges. It will be clear that the administrative system is not a simple one. It certainly does not conform to

a centralised bureaucratic model, which could be envisaged as pyramid having three layers. Let us consider how such a model would operate:

- (1) At the apex the Secretary of State, working through the civil servants in the Department of Education and Science, effectively making quite detailed decisions concerning the operation of the education system;
- (2) In the middle, the Local Education Authority, through its Education Officers, implementing at a local level, decisions made at national level;
- (3) Heads and staff of schools and colleges providing the teaching of pupils and students in accordance with the regulations laid down.

This is not how it occurs, though it would be equally misleading, as I said at the beginning, to suggest today an equal partnership, or as one writer called it, 'a triangle of power' balancing the three components. The relationships between (1) and (2), central and local government are governed by checks and balances in a continual state of mutual readjustment. Again the relationship between (2) and (3), the local education authority and the educational institution in which the teaching and learning takes place, is traditionally one which gives considerable recognition to the autonomy of the institution and of the teachers themselves as expert professionals. Such autonomy however is relative, and its nature continually has to be redefined. Then thirdly, there is a relationship between (1) and (3), central government and the teachers, which is seen in the increasing interest and involvement of national government in matters relating to the content and delivery of education.

What I have portrayed is certainly not a tight hierarchical structure such as Max Weber had in mind when he described the characteristics of bureaucracy. It is more in accord with the concept of structural relativism, which permits alternative, more differentiated, and more

flexible structures. In particular it fits in rather well with the perception of the American sociologist Karl Weick of educational organisations as 'loosely coupled systems'. Let me pause for a moment to consider this idea of 'loose coupling' or 'structural looseness'.

Loose coupling is intended to signify that the parts of a system are in some relationship to each other, but that the linkage may be limited, uncertain and weak. The idea of loose coupling also carries the idea of impermanence and adaptability which allows the system to respond quickly to outside pressures. On the other hand loose coupling may have a stabilising effect in that the connection points of sub-systems to some extent act as shock absorbers which internalise pressures rather than transmitting them to other parts of the system. There is also the interesting suggestion that, if a system faces a scarcity of resources, its pattern of couplings is likely to become significantly tighter.

This tightening of the system is precisely what appears to have been happening to education in Britain over the last decade or so, as economic constraints and other environmental factors have increasingly had an effect on the educational system. I would like to stress that, in spite of some difference of emphasis, this is not in the main a party political matter. A more interventionist central government role in education was already becoming apparent under a Labour Government in the 1970s (DES, 1977). This has been continued and strengthened under a Conservative Government in the 1980s (DES, 1985).

A new element is that the Treasury, which is the U.K. Ministry of Finance, has initiated reviews by its Audit Commission of financial expenditure on education, which are likely to have considerable impact on the

administration of education. I will consider in turn, the tightening control on the curriculum and the expenditure reviews.

Control of the School Curriculum

The traditional view in Britain has been that the content of the school curriculum is entirely a matter for the professionals, i.e. the teachers in the individual school, and is no concern of the politicians or the administrators. A DES booklet issued as recently as 1978 stated the position as follows:

"Legally, the curriculum is the responsibility of local education authorities and school governors; in practice, decisions about its content and about teaching methods, timetabling and the selection of text books are usually left to the headteachers and staff."

In fact the freedom of the teachers, though not entirely mythical, was subject to quite severe constraints. These included the requirements of external examination bodies, the resources provided by the local education authorities and the expectations of the public and particularly the parents.

By today the climate has changed. For the public and the government the current emphasis is not so much on the professional autonomy of individual teachers but on the accountability of teachers within a framework agreed nationally. Even in 1977 the Secretaries of State for Education and for Wales jointly promised that they would "seek to establish a broad agreement with their partners in the education service on a framework for the curriculum", and called on the local education authorities to "co-ordinate the curriculum and its development in their own areas, taking account of local circumstances...." Each local education authority was to review the curricular arrangements in its schools (something which many of them had never regarded as their concern), and each authority was then to report accordingly to central government. The curriculum was no longer to be "a secret garden" open only to the professional teachers.

The present government has confirmed and extended the change of emphasis. A 1981 government document, entitled 'The School Curriculum', on the one hand takes care to reaffirm the usual commitment to freedom for the schools to shape the specifics of the curriculum:

"Neither the Government nor the local authorities should specify in detail what the schools should teach. This is for the schools themselves to determine." (par. 10),

but on the other hand it also states very firmly that

"Local authorities...have a responsibility to formulate curricular policies and objectives which meet national policies and objectives, command local assent, and can be applied by each school to its own circumstances." (par. 9)

In particular

"...each authority should have a clear policy for the curriculum in its schools and make it known to all concerned; be aware of the extent to which its schools are able, within the resources available to them, to make curricular provision which is consistent with that policy; and plan future developments accordingly, in consultation with the teachers and others concerned in their areas." (par. 58)

It is made clear that the views of the Secretary of State for Education, together with the Secretary of State for Wales, are intended to be taken seriously as the following makes clear:

"The Secretaries of State will wish to inform themselves in due course about the action which, within the resources made available to them, local authorities are taking in the light of the guidance in this paper." (par. 62)

The word used is "guidance", not "control", but there is no doubt that the "loose coupling" which previously existed is being significantly tightened.

Finally the same paper shows the "loose coupling" being also tightened as far as the individual schools are concerned:

"...every school should analyse its aims, set these out in writing, and regularly assess how far the curriculum within the school as a whole and for individual pupils measures up to these aims." (par. 18)

"Her Majesty's Inspectors, in the pursuance of their normal duties, will provide the Secretaries of State with information about, and assessments of, the curriculum offered by schools..." (par. 63)

It would thus appear that with the Government, through the Department of Education and Science, now adopting a more managerial and interventionist role, it is appropriate to regard the local education authorities and the teachers in the schools more as agents than as partners of the central authority. I suspect however that in comparison with countries with long established centralised traditions, there is still considerable looseness in the system.

Financial Reviews of Educational Expenditure

I turn now to the reviews of financial expenditure on education which have been instituted by national government and carried out by the government appointed Audit Commission for Local Authorities in England and Wales. The Local Government Finance Act of 1982 requires auditors appointed by the Audit Commission to satisfy themselves that authorities have made "proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of resources."

Audit Commission Reports from 1984 onwards have thus dealt with such local authority matters as the cost of local authority purchases, securing improvements in refuse collection, managing social services for the elderly more effectively, saving energy in local government buildings. Since the major part of the local authority expenditure is on education, it was natural that educational expenditure would also come under scrutiny. In June 1985 a report, "Obtaining better value from Further Education" was published. The Audit Commission's latest Report, published in May 1986, is entitled 'Towards better Management of Secondary Education'.

The report on further education, i.e. on post-school education other than universities, was the outcome of the examination in detail by the Commission's auditors in the previous year of the way resources were being used in 165 out of 550 polytechnics and colleges of further education. Recommendations made include the following:

Better marketing for further education courses, with more emphasis on improving links with local schools and employers.

Tayloring teaching resources more closely to demand, having regard to student/staff ratios, class contact hours, avoiding over-teaching.

Tighter control over non-teaching costs.

Detailed suggestions of these kinds are being vigorously taken up at local level by the Audit Commission and it is estimated that savings, or as the report prefers to put it, "improvement opportunities" worth over £300,000 per college can result from putting the recommendations into practice. Some of the conclusions are being resisted by the local authorities and the lecturers' union, but the government itself is taking the auditors' views very seriously.

The report on the management of secondary schools concludes that local education authorities can manage their teaching resources better, and makes specific recommendations including the following:

- (1) Incentives are needed to encourage authorities to take unpopular decisions concerning the closure and amalgamation of schools which are not required because of falling enrolments.
- (2) The way teachers are assigned to schools needs to be changed from a pupil/teacher ratio approach to one which determines each school's teaching complement by direct reference to the curriculum and out-of-class activities which need to be undertaken.

- (3) Maximum authority in financial matters should be delegated to the school level. The head and governors should have the widest possible discretion to manage the school within the agreed budget, subject to appropriate quality assurance checks by the local authority.
- (4) On the assumption that good school management is directly reflected in educational performance, more effort needs to be devoted both to assessing the performance of individual schools and to ensuring that head teachers are in a position to manage their schools effectively. The auditors therefore call for more rigorous selection procedures for heads, greater investment in in-service management training, better planning and control systems and fuller use of information technology.

The recommendations are backed up by a formidable array of facts and figures. I will leave aside the first two recommendations which raise issues which have yet to be resolved. The third recommendation is an interesting one, because it shows a technical Commission, the objective of which is to ensure effective national control over the use of resources for education, coming out strongly in favour of more financial delegation to the school level as a means of achieving decision-making of greater relevance and higher quality. Six local education authorities are in fact already implementing schemes of this kind, which are being studied with great interest by the DES and by other LEAs.

The fourth recommendation concerning school assessment and in-service training for head teachers or school principals follows naturally from what has gone before. In discussing curriculum policy I have already referred to the government's recently expressed view that

"every school should...regularly assess how far the curriculum within the school as a whole and for individual pupils measures up to these aims"

and this is an area in which schools and local authorities are already

taking action. There is also considerable attention being given to management training for school heads and others in the education service, and it will now be appropriate for me to take this as the final topic of my address.

Training in education management

In the past substantial experience as a teacher has been regarded as the most important and often the only necessary qualification for management positions in education. The situation is changing, and there is an increasing recognition of a need for programmes of systematic education and training for those in, or likely to be appointed to, administrative positions in education, whether at institutional or system level. Thus a government consultative paper already quoted in relation to the curriculum, (DES, 1977) placed emphasis on

"the continuing need for the training of senior teachers, especially heads of department and head teachers, for the complex tasks of school organisation and management, including the design and management of the curriculum, to help them make the most effective use of all available resources, not least the talent of the school staff itself in providing for the diverse needs of their pupils." (par. 6.29)

The new impetus for specific training does not mean that on-the-job practical experience is not still seen as important. What is claimed is that such experience on its own does not provide adequate preparation for senior administrative responsibilities in education. The argument can be summarised in terms of three propositions which may also have some application outside the United Kingdom. Firstly, exclusive reliance on one's own experience disregards the experience and thinking of others. Secondly, learning by experience is liable to be costly and not only in financial terms, for disastrous errors of judgement can occur while experience is being gained. Thirdly in a world which is rapidly changing,

entirely new thinking may be needed, for practitioner experience in one situation is not necessarily applicable in another.

With the gradual acceptance of the view that some management training or development is desirable for those in responsible positions in education, there is some difference of opinion in Britain concerning the best use of limited resources for in-service training. Should the emphasis be on accredited award-bearing courses, whether full-time or part-time, or on more immediately relevant short courses and learning experiences within the institution itself? My own view is that there is a strong case for both, and for seeing them as complementary rather than alternatives. Short courses can be sharply focussed on particular topics and can be flexible, providing a quick response to perceived needs as they arise. Longer award-bearing courses, i.e. courses for a degree or diploma, may provide a more basic preparation for management responsibilities in the long term, placing immediate concerns and fashions in a wider perspective. But there is a natural tendency when resources are in short supply to go for short courses because they are cheaper.

Personally I would like to maintain a balance, and would propose an analogy which may be illuminating. Consider the different perspectives and viewpoints which a helicopter pilot can achieve, landing in different places and becoming familiar with the local landscape. But he is also able to rise above the terrain and see relationships and potential connections, and changes in relationships not evident to those on the ground. I think that the helicopter analogy gives us a very good parable of the relationship of theory to practice in educational administration, as, for instance, in appreciating better the linkages among central and local government and schools and colleges in the administration of education. We need opportunities for learning through action but also for opportunities to

relate a variety of theoretical perspectives to practical situations .pa (Hughes, Ribbins and Thomas, 1985), if our educational administrators are to respond adequately to changing relationships and challenges in today's world.

Conclusion

In this paper I have transported you, not by helicopter but through the power of your thinking, to a distant land. The educational landscape is very different from yours, and I have sought to explain to you some of the functions in education of central government, of local government and of the schools and colleges and the relationships between them.

In particular I have discussed the control of the school curriculum and reviews by auditors of educational expenditure as areas in which significant changes in relationships are taking place at the present time.

I have concluded by noting the implications of changes such as these for the initial training and further professional development of heads of schools and other educational administrators in England.

I appreciate that your problems in administering education in Japan are by no means the same as ours in Britain. Nevertheless I hope you will have found it of interest this afternoon to have adopted an international perspective. Sometimes such an experience can even help one to look with fresh insight at one's own situation. Thank you for listening.

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