

MANAGEMENT IN THE EDUCATION SERVICE

Challenge and Response

Society of Education Officers

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SOCIETY OF EDUCATION OFFICERS

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Challenge and Response
Society of Education Officers

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MANAGEMENT IN THE EDUCATION SERVICE

CHALLENGE AND RESPONSE

PREFACE

During the past three years a group of Chief Education Officers and senior colleagues from local authorities and the Department of Education and Science have been meeting together on an informal basis to exchange experience on development in the management of the education service. The group was formed in 1971 as a result of the wish of officers of the Department of Education and Science and certain Chief Education Officers to exchange information and explore different approaches and techniques in planning at national and local level. The Society of Education Officers has agreed to sponsor the publication of this booklet so that the experience of these officers can be made more widely available. The views expressed do not necessarily coincide with those of the Society nor with the authorities served by the officers concerned. It is emphasised that the approaches to management in the education service outlined in the following chapters are only limited examples of new approaches in this field, and are still subject to development and refinement. They are put forward in order to focus discussion rather than to commend their immediate implementation by other authorities.

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PART I INTRODUCTION

1. In 1970 there was some joy in the education service in the UK because total spending on the service in that year overtook spending on defence. The commitment of national resources was now second only to that devoted to health and social security. At last, education was assuming a proper place in the nation's priorities. In fact spending on education, both in cash terms and as a proportion of public expenditure, had been increasing steadily over the previous 20 years. Between 1959 and 1970 the average annual increase in expenditure on education was consistently higher than other public expenditure, higher than the increase in GNP and higher than increases in consumer expenditure. For example, in the decade 1960-70, 51% more was spent on education in real terms: yet only 10% more on food; 35% more on radio, television and so on; 44% more on alcohol (but 70% more on cars) (1). At the same time there has been growing pressure to devote more resources to some other public services, notably roads, health and social services. The rises in prices in recent years have also meant a rapid increase in consumer spending.
2. The priority given to education in the allocation of national resources is therefore being intensely challenged. First there is the pressure to control all public expenditure to bring its rate of increase in line with the rate of growth in the economy; second there is the need to recognise the demands of services other than education. The results of this process can be seen clearly in the annual White Papers on public expenditure published since 1969. These show: (a) that the overall rate of expansion for public expenditure has been reduced (3% in the 1969 White Paper; 2.7% in 1971; 2.5% in 1972; 2.0% in 1973); and (b) that the rate of growth for education has been changed relative to other services; for example, health and social services. (For education 3.8% in 1969; 4.5% in 1971; 5.0% in 1972; and 4.8% in 1973, compared with 3.8%, 5.1%, 4.8% and 4.6% for health and social services). This situation is reinforced by the legislation on Prices and Incomes and through the levels of rate support grants made by the government to local authorities. The impact of these factors is therefore that the flow of resources from government to local authorities is slowed down and redistributed somewhat between services and that, should a local authority feel the need to make up the difference, it can only do so by bearing the extra wholly on the rates.

(1) National Income and Expenditure 1971 and Glennerster "Willing the Means".

3. Translated to local level, this situation is posing some fierce problems to local authorities. Demand for services continues to increase fed by many factors: government legislation, social expectation, changes in the structure of the population, pressures for higher standards, rising costs. Indeed the cutback in public expenditure itself intensifies demand and needs — particularly among those consumers who are most vulnerable to rising prices. The creation of social services departments and related legislation (for example, the Children and Young Persons Act, 1969 and the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act, 1970) have given a new impetus to the personal social services. Local authorities have considerable additional responsibilities in respect of services, not only for children (for example, intermediate treatment and assessment units), but also for care within the community of physically and mentally handicapped persons and the aged, representing a shift of responsibility from the health service to local authorities. There is continuing pressure for new houses and particularly for improvement of existing older properties or for the clearance and replacement of unfit property. This is reinforced by new powers and procedures under the Town and Country Planning Act 1968 which require the preparation of Structure Plans and declaration of local areas for action within the next 10 years. The rapid increase in car ownership and use of the roads produces demands for better traffic control, car-parking and standards of road maintenance. Environmental protection and improvement requires higher standards in sewage, industrial and domestic waste disposal, smoke control and drainage systems. Similar pressures are extending demands on the education service: for example, the 1972 White Paper "Education: A Framework for Expansion" which refers to expansion of nursery education, more places in higher education, better training for teachers and smaller teaching groups in schools. At the same time there are pressures for better provision in the youth and community services and for adult education.
4. The intensity of these problems will bear particularly upon the education service: (a) because, in the reorganisation of local government and following the redistribution of functions, the education service will tend to loom larger in the work of the county and metropolitan district councils responsible for the service; (b) because its share of the total budget of the local authority is between 50% and 60% and may be higher following local government reorganisation; and (c) because only a minor part of the education budget (at most 15%) is readily variable in the short term. About 85% of the budget is committed to staffing costs (teaching and non-teaching 65%), debt charges (12-15%), student awards and further education shared expenditure. The "vulnerable" 15% covers teaching materials, maintenance of premises and equipment, fuel and light, transport and administrative costs.
5. This situation is exacerbated by the structure and traditional approach within the education service. The standards of the service

have been built up over 150 years in the movement from local voluntary provision (largely by the Churches) through ad hoc Boards to local authority administration in a national system. Throughout that long process there has been a need to equalise standards so that now the provision required (for example, premises or teachers' salaries) is enshrined in detailed national regulations. This need to equalise standards has led to a concentration on inputs and to an attitude that equal standards of provision mean equal opportunities. This attitude is still apparent, for example, in pressures for smaller classes. The development of national standards, applied locally, has also meant that the service has attained a position of some isolation from other local authority services. At the same time, the education process is extremely difficult to evaluate and the crude measures applied in the 1860's (The Revised Code or Payment by Results) so frightened the service in this country as to leave a legacy of resistance to any form of measurement.

6. There are however good precedents for confidence that the education service can meet the present challenge. The adoption of national standards in the past has almost invariably followed the example set by local developments. Developments in a number of local authorities and within the education service are perhaps pointing ways in which the responses will be made. For example, three aspects in which this is discernable are:
 - 6.1 positive discrimination: The Plowden Report advocated a redistribution of resources within the education service by the positive recognition that, because of the deprived circumstances of their situation outside school, some children require the deployment of greater resources in their schooling if their development needs are to be met as well as those of their more favoured peers;
 - 6.2 strategic and corporate planning: local authorities have traditionally organised their budgets on an annual basis and according to the services they provide. This tended to obscure the relationships between services, inhibit joint planning and ignore the longer term effects of annual decisions on finance. There is now a strong recognition of the need to plan all services on a corporate basis and to present a coherent and comprehensive range of services to the public: for example, the inter-dependence of housing, social, planning and education services is clearly shown in the National Child Development Study "From Birth to Seven". There is an obvious need for joint development between education and social services and there are dangers of overlap in provision for under 5's, handicapped and maladjusted children, youth and community centres and intermediate treatment. As part of this process, an increasing number of authorities are developing policy and budget projections forward for 5 or 10 years;

- 6.3 effective use of resources: a number of authorities have taken steps to appraise their systems and to give emphasis to outputs rather than inputs. This has meant defining objectives and producing methods of analysing achievement and alternative policies. Changes in committee, departmental and financial organisation may also be involved.
7. All these matters present a considerable challenge to the education service. Pressures on resources means greater competition between sectors and services thus producing a greater need to justify, re-appraise and consider alternatives in the use of resources. These pressures are increased from within the education service itself, involved as it is with the whole age spectrum of the population and with the quality of life in our society. Under these pressures the standards, structure, organisation and fabric of the service are all under challenge. How can the response be made? The rest of this booklet describes various ways in which different aspects are being dealt with by a number of authorities.