



Reshaping Education in the 1990s: Perspectives on *Secondary* Schooling

Edited by
Christopher J. Pole and
Rita Chawla-Duggan



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Contents

<i>Acknowledgment</i>	vii
<i>List of Abbreviations</i>	viii
<i>List of Figures and Tables</i>	x
Introduction	1
<i>Christopher Pole and Rita Chawla-Duggan</i>	
Part I Schooling and the Market	9
1 Dynamics of Competition – The Effects of Local Competitive Arenas on Schools	11
<i>Philip A. Woods, Carl Bagley and Ron Glatter</i>	
2 Education and Business: Converging Models	26
<i>Ian Jamieson</i>	
3 Unsaleable Goods and the Education Market	40
<i>Eric Blyth and Judith Milner</i>	
Part II Changing School Governance	53
4 The School, the Parent, the Banker and the Local Politician: What Can We Learn from the English Experience of Involving Lay People in the Site Based Management of Schools?	55
<i>Rosemary Deem</i>	
5 School Governing Bodies in Northern Ireland: Responses to Local Management of Schools	71
<i>Penny McKeown, Caitlin Donnelly and Bob Osborne</i>	
6 Devolved Management: Variations of Response in Scottish School Boards	89
<i>Margaret Arnott, Charles Raab and Pamela Munn</i>	
7 The Grant Maintained Schools Policy: The English Experience of Educational Self-Governance	105
<i>Sally Power, David Halpin and John Fitz</i>	

Contents

Part III Experiencing Local Management	117
8 The New Headteacher: Budgetary Devolution and the Work Culture of Secondary Headship <i>Julia Evetts</i>	119
9 A Question of Costs: Budget Management in Secondary Schools <i>Lynda Huckman and John Fletcher</i>	130
10 Educational Change in the United Kingdom: A North–South Divide <i>Sally Brown</i>	149
11 When ‘Breadth and Balance’ Means ‘Balancing the Books’: Curriculum Planning in Schools Post-ERA <i>Dawn Penney and John Evans</i>	164
<i>Notes on Contributors</i>	176
<i>Index</i>	180

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Christopher Pole
Rita Chawla-Duggan

List of Abbreviations

BEMAS	British Educational Management and Administration Society
CBI	Confederation of British Industry
CCMS	Council for Catholic Maintained Schools
CEDAR	Centre for Educational Development Appraisal and Research
CTC	city technology colleges
DENI	Department of Education for Northern Ireland
DFE	Department for Education
DMR	devolved management of resources
DSM	devolved school management
EBD	educational and behavioural difficulties
EIS	Educational Institute of Scotland
EIU	economic and industrial understanding
ELB	education and library board
ERA	Education Reform Act
ERO	Education Reform Order
ESRC	Economic and Social Research Council
EWO	Education Welfare Officer
FE	further education
FRS	Fellow of the Royal Society
FTE	full time equivalents
GM	grant maintained
GMI	grant maintained independent
GMS	grant maintained status
GNVQ	General National Vocational Qualification
HE	higher education
HMI	Her Majesty's Inspectorate
IIEP	International Institute for Educational Planning
IT	information technology
LEA	local education authority
LMS	local management of schools
MSC	Manpower Services Commission
MVA	Multi Variate Analysis
NAHT	National Association of Head Teachers
NC	national curriculum
NCPE	national curriculum for physical education

List of Abbreviations

NICER	Northern Ireland Council for Educational Research
NIESR	National Institute of Economic and Social Research
NUT	National Union of Teachers
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OFSTED	Office for Standards in Education
PASCI	Parent and School Choice Interaction (study)
PE	physical education
PGCE	Postgraduate Certificate in Education
PIC	Private Industry Council
PTA	parent-teacher association
SAT	standard assessment testing
SCOTVEC	Scottish Vocational Education Council
SEB	Scottish Examination Boards
SEN	special educational needs
SHA	Secondary Heads Association
SOEID	Scottish Office Education and Industry Department
TEC	Training and Enterprise Council
TVEI	Technical and Vocational Education Initiative

List of Figures and Tables

Figure 1.1	Local Competitive Arenas – Processes of Interaction and Influence	12
Figure 1.2	Typology of School Responses	14
Table 6.1	Main Characteristics of School Boards in Study	93–4
Figure 6.1	How Boards Handled Information	98
Figure 6.2	Boards' Links with the Outside World	100
Table 9.1a	Allyn High Budgets 1990–95 (LEA Indicative Formula)	136
Table 9.1b	Percentages of Net Expenditure (Total Allocation by Formula)	136
Table 9.2a	Penlyn High Budgets 1990–95 (LEA Indicative Formula)	137
Table 9.2b	Percentage of Total Expenditure	137

Introduction

Christopher Pole and Rita Chawla-Duggan

Introduction

In common with many other countries, education in the United Kingdom has undergone major change in recent years. Although the 1988 Education Reform Act is now some eight years old the effects of the wide ranging changes which it introduced are still being worked through in many areas of educational provision. The changes have had implications across all phases of education and have impacted upon its provision, content and management. The Act was designed to bring about major structural change (Simon, 1988) to a system which was seen as poorly managed by LEA administrators at some distance from schools and colleges, as failing to ensure all pupils received a curriculum which would equip them adequately for life after school and denied parents both a choice in the education of their children and a voice in its management (Knight, 1990). Any piece of legislation which set out to tackle these major issues collectively would necessarily be of substantial scale and scope.

In the spring of 1994 the Centre for Educational Development Appraisal and Research (CEDAR) held its fifth conference which took as its theme changing educational structures: policy and practice. Many of the papers presented at the conference dealt with issues arising from the changes brought about by the 1988 Act. The papers in many cases; reported on research which had been carried out in schools and colleges after the passing of the 1988 Act and as such they represent some of the first research based commentaries on the impact of the Act. Approximately 80 papers were presented in parallel streams at the conference and this collection is one of two which brings together debate, key questions and knowledge about issues which are central to the provision and experience of education in the United Kingdom.

In this volume the focus is upon changes which have occurred and are occurring in the secondary sector whereas issues relating to primary education are addressed in the companion volume (Chawla-Duggan and Pole, 1996). While papers at the conference covered a wide range of issues, those selected for inclusion in this volume relate to three key areas of post-ERA education provision and management. The book is, therefore, divided into three sections which address these three areas. In Part I three chapters address issues relating

to schooling and the creation of an education market. In Part II four chapters examine different aspects of changes which have occurred in the governance of schools and in Part III the focus is upon experience of local school management.

Although there are three separate parts to the volume the themes with which they deal are interrelated. While on the one hand they could be seen to engage with notions of democratizing schooling by placing more control in the hands of parents, headteachers and the forces of the market, on the other they could equally be seen to relate to notions of competition, a reduced responsibility for the state in education and an increase in bureaucracy at the level of school management. Their integration (Simon, 1988) is a clear reflection of the ways in which the different aspects of the 1988 Reform Act work together to achieve fundamental change in the provision, management and experience of education.

Schooling and the Market

In Part I the chapter by Woods, Bagley and Glatter reports on a longitudinal study of parents and school choice. The focus is upon the ways in which secondary schools have responded to greater competition for pupils. The authors put forward the hypothesis, which they test by means of several school case studies, that where there is a quasi-market for pupils then changes which schools make in order to attract them tend to be concerned with traditional academic issues, practices and values. For example exam performance, homework and ability setting are cited as instances of such changes. One of the conclusions to be drawn from the chapter is that competition leads to an homogenization of provision around fairly narrow definitions of what is good educational practice and what are acceptable educational values for schools to hold. The implications to be drawn from this research are that competition for pupils has the potential to stifle innovation, leaving schools no option but to play safe in their approaches to teaching and learning, school organization and management if they wish to succeed in attracting large numbers of pupils and the per capita funding which accompanies them. The chapter links to important questions, therefore, about competition, markets and a quest for conservatism in education, fostered by the need for secondary schools to attract and keep pupils.

In the second chapter Jamieson examines examples of convergence between the economic and education systems. He contends that as the economy becomes more complex then the relationship between the two systems also becomes more complex. He develops the argument that the marketization of education may mean that schools now have more in common with private enterprise. Jamieson argues that marketization can enable schools to realize their power in their relationship with the economy. He says, for example, that many schools are larger than most local businesses with more staff and a

higher turnover. His argument is that marketization of education has produced a shift from the curriculum as the focus of education—business links to a greater emphasis on the school in local social and economic restructuring.

Jamieson also spends some time questioning whether marketization of education has actually happened. This is an issue that is paralleled in the last of the chapters in this first part by Blyth and Milner. They examine the extent to which the education market includes the often diverse needs of different kinds of pupils. Their concern is with pupils as commodities as they examine issues of school efficiency, school exclusion and per capita funding.

Collectively, the three chapters are important in examining questions of choice, access to schooling and notions of consumerism. They suggest a form of commodification (Chitty, 1989; Jones, 1989; Hatcher, 1994) of education as schools package a homogenized form of schooling in their bid to attract clients.

Changing School Governance

The 1988 Education Reform Act also brought significant changes to the role of school governors (Deem, 1990). The Act increased their powers and responsibilities in such a way as to make them legally responsible for the activities of their schools and for the management of their finances. On the one hand such changes could be seen as examples of increased local democracy, with those directly involved in the school being responsible for the decisions and management by which it operates, particularly as parents were to constitute a greater part of governing bodies. Alternatively, the new arrangements could be seen as a measure to further remove local education authorities from the decision-making processes *vis à vis* schools and to reduce the responsibilities of the state. Moreover, while parents were ensured representation on governing bodies, there have been divisions of opinion as to whether this requirement would prove to be more inclusive or exclusive with regard to the social class, ethnic and gender composition of governing bodies. While optimists, e.g. Eggleston (1988), have drawn attention to the possibility for greater diversity which the Act brought, pessimists or realists, e.g. MacNeil (1988), have reminded us of key sociological factors which would ensure that such diversity would indeed be unlikely in most schools.

In addition the issues of democracy, decision-making and state responsibility, which have been raised in relation to changes in school governance, have been played out in a more concentrated fashion in relation to the emergence of grant maintained schools (Fitz *et al.* 1993; Angus, 1994). The possibility of shedding virtually all local education authority involvement in schooling has been presented to headteachers and governors as a central plank of the 1988 legislation. While take-up of grant maintained status was slow at first, the years since 1988 have seen further inducements (Power *et al.* 1994) and changes to procedures both to encourage schools to opt out and

to make the process involved more straightforward. The creation of this new kind of state independent school gives rise to a range of questions (Rogers, 1992) central to the administration, management and composition of state education.

Many of the central issues which underpin the introduction of grant maintained schools and changes to school governance are addressed by the four chapters in the second part of the volume. Part II also includes a view of school governance from Northern Ireland and an analysis of devolved management in Scotland.

In her chapter on the involvement of lay people in site based management of schools Rosemary Deem draws parallels between England and Australia and the United States of America. She compares power structures and discusses the ways in which they have changed. Her central concern is with the democratization of school management as she poses questions about the ways in which governors are appointed rather than elected. Her research leads to the conclusion that those who become school governors are from a fairly narrow stratum of society and are comprised principally by those who have the time and the material resources to allow them to take on what can be a demanding and time consuming role. While the role for governors now embraces finance, school organization and delivery of the national curriculum, Deem believes that a degree of confusion exists amongst many governors who find their task somewhat daunting. Moreover, her research has shown that most governors do not involve themselves with matters relating to teaching and learning and are unsure of their relationship with teachers and pupils. Her conclusion is that despite the rhetoric of involvement and democracy, lay governors have little effect in shaping education.

Several of the themes addressed by Deem are also present in the chapter by McKeown, Donnelly and Osborne. However, their specific concern is with school governing bodies in Northern Ireland and the changes which were brought about by the 1989 Education Reform Order (ERO). The chapter is a welcome contribution to the literature on school governance in Northern Ireland about which there has been little research to date. The authors develop their work to suggest that the increased responsibility for governors has, under some circumstances, led to a tension between governing bodies and headteachers. Where this occurs, the school may become a site of conflict as the forces of the new democracy are tested out.

A Scottish perspective on changes in school governance is provided in the chapter by Arnott, Rabb and Munn. Their examination of devolved school management (DSM) *vis à vis* Scottish school boards reveals many similar issues to those arising from the introduction of local management of schools (LMS) in England and Wales. Their chapter draws on research conducted in three geographical areas of Scotland and discusses the new roles for parents, headteachers and local authorities under DMS. In addition to issues related to the location of power and the capacity for decision-making under the new arrangements, the authors also point to evidence that DMS with its link to

formula funding (Levacic, 1993) has brought about particular image-management strategies as schools seek to attract and hold onto funds. The chapter also casts some doubt over the extent to which school governors have real power in schools. Their research shows that governors tend to defer to headteacher judgment on key issues.

Issues of devolved school management are taken further in the next chapter by Power, Halpin and Fitz as they consider the English experience of grant maintained schools policy. The chapter picks up on many of the themes already raised in the volume and which encapsulate the intentions, focus and implications of the 1988 Education Reform Act. For example, their concern is with parental empowerment and choice, the role of the head, curriculum and pedagogy. The authors deploy their research evidence to suggest a considerable difference between the rhetoric of grant maintained status and the experience of it. They conclude that in relation to parental involvement, curriculum and pedagogy, little change can be discerned in grant maintained schools. Their conclusion is that grant maintained schools policy has resulted in a consolidation of hierarchies within schools with headteachers continuing in much the same way as ever when it comes to decision-making and parents tending to defer to the authority of the teacher.

The chapters in this second part of the volume pose some serious questions about the extent to which new arrangements for school governance in England, Scotland and Northern Ireland are achieving any real change in the distribution of power in education. The evidence presented tends to suggest a rhetorical rather than a real shift of power to parents and governing bodies, with, moreover; a fairly narrow representation of parents in terms of key social characteristics. Given the chapters concentrate upon actual experiences of new arrangements for governance, they demonstrate little real change despite the elaborate structures put into place by the various Education Reform Acts in England, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

The theme of experience and rhetoric rather than reality also provides the foundation for the final section of the volume which is concerned with local management of schools.

Experiencing Local Management

While education management may be seen as a key aspect of the first two parts of the volume the final part addresses the changes brought about by the introduction of LMS head-on, by examining the experiences of those directly involved in this aspect of devolved management. The integrated nature of the 1988 Education Reform Act means that many of the themes already addressed in the volume are revisited in the context of LMS. For example questions of autonomy and the capacity of heads and governors to make real decisions are posed alongside questions of per capita funding and the implications for budget

management. Again, the chapters in this section highlight the difference between the rhetoric and the reality of changes which have occurred post-1988.

Part III begins with Julia Evetts's chapter on the role of the headteacher under LMS. Evetts argues that in respect of the day to day work activities the occupational culture of headship has changed fundamentally. Using detailed interviews and follow-up postal questionnaires with 20 headteachers, Evetts argues that LMS has necessitated a new kind of headteacher: one whose time is taken more by aspects of budgetary and corporate managerialism and less by traditional aspects of the role such as leadership. Her research signals a significant change for headteachers to a role which those with traditional expectations may find difficult. An emphasis on bureaucracy, finance and administration may be far removed from experience as a classroom teacher to the extent that questions need to be posed about the career paths for headteachers and whether the traditional route of working up through the ranks provides appropriate experience and training for the position of headteacher. Furthermore, an emphasis on budgetary and corporate managerialism may mean the position is less attractive to those whose interests lie with teaching. The title *Headteacher* may have become a misnomer.

The theme of budgetary and corporate managerialism is pursued in the second of the chapters in this part. Huckman and Fletcher are concerned with the school as a unit of production and their chapter, which is based on a two year study of LMS in two schools, focuses upon internal decision-making processes in the context of cost effectiveness and cost efficiency for schools. The language used in the chapter may seem to have more in common with accountancy than with processes of schooling, but it is nevertheless consistent with the rational planning strategies in which their schools engaged and with the structures now put into place by financial devolution. In this context of efficiency and financial effectiveness, the chapter raises some serious questions about school effectiveness and the ways in which the quality of education in secondary schools is demonstrated via balance sheets and league tables. The chapter introduces the notion of product assessment and again, while the language may seem somewhat clinical for what is a social process, it would seem to be quite appropriate for the ethos of the education market and the homogenization of provision discussed in earlier chapters of the volume.

In the penultimate chapter Sally Brown provides a view of recent changes in school management in Scotland. While many of the themes are familiar, for example, consumerism, competition, efficiency and enterprise, there are also some important differences from the situation in England and Wales. For example Brown informs us that technology academies (CTCs) failed to take off in Scotland due to a lack of private finance and were therefore, abandoned. The Scottish national curriculum is less prescriptive than the English, being based on guidelines rather than orders and there are no published league tables. Brown believes a period of policy hysteria has underpinned developments in Scotland as schools have endured multiple innovations, frequent policy switches and a lack of educational coherence. With regard to self-

government, Brown reports that this has barely taken off in Scotland as schools have been reluctant to break links with local authorities.

The final chapter is provided by Dawn Penney and John Evans. Their concern is with the internal markets which, under LMS, have developed within individual schools. Using examples from physical education, their chapter shows how competition for resources within schools has intensified. Rather than removing constraints which were previously imposed by local authorities, LMS has simply substituted a set of internal constraints for teaching staff as they vie for resources with each other based on various funding formulas devised and applied internally by schools. The chapter raises important questions about provision of the curriculum (Fowler, 1990), particularly in relation to less favoured or what might be perceived as less important components of it. Where resources are scarce, perhaps due to a failure by unpopular schools to attract large numbers of pupils (Levacic, 1993), it may be that schools are only able to adequately resource those areas of the curriculum which are mandatory. Consequently it is the national curriculum subjects which have the greatest influence on internal school markets. As a result, this may mean that some schools are only able to offer a relatively narrow curriculum.

In total, this volume provides a critical view of the new shape of education in the United Kingdom. It poses important questions about the experience of education from the perspective of teachers, heads, governors and parents. As the chapters draw on empirical research, the book provides an opportunity to gauge the actual outcomes of 1980s education legislation against the aspirations which underpinned it.

So far, the 1990s has been an important decade for secondary education – one where expectations have been high, where established structures have been challenged and where the responsibilities of the state have been modified. The decade has brought widescale change and a degree of uncertainty, which for some of those involved, has been difficult to accept. The chapters in this volume provide an opportunity, therefore, for reflection, and taking stock of how far education has changed since the watershed year of 1988 and on this basis, looking towards the implications of the changes for the further development of secondary education into the twenty-first century.

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Part I

Schooling and the Market

Dynamics of Competition – The Effects of Local Competitive Arenas on Schools

Philip A. Woods, Carl Bagley and Ron Glatter

Introduction

A major thrust of government reforms in education since 1988 has been to introduce a more competitive, market-like environment for schools. Key elements in this process include: open enrolment, by which schools and LEAs (local education authorities) are prevented from limiting admissions below their full capacity; local management of schools, through which responsibility for budgets and management more generally is devolved to schools; moves to diversify school provision, through, for example, grant maintained status and the creation of technology schools; and the publication of more information for parents, such as league tables of examination results and other data about schools.

To assess whether these reforms are achieving the intended aim of creating a vibrant market in schooling and, thereby, making schools more consumer-responsive and raising educational standards requires monitoring and investigation over a period of time. The PAsCI (Parental and School Choice Interaction) study is seeking to meet, in part, this requirement. It is a major longitudinal investigation of the interaction between parental choice of school and school decision-making.¹ It is focusing on how secondary schools respond to competition (including how they obtain, interpret and act upon clues regarding parental preferences, and what factors constrain them in reacting to such information) and how parents react to these responses (including their perception of choice and constraints upon it).

The exploratory phase (which undertook methodological groundwork and pilot fieldwork in preparation for the study's main phase) ran from 1990 to 1992. The three-year main phase began in 1993. As choice and competition in schooling is characteristically local in nature, we have sought in the study to focus on what we have termed *local competitive arenas* (Glatter and Woods, 1994). Such arenas are areas of varying sizes and natures within which schools draw from a largely common population of parents and children. Research