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ABSTRACT

This paper outlines the growth and development of teacher centers in England. These centers grew out of a general dissatisfaction on the part of classroom teachers with existing inservice programs. It was the feeling that certain priorities for teachers were being overlooked, such as methods of dealing with learning difficulties, class organization, developing curriculum, using space wisely, finding new teaching materials and, in general, handling the day-to-day functions of the classroom. Out of these dissatisfactions the English teacher centers gradually took shape. Teachers felt the need to meet as equals for intellectual cross-fertilization, exchange of ideas and practices, and social relaxation. The English teacher center is a flexible and relaxed place where there is an easy flow of new ideas. Emphasis is placed on helping and supporting new teachers who are just beginning their classroom experience. The center has become, in effect, a special assisting branch of inservice education. (JD)

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ASPECTS OF IN-SERVICE EDUCATION IN ENGLAND

In the generation since World War II, Great Britain has been the leader in much educational change, from open classrooms to the Open University. During the past decade, a new structure of English in-service training or education (in acronym, INSET) has been developing. Representatives of American school systems are examining British models to see how they can be adapted to our needs for vitalizing the continuing education of teachers.

A review of the basic English educational system provides background for an outline of their new approach to in-service work. The system contrasts with that of the United States, where the federal Department of Health, Education and Welfare and the Office of Education do not apply national standards per se, but rather account educational structure to the various states under the constitutional interpretation of states vs. federal rights. In England, though the central government does not run schools, hire teachers, or specify curricula and texts, it has the following responsibilities:

- set minimum standards of educational provision;
- control the rate, distribution, nature and cost of educational building;
- in consultation with local authority associations, forecast the level of local authority expenditure on education to be taken into account in determining the size of the Exchequer grant...;
- support financially, by direct grant, a limited number of institutions of a special kind;
- control the training, supply and distribution of teachers and determine the principles governing recognition of teachers as qualified;

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administer a superannuation scheme for teachers; support educational research through the agency of the National Foundation for Educational Research, university departments, and other bodies; settle disputes, for example, between a parent and a local education authority, or between a local education authority and the managers of a school.

(Educational System, pp. 12-13)

The Department of Education and Science (DES) is headed by a Secretary of State of cabinet rank. (It is of interest that Mrs. Margaret Thatcher rose from her work with DES to become the present leader of the Conservative Party). Supervision of the national aspect of education in England is done by some 470 members of Her Majesty's Inspectorate (HMI), whose primary function is to report to the Secretary of State.

All schools of whatever kind are open to inspection. HM Inspectors also offer advice to local education authorities, colleges and schools and discuss day-to-day problems with them. The Inspectorate gives professional educational advice, provides a focus for educational developments, conducts courses for serving teachers, and prepares advisory publications.

(Educational System, p. 13)

While the Inspectorate provides that a minimum educational standard prevails throughout the country, the power for accomplishing educational goals resides with Local Education Authorities (LEA), which are elected councils of counties, county boroughs, and the outer London boroughs. (The Inner London Education Authority--ILEA--is a specially constituted committee.)

[Local] education authorities build schools...; employ teachers, local inspectors of schools and education organizers; and provide equipment and materials. It is their duty to secure that there is efficient education at all levels to meet the needs of the local population. What is taught is normally decided on their behalf by the head teachers [principals] of schools.

(Educational System, p. 14)

Thus, ultimate responsibility for education is local, as it is here in the United States. There is, however, a more central administration of public education and curriculum reform. Major changes can be made at a national level, affecting all Local Education Authorities, rather than the variegated state by state pattern which holds in the United States. Such a national change in England in the 1960's provided impetus for innovation in in-service: the school-leaving age was raised from 15 to 16. With this came other major changes: metrication to meet conditions of European Common Market membership, and the continuing trend away from a tripartite secondary school division to unified comprehensive schools.

At this point, a charting of the British school structure is appropriate. Though some 500 public nursery schools are available, nursery education for children under five is largely private and requires payment of fees. The government goal is to have places by 1982 for 90% of the 4-year-olds and 50% of the 3-year-olds (Educational System, p. 2). At present, children begin primary school at five.

INFANT SCHOOLS: 5-7
JUNIOR SCHOOLS: 8-11

(A middle school movement, though small, is growing.)

Secondary school begins at age 11, is compulsory until 16, and can be continued until 18. About half the student population attends comprehensive schools. In some areas, there remains the former division into grammar schools (liberal arts university-preparatory), technical schools (scientific preparatory) and secondary modern schools (for the majority of students).

GRAMMAR SCHOOLS:
TECHNICAL SCHOOLS:
SECONDARY MODERN SCHOOLS: 11-16/18
COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOLS:

Factors like the raising of the school-leaving age, metrication, and the establishment of comprehensive schools demanded curriculum building, which in turn needed direct input from teachers themselves. Their extra-class association to develop new curricula led to released time, supportive relationships, and temporary centers of activity (often apart from the schools). Most important, they gave dignity to the classroom practitioners themselves and to their work and did not simply disseminate filtered-down authoritative dicta.

As early as 1944, a Board of Education Report (the McNair Report) had recommended setting up a building to serve as educational center of an area. "The Education Centre it envisaged could be used by staffs of the university, training colleges, technical colleges, colleges of art, drama and physical training--and by teachers from schools of all kinds.... The centre would offer the amenities of a club and it would experiment in the development of public opinion on local educational problems." (Thornbury, "Introduction: A Tumult of Centres", p. 7) In actuality, the McNair Report resulted not in the establishment of such centres but rather in a preoccupation with raising the academic status of the study of education.

As a consequence, teachers sometimes felt that they were not being properly prepared for their classroom work: the universities and colleges of education were too concerned with making education respectable on the academic level. Nor were the professional associations, such as the National Union of Teachers (NUT) directly concerned with classroom

curriculum, but rather with salaries, conditions, and fringe benefits. Outstanding teachers often left the classroom to become professors or Local Education Authority advisory staff members. There was little alternative for the teacher who wanted to be professionally heard.

A study by the National Foundation of Educational Research in 1967 showed that one-fourth of the teachers surveyed had not participated in in-service programs. (Thornbury, "Introduction: A Tumult of Centres", p. 9) They were forthright in stating their criticisms:

(1) They believed that few of the current courses were relevant to the reality of the classroom. (2) They wanted released time during their regular hours with adequate replacement for their classes. (3) They condemned the traditional lecture/discussion method and proposed instead workshops, working parties (no outside leader), observation of classrooms, radio and television programs. (4) They needed local courses to eliminate the travel expenses of time, money, and extra energy.

In addition, the teachers listed a priority of topics, half of which were not being given attention in available in-service at that time. Their nine priority areas were: "1) learning difficulties, 2) new methods of school and class organization, 3) new apparatus [i.e., audiovisual media], 4) planning and developing syllabuses, 5) courses on recent educational research relevant to their work, 6) the teaching of academic subjects to non-academic children, 7) teaching large mixed-ability classes with little equipment or space, 8) demonstration of new schemes of work and discussion of their results, 9) instruction, marking and interpretation of exams and

assessment tests." (Thornbury, "Introduction: A Tumult of Centres", pp. 10-11)

Conditions were ripe for change in in-service education. Combined with dissatisfaction with usual courses was the professional ability of teachers themselves as displayed in various curriculum reform programs. The major outgrowth was the development of teachers' centres, an "idea so simple, so obvious, so psychologically sound, as to make one wonder why teachers' centres have not dotted the educational landscape for decades...." (Bailey, p. 146) As the warden of a London centre states, "they meet the felt needs of teachers and show the futility of attempting educational reform without teachers being directly and importantly involved." (Thornbury, "Introduction: A Tumult of Centres", p. 1) The retired head teacher of a Kent county school relates teachers' centres to the fact that there will be fewer recent-graduate teachers in the future. "There will be a decline in new entrants, and so new needs will have to be met by retraining existing teachers. All teachers expect continued personal and professional development, though needs are highly individual." (Brooks, p. 5)

The underlying rationale for teachers' centres is threefold:

"1) Fundamental educational reform will come only through those charged with the basic educational responsibility...the teachers; 2) teachers are unlikely to change their ways of doing things just because imperious, theoretical reformers [educrats]...tell them to shape up; 3) teachers will take reform seriously only when they are responsible for defining their own educational problems, delineating their own

needs, and receiving help on their own terms and turf." (Bailey, p. 146)

By 1972, there were over 617 centres (Thornbury, "Introduction: A Tumult of Centres", p. 3), 41 in inner London alone (Rust, p. 188). Each is distinct to its locality, the common element being that each has "local physical facilities and self-improvement programs organized and run by the teachers themselves for purposes of upgrading educational performance. Their primary function is to make possible a review of existing curricula and other educational practices by groups of teachers and to encourage teacher attempts to bring about change." (Bailey, p. 146) Courses at the centres "are characterized by their immediate applicability to teaching situations." (Smith, p. 5)

The teachers' centre is not standardized: its strength lies directly in its local and flexible nature. It may be complemented by regional and national centres, but it fills, for its own area, needs for continuing education, a materials center, and a social pub comparable to a student union. Support for local centres comes from the Local Education Authorities. On occasion, regional groupings of centres combine to work on a project, such as the North West Regional Curriculum Development Project initiated in 1967. As a result of the Lockwood Committee, in 1964 a national teachers centre, the Schools Council, was organized, but its advisory power is clearly delineated: "Teachers should be completely free to choose for themselves in curriculum matters. Publications of the Schools Council, for instance, would carry no authority whatever apart from their own intrinsic merit." (Thornbury, "Introduction: A Tumult of Centres", p. 12)

Attendance is voluntary and noncompulsory; a captive-audience stance leads back to the old system of paper certification for promotion rather than educational purposes. "The real incentive for coming to the center is a personal desire on the part of the teachers to improve themselves professionally." (Rust, p. 189) Vigilance is taken to insure against institutionalization and any carryover of professional rank or authority. The value of a neutral ground is stressed: a place where all levels of teachers meet as equals for intellectual cross-fertilization, exchange of ideas and practices, and social relaxation.

The breaking of compartmentalized barriers is basic to the philosophy of teachers' centres. As one warden states:

The barriers which have all too long persisted in education in this country are between primary and secondary teachers; between individual subjects of the curriculum, especially in the secondary school; between teachers and head teachers; between the classroom practitioner and the college of education lecturer; and between the practising teacher and the administrators.... In the multi-purpose teachers' centre there is no room for such divisions, no room for a hierarchical system. All meet together as equals with their own special contribution to make according to individual expertise. (Kahn, p. 76)

Ideally, a teachers' centre should serve between 400-800 teachers; in actuality, the range of English centres is for as few as 22, as many as 8,000. (Thornbury, "The Fastest Vehicle in a Vacuum...", p. 28) Three-fourths of the centres, following the principle of neutral ground, are in separate buildings rather than part of a school or college. The average size is from three to seven rooms. The available space must include three indispensable elements: (1) a work room, for production and reproduction of materials, (2) a discussion room, which may also house the library of print and nonprint media, and (3) the

refreshment area, to ensure center use and enjoyment. (Matthews, p. 54) Some centres are single-purpose (i.e., devoted to "maths"); most, to achieve maximum interchange, are multi-purpose (various subject areas and age-levels).

The growth of teachers' centres in the past decade is indicative of success due to several factors. The teachers' own contributions provide the greatest recompense of the centres. Usually teachers constitute the majority on the centres' management committees. In addition, "local teachers may run as many as 60% of the courses..." (Julius, p. 251) The tea or bar amenities provide an attractive atmosphere. In some areas, the resource of released time has helped motivate participation. The days and times of course offerings are varied to accommodate the teachers served. A recent survey showed that "a single-session format was the most common pattern of meetings," followed by courses of 2-4 sessions. (Smith, p. 5) Like a mobile library, the local centre fulfills the key points of being close, convenient, and available: accessible in both time and distance. Practical considerations may even include registration by phone and help in locating a place to live. (Julius, p. 252)

Often there are greater reprographic facilities and audiovisual materials than at schools, with a media resources officer (MRO) on hand to help, explain, and demonstrate. The print libraries may include text repositories; there are also free materials and exhibitions--sometimes even an animal bank. (Julius, p. 252) The centre is often available for use by other education organizations. A future goal is to develop more involvement with community groups having interests in education, especially parents.

The person primarily responsible for the successful operation of a centre is its warden. Humorously referred to as a "general dog's-body," he/she must be a good teacher and group manager with a sound grasp of current theory and practice and an understanding of curriculum development. Wardens themselves, in a 1972 survey by the National Union of Teachers, rated their responsibilities in this order of importance: "1) Administration of courses, 2) Organisation of curriculum development, 3) Arranging exhibitions, 4) Development of resources, 5) Visiting schools, 6) Servicing study groups, 7) Arranging conferences, 8) Administration of teacher-groups, 9) Liaison with higher education centres, 10) Co-operation with the county authority, 11) Schools Council projects, 12) Social activities." (Thornbury, "James and his White Paper", p. 41)

Communication is the heart of the warden's work. He often is responsible for a newsletter featuring such items as profiles of people in education, notes on new developments, listings of centre doings, and reviews of professional literature. Items are contributed mostly by teachers. The newsletter is brief and attractive, so as to compete favorably amid the papers deluging teachers. Input and distribution are made through a network of teachers, at least one in each school. Face-to-face communication and address by name rather than by "addressee" effect far more than do paper mountains of bulk mail. Both by newsletter circulation and through personal visits, the warden continually assesses the centre's programs to develop topics which the teachers consider of value. Four subjects are in top demand: art and craft, mathematics, science, and reading. (Kahn, p. 72)

On the way to success, centres have encountered a number of problems. One is financial. Some Local Education Authorities have been "hesitant about encouraging an organisation run by teachers." (Thornbury, "James and his White Paper", p. 42) There is continuing need to attract secondary teachers, who tend to use centres infrequently, perhaps to avoid "identification with their low-status primary colleagues." (Thornbury, "James and his White Paper", p. 42) Wardens, no longer teaching in the classroom but filling administrative functions, worry about losing direct touch with children and ceasing to be recognized as "one of us" by teachers.

Despite difficulties, the centres are succeeding in changing the concept of in-service education in England. "The time has come, with the introduction of professional centres, for teachers to log their in-service hours like airline pilots." (Thornbury, "The Iceberg of Centralism...", p. 153) Though general statistics are not readily available, one report states that in 1974 the London teachers' centres had 20,000 attendances (out of 24,000 teachers); these figures may reflect duplications. Nevertheless, they are an indication of popularity. (Julius, 252)

One aspect of in-service education to which the English have paid special attention is the induction education or training provided for the probationary (first-year) teacher. Too often such novices have been disgorged from theoretical training at institutions of higher learning only to founder like lonely barks on the stormy sea of practical reality, to the detriment of their pupils and their own professional future. In 1971, the James Report on Teacher Education strongly criticized the inadequate help new teachers received:

The probationary teacher, in fact, leaves his college on the last day of term and never hears of or from it again. Nor does the school to which he goes communicate with the college, even if difficulties arrive. He is pleasantly received at his school as would be any newly appointed member of staff, whether or not in a first appointment, and introduced formally or informally to the ways of the place. No one suggests that he is in a special situation or entitled to unusual help. He may be invited by the LEA to attend a tea party but he will probably not go, and if he does, that will be his last meeting with his colleagues or advisors. He teaches a full timetable including one or two of the notoriously difficult groups of pupils. No one goes near him in the mistaken belief that to do so would be to interfere with his professional integrity. At the end of the year he receives a note informing him that the probationary year has been satisfactorily completed and he is now a fully qualified teacher.

The James Report shattered the myth that graduates emerge from college as fullfledged teachers. The individual needs growth in experience and maturity, but beyond that he/she needs continuing professional assistance. The Report recommended that the equivalent of one day per week be released for the probationary teacher to receive in-service help. This could come at teachers' centres or directly from an assigned teacher-tutor. The tutors are often a head teacher (principal), but not of the same school. College and university instructors may also fill the tutor role. "With far less students likely to be trained now, there is, of course, a surfeit of lecturers. The colleges and Institutes [at Universities] feel that these people could very well be used for Induction Training." (Brooks, p. 2) At most, tutors attend to eight probationers, allowing for individualized help, for often the new teacher suffers less from lack of knowledge than from uncertainty, low confidence, isolation, and inability to articulate his needs. An expressed interest in knowing more about "primary maths" may cloak bewilderment on how to handle a classroom of low-income children. "'Unfamiliarity with the children's social background' loomed largest [of

problems] in the view of probationers both at the beginning and at the end of their first year of service." ("Probationary Teachers," pp. 3-4)

A White Paper of the government Minister (Mrs. Thatcher) responded to the James Report by proposing that each new teacher undertake only three-quarters teaching load the first year. Pilot programs have confirmed that the "most valuable single feature...[of induction education] is...the reduced teaching load..." ("Helping New Teachers," p. 2) A national program of teacher-tutors was set for implementation in 1975-76.

In addition, the White Paper agreed with another proposal of the James Report: the secondment, or release, at full pay of experienced teachers for one term of in-service every seven years. The Report recommended that this be flexibly interpreted and not restricted to conventional academic courses (i.e., to allow time in industry for a careers teacher). The White Paper endorsed a target of 3% of all teachers to be on sabbatical release by 1981, wherein for each teacher "the in-service programme should strike a careful balance between the teachers' personal interest in his professional development and the employer's concern with the current needs of particular schools and the pupils in them." (Thornbury, "James and his White Paper", p. 46)

All this activity in the area of English in-service education has repercussions beyond the teachers themselves. For in-service is inevitably connected with curriculum development, the continuing cycle of definition of aims and objectives, construction of methods and materials, and assessment of effectiveness in use for feedback of results. "The colleges used to be the progressive innovators of curriculum reform. But in recent years the new ideas have come out of the classroom

and the teachers' centres." (Thornbury, "The Iceberg of Centralism", p. 144)

These new ideas are affecting publishers and writers.

The day of the prolific textbook writer, hoping to make half a million pounds with an enterprising publisher has gone.... The individual educational publisher, risking large amounts of capital on a new series or writer, is in serious danger. Educational publishing threatens to be displaced by a system of patronage operated by educational organizations such as the state publishing house, the Schools Council, the regional publishing projects sponsored by the LEA's, or other patronages such as the BBC Publications Department, or the educational television service of a large education authority. (Thornbury, "The Iceberg of Centralism," p. 142)

No longer will conditions favor writing of texts on authors' own time, with royalties accruing to the individual. The situation is analogous to the scientist-inventor whose work, on institutional time, results in institutional patents.

Any American adaptation of the English "silent educational revolution" (Thornbury, "Introduction: A Tumult of Centres", p. 2) in in-service education can lead to similar displacement of traditional entrenched investments, which are one step distant from teachers and students: college and university schools of education, state departments of education, and publishing companies with their array of print and nonprint, software and hardware, notes and guides. One critic, believing that "meaningful methodological changes will be the result primarily of teachers working positively and openly with children over a long period of time" (Pilcher, p. 340), nevertheless is cautious about the efficacy of transferring the English model of a teachers' centre to the United States. Because of the differences between the American and British educational systems, the American teacher has less autonomy than his/her English counterpart. In the United States,

university leaders, community spokesmen, and school administrators can exert greater pressure. It will be more difficult to achieve teachers' centers independent alike from academic advice, community criticism, and the administrative superior/subordinate attitude. (Pilcher, pp. 341-343)

Ultimately, the value of the innovations in English in-service education lies in the impact on the school room. "For the first time, local teachers...are prime movers in reforming [educational practice]..." (Bailey, p. 148) As one warden says, "The state of very rapid, and seemingly continual, change in our society needs to be matched by an equivalent change in the processes of education. If we wish to avoid 'Change without progress', then development in education must start in the classroom, at the stage where the children and teachers are..." (Gough, p. 128)

The change in English in-service education has been from externally devised course-structured study, with concomitant rewards in paper qualifications, ~~promotions~~ and increased salary (valid as these are), to exploration by teachers themselves of all facets of their work. "Such an examination in depth need not lead to the rejection of existing practices which have been effective for learning in the classroom. It could equally lead to a re-adoption of traditional methods which on critical examination ~~have~~ been found relevant to present needs. It could lead, and often does, to the working out, by teachers themselves, of new techniques. What is fundamental to the philosophy is not the act of change but ~~the~~ process of evaluation." (Kahn, p. 77)

Such evaluation "may be the essential but presently missing link

between innovative ideas and pupil performance in the classroom."

(Bailey, p. 149)

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See also: publications of the Department of Education and Science, including the periodical Trends in Education.

See also: publications of the Schools Council, including the periodical Dialogue.