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EDUCATION SECRETARY COMMENTS ON HMI REPORT

Commenting today on the report by Her Majesty's Inspectors on the effects local authority expenditure policies were having on the education service in England, Education Secretary Sir Keith Joseph said:

"I take seriously the concerns expressed in the report. It states that in most authorities within schools there is a mix of slight improvements in some aspects of provision, slight worsening in others, and a standstill in the remainder.

"It also says that, within further and higher education, colleges appear to be adapting well to meeting new demands; and that although there are some deficiencies there is no evidence of any major defect in the condition of the system or its range of provision.

"The report notes that the variation among LEAs in the levels of observed provision is not widening. As the report makes clear, there is no simple relationship between expenditure on the one hand and the quality of education offered and the achievements of pupils and students on the other.

"The report lays particular emphasis on the use to which resources are put and says that in some places there may, given time, be room for redistribution of resources.

"The position has not changed dramatically since last year. There is a number of deficiencies to which we must give attention, but also many satisfactory features on which we must build."

**REPORT BY HER MAJESTY'S INSPECTORS
ON THE EFFECTS OF LOCAL AUTHORITY
EXPENDITURE POLICIES ON THE EDUCATION
SERVICE IN ENGLAND-1982**

INTRODUCTION

1. This is the sixth in a series of short annual reports by HMIs to the Expenditure Review Group (Education). It is based on HMIs' routine and programmed visits to schools and colleges during the autumn term 1982 together with relevant written evidence.

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REPORT BY HMI ON THE EFFECTS OF LOCAL AUTHORITY
EXPENDITURE POLICIES ON THE EDUCATION SERVICE IN
ENGLAND - 1982

INTRODUCTION

1. This is the sixth in a series of short annual reports by HMI to the Expenditure Steering Group (Education). It is based on HMI's routine and programmed visits to schools and colleges during the autumn term 1982 together with returns made in November 1982 by District Inspectors (one each for schools and for further and higher education) for all 96 Local Education Authorities (LEAs) in England. It provides a commentary on the provision seen to be made for education and illuminates in some degree the effects of local authority and institutional expenditure policies, past and present, on the availability, range and standard of education offered in schools and further education. No account is taken of changes for better or worse in local authorities' expenditure policies, actual or planned, since Autumn 1982.

2. The relationship between expenditure on the one hand and the quality of education offered and the achievements of pupils and students on the other is not simple. It is obvious that negative attitudes by any of the participants can undermine the effects of the best spent money while, on the other hand, positive attitudes can overcome some of the restrictions on achievement arising

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from low or inappropriate spending. But this does not change the basic needs to be met by educational expenditure. In order to provide sound education, money has to buy four things: range; differentiation; match; and change. It must first provide the ingredients of the curriculum appropriate to the various stages of education and to essential qualifications; it must pay for the necessary educational functions which, as well as their teaching, fall to teachers (eg assessment of pupils, guidance and staff development) and for the services inside and outside the school or college that support the conduct of institutions and the progress of individuals. Secondly it must provide for variation in the basic range of provision to accommodate differences of ability, aptitude and goal, or, for example, of local circumstances, family background or mother tongue. It must then, thirdly, within a LEA and, more particularly, within an institution match the essential requirements of range and differentiation with appropriate accommodation, staffing (both teaching and support), training, equipment and materials. Fourthly, in the light of regular review of both provision and performance, it must buy changes required to improve and update the existing and to accommodate the new in curriculum or qualification, as well as any necessary restructuring of institutions, or redeployment of staff.

3. These four objectives of expenditure have to be held in balance and, as with any other expenditure, care has to be exercised to spend wisely on people and things that will hold their value for as long as possible in a context of inevitable development

and change. At any one time, for a variety of reasons, there is likely to be a degree of mismatch in amount, kind or quality of what education needs and money has bought. The managers of education and expenditure, at all levels, have then to decide priorities for improving the match in any part while avoiding major disruption to the necessary balance. This sort of management requires sufficient stability of function, population and funding – or at least information about these – to permit planning over a period of years. It is tempting to seek to establish a hierarchy in the key commodities to be bought and planned for but, in fact, no one commodity has its full value without adequate expenditure on the others, and the hierarchy will vary from LEA to LEA and institution to institution. There can, however, be no question but that the right teachers in the right number (properly equipped and supported) have the first claim on education expenditure.

4. This report is based on separate analyses of the degree of satisfaction (or dissatisfaction) with what money is currently providing in institutions or parts of them. It does not analyse individual cases in terms of the appropriateness of the mix of what money has bought, still less pick up the comparatively rare cases of unnecessary expenditure. Under each heading it identifies problems likely to require money if they are to be corrected. It does not address itself to aspects of education which, though more or less adequate, might well function more effectively as the result of professional leadership or mutual decision and without additional expenditure. Underperformance

from either cause needs tackling, but it is unlikely that the second will be taken as seriously as it needs to be in institutions where there are long standing deficiencies requiring expenditure for their amendment.

5. The heart of this report derives from HMI's observations in institutions and District Inspectors' broad assessment of the effectiveness of provision in individual LEAs. Two thousand two hundred and fifty nine returns were made on 1,733 schools (including sixth form colleges) and 671 on 339 further education institutions, including the youth service and adult education. These observations cannot be taken as statistically representative nationally or for any one LEA or type of institution. They do not provide a basis for detailed comparison with last year, nor are they directly comparable with the assessments of District Inspectors. They are, however, sufficiently numerous and diverse to provide an acceptable snapshot of the general state of play in schools and non-advanced further education (NAFE). For advanced FE (AFE) the returns can do no more than illustrate. Direct information on the youth service and adult education is even more limited and does not provide a sufficient base for detailed comment in this report; overall provision for these services seemed much as before.

6. The observed effects returns deal in actuality and HMI's assessment of it. The District Inspectors' returns deal with decisions

about overall distribution of resources within an LEA and with the details of any changes in level of provision compared with last year. To the facts provided by the LEA, HMI added comments about the pattern of expenditure in the authority and any changes in it in the light of their judgement of the provision observable in the LEA's institutions. All the assessments therefore embody HMI's professional judgement about the range of opportunity that might be thought to be required by the current law of education and appropriate to meet current policies.

7. The report gives a general comment first, followed by sections on schools and further and higher education (FHE). Separate, more detailed analyses of the returns received are being made available to ESGE.

GENERAL

8. For the first time this year, despite the generally more secure base of provision in FHE, the same message emerges as relevant to both schools and NAFE. The great majority of education in schools and colleges is adequately provided for, but the nature of some of the inadequacies observed in individual institutions is such that they cannot be shrugged off in any general satisfaction. When standards in the basic curriculum and the applicability of education to earning and work are, as now, at a premium for pupils and students of all abilities, access to them has to be assured. Yet the observations show that some pupils in some institutions, from primary schools to further education, in some parts of the country do not have that access.

9. There is no suggestion that this is a matter of will, though it may in some cases be one of inadvertence or temporary expediency. Such cases can occur in LEAs and institutions whose management is well informed and skilful. In some cases, there may, given time, be room for redistribution of resources. In others, there are simply not enough resources. The continuing stream of parental contributions to schools may well not be available in those cases where it could do most good; in any case these contributions are rarely addressed to the problem of specific shortages of teaching staff or to any aspect of FE. At a time when some LEAs are about to have the added advantage of specific projects for lower attaining pupils or technical and vocational

education, the general making good for all pupils in all LEAs of their basic education has to be a matter of common concern. Its financial implications clearly require further investigation. It goes without saying that its professional implications require constant attention.

SCHOOLS

10. Overall, it seems that in 1982 schools generally experienced few major changes in levels and standards of provision. The pace of reduction in levels of resources, occasioned by the combined effects of expenditure constraints and falling rolls, noted in previous reports, has slowed down. The evidence is that in most authorities there was a mix of slight improvements in some aspects of provision, slight worsening in others, and a standstill in the remainder. Provision and falling rolls may, however, interact in such a way that the same level of provision provides a less broad curriculum, less differentiation by ability or less good match of teachers' skills to their teaching programmes. The movements of provision and standards do not therefore necessarily go hand in hand. What is on the ground gives a clearer signal than the theoretical provision, unchanged, better or worse.

11. The overall provision of teachers illustrates the point. Sixty-eight authorities improved their primary pupil:teacher ratios, and sixty-five their secondary, often almost unavoidably because of falling rolls. Nationally, the secondary pupil:teacher ratio remained stationary at 16.6:1 whereas the primary pupil:teacher ratio improved from 22.7 to 22.5:1. This improvement has not prevented, in some areas, losses from the curriculum or reductions in supply cover for various purposes, or in provision for the induction of new teachers. This perversity is in part connected with the complications arising from the fall in pupil

numbers. In the first place, much education for many pupils involves courses of continuous study of anything up to seven years in one institution. Once started these can be sensibly interrupted only at given points and any curtailment may be wasteful of both talent and money. Numbers of pupils may therefore fall but a school's commitments do not lessen. Secondly, the shedding and redeployment of teachers surplus to need as a result of falling rolls is a difficult and lengthy matter. (Authorities have on the whole avoided compulsory redundancies). Thirdly, overall pupil:teacher ratios may improve but the nature of the numerical improvement achieved in this way may be random and cannot guarantee that all schools have adequate supplies of the teachers they need or that every school in an authority is better placed than in 1981.

12. To return to the general picture, twenty-two authorities improved their levels of provision overall while nine similarly reduced them. Most authorities had broadly satisfactory levels of provision across most of the aspects assessed (teaching staff, non-teaching staff, in-service training, induction, advisory services, premises, and books, materials and equipment). Variation among LEAs in the levels of observed provision persisted but the range was not, as in 1981, apparently widening. Nor were the fringe groups getting larger. In autumn 1982, six LEAs were reckoned to have satisfactory (or better) provision across all seven expenditure aspects. Last year's report recorded

five LEAs in this well-found group: one metropolitan district has dropped out, and two county authorities have moved in.

13. At the other end of the scale, last year's report noted HMI's concern about the level of provision in four LEAs. Two of these increased provision in 1982, one by an amount such that its overall level of provision is no longer a matter of concern. But a county authority with a previously low level of provision so reduced it in respect of all but two of the heads of expenditure that it joined the group, still four, which is of concern to HMI.

14. Elsewhere, though the ground is being held, it is important to remember what ground. Last year's report pointed out that LEAs and schools were surviving financially by doing less and that they were obliged to take the less in the form it came to hand rather than by shaping it to meet educational priorities. Even with evidence of much sharper management, that is the ground that is being held. It is characterised by levels and standards of resources which are sometimes inadequate to maintain the status quo, (already limited in many cases); by significant disparities between and within schools; and by schools in general being less than well placed to respond constructively and enthusiastically to the many calls for educational improvement and change that come from the education service itself and from parents and society, and which often require either extra educational range or diversification or both.

15. The advisory service is a case in point. Overall, as a result of mainly small gains or losses in 54 LEAs, the total number of advisers across the country had risen by about 10 since autumn 1981. (One shire county increased its advisers by 14.) However, in 16 cases there was a reduction despite the existing complement being less than the 15 usually considered a minimum. HMI assessed the cover provided by advisers as satisfactory in only 35 LEAs (ie 3 more than last year). Unsatisfactoriness was usually a question of the composition of the local team but in 21 returns was attributed, at least in part, to an excess of administrative work. Although across the country there were new appointments in some authorities for primary education, computer education, English, mathematics, multi-cultural education and special educational needs, elsewhere these same fields of work were among those inadequately provided for.

16. Weaknesses noted in the provision for in-service training and induction are likely to relate at least in part to shortage of advisers. Overall there was no great change in in-service training provision in 1982 though there was some increase in secondments over 1981. But HMI judged the in-service provision made in LEAs to be less than a match for current needs in 38 LEAs - 52 in the case of the induction of probationers.

17. Under the other expenditure heads there appeared to have been little change overall since 1981. Provision for the repair and maintenance of premises and for capitation allowances covering spending on books, materials and equipment was,

as last year, judged satisfactory in between three-quarters and four-fifths of schools visited. Allowing for a degree of overlap this nonetheless represents a substantial proportion of schools with one deficiency or another.

18. This general picture of no significant change means that the conditions in which many teachers work are little better than noted last year. As more authorities agree their school reorganisation plans to take account of reduced pupil numbers there is less uncertainty among teachers about their futures.

This may account for some evidence of better morale. The number of LEAs where teacher deployment is to some extent linked with a curriculum to be maintained increased to one in four, and there was some evidence of an improved match between teacher qualifications and what they teach and therefore better hope of job satisfaction and better standards.

19. But the pattern of vulnerable subjects and groups of pupils is much as was noted last year with mathematics, science and remedial teaching significantly represented in both primary and secondary schools, and special schools short of a range of subject expertise. Many primary and secondary schools have found themselves obliged by a combination of resource reductions and falling rolls to concentrate on the middle range of pupils with a consequence that the educational needs of the most and least able are not adequately reflected in either curriculum or organisation. Many schools have continued to be unable to make progress in dealing with long-standing difficulties such

as the teaching of minority subjects, or mixed age and mixed examination target classes.

20. Some new initiatives have been possible but there were some signs that perceptions of what is necessary and desirable were being restricted by what was immediately possible. The professional commitment and resourcefulness of teachers, education officers and advisers continued to be stretched by the efforts needed to maintain the status quo and were, in many cases, fretted by obvious inequalities. Since numbers of teachers are the key to providing teaching groups to match pupils' needs, the gross variations in staffing observed in both primary and secondary schools are of urgent concern.

21. Parental contributions to the costs of education were widespread. Beneficial as these are to the schools concerned, they have become an important factor in widening the difference in resources available to schools. District Inspectors recorded slightly fewer cases than last year of authorities where parents made moderate to considerable contributions to the provision of books and materials. But, at the school level, over two-thirds of all returns made by HMI on their visits judged parental contributions to be moderate or substantial.

22. Problems of educational provision may declare themselves more visibly in secondary schools, and recent national and local initiatives are more frequently concerned with secondary

education than primary. But in considering the way ahead it is vital that the claims of primary education should not be underestimated.

23. In addition, in both primary and secondary phases, special note needs to be taken of the recorded increase in the numbers of children with significant disabilities educated either in mainstream classes in ordinary schools or, more commonly, in designated classes or units attached to them. This was found in about a third of all LEAs, to a moderate or considerable degree in eight. Provision for special educational needs had increased in 22 LEAs, decreased in 15 and been reorganised to some degree in six. Out-county placements were viewed with some concern by some LEAs on grounds of cost. These changes in the balance of provision were associated with markedly beneficial changes in curriculum in only a handful of LEAs. In at least five LEAs there had been lack of appropriate in-service or advisory support for teachers of children with special needs in ordinary schools.

24. A minority of LEAs took extra steps to improve the provision for one or other group of children with particular needs. Five LEAs were for example reported as providing better support for children needing additional help in English and four LEAs as making improved provision for schools in social priority areas.

From the limited information available, it appears that schools are not finding it easy to provide well for differences without billing into what they must do for all pupils.

PRIMARY SCHOOLS

25. Teacher staffing, and within it the disparities and shortages, remained the key feature of HMI's observations. District Inspectors reported ratios in primary schools in individual LEAs ranging from 16.5:1 to 25.6:1 but in the schools visited by HMI the range was from 8.5:1 to 31.0:1. Small rural schools and urban schools in LEAs which also have a large number of small rural schools were facing particular difficulties of tight staffing. Mixed age classes and undifferentiated ability groupings were more common.

In some schools specific shortages in expertise could not be made good and heads had difficulty in maintaining a broad basic curriculum when teachers left. Although satisfactory staffing was recorded in the great majority of comments, deficiencies were quite commonly noted in respect of remedial teaching, mathematics, science, music and art and design. In middle schools, the major problems were with science, French, music and CDT. No subject was likely to be totally unscathed.

26. The picture of non-teaching support was much as last year: satisfactory in nearly three-quarters of the schools visited.

But, particularly in authorities outside London, lack of clerical assistance continued to distract heads from their fundamental task of educational leadership and management, and less than adequate provision of classroom ancillaries limited some teachers in their professional duties.

27. Although opportunities for in-service training appear to have improved marginally since 1981, the inhibitors to teachers' take-up of the opportunities were as apparent as before, for example, lack of supply cover or financial support for travel or attendance. Yet all primary teachers face the changing demands being made of schools; teachers need guidance, and time in school hours, in order to act effectively as consultants in parts of the curriculum, for example in mathematics as recommended in the Cockcroft Report. Many schools need to develop new approaches in the teaching of science and most schools need to develop suitable work with the micro-computer. The consistent development of language skills still needs concerted effort. The observed continuing deterioration in programmes of induction for probationer teachers is of particular concern.

28. Good management of resources by schools has become more necessary than ever. Those schools which had bought wisely over the years were more easily able to stretch their allowances to meet the needs of their pupils, but levels of resources provided by LEAs differed markedly. Book provision was judged to be satisfactory or better in three-fifths of authorities and in about four-fifths of visits. But the unfavourable comments touched on important aspects of education, eg English, science, mathematics, picture books for the youngest children and, among library books, both reference books and fiction. The observed provision of consumable materials was judged satisfactory in the very large majority of cases. But again there were worrying cases of shortfall, particularly for art and, less commonly, for science.

29. It has to be noted that there was clear evidence that (except, perhaps, in London) primary schools were frequently dependent upon parental contributions, not only for "extras" but to buy books and basic materials.

30. In general, the state of maintenance and decoration has not improved and, as in 1981, in one-quarter of the primary schools visited maintenance was inadequate and decoration shabby. There is an increasing amount of surplus accommodation in both permanent and temporary buildings and nearly one-half of the schools visited had one or more "spare" rooms. HMI noted that one third of these schools were making good use of the rooms as libraries and resource areas or for small group teaching.

31. LEAs and schools accept that they have to order and re-order their priorities by adjusting the balance of available resources, including teachers, to match identified needs and targets. Some change can be achieved by more effective management of existing resources. Many authorities are now tackling the problem of the overall organisational structure of their schools and a few are attempting to base the staffing of their primary schools on maintaining the current curriculum. If pupil:teacher ratios are not otherwise adjusted at a time of falling rolls, both these measures make educational sense. But in many cases the 1982 returns show that what can be achieved is limited by the lowered baseline of provision consequent upon successive years of trimming back. If one looks ahead, many of the changes

implied by current policies, including improvements in the quality of teaching, have cost implications.

SECONDARY SCHOOLS

32. Although in 1982 there was no further serious erosion of the levels of resources made available to schools, the cumulative effects of financial constraint noted in previous reports still put at risk and in some cases undermine attempts to maintain standards, particularly as the wave of falling rolls moves through the secondary sector. Small schools are most affected, not least because they are more expensive if they provide a standard secondary curriculum.

33. Staffing is, throughout, the main constraint. Attempts have been made in about a quarter of all LEAs to accommodate falling rolls by relating the staffing of schools to the needs of the curriculum. In fifty-three LEAs staffing was assessed as generally satisfactory and, across the country, it was held fairly steady overall. But in 12 cases tightening was observed even where the authority's PTR was already less favourable than the national secondary ratio. Amidst this overall near stability, homogeneity and even improvement at the authority level, a surprising range of PTRs was observed in schools: HMI found ratios as low as 9.7:1 and as high as 21.8:1.

34. For a variety of reasons – which must, as always, include the range of visits made – the match of qualifications to teaching

noted in this year's visits was better than last. But small secondary schools had noticeably more non-specialist staff teaching subjects for which they were not qualified by initial or in-service training than larger schools. Shortages of specialist teachers were noted in a quarter of all returns on individual schools. Redeployment of teachers had in some cases increased the incidence of teachers teaching beyond their qualifications. There was a significant number of references to over-heavy loading of teachers.

35. The curriculum and its delivery to pupils were in some schools marred by similar features to those noted last year. Option choices for pupils in years four and six were restricted and mixed target examination groups had become more common in some schools. Some minority subjects, such as languages other than French, were taught outside the normal timetable or, rather more often, lost. And even a mainstream subject like music could be so treated. There were plenty of examples of the more academically able pupils being insufficiently challenged and even more of the slow learners being short of support or appropriate curricula.

36. Post-16, in well over one-third of all LEAs, there was an improvement in the range of courses offered to the increased number of non-A-level pupils. But the extra provision was not always well planned and there was still much use of examination courses inappropriate to the needs and aptitude of the pupils. For example, only half the observations in respect of sixth form colleges recorded satisfactory provision for less academic pupils or for those for whom a pre-vocational programme might

be appropriate. There was also some evidence to suggest that the provision for A-level pupils in schools had deteriorated in some parts of the country. Some deficiencies appeared to have arisen from the consequences of falling numbers of A-level pupils to which LEAs and schools had not fully adjusted; poor organisation within and between schools was a factor in some cases, insufficient specialist teachers in others. Pupils in some LEAs not only have access to a more limited range of A-level courses but also have fewer opportunities than in other authorities for general studies.

37. At the same time as these restrictions occurred, micro-computers and associated studies have clearly taken root in the curriculum throughout the secondary school, though so far only in a small way. The growth in micro-computers, backed by the Department of Industry programme and encouraged by the Microelectronics Educational Programme (MEP) was not paralleled in those aspects of teaching support more dependent on capital, boosted as it may be by parental contributions. Overall provision of books in secondary schools was judged to be satisfactory in only two-fifths of LEAs. Library provision was often found inadequate to support the pupils' levels of learning, particularly those of the less academic, and, although in two-thirds of the work observed textbooks were in satisfactory supply, there were still too many cases where pupils did not have enough textbooks in subjects such as English, modern languages and, especially, science. The pupils' capacity to work on their own was therefore reduced.

38. The general picture of the provision of consumables was satisfactory and slightly better than last year. Where there was shortfall it was sometimes attributable to teachers' choices.

But there were sadly unavoidable cases of shortages for art, CDT, science and other practical subjects. For the pupils concerned in this nearly a fifth of all institutions visited, such shortages were serious. Pupils were quite commonly buying at least some of their own materials, in art, home economics, needlework and CDT.

39. Equipment, too, presented the same face as last year: about a quarter of the observations on secondary schools identified problems. Science and computing were particular subjects of adverse comment.

40. There has been no further deterioration overall in the state of secondary school premises but the backlog of necessary repair and maintenance work appeared undiminished. In two-thirds of the secondary schools visited, the present state of repairs and maintenance of the premises was judged to be satisfactory. But in only one-third of LEAs was that assessment made of secondary school premises as a whole.

41. Secondary schools were in general not well placed to meet the demands currently made on them in respect of their general curriculum (along the lines of Circular 6/81 and, subsequently, the associated consultation documents on science and modern languages, and of the Cockcroft Report). They are asked to raise standards across the board, to develop a more practical

curriculum for pupils of all abilities and to enhance the prevocational and technical element; and, in particular, to improve the motivation of and means of learning for the least academic of their pupils.

The 1981 Act requires new effort in respect of special educational needs without decreasing the schools' obligations to match any of the other accepted variations within a school population.

Recent ventures like the MEP will not and should not stand still but need to grow under control. The degree of management, self-awareness, and co-operation required of schools is high and needs to be matched with time and training if individual pupils' needs are to be reasonably accommodated and their progress properly recorded for use by both schools and pupils.

Although there may have been a marginal improvement in the opportunities for in-service training, much more of it, as well as other targeted resources of all kinds, needs to be made available if teachers are to meet the needs of the full range of their pupils and particularly of those who, even with the Youth Training Scheme (YTS), are likely to be the least equipped to reach the increasingly demanding standards required for success in the employment market. In most secondary schools, existing levels of resources could not now be stretched to meet the demands legitimately placed on them by the community at large, nor could they in all cases maintain the existing basic provision. It needs to be recognised that the top of the secondary school faces similar demands to those made on non-advanced further education (NAFE) with its growing and in some cases new clientele. The majority of schools could and would do more and better if they had available the resources normally found in NAFE.

FURTHER AND HIGHER EDUCATION

42. The returns covering further and higher education indicated that the changing trends in student demand noted in previous reports had continued. Overall, colleges appeared to be adapting well to meet new demands and there was no evidence of any major defect in the condition of the system or in its range of provision but there were deficiencies. The spare capacity present a few years ago in this then very well provided part of the service appeared to have been largely taken up. Many colleges, particularly those providing predominantly non-advanced courses, were becoming severely taxed by the increasing number of students they were attempting to cater for.

NAFE

43. In the colleges providing mainly non-advanced FE, increased provision was being made in response to further growth in full-time recruitment arising from increased staying on rates for 16-year olds, a continuing decline in the number of part-time vocational students, and increasing numbers from the Manpower Services Commission (MSC) sponsored youth opportunities and related programmes. Many more colleges were engaged with the MSC programmes in dealing with the young unemployed, particularly in the southern half of England, which has only recently come to experience this problem on any sizeable scale. The extent of MSC-funded courses in many colleges

Is such that the income generated provides a substantial part of the total available resources, and its withdrawal or reduction for any reason would create significant problems.

44. Overall, HMI's assessments of both the provision of NAFE by the authorities and the work in institutions recorded that its condition remained satisfactory. More than four-fifths of all the comments judged the number, range and scope of courses available, and the provision of teaching staff for them, as satisfactory or better.

45. Given the colleges' record, it is tempting to suggest that the less satisfactory cases will be corrected as the colleges adjust to the changes in demand, but it would be unwise to be complacent or to assume the correction could in all cases be made without additional expenditure. Meanwhile, some potential students may not be getting courses at all and other students are getting inappropriate or less than well-found ones.

46. The size of the problem, as illustrated by HMI's visits, is almost a fifth of the total, and its incidence is more marked in shire counties than elsewhere. The causes of dissatisfaction are most commonly: demand being greater than provision; staff shortages; lack of course development, accommodation or resources. The sorts of course provision found wanting ran from the general education courses in which the less well qualified new-to-NAFE population often appears and across

the range of traditional FE eg agriculture, food education, construction, mathematics and computing, industrial science and engineering. For the last named area, as for nautical subjects, a continuing decline in enrolments is also a problem.

47. If one focusses down on the problem area in NAFE, staffing is a key factor in most cases, either because there are insufficient staff to carry out the work adequately, or because those available are inappropriately qualified for the work they are undertaking. Nearly half the unsatisfactory assessments of staffing concerned inadequate adaptation to the changing demands on and curricula of the colleges, but a further third related to employment patterns with temporary appointments and large numbers of part-time staff adversely affecting the stability and continuity of teaching.

The former circumstances underlined the need for adequate programmes of staff development whilst the latter staffing pattern highlighted the difficulty of always providing it. In a situation of marked change good senior staff are vital.

48. Accommodation was also a major aspect of unsatisfactory provision and often a considerable problem in otherwise satisfactory provision. Shortage of space and use of inappropriate or inadequate accommodation featured equally. Ingenuity in providing solutions may, however, create other problems like shortage of non-teaching space, over-dispersed (and more difficult to manage) institutions, and under-cleaned and under-maintained premises.

49. Equipment, too, attracted criticism on grounds of being worn out or out-dated. A proportion of these cases related to the introduction of new technology eg in engineering and business studies, but others were of more routine nature, for example in food education and agriculture. Such references were often accompanied by comments on shortages of consumable materials due to inadequate funding. Some colleges are now charging a student registration levy; the amount of this levy varies with the mode of student attendance or the nature of the "specialism" involved. In catering courses, the cost of raw materials is high and colleges can charge the students high prices for any cooked food sold. The need to recover the cost of raw materials from sales of cooked food can influence the range and type of dishes produced. There were over forty examples of colleges using MSC funding to supplement purchases of materials for traditional FE courses. In addition, a number of colleges continued the practice of acquiring "off cuts" and surplus materials from local firms.

50. The provision of non-teaching staff attracted adverse comment, not only in those cases of NAFE judged less than satisfactory.

It is a matter of general concern, not least because of its impact on FE's capacity to develop necessary new work and because of its adverse effects upon the efficiency and productivity of the teaching staff. Straight shortages (of technicians and clerical or administrative staff) create the main problems but manpower

policies which restrict the filling of essential, vacant posts seem an unnecessary complication, particularly for courses which, compared with those in schools, are of short duration and may pose the special problems of part-time attendance. Previous reports have also commented on the importance of a proper mix of expenditure if value for money is to be reflected in students' achievements. The place of non-teaching staff in the desirable mix is obviously something requiring better general understanding.

51. Despite these specific problems which need to be tackled, the achievement of authorities and colleges is notable when one considers the substantial increase in student numbers and the considerable change in the balance of course demand in recent years. Further change will inevitably follow the full functioning of the Youth Training Scheme and the growth of demand for post-experience training. Most authorities still lacked in autumn 1982 systematic plans for providing for changed and changing numbers and types of 16-19 year olds wishing to continue their education. Few authorities could look forward with confidence as to the demands which MSC might make on them. In many areas there was strong evidence that the local authorities, colleges, MSC and other interests needed to come together to give consideration to better co-ordinated provision for 16-19-year olds. Elimination of some of the disorderly features of existing arrangements would release resources for the development and improvement of the education and training opportunities currently available.

52. It is more difficult to assess the message from HMI's less numerous visits to AFE (mainly to polytechnics). Specificity and standards are in a sense even more important at this level and it is rash to generalise without an adequate base. Illustration is, however, in order. Where such illustration is of problems that affect the learning of students in their crucial transition to highly qualified employment, there is room for further investigation and consideration of solutions.

53. Generally the available evidence suggests that the major providers of AFE were able to cope with increased student numbers using a smaller teaching force with no significant effects on the quality of instruction. There was some evidence, however, that a further tightening of staffing ratios would require more fundamental changes in disposition and institutional management procedures. The provision of premises, non-teaching staff and equipment produced more problems but were judged satisfactory in about three-quarters of HMI's autumn visits. In the remaining quarter attention was particularly drawn to the need to improve, update or replace specialist equipment; to shortages of materials for laboratory and workshop based courses; to limitations on library expenditure affecting the ability to maintain an adequate bookstock; and to shortage of technicians. Among the majority of cases judged satisfactory or better, are many which are described as very good. It is not possible to consider whether the cases of satisfaction had anything they could cede to the

less satisfactory. The heart of the matter is the definition of specific need.

TEACHER TRAINING

54. Within FHE lies the crucial area of teacher training, with its double, academic and practically professional, demand and a high degree of specificity. The limited number of visits (46) made by HMI in the autumn term of 1982 do not allow distinction to be made between the two aspects. It is not possible to comment on any particular aspect of the academic provision. In general, staffing levels and opportunities for staff development were judged satisfactory. Some increase in secondments was associated with redundancy arrangements and it is not clear that enough provision was as yet being made to support necessary transfers from secondary to primary teacher training. Cuts in non-teaching staff were fairly regularly reported and standards of maintenance had fallen noticeably. However, provision of equipment and materials, including library resources, remained satisfactory in all but about a tenth of the institutions visited.

55. In respect of the practical aspects of training, at a time when close links between training institutions and schools are seen as fundamental to efficiency, it was apparent that limits on funds available for travel imposed a restraint in a sixth of the institutions. Supervision of school experience and school

based activities for students were therefore reduced and the choice of school for such activities was in some cases related to distance rather than educational criteria. The same theme of difficulty in maintaining and establishing closer links with schools also marked the comments on college-based in-service training provision. In general, programmes and consultation about priorities are satisfactory and many staff were recorded as giving their services to schools beyond normal requirements.

56. As progress is made in implementing the Teaching Quality White Paper, attention will need to be given to the messages embodied in these comments and to examining the pattern of expenditure which makes for effective teacher training.

CONCLUSION

57. This report rests mainly on the actuality HMI observed in institutions in autumn 1982. In its interpretation it draws on the Inspectorate's general knowledge of the performance of the system. There can be no doubt that LEAs and institutions are generally trying to reconcile their educational obligations with current financial policies. There is also no doubt that, however great their efforts and achievements, the educational assessment to which most would subscribe has to be "needs to do better"; apart from a general concern to improve basic standards, current policies for the curriculum, qualifications and training require in many cases a greater range and degree of differentiation of pupils' and students' programmes than can everywhere be made accessible. The needs of individuals and the country now urgently require that means and mechanisms be found to improve this accessibility and to recognise the necessary degrees of match and change. Throughout the system there has been for some years a rash of deficiencies which affect schools, NAFE and AFE (in decreasing order of severity). Time will correct some of the deficiencies but pupils and students depend on what is offered in the present, and the morale and repute of LEAs and their institutions and staffs are related to what they can do now. The most urgent need is for clearer understanding of how to deal, educationally and financially, with specific problems, as and before they arise.

At present it is difficult enough for educational policies, national, local or institutional, to be seen and developed as a whole in educational terms, and, in too many cases, financial mechanisms at least (and in some cases finance tout court) aggravate the problem. This year's report shows that the pace of deterioration in provision has at least been slowed and this is therefore a good moment to increase efforts to tackle this problem of specificity.

There is much to be done to make good the basic range of provision, and even more to meet necessary changes in population of pupils and students and the many new tasks already formulated or yet to be perceived.

July 1983



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PRESS NOTICE

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WEDNESDAY 20 JULY 1983

HMI REPORT ON EDUCATION EXPENDITURE

Schools and colleges in 1982 generally experienced few major changes in levels and standards of provision. The pace of reduction in the levels of resources in schools, caused by the combined effects of expenditure constraints and falling rolls, has slowed down.

The great majority of education in schools and colleges is adequately provided for, but there are inadequacies in individual institutions which cannot be shrugged off.

This is stated in a report* by Her Majesty's Inspectorate published today on the effects local authority expenditure policies had on the education service in England in 1982.

The evidence, says the report, is that in most local education authorities there was a mix of slight improvements in some aspects of provision, slight worsening in others, and a standstill in the remainder.

But even where ground is being held it is important to remember what ground; the baseline of provision is characterised by levels and standards of resources which are sometimes inadequate to maintain the status quo, already limited in many cases by years of trimming back. Some new initiatives have been possible but in general schools were less than well-placed to respond constructively to the many calls for educational improvement and change.

Twenty-two authorities improved their levels of provision in schools overall while nine similarly reduced them. Most authorities had broadly satisfactory levels of provision across most of the aspects assessed (teaching staff, non-teaching staff, in-service training, induction, advisory services, premises, and books, materials and equipment).

* Report by HMI on the Effects of Local Authority Expenditure Policies on the Education Service in England in 1982. Copies available free from the Publications Despatch Centre, Department of Education and Science, Honeypot Lane, Canons Park, Stanmore, Middlesex HA7 1AZ

Variations among LEAs in the levels of observed provision persist but the range was not, as in 1981, apparently widening. Nor were the frings groups getting larger.

In autumn 1982, six LEAs were reckoned to have satisfactory (or better) provision across all seven expenditure aspects compared with five in 1981. One metropolitan district has dropped out, and two county authorities have moved in.

At the other end of the scale HMI last year were concerned about the level of provision in four LEAs. Two of these increased provision in 1982, one by an amount such that its overall level is no longer a matter of concern.

But a county authority with a previously low level of provision so reduced it in respect of all but two of the heads of expenditure that it joined the group, still four, which is of concern to HMI.

In further and higher education, colleges generally appeared to be adapting well to meet new demands and there was no evidence of any major defect in the condition of the system or in its range of provision but there were deficiencies in individual institutions affecting both traditional further education and the general education courses in which the less well qualified new-to-non-advanced further education population often appears.

The spare capacity in colleges, present a few years ago in this then very well-provided part of the service, appeared to have been largely taken up. Many colleges, particularly those providing predominantly non-advanced courses, were becoming severely taxed by the increasing number of students they were attempting to cater for.

The report concludes that, despite the largely satisfactory provision in schools and colleges and the efforts and achievements of LEAs and institutions, "there has been for some years a rash of deficiencies which affect schools, non-advanced further education and advanced further education (in decreasing order of severity).

"Time will correct some of the deficiencies but pupils and students depend on what is offered in the present. The most urgent need is for clearer understanding of how to deal, educationally and financially, with specific problems as and before they arise.

"There is much to be done to make good the basic range of provision and even more to meet necessary changes in population of pupils and students and the many new tasks already formulated or yet to be perceived."

The report is the sixth in a series of annual reports by HMI. It is based on reports from HMI's visits to schools and colleges last autumn and on returns on all LEAs made by District Inspectors in November 1982. No account is taken of changes for better or worse in local authorities' expenditure policies, actual or planned, since last autumn.

A total of 2,259 returns were made on 1,733 schools (including sixth form colleges) and 671 on 339 further education institutions, including the youth service and adult education.

The report states: "These observations cannot be taken as statistically representative nationally or for any one LEA or type of institution. They do not provide a basis for detailed comparison with last year. They are, however, sufficiently numerous and diverse to provide an acceptable snapshot of the present state of play in schools and non-advanced further education."

NOTES TO EDITORS

1. This is the third time the report has been published, the first being in February 1981, following requests from the local authority associations for it to be made more widely available.
2. It is the sixth annual report presented to the Expenditure Steering Group - Education (ESGE), the joint Department of Education and Science/local authority associations group at official level. ESGE is chaired by a DES senior official and is a sub-group (as are equivalent groups for other local authority services) of the Consultative Council on Local Government Finance. Its prime task is to monitor trends in LEA expenditure as part of the process of consultations leading to the Government's decision on the annual Rate Support Grant settlement.