

Prime Minister

I suggest you ask for this to be dismissed
at E(EP), but make these points in advance
in writing. Agree?

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PRIME MINISTER

22 September 1987

DLV
22/9.

It is utterly ridiculous.

The result will come
through in the tests

MONITORING THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM

exam. The importance

will continue with their present

You may remember that, when a draft of the consultation
document on the National Curriculum was produced in June,
there was a fundamental disagreement between yourself and
Kenneth Baker on how the National Curriculum was to be
monitored. The consultation document was issued with
details of monitoring being left for consideration in a
further paper.

role - 1

design

by inspection

a very big

schools.

This has now arrived. In it Kenneth Baker:-

It is done very authoritatively

approach - a takeover

of ed: by HMI enough to be responsible.

- argues for comprehensive monitoring of the National Curriculum;

try to break

it out immediately

- states that the most cost-effective way to achieve this
is by LEA's recruiting 800 extra inspectors at a cost
of £25m per year and

no

- proposes that the 2,000 LEA inspectors should be
monitored and controlled by the HMI, of which there are
roughly 500.

This is a quite outrageous proposal and should be firmly
rejected.

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How much Inspection do we need?

The fundamental flaw of this paper is its basic assumption. It starts from the premise that effective delivery of the National Curriculum requires

"(i) systematic and (initially, at least) frequent monitoring of all maintained schools;

(ii) oversight of the local arrangements and procedures for assessment and testing and for the reporting of the results;

(iii) a first line local facility to examine complaints by parents and others about curricular provision in the area and/or that assessment and testing have not been properly conducted or have operated unfairly or unreasonably in individual cases;

(iv) wide-ranging inspection, the findings of which should provide much of the information and judgement about the efficiency or effectiveness of the system that underpin and inform the development of educational policy and action nationally and locally; provide the DES, the Government, LEAs and schools with professional advice about what needs to be improved; good practice that should be spread more widely; and suggestions of what action is needed for these ends to be achieved;

(v) national oversight of the arrangements under (i), (ii) and (iii) above for day-to-day monitoring."

I can see no real reason for requiring points (i) and (iv) other than if the HMI wish to monitor detailed programmes of

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work in all schools. This, however, is a fundamentally alien notion of the National Curriculum from the one which you have continued to espouse since the beginning.

If implemented this will alienate teachers, dampen individual initiatives at school level, increase the power of the HMI and centralise the curriculum to an intolerable degree. More than that, we run the risk that the National Curriculum will become the embodiment of the HMI world view, with Parliamentary backing.

(Incidentally, it should be noted that point (iv) involves a potential growth in DES staff as well!)

The proper function of those inspecting the delivery of the National Curriculum should simply be:-

- To ensure that testing procedures and the reporting of results for individual schools are adequate.
- To examine individual complaints.
- To inspect teaching methods at those schools whose pupils perform badly overall in the standard tests.

Do we need extra Inspectors?

No.

These tasks can be carried out quite adequately by the existing 2,500 Inspectors. No mention is made in the paper of the important role which governors (250,000?) can play in the process. If governors take pride in their schools,

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which is surely not an unreasonable assumption, they will wish to see that the tests are properly managed, the results published and that individual complaints by parents regarding their schools are minimised.

Should LEA Inspectors be controlled by HMI?

HMI clearly see the National Curriculum as a way of taking over our educational system. First they design the curriculum, then they influence the tests, and now they de facto increase their numbers from 500 to 2,500.

Some LEA Inspectors may not be good. But there are at least some others whom we need to protect from the clutches of the HMI.

Conclusion

If this proposal is allowed to go forward we run the great risk that the National Curriculum will achieve precisely the opposite of what you originally intended.

Recommendation

for
Reject the proposal and suggest a new role for inspection which would require far fewer resources.

Ros Llewellyn
for BRIAN GRIFFITHS

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10 DOWNING STREET

LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

23 September 1987

Dear Tom,

MONITORING THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM

The Prime Minister has seen your Secretary of State's minute of 18 September which discussed the arrangements for monitoring the delivery of the national curriculum in maintained schools.

The Prime Minister finds wholly unacceptable a proposal that there should be comprehensive monitoring of the national curriculum requiring LEAs to recruit 800 extra inspectors at a cost of £25 million a year and involving 2000 LEA inspectors to be monitored and controlled by nearly 500 HMIs. This would be seen as autocratic, in fact, a takeover of education by DES through the Inspectorate. It would alienate teachers, hold back individual initiative at school level and centralise education to an unacceptable degree. There should be no need to require systematic and frequent monitoring of maintained schools or wide-ranging inspection (points (i) and (iv) of paragraph 5).

The objectives for those inspecting the delivery of the national curriculum should be, first, to ensure that testing procedures and the reporting of results for individual schools are adequate, secondly, to examine individual complaints and, thirdly, to inspect teaching methods at those schools whose pupils perform badly overall in the standard tests. There is no need to appoint more inspectors and no reason for HMIs to change their present role.

Your Secretary of State will no doubt wish to re-consider his proposals in the light of these comments. In view of the time pressures and the approach of the Party Conference and the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, it will be important, as we discussed, for revised proposals to be circulated as early as possible next week.

I am copying this letter to the Private Secretaries to members of E(EP), Philip Mawer (Home Office), David Watkins (Northern Ireland Office) and Trevor Woolley (Cabinet Office).

(DAVID NORGROVE)

Y
Jas,

David

Tom Jeffery, Esq.,
Department of Education and Science.

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