
Economic Perspective 3

WHITHER SCOTTISH EDUCATION?

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Few, if any, of the predictions for 1987 envisaged the EIS accepting a set of proposals on pay and conditions not markedly different from the Main/Rifkind package so comprehensively rejected by the profession towards the end of 1986. John Pollock's preparedness to resign if the proposals were not accepted, and the actions of the EIS executive to minimise the influence of those local associations of the Institute that opposed the revised proposals seemed a curious about-turn, given the intensity of industrial action over the past two years.

A comparison between the recommendations of the Main Report and the proposals of the Scottish Joint Negotiating Committee for Teaching Staff in School Education accepted by the EIS indicates some success on the part of teachers. A number of anomalies in the Main Report over salaries were eliminated, (eg. ensuring a 10% safety net, introducing a common scale and maximum salary structure and increased rewards for teachers at the top of the salary scale), and at least a deferment of the moves towards increased managerial powers for teachers. Most importantly, for the EIS, SSTA and NAS/UWT, the agreement still appears to ensure the continuation of the SJNC and full negotiating rights for teachers.

Nevertheless, on balance the government has had the greater success. The agreement still retains the key principles sought by the previous Secretary of State for Scotland:

"any solution to the dispute must address the conditions in which teachers work and must take full account of such developments as the need to work on assessment..... It

was, and still is, a condition of the offer.... that a substantial clarification and redefinition of teachers' duties and conditions of service be negotiated." (G Younger in a letter to the chairman of the teachers' side of the SJNC 7.1.86)

These principles were embodied in the terms of reference to the Committee of Inquiry into the pay and conditions of service of school teachers in Scotland, chaired by Sir Peter Main.

"The members of this Committee were appointed with the following reference ... to consider (6) teachers' duties and responsibilities and their definition in contracts of employment"

The teachers' unions were not successful in securing any changes to the recommendations of the Main Report with respect to:-

1. the statement of teachers' duties.
2. the twenty seven and a half hour working week.
3. the provision for up to an additional 30 hours per annum for the purposes of parent meetings.
4. the provision of up to an additional 50 hours per annum for planned activities related to the wider educational needs of the school.

Whilst the EIS sought to protect members by insisting on 'strict conditions' on the use of additional hours, these new conditions constitute a significant intensification of teachers' efforts, a process further engendered by the

increasing emphasis upon merit as the criterion for promotion.

While the Main Report (section 10.12) had recommended a new grade of 'senior teacher' for good classroom teachers, the current agreement proposes the creation of some 6,000 promoted posts under the existing procedure for appointments rather than allowing head teachers increased powers in the distribution of such posts. Other, more contentious issues - powers of head teachers, review of staffing and development, composite classes, absence cover - appear to have been deferred for future review, or patched over by those traditional ambiguous and non-definable industrial relations phrases 'only in exceptional circumstances', 'where practicable', 'in principle', etc.

Despite the removal of the most contentious elements of the Main Report and some improvements in the salary provisions, (although changes to salary grades are, to a degree, marginalised by changes to salary structures and provisions for conserved salaries), teachers have followed the recommendations of the EIS and accepted a set of provisions not very different from those in the Main Report, proposals which will adversely affect their terms and conditions, and over the long term contribute to a radical change in teaching.

The decision to accept these proposals negotiated within the established bargaining machinery poses two questions:

1. Why have teachers agreed to settle on terms hitherto unacceptable?
2. What are the implications for employee relations in Scottish education?

Reasons for settlement

It is evident that the change in attitudes and increased willingness to settle is primarily a reaction to the Education Act introduced as a response to developments in the dispute South of the Border. This affords the Secretary of State for

Education wide ranging and almost unilateral control in determining the terms and conditions for teachers in England & Wales, including:- dismantling the existing bargaining machinery, excluding trade unions from the processes of establishing terms and conditions, and an ability to vary rates of remuneration on a regional or grade basis. It was thought that continued opposition and confrontation would increase the likelihood of the Secretary of State for Scotland promoting legislation incorporating sections 13.26 - 13.28 of the Main Report:

"In our view, a continued reliance on negotiations to settle the pay and conditions of school teachers in Scotland would be fundamentally flawed by the tripartite nature of those negotiations and would fail to ensure that stability that all parties seek. We are therefore bound to recommend that this role of the SJNC(SE) be ended and an independent body be established...

We recommend that the new independent body should report biannually with recommendations for new pay levels for the following two years..

We envisage that such a body should be small, composed of no more than five independent persons, appointed by the Secretary of State for their personal qualities... its recommendations should be submitted to the Secretary of State.. who would have the right to amend these findings in the light of what he considered could be afforded." (Committee of Inquiry Report under chairmanship of Sir Peter Main, HMSO 1986 Edinburgh).

Clearly, similar thinking lies behind both the Main Report and the Education Act over provisions for ending the established collective bargaining machinery, (and as with several other recent legislative innovations the idea was first tried out in Scotland to get people used to it). Should such measures be promoted, then the role of teachers' unions in Scotland would have been reduced to lobby, friendly society and quasi professional agencies.

Secondly, the EIS executive committee were also aware of a growing weariness amongst members towards a continuation of industrial action. Whilst John Pollock

referred to the 'consciences of members' being the pressure on members, those in the executive opposing the agreement highlighted a sense of fatalism and weakening of resolve within the Institute itself. This air of the futility of further action pervades the 'Agreement Special' - the EIS journal's coverage of the proposed agreement.

Thirdly, the EIS executive promoted the view that as the proposed conditions and duties were already undertaken voluntarily by teachers, the new conditions would not, therefore, imply an increase in effort. Underlying this is the apparent belief that the government having resolved the teachers' dispute would withdraw from the detailed discussions over workloads, etc., and thus life would return to normal. However, there is much to suggest that the new agreement represents only one element in a wide-ranging process that will radically reform relations within education and the very processes of education.

Implications and developments in Scottish education

There are two opposing assessments of the significance and implications of the agreement. The first, to which we have already alluded, argues that the government has been motivated to prevent similar industrial action in the future and to 'resolve' the educational issue before the general election. Having appeared to have achieved 'normality' in schools the government will turn to other issues, employers and unions will be able to negotiate the details along traditional lines and principles. To stress essentially preventative and electoral strategies as underlying the government action in the teachers' disputes is arguably naive. It does not explain the nature or style of government interventions, the reluctance to use the established machinery to improve relations within education, nor the indifference of the government to low morale and to the need to regain the co-operation of teachers.

We believe government action both north and south of the border reflects a policy

of extending control over two dimensions of education. First to control teachers' efforts, and to further the introduction of modern management practices and techniques in education which we have called the 'industrialising of education'. Secondly, to control and redirect the nature of teachers' work. Here the government's concern is to reintroduce a set of 'traditional values' into the philosophy, organisation and management of education.

Elements of these two principles - 'industrialising education' and the 'return to traditional values' - are clearly reflected in both government strategy and the Main/Rifkind/current proposals and their consequences are far reaching and, for industrial relations, little short of disastrous. They reflect a longer term policy of introducing effective market mechanisms into education, and ultimately a wish to change the attitudes of future generations.

Industrialising education

The increasing costs of education have prompted, for several years, initiatives to increase efficiency, or to ensure 'value for money'. The onset of a decline in pupil numbers has heightened such concerns and led to the introduction of a number of measures to reduce costs. Schools and further education colleges have been grouped into consortia to rationalise the teaching of the 16+ age group, admittance to teacher training college has been restricted to those graduates qualified to teach two subjects at secondary level, and the Audit Commission's Report argued for a more rapid closure of schools to generate savings to cover most of the current shortages, and the advantages of greater flexibility, possibly by the wider use of part-time teachers. Elsewhere studies have questioned the costs of lags between conserved salaries and responsibility payments for promoted staffs in an era of a decline in pupil numbers.

The proposals in the Main Report, SJNC(SE) agreement in Scotland, and Education Act

in England and Wales, constitute a second stage to increase efficiency. The emphasis has shifted to intensifying teachers' effort, hence proposals for lengthening the working day, reducing the degree of teachers' discretion (eg. the list of duties), ensuring labour flexibility via absence coverage. However, to introduce these more radical improvements in productivity requires changes to the traditional processes of establishing teachers' work loads, and, more significantly, a move away from the traditional methods of salary progression to a system which places a greater emphasis on performance and assessment of the value of individual teachers. Such a system would tend to stress individualism rather than the established collective bargaining machinery, and calls for a more managerialist strategy of running schools. Elements of all these requirements are discernable in the Main/Rifkind/current agreement and in the Education Act.

Traditionally, in any school, the number of teachers and hence work load is a function of the school roll. The number of pupils is divided by an established formula to generate the number of teachers, with additional staff if the school roll is above certain numbers. The Main Report touched upon the basis of the established formula and recommended re-assessment of a number of criteria. These were further developed especially in Section 7 and, to a lesser extent, in Sections 5, 6, and 9 of the SJNC(SE) proposals on conditions and resources. Nevertheless, despite an extension and further development of the criteria the technique still reflects the less efficient labour loading approach rather than more sophisticated manning techniques. However, the first steps towards the introduction of 'man' assignments are apparent in the definition of duties and proposed reviews of the volume of work completed by teachers, an inevitable consequence of which would be a reduction in teachers' discretion. Performance appraisal, merit payments and other additions to basic salary are popular management techniques of motivation and the government has repeatedly indicated a wish to introduce elements of such techniques to improve efficiency in education and to reduce the reliance on traditional methods. (Indeed the Secretary of State's criticism of the provisional agreement between employers and unions in England was primarily a

reflection of its egalitarian philosophy and lack of higher rewards for senior teachers.)

Traditionally, a teacher's pay has been determined by national negotiations and the number of years service. For promoted staff there is an additional payment, the size of which is dependent upon the size of the school and is nominally a reward for the work of the individual. Both north and south of the border the government has pressed for higher increases for promoted staff possibly to divide the teachers' response to its proposals. However, the prime motivation is an attempt to reward the 'good' or dedicated teacher. Hence the proposals for senior teachers in the Main Report (or as the SJNC(SE) agreement euphemistically retitled as 6,000 'additional promoted posts'). The agreement envisages that the first appointments to the new promoted posts on the APT scale will take effect from October 1988. On the basis of the available figures, this suggests for 1988 1 promoted post per 3 primary schools and 1 promoted post per secondary school. By 1990 the ratios would be 1.5 promoted posts per primary school and 5 per secondary school. Good teachers will be required to be extremely patient to wait for any such rewards: the motivational value is slight by any criteria.

On 1984 figures 19.7% of primary and 47.9% of secondary teachers enjoy some additional payment as a consequence of holding a promoted post. The introduction of such promoted posts will have a more significant effect on the primary than secondary sector. The importance of this is illustrated in the voting patterns, over 87% of primary teachers as compared to 55% of secondary teachers voting for the deal.

However, there are a number of problems in using promotion pay as a means of motivation. First, as pay for promoted staff is linked to the school roll, then, given the current decline in pupil numbers between 25-40% of the promoted staff in each grade of primary and secondary schools now enjoy a conserved (or unearned, to use notions of efficiency and productivity) salary. To reduce this, new

salary structures are to apply for promoted posts. The SJNC(SE) agreement is not clear as to the criteria applying for assistant principal and principal teachers. For assistant head teachers a single salary point is introduced. For depute and head teachers salary is a function of the school roll.

Linking the size of responsibility (promotion) payments to size of school in an era of decline tends to block the promotion structure. It generates inequalities of opportunities for promotion between subject areas. There are furthermore far-reaching implications. The retention of size of school as the determining factor for head and depute head teachers' pay is significant in the context of the government's policy of introducing market mechanisms (parental choice) into education. Given the decline in pupil numbers a head teacher's salary depends on his ability to make the school popular with parents rather than resting on more solidly based educational criteria.

Secondly, at present salaries do not distinguish between the effort/work load of a primary 1 or 7 teacher, between size of class or between certificate and non-certificate work. The intensification of effort and additional hours introduced by the agreement is likely to highlight such differences in effort and lead teachers to evaluate their work in such terms. Those teaching larger, harder classes, or teaching pupils for whom more preparation/marking is required will seek more pay than those who do not, leading to disputes over internal as opposed to external relativities.

Thirdly the criteria for promotion may change. The government's intention was to give head teachers more powers to run schools and greater influence in promotion. Indeed the chairman of the Inquiry commented on the need to reintroduce the thrust towards managerialism that appeared to have lost momentum in the revised proposals, in the hope that this would reflect the demands of parent popularity. Whilst the additional powers for heads have been

deferred (the SJNC(TSSE) is to prepare, in consultation with the appropriate bodies, a description of the essential duties and responsibilities of the head teacher), heads still have considerable and increasing informal influence on promotions. More significantly, performance in the additional hours areas - and effort over and above contractual hours - will be key factors in promotion. Thus promotion will be restricted to those accepting the intensification of effort and who still contribute voluntary effort, which by 1990 will affect 33% plus of primary and 50% plus of secondary teachers. Promotion may thus become the alternative to more open forms of performance appraisal and merit payments, given the difficulties of establishing criteria and measuring classroom teaching performance on a comparable basis.

Traditional values

Whilst it is difficult to assess teacher performance on educational criteria it is somewhat easier to pronounce on performance in ideological terms. Much of the popular debate has focussed on the need for practical results, socially and economically relevant curricula (eg. the Secretary of State for Education's proposals for a national curriculum), or the proposals to educate pupils on the 'wealth generating processes', increasing the school-industry links.

In recent years the Department of Education and Science has tended towards an 'economic ideology of education', recognising the political importance attached to education meeting the economic needs of the nation. A further strand in such a development has been the moves towards greater efficiency and productive use of resources. There has been a parallel move in the political sphere. The present administration, using the language of efficiency, national needs and parental interests, has sought to introduce policies which will reverse a number of postwar developments in education. Whilst at present such reforms have been raised and discussed within the context of education in England and Wales it is extremely likely that similar

changes will be imposed on Scotland.

From the 1960's education moved towards a more child centered approach to teaching. Such a system tended to stress less formal but more continuous assessment methods, it implied a more decentralised education structure with considerable autonomy resting with the classroom teacher and individual school. The stress on the increase in teachers' work arising from 'development work' in the last dispute indicates well the significance of such educational developments. However, such a devolved structure reduces the scope for managerial control within schools or for central intervention on the curriculum. The government has sought a return to more traditional methods and values to enable its intervention, via a national curriculum, to be more effective. The Secretary of State for Education proposes to introduce such a national curriculum within three years which will indicate models of what should be taught or learnt, and would enable the introduction of a far more sophisticated and elaborate system of performance appraisal for teachers.

For many years the Conservative Party has argued the case for greater parental involvement in education. As the Secretary of State for Education stated to the 1986 Conservative Party Conference:

"Education can no longer be led by the producers - the academic theorists, the administrators and even the teachers' unions. Education must be shaped by the users - by what is good for the individual child and what hopes are held for parents."

Although providing greater parental choice and involvement are presented as the reasons for changes and new initiatives, the 1986 Education Bill does not require the Secretary of State for Education to consult with parental groups with respect to changes in teacher's terms and conditions. No training programmes have been established for the new parent governors under the new education act. The Department of Education's draft document 'Providing for Quality' called for comments on improving the quality of education but copies were not sent to any of the major parent bodies. Cynically, it might be thought that the Secretary of State has decided that parental interests are best served by his declared intention

to pay particular attention to parental preferences for single sex, denominational and selective schools.

Such an interpretation of parental interests coupled with a wish to privatise education and eliminate local authority control of education are reflected in the Conservative Party proposal that schools should be able to opt out of local authority control and receive a fixed sum for each child recruited (eg. the cost of educating a child at an ordinary school). Such schools would be run by independent trusts and they, rather than the parent, could choose which children to admit. It has been suggested that such schools might be linked to the smaller independent schools which have faced financial difficulties due to falling school rolls.

It can be argued that the government's commitment to change education reflects the desires to reintroduce the traditional values of individualism, diligence, dedication, selectivity and an understanding of the wealth-creating processes to both pupils and schools and to reduce local authority control via the reintroduction of selectivity and a partial privatisation of what has traditionally been regarded as state education. Whilst the government priorities for education are becoming clearer, the importance the government attaches to parental and pupil interest remains obscure and curiously limited and selective.

Conclusions

Our main concern has been for the likely climate of industrial relations in education in the future. We can detect few measures that have reduced the accumulated grievances of the teachers and many that will exacerbate them.

On a wider note it seems clear that despite the distinctive history, structure and identity of the Scottish education system it is being subject to the same package of reforms as that in England and Wales, both systems facing the prospect of being forcibly re-moulded into a single "national" education.

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