


## BETWEEN A ROCK AND A HARD PLACE? CURRICULUM FOR EXCELLENCE AND THE QUALITY INITIATIVE IN SCOTTISH SCHOOLS

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### ABSTRACT

With the Scottish government renewing the pledge to implement *A Curriculum for Excellence* (2004) the schools' sector arguably faces a period of radical reform that could fundamentally affect the nature of pedagogy and schooling. This paper explores the disjunction in national policy that is foregrounded by this particular initiative. Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) can be seen as an attempt to move the Scottish approach to school improvement away from an alignment with the tenets of 'hard' managerialism and the requirement for conformity with centrally determined procedures and practices. It can be interpreted as using a 'softer' version of the discourse, where notions of organisational learning and contextualised development are seen as the basis for securing better performance. As such the implementation of CfE might be construed as incompatible with the approach to school improvement embedded in the *Quality Initiative in Scottish Schools*. This paper argues that the key to curricular reform lies with increasing the capacity for teacher, as well as student, learning in schools and that this requires a major revision of our approach to accountability. Given the recent OECD report on schooling in Scotland, the outcomes of the Crerar review of audit and inspection and the signing of the Government Concordat with local authorities, this is an ideal time for re-thinking how we set about achieving quality assurance.

### INTRODUCTION

The recent OECD (2007) report, *Quality and Equity of Schooling in Scotland*, identifies that schools in Scotland provide a very good quality of education for all children up to the latter part of their primary education (Primary 5<sup>1</sup>). Thereafter the authors point to a growing divide in terms of educational outcomes between students. This is linked to the socio-economic status of individual children and young people and their families and is largely independent of where students are placed leading the authors to assert that, 'Who you are in Scotland is far more important than the school you attend so far as achievement differences on international tests are concerned' (p. 15). They conclude that the education service caters very well for those students who respond to what the review group identified as 'a predominantly academic culture' in Scottish schools. For students that do not, largely those that come from poorer homes, underachievement and disengagement are likely outcomes so that Scotland's record in relation to the educational participation and achievements of over 16 year olds is comparatively poor.

Accordingly, in arriving at their recommendations, the authors postulate, firstly, that there is a set of cultural and organisational factors that are held in common across the compulsory education sector in Scotland and that these underlying factors discriminate against significant educational outcomes being achieved by roughly a fifth of the school population. Hence the changes they believe are needed are systemic and cannot simply be brought about by concentrating on the performance of a few schools. Secondly, whilst pointing to the strengths and achievements of the Scottish approach to schooling, the OECD review group argues that a highly centralised control over both the curriculum and organisational structures has been achieved at the cost of responsiveness and relevance to the educational needs of a significant proportion of the population. Therefore they believe that greater autonomy and independence should be given to education authorities, schools and

their communities at local level to make decisions about how best to engage the students they serve more fruitfully in the educational process.

Neither this set of observations nor the thesis for change that follows them are new. There have been various policy texts that have validated the need for greater flexibility and inventiveness on the part of teachers and for greater differentiation of provision according to school context. In particular these elements are detectable in the McCrone Report, *A Teaching Profession for the 21st Century* (Scottish Executive 2000), *the Standard for Chartered Teacher* (Scottish Executive 2002), *A Curriculum for Excellence* (Scottish Executive 2004) and *Ambitious, Excellent Schools* (Scottish Executive 2004). Amongst these probably the most significant is *A Curriculum for Excellence* (CfE) which the members of the OECD review group praise as a radical and apposite response to the need for reform. Whilst their report concentrates on equity issues at secondary level, the rationale for CfE is broader, seeking to change the educational experiences and, consequently, the achievements of all children and young people from 3 to 18 years in addition to providing a more inclusive framework for the lowest achieving segment of the population.

#### GOVERNANCE AND MODELS OF IMPROVEMENT

In the education sector ‘theories’ about how to achieve school improvement have become strongly associated with systems of governance over the past twenty years. For much of this period the dominant thesis underlying policy has been that better performance can be achieved through improving school effectiveness. Put in crude terms, improvement is a matter of ensuring that what has been identified as best practice at the centre is replicated across all schools. Latterly, there has been a growth in the policy field of a call for ‘transformational’ change, a rather different formulation, which tends to be associated with notions of the learning organisation and the invention and improvement of practices through the engagement of staff working locally with pupils and parents.

#### Theory 1: Quality Control

The charge of having an overly centralised system in Scotland is unsurprising. A major part of the text of the Parliament’s first piece of educational legislation (Scottish Executive 2000), *the Standards in Scottish Schools etc. Act*, was concerned with providing a statutory framework for the external evaluation of schools and local education authorities. This development was congruent with a commitment to the central bureaucratic control of the public school sector that had existed long before the reforms of the ‘90s (Anderson 1999). Indeed, it could be argued, that this bureaucratic tendency found its ‘natural’ extension in the tenets of hard managerialism (Trow 1994 ) enshrined in the 2000 Education Act. The legislation, through co-opting the local authorities into the quality improvement regime, intensified concentration on the attainment outcomes of pupils and the implementation of performance standards that had been developed under the previous Conservative government. It also significantly increased the frequency of school inspections as part of a general growth in the burden of scrutiny (Scottish Government 2007<sup>2</sup>).

Post-devolution, control over developments within the sector has continued to be exercised by central government through both the quality assurance (QA) system and financial ring-fencing of centrally mandated initiatives. There has been limited encouragement of innovation and risk-taking at grass roots level. Whilst the white paper that preceded the passage of the 2000 Education Act asserted that devolved school management had given schools greater autonomy (SOEID 1999) the reality has been very different. Improvement plans became the means for intensifying levels of central control rather than establishing the validity of local decision-making. This

Innovation has largely been predicated as a matter of up-dating teachers through knowledge transfer. The practice has been for solutions to current ‘problems’ in education to be provided by the centre in the form of prioritised initiatives, guidelines, courses etc. The task of institutional leaders has been to put these into operation through the mechanism of local authority and school improvement plans and annual standards and quality reports. The underlying ideology embedded in this approach is that improvement is secured through compliance with a centrally determined model of good practice. The publication of performance data and HMIe reports is an important part of the process ensuring that non-conformity is perceived as a high risk strategy by teachers, school leaders and local authorities.

For schools the web of devices associated with the Quality Initiative in Scottish Schools (HMIe 2002) has entailed:

- compliance, not simply with a broad externally driven ‘agenda’ but, with detailed prescriptions for action which obviate the need for any real attention to diagnosis, or evidence-informed problem finding and solving in-house;
- a top-down approach to change which attenuates a sense of agency on behalf of teachers and managers and which discourages intellectual engagement and innovation;
- a simple, linear, task and resource-orientated interpretation of change which glosses over deeper issues such as: beliefs and assumptions; capability, contextuality and basic principles of learning (Reeves 2006).

Rose (1999) claims that this approach to governance, with its emphasis on measurable outcomes, standards, targets, performance indicators etc. has replaced trust. It provides an effective form of ‘distanced’ control for the political centre over local units. However, it carries the danger of re-creating a ‘problem’ it set out to eliminate at a new locus i.e. amongst those at the centre who have now captured an exclusive right to knowledge and wisdom.

The content of a document most clearly aligned with this approach, *How Good is Our School? 2nd edition* (HMIe 2002) (HGIOS2) demonstrates this inclination to self-reference. *Part 4: Some useful sources of advice* contains 39 references to government sources (19 HMI) and only 4 from elsewhere. The text underlines that the emphasis in this model is on replication within a strictly hierarchical system:

Priorities and targets are set nationally for key aspects of educational performance. Authorities in turn establish local objectives, taking into account their own circumstances. Schools use these objectives as a basis for deciding their own priority projects and targets for action.(p. 2)

Performance measurement and review take appropriate account of best practice as embodied in local and national guidance.(p. 64)

Promoted staff monitor teachers’ plans, evaluate pupil’s classroom experiences, track pupil’s attainment and evaluate their progress. (p. 64)

### Benefits and Risks

As a means of securing a general level of competence, i.e. eliminating poor practice, external evaluation as part of a quality control system has been judged to have a positive impact by some researchers (Ouston & Davis 1998). In Scotland centralised control is also credited as a means of securing equity in the provision of education across the system although, as the OECD report points out, it has not been successful in ameliorating problems of inequity within schools<sup>3</sup>. Nevertheless, as the product of a highly centralised system, Scottish education has performed well in a number of respects and therefore there is an argument that ‘reforms should preserve and build on the system’s strengths’ (Raffe 2008: 24).

However, there are significant disadvantages in the use of high stakes accountability. Reay and Wiliam, reporting on the effects of target setting, observed,

it seems to us far more likely that for most observers, this narrowing of the focus of assessment, together with an emphasis on achieving the highest scores possible, produces a situation in which unjustifiable educational practices (*such as the exclusion of less successful learners*) are not only possible, but encouraged. (1999: 352)

In a systematic review into the effect of the use of summative assessment measures on student motivation Harlen and Deakin-Crick (2003) found that it had led to:

- constricting effects on the curriculum and on teaching methods;
- the neglect of areas of the curriculum involving creativity and personal and social development;
- limitations in both the scope and the depth of learning on offer to pupils; and
- a neglect of the practice of formative assessment.

They concluded that the practice had discouraged positive attitudes to learning on the part of many pupils. What these studies point to is the exacerbation of ‘risk aversion’ on the part of teachers who retreat to teaching to the test rather than experimenting with the development of new pedagogic strategies in a search for improved outcomes.

There is also strong disagreement with the central tenet that ‘best practice’ can be identified and applied across an education system (Biesta 2007) on both theoretical and practical grounds. A position that is largely borne out by research into the learning of experienced teachers discussed later in this paper.

## Theory 2 – Learning Systems

Quality control systems are based upon a set of principles which are arguably incompatible with the enaction of ‘shared and distributed’ leadership, ‘evidence-informed practice’ and ‘knowledge creation’ in schools, practices which are advocated as the basis for securing transformational change. These conceptions are associated with a ‘softer’ version of managerialism, in a discourse that has been gradually extending its territory at national policy level since devolution. ‘Soft’ managerialism is associated with the idea of the learning organisation (Senge 1990; Evans & Wolf 2005) and total quality management (Deming 1982) an approach that supposedly allows both the pursuit of shared objectives and projects of individual self-actualisation on the part of organisational members. Thus workers become better motivated through exercising greater control and agency in relation to their work including taking on a leadership role in improvement. Some have traced this somewhat utopian vision of organisational life back to a rather more sinister origin as a method of social control (Rose 1999) nevertheless, it has proved attractive in educational circles. It has much in common with notions of professionalism advocated by a number of writers and variously described as ‘extended’, ‘new’, or ‘activist’ (Nixon *et al.* 1997; Sachs 2003).

The results from increasingly differentiated studies of school effectiveness have suggested for some time that the greatest variance in pupil outcomes is accounted for at the level of classroom teaching (Goldstein 2003). On these grounds it has been argued by Sachs and others (Harris & Lambert 2003) that teachers should be encouraged to become the pro-active leaders of improvement processes in schools. Sachs links the institutionalisation of values of ‘reflective practice, collegiality and critical pedagogy’ (2003: 21) to establishing commitment to processes of collaborative knowledge creation by teachers. In a variant of this argument Hargreaves (1999), claimed that professional trust could be re-established if

educational practice is built on an evidence-informed approach to pedagogy on the part of teachers.

This notion that improvement is essentially generated through the participation of those at the grass roots of the organisation in decision-making connects to a wider international discourse about the renewal of democracy and the value of localism. The 2000 Education Act re-iterated the rights of the child as agreed by the United Nations and asserted that, in carrying out their duty to provide school education, education authorities should have regard for the views of children and young people in decisions that directly affect them. This directive relates to an aspiration, post-devolution, to renew the democratic process in Scotland by actively engaging people more directly in civic life (Ozga 2005). The National Debate on Education, inaugurated in 2002, represented a significant commitment to this aspiration as does CfE in seeking to provide children and young people with experience of active participation in decision making at school and classroom level. Indeed, it could be argued, that this form of governance aligns with, and is enshrined in, CfE's four capacities for students' educational development. These are practices that fit with an emerging discourse about choice and personalisation (Leadbeater 2003) based upon a communitarian approach to governance where judgements about the provision of services are made at local level. A school's curriculum would be based, in part, on collaborative decision-making and action by professionals and young people thus requiring a radical re-conceptualisation of the relationship between professionals and those they serve. Texts supporting the *Ambitious Excellent Schools* initiative, which was introduced as the major vehicle for raising standards of attainment and achievement in 2004, take up a similar theme, although for a slightly different reason, citing the need to respond to the complex effects of globalisation and the growth of a knowledge economy by encouraging enterprise, innovation and creativity among young people.

#### Benefits and Risks

The benefits of a learning systems approach have already been listed but, as a largely untried strategy in the context of Scottish schools, there is little evidence in relation to outcomes other than reports of experience from elsewhere (Fullan 2003; Hopkins 2001). Certainly the introduction and maintenance of such a strategy in commerce and industry has not been notably successful in many organisations (Evans & Wolf 2005). The level of expectation and the lack of experience in this regard is clearly a major risk with respect to CfE.

More particularly it has been argued that such an approach may well exacerbate levels of social exclusion through increasing variation in provision according to the capacity and inclination of local authorities (Raffe 2008). In its turn, such diversity could fuel a marketised approach to the selection of schools on the part of parents thereby widening the divide in educational achievement according to social class even further (Ranson 2008).

#### IMPLEMENTING CURRICULUM FOR EXCELLENCE

In many ways the implementation of Curriculum for Excellence is a test case for the adaptability of public education service, particularly in the secondary sector, since it requires a radical change in orientation to practice on the part of teachers and schools since it calls into question traditional assumptions about:

- *The nature of pedagogy.* The move to privilege constructivist/social constructivist frameworks as opposed to transmissive and behaviourist approaches to teaching alters the role of teachers and hence the assumptions, skills, knowledge and tools that they need to employ in their practice.

- *The purpose of education.* By placing cross-curricular capacities, which have tended to be treated as peripheral distractions in the past, at the centre of the curriculum it challenges teachers' alignment and identification on the basis of the subjects they teach both;
  - a) by privileging interdisciplinary contexts for learning; and
  - b) by making the formation of the moral character and conduct of the student central to the curriculum.
- *The power relationship between teachers and students.* The balance of power is altered in favour of the latter by granting a greater measure of autonomy and agency to students in terms of their education thus challenging assumptions about appropriate interactions between staff and students.

On these grounds the enaction of CfE would require a major re-alignment of what it is to be a schoolteacher in terms of both identity and practice. The changes would not only be radical at teacher and classroom level but would also disrupt organisational arrangements in schools and the wider service since these are based upon traditional specialisms and tend to preserve tight departmental and organisational boundaries. In changing relations with pupils, implementing CfE raises issues about the conduct of other relationships such as those between teachers and their managers that arguably will also need to reflect a less hierarchical and prescriptive environment for learning.

Thus, in order to implement CfE, developing new capabilities and capacities at individual and organisational level in schools, other establishments, and local authorities will be essential. The new curriculum will require that opportunities for professional learning are maximised if the aspirations of the Government are to have any chance of being realised.

#### CONDITIONS FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

The difficulty of changing practice is indicated by research studies on the impact of professional development such as Joyce and Showers' work (1988). They found that incorporating new practices into teachers' repertoires required complex and sustained forms of support across different contexts including classrooms. Even where pedagogic approaches are well researched, piloted in school settings and legitimated by employers their application is often limited. For example, a recent evaluation of the implementation of Assessment for Learning (Marshall & Drummond 2006) found that only 20% of those teachers who claimed to be using the approach were actually observed to be teaching in accordance with the rationale.

Many researchers have identified the isolation of teachers, and other professionals, as a barrier to their learning and development (Huberman 1993; Day *et al.* 2007). The traditional restriction of teachers' experiences of teaching and learning to those available to them in the confines of their own classrooms is seen as:

- preventing teachers from gaining access to new ideas and experiencing the practice of others;
- restricting opportunities for professional dialogue and the development of a language in which to discuss learning and teaching; and
- contributing to the lack of development of a sound knowledge base for the profession as a whole.

Nevertheless, teaching is still a relational practice (Shulman 2005) and therefore opportunities for professional growth need to be contextualised within the social spaces in which practice occurs. Teachers are part of a collaborative activity system. Change on their part, because it potentially disrupts the practice of others such as pupils and colleagues, is therefore likely to be resisted. They have to justify any alterations they make in their behaviour not only to themselves but to the pupils they work with and to colleagues to secure sufficient co-operation to make new practices sustainable (Reeves & Forde 2004).

Recent reviews of research into the effects of professional development commissioned through the EPPI<sup>4</sup> Centre have provided further evidence for the complexity of professional learning. Cordingley *et al.* (2003, 2005) found that studies which they judged to have established a link between continuing professional development and impact on students' learning described programmes which were collaborative, sustained, and involved feedback on practice i.e. classroom enquiry and reflection. In describing the effects on teachers cited by these studies the review team identified the following: greater confidence; enhanced beliefs about self-efficacy in regard to students' learning; enthusiasm for collaborative working; development of knowledge, understanding and skills in a curricular area; changes in teacher beliefs; and access to suitable resources.

Adey *et al.* (2004), whose work in science education is judged to meet criteria for classroom impact, cite three key dimensions for securing effective change. These are: the nature of the innovation and how convincingly it can be argued and understood as being of educational value; elements in the provision of professional development such as longevity and intensity, and access to coaching and reflection; and the nature of the environment in which the change is engendered including levels of collegiality, the attitudes of the senior management, and opportunities provided for the personal engagement of teachers.

The implications of these reports are that the transformation in practice that CfE requires entail contemporaneous changes in a complex that consists of a teacher's:

- beliefs and values (knowledge);
- self-concept and identity;
- relationships;
- conceptual frameworks, classroom procedures and materials; and
- skills.

And, by implication, the same 'complex' needs to undergo alteration on behalf of others within the context of practice: students, parents and colleagues. This places the major element of a teacher's learning as occurring in the workplace supported by a process of feedback and reflection as they practice and refine the use of new classroom approaches with their students. The conditions for learning require an organisational culture that, in Deming's (1982) terms 'drives out fear,' and encourages people to be open to, and about, change and prepared to take the risks of both justifying and enacting new behaviours.

#### BETWEEN A ROCK AND A HARD PLACE?

What this evidence suggests is that the implementation of Curriculum for Excellence is, as the OECD report predicts, unlikely to be achieved if the current Quality Control approach to school governance is not drastically modified. Indeed feedback from both the implementation of a flatter management structure following the McCrone Agreement (Scottish Executive 2001) and of professional actions associated with Chartered Teacher status indicates that introducing interdisciplinary practices, collaboration and evidence-informed approaches to teaching in schools is liable to be problematic. Ideas around 'distributed' or 'distributive leadership', and 'teacher leadership' remain deeply contested at all levels within the school sector (MacDonald 2004; Reeves 2007; Reeves & Fox 2008).

Recent publications by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIe), which, as the agency charged with responsibility for quality assurance (QA), has been central to enforcing a compliance agenda, provide indications of a change of sentiment in representing school improvement as being based on the instigation of new approaches to teaching and learning and greater local autonomy (HMIe 2006). The agency seems to be trying to square the circle by adopting Argyris and Schon's model of double-loop learning (1978) according to which organisations are able to switch from a concern with quality control (preventing deviation from

established standards) to learning (the second loop) where underlying norms, policies and objectives of an organisation are called into question. This appears to be the logic behind the series of texts badged as *The Journey to Excellence* where schools are told that once they have achieved a good performance using the set of indicators in *How Good is Our School? The Journey to Excellence Part 3* (HMIe, 2007)(HGIOS3) they may then be ready to proceed to a second template, *The Journey to Excellence Parts 1 & 2* (HMIe 2006). The latter contains a further ten ‘dimensions of excellence’, which will support them ‘to make the journey from good to great’. The implication being that a smooth transition from compliance to innovation is eminently achievable, a contention that many would claim to be highly questionable. Indeed, commenting on the development of a personalised approach to education, Campbell *et al.* write:

Noting the contrast between the learner-centred character of personalisation and the previous and current state-centred approaches to curriculum and assessment, the ESRC analysis doubts whether a ‘simple switch’ between the two modes can be achieved. (2007: 141).

As the latest version of guidelines for school self-evaluation, the authors of HGIOS3 argue that their text has been adapted to be congruent in both purpose and means with the development of CfE. Comparing it with that of HGIOS2 the most significant changes are:

- a requirement for all members of the school community to be committed to the common set of values and a vision identified for the whole of Scotland by the Government;
- greater emphasis on the direct involvement of classroom teachers in self-evaluation, addressed as ‘you’ in the opening sections of the document;
- the role of ‘leadership’, a term that is much more heavily used<sup>5</sup>, as the means of winning ‘hearts and minds’ and gaining commitment. This is accompanied by a call for the spread of leadership although exactly what this means is unclear. It seems that teachers will be ‘involved in’ and ‘shape’ developments and there may be ‘well-considered’ innovation;
- an increase in the number of indicators badged as tests of impact (7 out of the 30 indicators), with all the indicators to be ‘measured’ at six levels rather than four;
- the adoption of a new pattern of discourse using the words *professionalism*, *collegiality* and *engagement*, which were largely absent from the earlier text;
- the supervision of teachers is disguised through the use of the term ‘we’.

However, ‘we’ is identified at one point as those in ‘leadership roles’ who are still charged with monitoring, evaluating, guiding, managing and driving development in line with national priorities.

Overall most of these changes are cosmetic since the basic instruments and methodology for securing quality remain the same. The emphasis on adherence to centrally determined priorities is maintained, as is the level of prescription in terms of practice. Indeed Parts 1 and 2 and the associated DVD aim to provide schools with the resources they need to make the changes. Whilst Curriculum for Excellence is mentioned several times there is nothing to indicate that, other than certain modifications in vocabulary, the inspectorate sees this initiative as raising substantive issues for alteration in the QA system<sup>6</sup>.

However, as noted by the OECD review group, the achievement of the aspirations of the Curriculum for Excellence will require a much greater degree of latitude in framing problems, making decisions, determining direction and generating new practices at local level than the HGIOS3 version of Quality Assurance either encourages or allows. Caught between two theories of improvement, with the contradictory ideology firmly in the saddle, the prognosis for the implementation of CfE does not look particularly rosy.



## SEEKING SOLUTIONS

The OECD's solution to the problem of combining greater flexibility with the maintenance/improvement of measurable outcomes appears to be one of continuing to set central targets for performance but not specifying in detail how they are to be achieved (Murgatroyd & Morgan 1995). This represents a possible compromise in balancing the need for local autonomy with the need to ensure a common level of entitlement to public education. However, as already noted, the evidence in relation to high stakes assessment practices indicates that this may not be sufficient to lessen levels of risk aversion on the part of teachers. The degree of latitude such a strategy allows may not serve to foster a corresponding will and capacity within the education service to exercise the option to be innovative. Summarising the evidence in relation to the use of such performance-based accountability systems in the USA, Elmore (2004) notes that there is some way to go in ensuring that they have the desired effects, because,

the schools that most need improvements in access, teaching, and learning are often the ones that focus most on test scores and least on deeper improvements. The result is a classic example of what organizational sociologists call goal displacement: the challenging goal set by policy makers – in this case, improvement in access and learning – is displaced in favor of the easier, more feasible goal of teaching test items. (ibid: 276)

and, he goes on to claim, policy makers do not understand the need to develop the capacity of schools to respond to these demands. Without creating the conditions for teachers to learn based on a sense of agency and efficacy, the effects of performance-based accountability may be the opposite of what is desired.

A possible solution might to adopt an approach similar to that used in Ontario where performance data is published and used as the basis for making decisions about improvement but is supplemented by a system that concentrates on enhancing student and teacher learning. Here the emphasis is not on scrutiny but on building systems for quality enhancement founded on interactive and collaborative models for developing and using professional expertise alongside the structures required to enact them. This strategy might form a basis for challenging and dismantling norms of hierarchical control and communication through fostering the emergence of more dynamic and effective systems for knowledge exchange and generation across both internal and external organisational boundaries. Such a change would be supported by:

- making teaching a more public affair through opening up access and interchange between teachers and others around issues of practice, instituting collaborative professional enquiry and action research in classrooms to support building a system of professional accountability;
- developing dialogue, discussion, and interchange to provoke reflection, build knowledge and self-confidence thereby removing some of the risks associated with changing practice and building support for change;
- encouraging problem finding and solving, experimenting and innovating through developing practices which create good conditions for teacher learning;
- publishing and disseminating findings, tools and materials for scrutiny and use by colleagues, encouraging openness and the sharing and 'testing' of pedagogic procedures and materials in different contexts.

Perhaps the players in such an alternative system might form the basis for building national and local alliances of those with a developmental and formative focus on educational quality rather than a largely summative concern. Potentially the implementation of the Government Concordat, with local authorities and the proposals under the Crerar Review for handing over the responsibility for school improvement to local education services offer the opportunity for taking a more creative approach to enhancing the quality of education that is on offer to our

students. The key lies in improving the educative capacity of the system for all those involved, both educators and students.

#### ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Primary 5 – 5th year of schooling for children aged 9/10 years.
- <sup>2</sup> Local authority personnel were much more likely to become engaged in conducting inspection visits for their authority as a result of the Act, including pre- and post-inspection visits with respect to HMIE inspections. Many local authority staff were also co-opted onto HMIE inspection teams for training purposes.
- <sup>3</sup> A recent review of external scrutiny in the public services in Scotland has cast doubts upon its efficacy at current levels of intensity (Scottish Government, 2007)
- <sup>4</sup> Evidence for Policy and Practice Information and Co-ordinating Centre
- <sup>5</sup> As Gunter (2008) notes the term leadership is used liberally in many current policy texts to ‘sex up what headteachers do’ which basically consists of procuring the compliance of others to the operationalisation of central directives.
- <sup>6</sup> Indeed, a sign of this is the corraling of a compendium of performances in a single new quality indicator, 4.2 *The School’s success in working with and engaging with the wider community*, which is exemplified as the extent to which the school encourages and supports creativity and innovation, learns from, and adopts, leading edge practice, influences wider policy or practice, anticipates and responds flexibly to change and engages in global issues (p.18).

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