A ‘Home International’ Comparison of Education and Training Systems in the UK

The Education and Training Systems of the UK: Convergence or Divergence?

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SESSION 1

THE EDUCATION AND TRAINING SYSTEMS OF THE UK
1. The Home Internationals Project

In Scotland and Wales new elected assemblies and their executives have assumed responsibility for education and training. The same may yet happen in Northern Ireland. This may therefore be a good moment to take stock of the education and training systems of the UK, to assess their similarities and differences, and to explore the potential for their future convergence or divergence.

Since January 1997 we have been engaged in a research project, funded by the Economic and Social Research Council, on A ‘Home International’ Comparison of 14-19 education and training systems in the UK, or ‘Home Internationals Project’ for short. This set out ‘to compare the education and training systems for 14-19 year olds in England and in Scotland (and, as far as possible, in Wales and Northern Ireland) in respect of:

• patterns of participation and flows through the system,
• educational and labour-market outcomes,
• the distribution of participation and outcomes by gender, ethnicity, social class and prior attainment, and
• factors determining individuals’ progress through the system and their outcomes.’

The project also aimed to provide a ‘descriptive and analytical framework’ to support policy-makers and researchers, with particular emphasis on policy borrowing or lesson-drawing, and to contribute to theory, methods and resources for comparative research.

Our rationale for the Home Internationals Project did not rest solely on devolution, which was still a distant and uncertain prospect when we planned the project. We also argued that ‘home international’ comparisons were particularly likely to be of value for policy-making as well as for theoretical development. As an example, the Centre for Educational Sociology was then engaged on the Unified Learning Project, a comparison of post-16 policy developments in Scotland, England and Wales, and other European countries (Howieson and Raffe 1999).

One of our first tasks in the project was to summarise the existing differences and similarities of the four UK systems and to set out in detail the practical and theoretical case for comparing them. The resulting article, published in Comparative Education, is the companion to the present paper in setting the scene for the seminar (Raffe et al. 1999a). A second paper compared the ‘National Curriculums’ of the UK with particular reference to gender inequalities (Croxford 2000) and a third paper discussed the interdependence of the four systems and the prospects for divergence in post-16 education and training (Raffe 1999).
We also interviewed policy-makers in the four UK territories. These interviews gathered background information, ascertained policy-makers’ interest in the research, and asked what use they currently made of home international comparisons in policy-making. The answer was not much, and we say more about this below.

The largest part of the Home Internationals Project was the construction and analysis of a cross-national dataset. This dataset described the experiences and transitions of young people across the four territories, and was assembled from three different surveys: the England and Wales Youth Cohort Survey and the Scottish Young People’s Survey of 1991-93, and the Northern Ireland Secondary Education Leavers’ Survey of 1992-95. For England, Wales and Scotland it described a cohort of young people aged about 16 in 1990 who were last surveyed in 1993 at 18 or 19 years. The Northern Ireland sample was different, based on 1992 school leavers. When we planned the research this cohort was the most recent for which even partly comparable data were available. However, education and training have changed since the early 1990s, and we will need to follow the comparisons into the present and the future.

2. A FRAMEWORK FOR COMPARISON

In order to compare education systems we had to be clear what we understood by the term ‘system’. How, for example, would we distinguish differences between education systems from differences in the uses that people made of systems? Drawing on the wider comparative literature (eg Maurice, Sellier and Silvestre 1986, Delamont and Rees 1997), we distinguished three levels of comparison:

- the **societal context of education and training**: culture and social attitudes, family structure, the economy and labour market, social welfare, political system, and so on;
- the **administrative system of education and training**: the formal structures of institutions, qualifications, the curriculum, governance and accountability, and so on;
- the **social relations and processes of education and training**: patterns of participation and flows through the system, learning processes, interactions between teachers and students, learning outcomes and attainments, inequalities by gender, social class and ethnic origin, and so on.

These three levels are summarised in Figure 1. The third level, of social relations and processes, includes ‘outcomes’ of the education system such as average qualifications and levels of inequality. However these outcomes are influenced by the societal context as well as by the administrative system of education. For example, the relatively polarised distribution of attainments in all four UK systems, compared with many other European countries, may reflect social inequality and polarisation in the labour market as much as it reflects the weaknesses of the administrative systems of education. The causal arrows therefore connect all three levels in Figure 1. They are also double-headed: the relations of cause and effect run in both directions. Not only does the administrative system influence the social relations and ‘outcomes’ of education, but it is itself reformed in response to these social relations and outcomes. For this reason we need to go beyond snapshot comparisons to study comparative change over time.
This framework draws our attention to two distinctive features of ‘home international’ comparisons. The first concerns the way in which the societal context varies across the home countries. We summarise this variation in terms of four ‘stylised facts’ (see the companion paper for a fuller argument):

1. Many of the social institutions which affect education and training - such as the organisation of the economy and labour market, employment regulations, the social welfare system, family structure, and so on - tend not to vary across the UK.
2. The social or economic factors which vary across the four home countries tend to be compositional factors - such as the ethnic or social class mix of an area, the occupational structure or the local unemployment rate - which vary within each territory of the UK as well as between territories.
3. There is more variation across the four home countries in social attitudes and values concerning the politics of education and training (e.g., comprehensive education, the role of public provision, etc) than in attitudes and values which influence individual behaviour and motivation. In other words, variations in attitudes and values are more likely to result in differences in administrative systems of education than differences in the social relations and processes of education.
4. To the extent that points 1 to 3 above are not valid the main differences are between Northern Ireland and Great Britain rather than among the three countries of Great Britain.

If this argument is correct, home international comparisons which attempt to relate differences in administrative systems to differences in social relations of education are not seriously confounded by differences in the societal context, except for compositional differences which are easily controlled for. Does the UK - or at least, Great Britain - therefore provide a natural laboratory of educational change, in which to observe the effects of variation in administrative systems on the social relations and processes of education?
However, in a real laboratory experiment treatments are randomly assigned to subjects. The variations among the administrative systems of the UK are anything but random. The second distinctive feature of home international comparisons is that the systems are highly interdependent. At least until recently, each territory of the UK has tended to pursue distinctive policies only when its different circumstances have necessitated a different approach, or when domestic politics have enabled territorial policy-makers to maintain a distinctive line. In other words, systems have varied precisely in those circumstances which make it unlikely that the lessons can be transferred to other parts of the UK. It is possible that the administrative devolution of the past decade has increased the ‘randomness’ in policy variation across the UK - for example, in the different mechanisms and formulae for funding further and higher education - and that political devolution will further increase this randomness. If so, there may be more scope for policy learning from home international comparisons in the future than hitherto.

In the rest of this paper we present some findings and issues from the project, using the three levels of Figure 1 as our frame of reference. In the next section (3) we summarise the main similarities and differences in the administrative systems of education - briefly, as this is covered in more detail by the companion paper. We then (in section 4) discuss the interdependence of the four administrative systems, drawing on interviews with policy makers in 1997. These two sections provide a baseline for the afternoon seminar presentations, which will discuss the implications of devolution for policy in the four territories. Section 5 considers the social relations and processes of education and training, focusing on the 14-19 age range, and includes some results of our comparative analyses of data from the early 1990s. Finally in section 6 we discuss some of the problems in comparing the UK systems, in particular the scarcity of appropriate data.

3. THE SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEMS OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Larger differences. The distinctive features of the four systems include:

- the primary curriculum, based on five broad curriculum areas in Scotland’s 5-14 curriculum and on subjects in the statutory National Curriculums in each of the other three territories;
- the organisation of secondary education, which is selective in Northern Ireland and comprehensive in Scotland, Wales and (more variably) England;
- the role of Welsh as a subject in the Welsh National Curriculum and a medium of learning, on a much larger scale than Irish in Northern Ireland, Gaelic in Scotland or minority languages in England;
- the unified system of post-16 courses in Scotland compared with continued tracking elsewhere (although Wales is exploring more ‘unified’ options); and
- university education, with a four-year Honours degree and broader curriculum structure in Scotland than elsewhere.

Smaller differences. A number of other differences among the four systems are best described as variations upon common themes. For example, similar policies or principles are implemented in somewhat different ways within each territory: these include parental choice, devolved management of schools, the funding of further and higher education,
denominational schooling, and youth training. Some of these differences may be obscured by common terminology. For example the Further Education college is a distinctively British institution; yet the role, client group, organisation and funding of FE vary significantly across the four territories. Individually each of these smaller differences among the four systems may seem insignificant. But as they accumulate - and they have tended to accumulate during the 1990s as administrative devolution has gathered pace - their cumulative significance may be much greater.

Similarities. Nevertheless, the similarities of the four systems remain their most striking feature, at least when seen in a wider comparative perspective. These similarities include the timing and role of public certification, an elective course structure, the absence of a concept of upper-secondary graduation, a distinctive pattern of institutional flexibility, a system of competence-based vocational qualifications, a distinctive role and organisation of work-based training, a liberal culture and philosophy of education, and a particular balance of power among central government, local government and institutions.

Variation. Finally, any account of the similarities and differences of the four systems must allow for the fact that these vary across sectors of education and training and across countries. In the past the differences have been stronger in school education than in training, and England and Wales have been the most ‘similar’ and Scotland the most ‘different’, but Northern Ireland has made separate provision for training.

4. THE INTERDEPENDENCE OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEMS OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Between February and May 1997 we interviewed policy-makers in government departments or public agencies in the four territories. The interviews are described in an article in the Journal of Education Policy (Raffe 1998). They aimed to collect background information for the project and to invite suggestions for its research agenda. They also asked about mutual influences on policy-making across the four territories, and about pressures for policy to converge or to diverge.

The interviews revealed a different climate and context of policy-making in each territory. Welsh policy-makers appeared the most confident about their protected role (as at 1997) within the UK policy process. Scottish policy-makers felt more separate, but they were not troubled about the risk of exclusion from policy-making elsewhere in the UK, and in contrast with the Welsh they felt less desire to influence developments across the Border. Northern Ireland was the most peripheral system, least visible to the other three: its policy-makers were aware of this and appeared the most anxious about being excluded from the UK policy process. This pen-portrait is undoubtedly influenced by the particular individuals whom we interviewed; to the extent that it reflects the prevailing climate this may have changed significantly following political devolution.

Policy-makers in all four territories thought that systematic comparisons of the four systems could support policy-making. However they made little use of such comparisons to inform their policy decisions. Mutual learning among the UK systems was more likely to occur through collaboration and consultation during the policy-making process than by comparing policies and practices already in place.
The process and politics of policy-making tended to inhibit mutual learning. Policies tended to diverge across the UK only when the circumstances made different policies appropriate, that is when policy lessons were least likely to be transferable. Mutual learning between the UK systems was often negative or defensive, for example when the other territories looked for reasons not to follow English policy. Mutual learning was obstructed by what we termed the ‘politics of similarity and difference’: many policies were ‘badged’ and presented as distinctive to domestic audiences, but presented elsewhere as consistent with UK-wide policy. In such circumstances there was neither transparency about the nature and extent of policy differences, nor an openness to learn from them when they existed.

At the time of these interviews the territorial departments and their agencies applied the policy of the UK government, and any variations were presented as adaptations to local circumstances. Political devolution has changed this formal position, but it has not ended the interdependence of the four systems. There are at least three aspects of this.

1. **Constitutional and political interdependence.** The UK Parliament retains important reserved powers which affect education and training policy, including employment and social security policy and, critically, control over spending. Although each territory can reallocate spending across areas its realistic freedom of manoeuvre is limited. This may limit the scope for systems to diverge. Treasury control of spending may influence the uniformity of education provision across the UK in more subtle ways. For example, some policy-makers were afraid that if their provision was not directly comparable with that elsewhere in the UK it would be harder to make the case for parity of funding.

2. **Administrative/governmental interdependence.** Administrative devolution has been in progress at least since 1885 in Scotland, 1922 in Northern Ireland and 1970 in Wales. The process accelerated in the 1990s. Many functions that were formerly the responsibility of the Department for Education and Employment or its predecessors were devolved to the Welsh and Scottish Offices and the Department of Education Northern Ireland or to territorial bodies set up to oversee such issues as curriculum, qualifications, funding and quality assurance. This administrative devolution has permitted a substantial degree of autonomy to each territory, within the constraints of a technocratic type of policy-making (Paterson 1994). It has increasingly enabled policy-makers in each territory to plan and co-ordinate their system as a system - including training and higher education - rather than focus on those sectors for which responsibility had previously been devolved. However, Wales, Northern Ireland and (to a lesser extent) Scotland have been constrained by the limited number of civil servants and professionals able to develop new policies. They were dependent on the greater resources of England for policy-making and development, and they had to ‘pick and choose’ the areas in which to develop autonomous or at least distinctive policy. In the short term, at least, political devolution will not reduce this aspect of interdependence.

3. **Functional interdependence.** There are large flows of students between the home countries, especially at higher education level, and significant if more constrained flows of teachers. There are strong pressures for qualifications that, if not the same throughout the UK, are at least convertible into a common currency, and for common occupational standards. Thus the interdependence of the four systems, and their shared dependence on ‘societal’ factors such as the UK economy, create a strong and continuing pressure for co-ordination, if not necessarily uniformity, in policy initiatives.
The four systems have become more autonomous, but they are still more interdependent than in the case of most nation states. Nevertheless, to the extent that devolution encourages more ‘random’ differences in policies and practice, and to the extent that it supports greater transparency of such differences and greater openness to learning from them, it may increase the potential for mutual learning from home international comparisons.

5. THE SOCIAL RELATIONS AND PROCESSES OF EDUCATION

We now summarise the Home Internationals Project’s conclusions concerning the social relations and processes of education and training in the four systems, including the ‘outcomes’ of each system.

The level of attainment. Comparing total levels of attainment was not the main objective of the project, partly because our main dataset was not the best source of evidence on comparative attainments. Nevertheless the home countries provide obvious ‘benchmarks’ for each other’s performance. To set the scene for the sections that follow Table 1 presents indicators of performance in four areas of attainment:

- compulsory-school attainment in maths;
- compulsory-school attainment in science;
- attainment at ‘level 2’ (GCSEs or Standard grades or equivalent) in initial education and training; and
- attainment at ‘level 3’ (A levels or Highers or equivalent) in initial education and training.

The Table lists different indicators for each of these areas as a reminder of their fragility and a warning against simplified comparisons.

Table 1: Selected measures of attainment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>England</th>
<th>Wales</th>
<th>Scotland</th>
<th>N Ireland</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Maths attainment:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIMSS score at 13 years: lower grade (1995)(a)</td>
<td>476</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>463</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIMSS score at 13 years: higher grade (1995)(a)</td>
<td>506</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>498</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Year 11/S4 pupils passing Maths GCSE or S grade at A*-C/1-3 (1996)(b)</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Science attainment:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIMSS score at 13 years: lower grade (1995)(a)</td>
<td>512</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>468</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIMSS score at 13 years: higher grade (1995)(a)</td>
<td>552</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>517</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Year 11/S4 pupils passing any Science GCSE or S grade at A*-C/1-3 (1996)(b)</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attainment at ’level 2’:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Year 11/S4 pupils achieving any GCSE or S grade at A*-C/1-3 (1996)(b)</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Year 11/S4 pupils achieving 5 GCSEs or S grades at A*-C/1-3 (1996)(b)</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of 19-21 year olds with 5 GCSEs or S grades at A*-C/1-3 or equivalent (autumn 1997)(c)</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of 19 year olds with 5 GCSEs or S grades at A*-C/1-3 or equivalent (spring 1999)(d)</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attainment at ’level 3’:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of school/college students achieving 2 A levels or 3 Highers (1996)(b)</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of 21-23 year olds with 2 A levels, 3 Highers or equivalent (spring 1997)(b)</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of 21 year olds with 2 A levels, 3 Highers or equivalent (autumn 1997)(d)</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: (a) SOEID (1996); (b) ONS (1998); (c) DTI (1999); (d) ASCETT (1998).
England and Scotland both participated in the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS). Their 13 year olds achieved similar levels of attainment in maths, although a somewhat higher proportion of Scots achieve a 'good' result in maths in examinations at 16. English 13 year olds performed better than Scottish 13 year olds in science in the TIMSS study, but many more Scots achieve good results in science in examinations at 16.

Northern Ireland and Scotland achieve the best results at level 2 at the end of compulsory schooling, although England and Wales close the gap by age 19-plus as a result of GCSE resits and other level 2 qualifications such as Intermediate GNVQs. Wales has the lowest performance at age 16; it is difficult to say if this gap is made up by age 19-21 because the two Welsh estimates based on the Labour Force Survey (LFS) produce very difference estimates. (This probably reflects small Welsh LFS sample numbers.)

The Welsh pattern is similar at level 3: Wales has the lowest A level performance among school and college leavers but the LFS produces discrepant estimates of relative Welsh attainment at age 21-plus. Northern Ireland achieves the best 'level 3' results among school or college students, but again it loses this advantage in subsequent years. By contrast the relative Scottish performance at level 3 improves strikingly between leaving school and age 21-23, although comparisons at level 3 are particularly sensitive to assumptions about the level of attainment represented by different qualifications. It appears from Table 1 that more post-school provision is recorded in the statistics as level 3 rather than level 2 in Scotland than in the other home countries. We are no position to judge whether this is justified by the actual level of learning that takes place.

Inequalities and school effects in attainment in compulsory education. Both Scotland and Wales claim a more democratic tradition which emphasises educational opportunity for able children from humble backgrounds. These two countries also have fully comprehensive state secondary school systems, compared with a more differentiated state system and larger private sector in England, and a selective state school system in Northern Ireland. Proponents of comprehensive education claim that it reduces class inequalities in education. Are inequalities in educational attainment therefore smaller in Scotland and Wales?

We used the integrated survey dataset for the early 1990s, described earlier in this paper, to compare gender and class influences on attainment at 16 across the four home countries (Croxford, Brannen and Raffe 1999). Females had higher attainments than males throughout the UK, and the gender gap did not differ between countries. There were social-class inequalities in attainment in all home countries of the UK, but the effect of social class on attainment was weaker in Scotland (and to a lesser extent Wales) than in England.

Attainment varied much more across schools, net of student characteristics, in Northern Ireland and England than in Wales or Scotland. This was largely attributable to the greater diversity of school types. Not only did many more students attend Grammar schools in Northern Ireland than elsewhere, but the effect on attainment of attending a Grammar school was stronger in Northern Ireland than in England, the other country which still had Grammar schools. However even when we took account of a range of student and school characteristics, we still found much more variation in attainment across schools in Northern Ireland than elsewhere. Attending the right school - the right type of school and the right school within each type - was more important for attainment in Northern Ireland than in the other home countries.
In Wales, by contrast, not only was the school system almost fully comprehensive, but we found no variation in attainment across schools that could not be explained in terms of student characteristics or the type, gender, denomination and social composition of the school. There was a small residual school effect in Scotland, but the ‘contextual effect’ - the influence of the social composition of fellow-students - was significantly weaker in Scotland than elsewhere.

We now summarise our analysis of attainment at 16. First, social-class influences on attainment were not as strong in Scotland (and Wales) as elsewhere. Second, the influence of the school attended was more uniform across schools in Wales and Scotland than across schools in England or (especially) Northern Ireland. Third, the influences of gender and of several other student and school factors were consistent throughout the UK.

**Full-time participation at 16-18.** Policy analysts have used ‘home international’ comparisons to draw inferences about the effect of post-16 courses and qualifications on participation. In the Scottish ‘Howie debate’ of early 1990s many people argued that the greater flexibility of Scottish courses and qualifications - the opportunity to make decisions incrementally, and the S5 exit point - encouraged higher participation. South of the Border, critics of the 'low participation' system in England drew lessons from the greater flexibility and breadth of Scottish post-compulsory education and its weaker divisions between academic and vocational tracks. Our third study used official statistics and survey data to review participation in full-time education at 16-18 across the four home countries (Raffe, Croxford and Brannen 1999).

Participation has risen in all four countries, but the trends have not been parallel, so relative participation rates have fluctuated over time. This may warn us not to attach too much importance to differences that may be transient (Bamford and Schuller 1999). In all four territories participation beyond 16 declines stepwise with age, but the height of each step varies across countries. In recent years participation has been highest in Scotland, followed by Northern Ireland, at 16-plus, highest in Northern Ireland at 17-plus and highest in Wales and Northern Ireland at 18-plus.

Our results challenge the perception that participation is particularly high in Scotland. More Scots stay on at school but many fewer enter the less visible FE sector. Moreover, higher Scottish participation at 16-plus is balanced by a shorter duration of study and a larger outflow at 17. In addition, Scottish year groups are younger than their counterparts in the other three countries. When we estimated participation rates on a consistent age basis we found lower age-based participation in Scotland than in the other home countries at ages 16, 17 and 18. However these comparisons described the early 1990s. Since then, participation at 16-plus has risen much more in Scotland than elsewhere in the UK, especially compared with England where participation rates have fallen. Even in the early 1990s English participation rates were significantly less favourable than the other three countries when the educational and social composition of the age group is taken into account.

Scotland also had the least equitable distribution of participation in terms of social class and other indicators of family background. This arose largely because participation was more strongly associated with GCSE or Standard grade attainment in Scotland - and also in Northern Ireland - than in England or Wales. In all four countries more females than males
stayed on, even among young people with comparable backgrounds and attainment levels, but this gender effect was strongest in Northern Ireland and weakest in England.

The school attended up to 16 years most influenced staying-on in Northern Ireland, and least in Scotland and Wales. Attending an independent school was associated with staying-on, over and above the effects of social background and attainments of the students. There was a similar effect of attending a Grammar school in Northern Ireland, but in England the Grammar-school effect was negative. However when we controlled for the type of school as well as the characteristics of students the residual school effect was still strongest in Northern Ireland, followed by England.

Our results suggest that commentators in earlier debates (ourselves included) may have exaggerated the extent to which ‘flexible’ Scottish courses and qualifications encouraged a higher level or more equal distribution of participation. Either the Scottish system has been no more flexible than the other UK systems, or the benefits of flexibility require more critical scrutiny. Two further findings cast further doubt on Scottish flexibility: fewer early leavers re-entered education at 17 in Scotland than in the other home countries (in a flexible system we would expect easier re-entry); and we failed to find a stronger influence of local unemployment on participation in Scotland than in England, which earlier studies attributed to the incentive effect of Scottish flexibility (Gray et al. 1992).

Our results also suggest that in focusing upon England and Scotland commentators may have ignored policy lessons from Wales and especially Northern Ireland. Our analysis suggests two possible clues to the higher participation in Northern Ireland - a stronger gender effect, and a stronger school effect which may point to an influence of ‘sponsorship’. But without more comparable data we can do little to explore this further.

**Academic and vocational tracks in post-compulsory education and training.** In our fourth study we used a broader definition of participation, to include work-based training as well as full-time education (Raffe et al. 1999b). We first compared the level and distribution of participation across the four territories, and reached similar conclusions as in the study of full-time education. The total participation rate at 16-plus was highest in Northern Ireland and Scotland (these two countries had the highest participation in work-based youth training). Overall, participation was slightly more skewed towards 16 year-olds with higher qualifications or a more middle-class background in Scotland than elsewhere, but the differences were small. The similarities of the four countries were significant: they shared a distinctively ‘British’ pattern of participation.

We hoped to use our home international comparison to explore the implications of the ‘unification’ of post-compulsory education and training for academic drift and parity of esteem between academic and vocational tracks. In the early 1990s Scotland was the ‘most unified’ of the four UK systems, in that it had the weakest divisions between academic and vocational tracks. Northern Ireland was the least unified, or most strongly tracked, since its post-16 tracks built upon a selective system before 16 years. We used different definitions of post-16 tracks, based respectively on institutions (school, FE, youth training) and on qualifications, but our conclusions were similar in each case. Scotland had the most advanced level of academic drift, in the sense that it had the highest proportion studying in academic rather than vocational tracks. We measured parity of esteem in terms of the relative educational and social status of young people entering academic and vocational
tracks. In a system with parity of esteem entry to different tracks would be unrelated to prior educational attainment or to social class. This was not the case anywhere in the UK, but the correlation between attainment and track was strongest in Scotland and Northern Ireland, which were therefore furthest from our notion of parity.

The countries which were furthest from parity were the most and the least unified, so there can be no simple link between unification and parity. Moreover, Scottish education has moved fastest towards unification precisely because of the low status of its vocational education; in other words, unification may be the consequence and parity (or its absence) the cause, rather than the other way round.

Further analyses suggested that the smaller scale and lower status of vocational education and training in Scotland could be attributed to the small scale and low status of full-time vocational education (FE). Our research suggests that a strong work-based sector is more important for the level and inclusiveness of participation, while a strong full-time vocational sector is more important for parity and for avoiding academic drift. At least, vocational provision must be sufficiently diverse to achieve these different ends.

The transition from school to work. Our analysis of post-compulsory tracks suggests that Scotland suffers in extreme form from what a recent OECD panel diagnosed as the ‘two principal sources of problems in the transition from school to work within the British education system: the academic orientation of mainstream education and, related to it, the previous absence and today the relative weakness of a genuine system of initial vocational education’ (OECD 1999, p.39). Our fifth study compared the transition from school to work, up to the age of 18/19, in England, Wales and Scotland (Raffe, Brannen and Croxford 1999). We did not include Northern Ireland because the different survey design made the data less comparable for this purpose.

We found:

- differences attributable to current labour-market conditions, in particular higher unemployment and weaker flows into employment in Wales;
- a more staggered pattern of labour-market entry in Scotland, reflecting different school-leaving patterns;
- different occupational returns for males entering the labour market at 18 rather than 17 years; positive in Scotland, negative in Wales;
- differences in participation in youth training: highest in Scotland, lowest in England and most male-oriented in Wales;
- poor ‘returns’ to vocational education and training. Vocational qualifications were associated with being employed rather than unemployed at age 18/19 (except among females in Scotland) but not with the level of occupation. Net of this, we found no effect of participation in full-time FE on employment or occupation, and a negative association between participation in youth training and employment at 18/19 (strongest among Scottish males). These findings suggest that the problems identified by the OECD panel are UK-wide and have their origins at least partly in labour-market demand;
- in most other respects the transition from school to work was very similar across the four home countries, with respect to the main institutional transitions, the occupational destinations of early school leavers, and the factors associated with having a job and with the level of occupation obtained.
**Entrance to higher education.** A sixth study is planned to look at entrance to higher education. Among other things we hope to explore the Dearing and Garrick committees’ claims that the Scottish system provides wider access, following Osborne’s (1999) recent research questioning this view. However the problems of data comparability, discussed below, affect comparisons at 18-plus more than at 16-plus, and we are not sure how far we will be able to resolve these issues.

**6. COMPARING THE UK SYSTEMS: DATA COMPARABILITY**

If this overview reflected the balance of time spent on the project, data comparability would occupy scores of pages rather than a couple of paragraphs. Our empirical analyses were based on an integrated dataset, with common variables and definitions for all four countries, which described the progress of a year group in the early 1990s. The task of constructing this dataset was made difficult by differences in:

- sample designs (birth cohort in England and Wales, year group in Scotland, leaver group in Northern Ireland), with insufficient time-related information to put them easily on a common basis,
- weighting procedures,
- the information collected, and
- the classifications employed.

The resulting uncertainties about comparability have bedevilled our comparisons, especially (but not only) between Northern Ireland and the other home countries. Yet by the standards of many international datasets ours achieved a high level of cross-national comparability. This paradox led us to coin Murphy’s Law of Home International Comparisons:

> *The more similar the systems being compared, the greater the problems caused by small differences in the data sources.*

More surprisingly, it has been as difficult to compare the home countries using official statistics as using data from the youth transition surveys (Martin and Raffe 1999). When we have raised this issue with government statisticians they have suggested that their priority has been to produce statistics which best reflect the circumstances of each home country rather than facilitate comparisons between them. This may be the right priority, but it raises the question: may we miss the opportunity to monitor the unique experiment in comparative educational change that is provided by devolution?

**7. CONCLUSION**

We conclude with three general comments. First, we have tended to focus on the differences among the four UK systems, but they also share many common or similar features. The very fact that we have been able to make such precise comparisons itself reflects their institutional similarity. Most of the factors which influenced attainment and participation did not vary significantly across the countries. For example, in none of our analyses did we find evidence that the ‘Roman Catholic effect’ varied across the home countries, despite their very different arrangements for denominational schooling. Even when influences on attainment and participation did vary across the four countries this was often relatively minor variation on a common UK trend. For example, despite recent increases the pattern of
participation in post-compulsory education still appears to reflect an assumption that continued education is most suitable for the intellectually gifted.

Second, we nevertheless did find significant differences, not only in the administrative systems but also in the social relations of education. Levels of attainment tended to be slightly higher in Northern Ireland and Scotland. Participation was highest in Northern Ireland. The school attended - both the type of school and the individual school within each type - mattered most in Northern Ireland, and least in the more uniform systems of Wales and Scotland. Scotland and Northern Ireland were furthest from parity of esteem between academic and vocational education. The status of vocational education tended to be lowest in Scotland.

Our research questions some prevailing beliefs about the superior outcomes of Scottish education, in respect of social equality, parity of esteem and the effects of flexibility on participation. Does this mean that the Scottish education system is less effective than has been claimed? Not necessarily. Merely to show that features of administrative systems are associated with the social relations of education, is not sufficient evidence of a causal connection. Only when we can relate different changes in administrative systems to changes in social relations can we become more confident about the effects of different systems on these outcomes. Our final conclusion is that home international comparisons need to study comparative change across the UK. Devolution may provide opportunities for this.

REFERENCES


I must admit, I feel a bit like a stranger in a big family party or rather to stay with the metaphor of the Home International project, a foreigner playing in a UK football team. I also have to admit that I belong to those people that often confuse England, UK, Great Britain, Anglo Saxon countries, sometimes even the English speaking countries and from that point of view, I found this project’s attempt to identify similarities and differences within the UK VET systems very interesting.

I was a member of the OECD panel who visited last year, England, Wales and Scotland and I have to admit, we were rather glad that we didn’t have to go to Northern Ireland also during those 14 days. It was actually quite difficult for us to understand what was going on, because of all the changes that were taking place and it has been almost impossible to see the differences between the different countries of the UK. We were happy enough to believe we had developed a global understanding.

I was nevertheless asked to make some remarks on the project. I’ve said already I found it an interesting project, certainly after the OECD experience, and although the datasets that were used were from the early 90s and as many things have actually changed since then I would have been more interested in seeing the effects of those changes. Also the similarities appeared to be bigger than the differences and, actually, for me the similarities are the most striking feature of this study, more than the small differences that were found. David and his colleagues wrote in their report that the accumulation of the few little differences may be important. But I would say that this is perhaps more for UK nationals than for us who come from the continent. Looking at those differences, it is difficult to give an answer to the questions that David asked me to go into, “will they increase, will they disappear or will they remain or stabilise?”.

First of all, the differences at least from the two papers that I’ve seen are not all that clear. There are no differences in the context of the individual VET systems. No relevant differences at least. The differences are rather in the administrative set up, also in the performance, in the outcomes, and in the processes. Some of these now even appear to be less significant than initially assumed. It’s also not clear to me how those differences are to be explained. Sometimes, the authors say that they result from different attitudes and values with respect to the politics of education. Different attitudes to comprehensive or selective secondary education are given as an example of this. Sometimes the authors say that the differences are only there where the particular circumstances of countries make them necessary and hence those differences will be difficult to transfer to other parts of the UK. Also if one looks more carefully at the differences, in practice they even seem to be a little bit different from what was expected or even perhaps hoped for, and certainly some of them challenge some of the Scottish myths, as I recall. All in all, therefore, for me as an outsider from abroad it’s not all that clear and it’s not so easy to answer the questions that were given to me.
Can I therefore leave the discussion on the differences and similarities perhaps to the speakers from the rest of the UK who will talk later? I would then rather take another look at the project and before I do so, I would like to say a little bit about my own biography because the remarks that I will be making are shaped of course by what I am interested in. In fact, I looked at the papers with the question in my head, “what can I take from that for the work that I am doing myself?” David has mentioned already that I’ve been moving around quite a lot in Europe over the past twenty years. Presently, I am working in Slovenia where we are helping to introduce a reform of the educational system, especially of the secondary vocational education system. When working with colleagues in Slovenia and in the other countries of Central and Eastern Europe, we tend to make a distinction between what we call ‘modernisation’ of education, which refers to bringing the curricula and the teaching equipment in the school classes up to date, say, to the general levels of schools in West European countries. We distinguish from that, what we call ‘structural’ changes, with which we mean the changing of the relative weight of the different educational sectors. Of course, when you come from Central and Eastern Europe, this is especially the case for the balance between vocational and secondary general and Higher Education, since in most of the countries, vocational education had a predominant position inside the education system - contrary to the situation in the UK - while the reform policy measures were set up to reduce the weight of the vocational part, at least in the formal education system. The aspect that we particularly like to refer to however is the introduction of “systemic” reform.

Here, I come to the theoretical basis of the Home Internationals study. Reference was made to the societal effect approach of the French sociologist Marc Maurice and his colleagues. I was also a member of that network and most of my work over the 20 years was influenced by that very societal effect approach. I will come back to that later. What we are trying to achieve in the VET reforms in Central and Eastern Europe, is to introduce systemic reforms. The concept of systemic reform actually has a double meaning. It first of all refers to changing an educational system that was developed to serve a planned economy, to one that can serve a market economy. But at the same time, also, it means the introduction of an educational system that can develop further towards a Lifelong Learning system, which is of course the systemic reform that has taken place – or rather still is taking place - in most of the west European countries.

You may ask what this all has to do with the Home Internationals project. But in that the context of developing and implementing educational reform policies I have worked with, alongside, and sometimes also against colleagues from the UK. I worked with people who represented the British Council and the then NCVQ, Scottish SCOTVEC, Irish FAS and of course in the context of educational reform policy-making, the main question was always what can national or foreign consultants bring to the countries? Or more specifically, what can UK VET consultants bring to the Transition countries of Continental Europe. I belong to those who are fundamentally sceptical about the value added that UK VET experience can bring there, at least at the policy level in view of the very continental traditions of most of the countries. Things may be different inside the classroom.

Thus my main experience is not so much with Home Internationals but with players overseas. It’s not only in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe where the influence of UK researchers, policy makers and consultants is strongly felt. In fact some countries like
Cyprus have a very strong British tradition. In Cyprus, they are now reviewing their educational system with a very strong eye again on the UK and the Cypriots are in that context interested again to study the differences between England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland. That is also why one of my Cypriot friends is taking part in this conference. Other countries like Jordan in the Middle East have a similar challenge to face, they have certain British rules and traditions in education. How should they develop further if they are going to stay within the UK model so to speak? Should they go the English way, the Scottish way, the Irish way? These remarks I'm making to support the argument in favour of the home international approach but I would like to see it expanded within a much wider international perspective. Home internationals could be interesting not just for the countries of the UK but for many other countries, and certainly those with a strong British tradition. But I repeat, I am sceptical about the others. But then of course it matters what we are going to be talking about.

I should now turn to the OECD report. In the papers of the Home Internationals project, two main conclusions of our panel were summarised saying that we felt that there was a very strong academic orientation in the educational systems of the UK and that there was also a long absence or an actual weakness of a genuine system of initial vocational education. Well this is nothing new of course. This has been the debate between the UK and the continent so to speak for many years. But we have also identified some other characteristics, which are more interesting perhaps for today’s discussion. For example, we were surprised to see this very complex intermediate system between education and employment. David and his team called this the ‘broker system’ in the background report that was prepared for the OECD review. We looked at it as a kind of institutionalisation of the transition phase. We also were surprised by the strong focus on assessment and certification rather than on vocational training as such, and it was as - if I remember well a representative from the employers in the UK actually admitted this – if there’s more talk about certificates than about skills. Another characteristic that caught our attention was the particular use of the concept of competences, at least from the continental point of view. They were broken down into individual bits of competences where we on the other side of the channel tend to use competences rather for professional identities as a whole. Connected to this is also a different use of the concept of modules and a particular view towards flexibility of educational systems. The final point that we noted, at least from my memory from that panel visit, was the clear hierarchy between different types of secondary or post-secondary education into a school-based vocational educational route and the work-based route, and the fact that this hierarchy was defined by academic success of the students most of all.

The question that we raised at that time in our discussions with UK colleagues, and I think that it’s still important to consider, is whether those elements or those characteristics were just random characteristics of the UK system or whether they were part of a model or a paradigm or a societal effect as Marc Maurice would rather argue. And here I come back to the societal context as a major argument in the theoretical approach of the study. For us - if I may say that I belong to them - within the societal effect approach it’s not so much a matter of talking about the differences and similarities as such. The question is rather whether differences and similarities are coherent among themselves, so that they create a pattern or a functioning logic that is underneath all the particular characteristics of a system. When we were trying during the 1980s at CEDEFOP to compare qualification systems and structures
within the European Union, it was this approach of “logics” of vocational education and employment systems that was really the driving force. It is fair to say now that this way of thinking has had a very important, maybe not generally recognised, influence in the debate and in the policy-making on education within the European Union. It has clearly shaped the Commission’s views on the topic of the possibility to achieve a European system of qualifications or a unified educational system in Europe as used to be on the agenda for some time. The recent policies are of course much more modest in that respect. And again this all is, in my view, directly related to what we are talking about today: The possible differences within the UK and whether they are more relevant for policy-making than the similarities, on the one hand, or the coherence of distinct models of educational systems in Europe.

The existence of “national” systems of education, or “national” systems of qualifications, was a concept that was relevant at the end of the 70’s when the dominant debate was about conversion of systems. The contribution of that debate was to stress the uniqueness of national systems. That was almost 30 years ago, of course, and in the meantime - thinking about one of the keywords that David used - the inter-dependence of the systems has become much more important than the uniqueness of systems. The inter-dependence of systems has also been increased as an indirect result of EU policies, EU educational programmes, but also of the European Social Fund criteria and funding mechanisms. Perhaps it’s too far to call this conversion although I am convinced that there are more common elements within the different systems of Europe today than there used to be. However, national systems are still having a tendency to underline the more or less clear “logics” that we were able to distinguish in the 70’s and 80’s. This element of growing inter-dependency of national educational systems and the impact of this on the national logics or national characteristics, (similarities and differences), is in my view a very exciting area of comparative research, which goes far beyond Home Internationals.

One very good example of this development is what we found when we were touring around the UK with the OECD Panel: this complex institutional network of broker institutions, or institutions that are mediating between training providers, trainees and firms. We found this typically fitting in the UK situation as this intermediate system was obviously filling the gap left by the non-existence of a genuine VET system. Well, I was, six months later, on a similar review tour in Germany, and Germany is always presented as the country of the dual system. What we found, actually, was that parallel to the formal dual system, Germany had developed also an informal system covering what the Germans call disadvantaged youth, which was very elaborate. You know that the German concept of disadvantaged youth stands for everybody who didn’t get a place in the apprenticeship system so you can imagine how big that system potentially is. That parallel system was co-financed from the European Social Fund and from Labour Market contributions. It was outside the formal educational system, but it had much in common with the broker system that we found in the UK. However, it was a parallel system and not a replacement. These and similar common elements that perform quite different functions are from the recent past, and they have escaped the attention of comparative researchers so far. They should not.

Perhaps a final remark on soccer. The analogy with Home Internationals is, of course, competition between national teams – but let’s have a look at the football clubs now.
successful in England. There are many foreign players playing important roles and, I am not a big fan of football myself, but those who are, at least in The Netherlands, tend to argue that British football has become more intelligent because of this. The question would be if the same situation could perhaps not be achieved in the field of vocational education. In other words, is it not true that – like in soccer - more radical innovations have come from abroad, even the competence concept, and now most recently the modern apprenticeship system: Home Internationals are interesting, but I still would favour real international games.
SESSION 2

THE IMPLICATIONS OF CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGE FOR EDUCATION AND TRAINING
I am currently working with colleagues in Cardiff on a project that is looking at the impact of the Welsh Assembly on various aspects of change in the governance of economic development. In particular, I have been looking at how education and training fits within that somewhat wider picture. I want to share with you some of the very preliminary conclusions and findings that we’re drawing from that study.

**THE CURRENT CONSTITUTIONAL SYSTEM IN OUTLINE**

Let me begin by giving a very basic introduction to the kind of constitutional system that was ushered in with the establishment of the National Assembly for Wales.

The National Assembly has 60 members, divided politically, following the election, in the way shown in Slide 1. It operates, therefore, with a Labour administration, but one which is essentially dependent on the support of other parties in the Assembly to pursue and to progress its programme. The next level, essentially operates a cabinet system, made up of a set of ministers, with the kinds of responsibility that are indicated by their title. And therefore, the area that I’m particularly going to look at today, the development of education and training, is split between a number of cabinet members.

**SLIDE 1: CONSTITUTIONAL SYSTEM**

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<td>Conservatives</td>
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**OFFICE OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**OFFICE OF THE PRESIDING OFFICER**

**OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR WALES**
Firstly, and most obviously, the one that’s labelled ‘education and training’, which is essentially a cabinet minister responsible for post-16 education and training. But clearly, this responsibility interacts with the education secretary, whose responsibilities go up to 16, and - this is a point that I want to return to later on - the minister responsible for economic development. In the Assembly itself, there is a committee system, with the committee structure essentially replicating that of the Cabinet itself. When I move on in a moment to a particular case-study, I’ll be referring primarily to the functioning of the post-16 committee.

Finally, the Civil Service at the bottom of the overhead. Simply, what has happened is that what was the Welsh Office in the pre-Assembly system has been split into three elements: the Office of the National Assembly; the Office of the Presiding Officer; and the Office of the Secretary of State for Wales. The Office of the Presiding Officer is made up of those civil servants whose activities are to service the day-to-day direct activities of the Assembly itself. The Office of the National Assembly is the equivalent of the old Welsh Office, but now working to the new Welsh administration. And the Office of the Secretary of State (whose name is Paul Murphy, for those of you who have forgotten) is the part of what used to be the Welsh Office, which remains operating to the Secretary of State and is split between Cardiff and Whitehall. Very quickly, then, that is the current constitutional situation.

THE PRE-ASSEMBLY SYSTEM

Let me move on to say something about the system before the National Assembly. David Raffe referred this morning to the importance of trying to understand the way things are changing all the time. Clearly, the pushing through of democratic devolution is a major event. But equally clearly, there’s a kind of before and an after situation. So this is the before, the pre-Assembly situation.

There has, of course, been a very long term process of administrative devolution to Wales, which can be dated back to various points in the last century. But particularly after the establishment of the Welsh Office in 1964 (which is very recent, of course, in Scottish terms), administrative devolution had become a well established element of the Welsh policy scene. There was a quickening pace of administrative devolution as the Welsh Office itself progressively took on responsibilities for different areas of government, assuming responsibility for all of education and training and its relationships to industrial and economic development (with the partial exception of HE, but I’ll leave that to one side for the moment).

In addition, through the 1980s and 1990s, there was an accumulation of a number of non-governmental bodies, with specifically Welsh responsibilities for, for example, the development of curriculum, qualifications and assessment policies, the funding of further and higher education and so on. So these sorts of development in ‘Quango-land’ paralleled the progressive acquisition of functions by the Welsh Office and resulted by the 1990s in a policy system with a considerable degree of autonomy over the policy making process with regard to education and training in Wales, but an autonomy which was itself highly qualified. The way that I’ve described the process elsewhere is in terms of a policy process where policy initiatives clearly originated for the most part in Westminster and Whitehall. But if that was their point of origin, their implementation and the kinds of impacts that they had, were clearly mediated through these national level Welsh institutions. And they were further mediated through the activities of both local government inside Wales and organisations essentially
operating in civil society. Particularly in the Welsh context, for example, the teacher unions and so on. So in order to understand the particular form which education and training policies took in Wales during this pre-Assembly period, then it is necessary, as I’ve argued elsewhere, to understand not simply the point of origin in Whitehall-Westminster, but also the ways in which those policies came to be translated into particular forms through the working out of Welsh political mechanisms/processes. These were essentially operating inside Wales and were interactive in the relationships between the national level organisations, in particular the Welsh Office, but also the Quangos which had been established, in parallel with those organisations whose constituencies were either locally rooted in Wales or were rooted in Welsh civil society.

So what you had, in a sense, was a hierarchical network. A network which was clearly orientated in a vertical way, with Whitehall and Westminster at the top, but in order to understand what came out of the policy process at the bottom, you need to understand the intervening processes, as well.

THE 1997 NEW LABOUR GOVERNMENT

That system I’ve just sketched out was clearly changed as a consequence of the election of the New Labour Government in 1997. I think one of the issues in trying to isolate the effects of the establishment of the Assembly is to distinguish the effects of the establishment of the Assembly from the effects of the 1997 Labour Government. Both were important in terms of understanding of the current situation and the future situation in Wales, but analytically we need to distinguish between the two kinds of impacts.

We have quite a lot of interview evidence to draw on here. For example, Peter Hain, who was then one of the Ministers of State in the Welsh Office, was very strong in terms of his argument that when the Labour Party entered the Welsh Office in 1997, they were very keen on the idea of increasing the area of autonomy that the Welsh Office had to operate in. One of the first things they did, for instance, was to abolish the nursery voucher scheme, much to the chagrin of David Blunkett, who wanted to be the first one to do it. The impacts were significant and that is corroborated again by the interview testimony of civil servants who were working in the Welsh Office at that time. So that the impact of New Labour, in terms of strengthening the sphere of autonomous action from the Welsh Office, is one, which I think is important to understand. And which needs to be developed further in our research.

THE REFORM OF POST-16 EDUCATION AND TRAINING

However, the current situation is what I really want to spend time talking about. What I want to do is to try to understand some of the implications of the establishment of the Assembly through a case-study. Much of the work in the education sphere, broadly defined, that has gone on so far since the establishment of the Assembly has related to the re-organisation of post-16 education and training. Therefore I want to use that as a kind of case study to try and draw out some tentative points about the kinds of impacts that the creation of the Assembly has had on the politics of education policy and the policy-making process.

I’m not going to say much about the general background. In fact, the general role of education, training and economic development has been a central issue in Welsh policy and
politics since the 1980s and the collapse of the traditional economy. During that decade, the notion of Wales’ salvation lying along the route of the creation of a knowledge-based society became widely accepted. Therefore, education and training came to be seen as a central element in economic strategy. There was also a widespread recognition that the post-16 sector, in particular, lacked the institutional capacity to service the kind of economic trajectory which was envisaged as being the only viable one to generate a successful Welsh economy.

These general concerns resulted in the establishment of the Education and Training Action Group for Wales (ETAG). It was set up in the immediate aftermath of the 1997 general election. It was very much seen as part of the Labour Government’s new broom sweeping clean, as it were. Then it produced a consultation document the following year, which produced a very wide range of responses - a genuine indicator of the significance position which post-16 education and training occupies within Welsh education policy making. Earlier this year in March, they produced an action plan and that action plan is currently being debated in National Assembly. It’s actually currently being debated by the Post-16 Education Committee as I speak.

What did the Action Plan involve? This is a very complicated diagram (Slide 2) which probably won’t show up on the overhead. Basically what the Action Plan embodied was an institutional re-organisation of the post 16 system. You would have a national level organisation, labelled here, the Council for Education and Training for Wales (CETW), subsequently renamed the National Education and Training Council. And that would be a national level organisation corresponding to the Welsh Development Agency (WDA), the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW), the Curriculum Authority for Wales, the national level Careers Service for Wales and the OHMCID, the Inspectorate of Wales. So all of those bodies be national level organisations. They would therefore respond directly to the Assembly itself and they would clearly have an all Wales remit.

So you’d have a national level, a regional level and then down at this bottom level, you would have the Community Consortia for Education and Training, the CCETs, which for local areas would bring together in partnership (a key word) the players in the provision and delivery of training and the funding system would then operate down the structure.

Of course, that system, for anybody who is familiar with what subsequently was proposed for England is actually very similar (Slide 3). That’s broadly the English set of proposals, where you have the national level Learning and Skills Council going down to the regional level, what they label here, the local Learning and Skills Council, and then down to the very local level. So again, you have that sort of three-part system. Broadly that system is the one that is going through in England. Indeed, it is frequently claimed, and this is supported by the chronology, that this English model is derived from the Welsh one. So it may be an example of policy borrowing by England from Wales! I’m not sure that the DfEE would agree with that view. But certainly the chronology works like that. The instigation of ETAG and so on was happening before things were happening in England.
National Assembly for Wales - including Regional Committees and Partnership Council

- CETW
- WDA
- HEFCW
- ACCAC
- Careers Wales
- The Independent Inspectorate for Wales

Overall policies and priorities

Advice to Assembly, strategic direction & policy implementation

Regional support

Local operational planning and delivery

Scope to brief Assembly, Regional Committees; support business, review panels and skills needs assessments etc

4 Economic Fora - support to business, enterprise and employers

Careers Service Companies - information, advice and guidance

Funding route agreed with WLGA

LEA School VI Forms
LEA Adult Education
FEIs
Private Training providers (publicly funded)
Voluntary Sector

Collaboration with CCETs

Community Consortia For Education and Training (CCETs)
Ironically, however, what has happened subsequently is that, as this set of proposals has gone through the new political process in Wales, the regional level has been removed (to a very large extent) from the proposals. Although ETAG was set up before the establishment of the Assembly, it’s actually being considered after the establishment of the Assembly. When the proposals went to the Post-16 Committee, they basically decided that they didn’t want a powerful regional level. They only wanted the local level and the national level. If you look at the debates that have gone on inside that Committee, a great deal of the discussion centred around this issue of the regional level.

Why is it so important? One of the proposals that is embodied here is the abolition of what in England and Wales are the Training and Enterprise Councils, the TECs. Of course, it was widely perceived that this regional level actually allowed the TECs back in. The TECs themselves have recently been re-organised into four regional TECs, for the four economic development regions of Wales. Therefore, this regional level was widely perceived as allowing the TECs back into the policy system. Crucially, this would provide the private sector, through their dominant position on the TECs, with a distinctive institutional route into the new policy making process.

Of course, it seems to me that it also provided for an element of strategic planning which would be absent if all we have is the local level. It’s not entirely clear what is meant by the local level, but it would appear to be the case that it would be some approximation to the 22 unitary Local Authorities that currently exist in Wales. That point is crucial because it’s quite clear that the outcome from the Post-16 Committee reflects a pattern of political lobbying in which the Local Authorities played a key part. It appears to be the case that the Cabinet will accept the recommendation of the Post-16 Committee to take out this regional level, so that alone in all the elements of economic development policy in Wales, education and training won’t have a regional level. It’ll be unlike all the other bits of the governance of economic development.

ETAG AS A POLITICAL PROCESS

That’s the situation we’re at, at the moment. On the basis of this account, then, what kinds of tentative conclusions can we begin to draw about the nature of the political process with regard to education and training as it currently operates?

Firstly, I think that the decision making process has to be understood in terms of the politics of the National Assembly. I think that in itself is an important point to emphasise. The National Assembly has opened up, in my opinion, a greater area of autonomous action than was the case under the old Welsh Office system. But it’s important to remember, as I indicated at the outset, that what we have currently in the Assembly is a minority government. The largest party, Labour - the administration - can only act with the collaboration of Plaid Cymru and effectively the Liberal Democrats. Given that Plaid Cymru and the Liberal Democrats were both opposed to having the regional level, there was no way that the regional level could have been maintained in face of that political opposition, irrespective of the wishes of the Cabinet.

It’s further complicated by the fact that within the Labour Party itself, there is an ongoing battle between Old Labour and New Labour. Within the Welsh Labour Party, Old Labour is
extremely powerful, and is certainly opposed to the TECs, which are seen to be a kind of alien imposition of the Thatcher regime. More generally, the notion of ‘public sector – good, private sector – bad’ is one that has a degree of ideological reality within the Labour Party. In part, that explains the capacity of the Local Authorities actually to push through the agenda which is clearly favourable to them. It is very striking that the private sector, the business interests, are largely absent from the Assembly in terms of the actual people who were elected. That’s true of Conservatives as much as it is of members of other parties. What that reflects is the way in which the societal context (in the terms we’ve heard this morning) actually is intimately connected with the processes through which the administrative mechanisms of the education system actually work out. Those administrative mechanisms, in this case, reflect the nature of the political character of civil society in Wales.

That, however, is again crucially mediated through the actual mechanics of the Assembly itself. The Local Authorities and the teacher unions clearly played a very large part, both formally in the committee proceedings through their presentation of evidence, but also, according to our interview evidence, in terms of lobbying members of the committee in ways that they said was simply not possible in the pre-Assembly system. When you have to, in effect, go to Westminster and try and lobby MPs or have meetings with Whitehall civil servants or even civil servants in the Welsh Office, that is a radically different process from the immediacy and accessibility of the lobbying that is possible through the new committee system. And despite the fact that the Labour Party is a minority administration, it is not insignificant that the Local Authorities and the teacher unions and the politicians who sit in the Assembly are themselves networked through the Labour Party itself. There is a kind of seamless web of inter-relationships there, which further fuels the capacity to influence policy making through these means.

One final point on this – the role of the civil service. One of our respondents said, “well, why was it that the civil service weren’t briefing the committee better?”. Talking to civil servants, their consistent argument is one of over-load. They say they are now having to do far, far more work than they had to under the old Welsh Office/ Westminster system. They have not had increased resources to do it, therefore they don’t have the capacity. Clearly, the Office of the National Assembly does not have the resources of the DfEE in total, let alone to deal with post-16 education and training. I think there are real issues there in terms of the operation of the system.

In terms of the current situation, and the likely future one, I think that this very preliminary case-study suggests that the impact of democratic devolution has to been to increase the arena within which the autonomous policy development can take place in Wales. There is some evidence, indeed, of policy borrowing in the other direction. Remember the pre-Assembly system was totally from England to Wales. I think there’s some slight evidence that it’s operating in the other direction. But ironically, the actual operation within the new political sphere that has been generated through the establishment of the Assembly has been to secure a further divergence between England and Wales, taking out that regional level, which remains in England, has increased the difference between England and Wales.
EDUCATION AND TRAINING POLICY: CONVERGENCE OR DIVERGENCE?

Looking to the future, then, what kinds of implications does this have for policy development in the longer term? It seems to be likely that there will be a further divergence between the systems of Wales and England. Obviously given the history, it’s basically with England that Wales compares itself. That, I think, reflects (and this is where I depart slightly from David Raffe’s comments this morning) elements of societal context. I think it does reflect some of the realities of the distinctive character of, for example, Welsh civil society, other aspects of the Welsh economic structure, and aspects of the political sphere that is constructed on those two bases. Those societal effects are then clearly mediated through the mechanisms that have been constituted out of the establishment of the Assembly. I’ve hopefully illustrated a little bit of how that is currently operating.

That, however, is a long way from arguing that there will be any long term impact in terms of the social relations and processes of education. The divergences, as I see them, will operate at the level of policy and policy making. But in terms of the actual educational experiences of pupils and students and trainees going through the system, I think that the impacts are likely to be much less and that is partly because of some of the factors that David Raffe was talking about this morning. Put crudely, the impact of education policies are swamped by everything else that is going on. Even at policy level, it’s much more important what’s happening in terms of macro economic policy than it is in education policy, in terms of actually determining these social relations and processes of education.

That directs us towards a view which looks at the policy making process and the impacts of policies in terms of levels. I think this is relevant to some of the debate this morning about policy learning and to put that another way - Is there a distinctive locus of policy making in Scotland? Well, of course, there isn’t, but then, there isn’t anywhere, because all educational policies are ultimately subject to levels of determination which operate at international levels. What is in a sense analytically important, is to distinguish the effects that derive from these different levels: the international, the national, the British and indeed, the local. It is to my mind the significance of the project that it is moving forward through identifying those effects, not simply at societal level, but at those other levels, too.

QUESTION & ANSWER SESSION

S1 Can I just clarify something, which you said? In this independence of thinking that’s coming out of the Welsh Assembly, you made two points which in a way are always at variance. In part, you suggested it was the minority government, which allowed more lobbying, but you also suggested that it was actually the Labour Party that was doing the lobbying through the internal informal networks. So, what you’re suggesting is that it’s the conflict between the Welsh Labour Party and the official Labour Party, which is actually delivering this independence. Is that what you’re trying to say? That, in fact, it is actually the social pressures, although they’re expressed through political linking? Would it work so well, for example, if the minority government were Plaid Cymru and the networks were still Labour?
GR  Well, yes, I think that within the Labour Party in Wales I think the distinction between old Labour and New Labour is an important one. There is a sense in which the establishment of the Education and Trading Action Group (ETAG), the whole move towards the re-organisation, the re-vitalisation of post-16 education and training was part of New Labour’s project when they were elected in 1997 and, of course, that was to the Welsh Office. What has happened as a consequence of the establishment of the Assembly is that the internal nature of the Labour Party in Wales has become more significant in terms of actually working through the proposals and their revisions and what eventually will come out. And I think there, the capacity of Old Labour represented in the Local Authorities, very ably represented by the Welsh Local Government Association, by the teacher unions and, indeed, by many of the Assembly members themselves, of whom the largest group have background in Local Government, was crucial. That configuration has impacted on this taking out of this regional level, which is more than an administrative thing, as I tried to indicate. It’s actually taking out the level through which the private sector, business elements, would perceive to have its kind of distinctive route into the policy-making system. All of that has been made possible in turn - all of that in a sense reflects the character of a society and its political manifestations in Wales – through the mechanics of the Assembly and the way it has been established. This is why I was suggesting that in order to understand the policy making process, one needs to understand the ways that the distinctive features of Welsh civil society actually get translated through the administrative apparatus of which the Assembly and its cabinet and committees and so on are now the crucial elements. It’s that process of mediation that is now the distinctive one in terms of understanding what I perceive to be this divergence between England and Wales.

GR  I think that the minority nature of the government is a kind of temporary aberration and I will publicly eat my hat if the Rhondda remains in the hands of Plaid Cymru. Obviously, this is speculating, but I think that if the Assembly election had gone in the way that God ordained it should have gone, the dynamics of policy making would have been significantly different. I think the fact that Plaid Cymru and Liberal Democrats have more substantial representation than was expected is a contributory dimension of this kind of Old/New Labour battle inside the Labour Party.

JL  Janet Law, SNP, Perthshire. I suggest that quite a good place for a strategic link between education and economic development at a kind of regional level rather than the Local Authority. With your expertise in the area of economic development, a question for all of us, whatever political background, is where should the appropriate level be? Is it better that more emphasis should be put on allowing small Local Authorities at the local level in Wales or in Scotland, to have an input into planning for training and economic development, or should that be at a strategic level above that?

GR  There’s not a shadow of doubt that there ought to be a strategic regional level.

FF  Fred Forrester, EIS. The Welsh Assembly does not have legislative powers. How come you can have the degree of divergence, which you have described to us, without legislative powers?
Well, obviously, you're right. We don't have primary legislative powers, but actually, the scope for policy-making remains nevertheless is very considerable and these proposals will, in effect, nearly all of these proposals will be pushed through without any specifically Welsh changes in legislation.

Jason Tarsh, DfEE. To what extent have they conjured up a distinctively Welsh model of post-16 especially for Welsh conditions? I think what you’re suggesting is the Welsh model is protecting the political pressures in Wales and therefore the regional insight is largely being lost. Is that right?

I think that, very briefly, there is a level of truth in that, but there is great deal, for example, in the Action Plan produced by ETAG, that related to real educational outcomes. For example, there’s a great deal about how the curricula should be changed, how careers guidance should be organised and so on. Most of that hasn’t been addressed in the debates which have been carried out so far.

Note: Some of the participants in the discussion could not be identified from the recording. These are denoted S1, S2 etc.
1. INTRODUCTION

I'm going to be provocative, questioning how politically realistic is the exercise in which we are engaged today.

I'm going to argue three things:

• first, that the importance of this type of Scottish home rule has been exaggerated;
• second, that the CES research is in that sense based on a correct premise:
  ▪ it's only to the extent that the Scottish parliament doesn't do very much that this kind of detailed, technical policy analysis makes sense - because, as David Raffe argued, the validity of this kind of comparison depends on a common polity;
• but, third, there are good reasons to believe that the present state of the Scottish constitution is by no means settled:
  ▪ and that's because, despite the aspirations towards consensus, there remain very sharp political divisions which are driving Scottish policy making in directions that, in the long run, make comparison with England, at least, increasingly irrelevant.

2. HAS THE RELEVANCE OF CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGE BEEN EXAGGERATED?

One of the more depressing aspects of public debate on Scottish government these days is its lack of historical sense.

When the Scottish Parliament was being elected last May, the media were full of ridiculously exaggerated claims about the historical significance of this body.

• It was the most important political event in Scotland for three centuries.
• It was the end of the UK as we have known it.
• It was the rebirth of a nation.

That kind of hyperbole might have been appropriate if Scotland had been electing an independent parliament

• if it was truly the end of the Union that we were witnessing.

But it wasn't.

This parliament is a highly constrained domestic legislature,

• with almost no independent power of taxation,
• with a founding statute that is hedged around with powers reserved to Westminster even in areas like education and training which seem to be wholly transferred,
• and served by a civil service that has resolutely refused to countenance any autonomy, insisting on its Britishness, on its lines to Whitehall, and on the 'concordats' which enshrine the kinds of gentleman's agreements that have always formed the basis of the British constitution.

I'll be coming back to the parliament's freedom of manoeuvre later.

But the first point I want to make is that what we are seeing at the moment is emphatically not the reversal of three hundred years:
• it is no more than the restoration of British territorial pluralism that was still working tolerably well as recently as the 1950s.

In the words of Bernard Crick, talking about the English Tories but actually describing the whole set of conventions that governed the old UK:
• 'many of the old English Tories had a clear and politic sense of the diversity of the United Kingdom. ...Unlike the new breed of self-made men and women, they had some sense of history; and, unlike most socialists, a sense that discontinuities between sociology and government were possible, given political will and skill'.

This is not the place to go into the detailed origins of this governing system, because they are well known.

What matters for the present is that, at least until the mid-twentieth century, the Union remained partial.

When a more interventionist state grew this century, it was as much an emanation of Scottish civil society as a reorganisation of Whitehall departments on a territorial basis
• a renovating for the new century of the autonomous system of local boards and councils that governed Scottish social policy in the Victorian age.

In the absence of a Scottish parliament, it might appear, of course, that a separate bureaucracy was not much of a political prize.

But that is true only insofar as the liberal-democratic theory of the state is true, and political science has long taught us to be sceptical of its claims.

The system of Scottish policy making was autonomous first because of internal pluralism.
• If policy is made by the bargaining which goes on among interest groups, then Scottish policy in the unreformed Union has to be judged to have been made to a very significant extent within Scotland.
• In education, for example, almost all these groups other than parliament itself were Scottish rather than British, and indeed until the 1960s parliament paid almost no attention.
• At the centre of the process was the Scottish Education Department.
• It supervised a dense network of committees, and maintained official and informal contacts with pressure groups, with representatives of local government, and with professional associations. McPherson and Raab have described these as the 'policy community', the Scottish instance of British pluralism.
Furthermore, insofar as undiluted pluralism is not a wholly satisfactory way of characterising the process, the relative autonomy of the system can be seen to be all the more officially entrenched.

- For example, if we follow the corporatist critique of straightforward pluralism, we are led to see the Scottish Office as an official agency for co-ordinating Scottish pressure on the UK state - in fact, a nationalist agency, and not at all the unionist instrument which its nationalist critics allege.
- For education, the Scottish system became increasingly corporatist in the 1960s, as the power of the Scottish Office increased.

And, third, whatever the process by which national decisions are made - pluralism or corporatism or something else - there remains the large area of implementation, the means by which the national policies have an impact on everyday experience.

- All policy proposals have to be modified in practice when placed in the hands of professionals such as teachers, and when faced with the complexity of society and of individuals.
- In education, the arm of the Scottish Office which had most to do with implementation has been the Inspectorate, and in that sense the Office was able to keep some control of the process.
- But the inspectors have always themselves been educational professionals, and so their negotiation of practice with teachers has been shaped by a shared professional outlook.
- They have also had to deal with the local directors of education, also from the same professional background.
- Schools themselves, in any case, had a great deal of scope to devise their own ways of responding to national policies,
  - although - because of the centralising effects of the Inspectorate and the Scottish Examination Board - they tended to follow a common pattern to a greater extent than did schools in England and Wales.

That old British polity has been called various things by academic analysts:

- territorial pluralism;
- union state (as opposed to unitary);
- administrative devolution.

But all these terms tend to place the explanatory power in the state itself:

- the point seems to be that the UK state chose to decentralise because that was the sensible thing to do.

If we follow these analyses, we can then do as the authors of the papers for today's seminar have done, and accept the official government line that the point of constitutional reform is a further sensible re-ordering,

- the opportunity to experiment and therefore to learn from each others' successes and mistakes.

But a quite different perspective on the mid-twentieth century Scottish government can be found in the idea that the UK was a quasi-federation in which sovereignty came from below, from the people.
W.S. Livingston, for example, used the UK as a pre-eminent instance of a state which had the outward forms of being unitary, but which, in practice, respected the essentially federal character of the territory which it governed.

This was the twentieth-century version of that tolerance of diversity of which Crick wrote.

And the key point is that the diversity - the federalism - comes from the society, not from the state.

The outcome, for Scotland, was a greater degree of freedom than the component parts of some formal federations enjoy.

For example, Scottish education even before the new Parliament was elected was much more different from English education than any of the education systems of the German Länder are from each other.

Let me remind you of some of the key features of what that now amounts to, features all develop in the unreformed union:

Compared to the rest of the UK, Scotland has

- a different system of qualifications, about to become even more different with the development of Higher Still;
- a different structure of secondary schooling (all-through comprehensives);
- a different internal structure of higher education (breadth and four year degrees);
- a much more important role for FECs in providing HE (one third of undergraduate places, compared to one in eight in England, eg), a role that is almost wholly not dependent on franchising;
- a system of community education with a philosophy still rooted in ideas of social justice and actively promoting social change;
- a training system that is more corporatist, more tied to economic development, and - because of the independence of the FECs - more self-assured.

If Scotland had acquired a domestic parliament in the 1970s, the 1940s, or the 1920s - the other times this century when that was a distinct possibility - then all these educational distinctions would by now have been attributed to its political creativity.

So, in conclusion of this first part, I would take issue with one of the points made by the CES authors.

They say that the differences among the UK systems are a matter of institutions, not social or political culture (eg pp.16-17 of their paper in Comparative Education).

I'll come back to political culture.

My point just now is that institutional differences depend on social differences - that's quasi-federalism - and that these institutional differences then shape the culture in which they are situated.

For example,

- As Bob Osborne has shown, Scottish universities are less good than English ones at attracting working-class students.
  - That's almost certainly because of the importance of the FECs:
they siphon off working-class entrants.

- So the institutional importance of the FECs produces a difference in social behaviour.

- Another example:
  - despite what the CES authors imply in their papers (eg p.17 of the *Comparative Education* paper, and p.3 of the other background paper), Scotland has a quite distinct politics of education:
    - notably, much higher levels of support than in England for comprehensive secondary schools.
    - So there we have another institutional difference - in secondary schools - that has now yielded a social difference.

3. DIRECTIONS OF POLICY

That last point about politics brings me back to the current situation.

- Despite what the UK government seems to think, the whole process of constitutional change in these islands is being driven by social and political change,
  - certainly not by the enlightened rationalism of policy makers.

This New Labour perspective is, I think, widely shared in Whitehall.

And I have to say that it seems to be the underlying philosophy of the CES research which we're here today to discuss.

It's a belief that says that:

- constitutional change is about experimenting with policy (that's the implication of the word 'benchmarking' used in the CES press release);
- that constitutional change is about experimenting on the margins:
  - not just the margins in the sense of small alterations to essentially common policies (eg the role of FECs in helping HE to expand);
  - but also margins in the sense that Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland will try things out which the English core can then decide whether or not to adopt.
- the belief is also that constitutional change is driven by elites working in very similar ways to those which their predecessors favoured up to the 1950s,
  - and which produced the already existing divergence among systems that I have mentioned, and which the CES research catalogues.

And maybe that view of the current state of constitutional change is entirely appropriate for the time being.

So long as Labour is in power all over the place, that view is likely to prevail,

- and the Scottish civil servants and the quangocrats will be able to rest easy that they now work for a politically legitimate government which, nevertheless, will maintain the British link at all costs,
  - not just the obvious link from home rule periphery to metropolitan centre,
  - but also the cultural link that keeps Scottish education, in an international context, essentially the same as English education,
  - whatever the important differences at the margins.
And so we will get the kinds of policy experiment that is amenable to this kind of research study:

- new community schools, based on US full-service schools and bringing together social services, rather than privatised education action zones;
- public-sector secondaries still wholly comprehensive, not selective;
- a renovated community education service, with an added remit to develop citizenship in the kind of civic republican way that Blair borrows from Etzioni: participation in responsible ways, certainly not anarchism.
- and FECs as the leading mechanism for expanding higher education still further.

And because the Scottish Parliament is surrounded by the rhetoric of consultation and consensus, all this will happen with lots of technocratic deals,

- in exactly the same way as the Scottish Office used to manage so adeptly before Margaret Thatcher came along and spoiled it.

If you doubt that, just take one look at the composition of the Cubie committee on student finance:

- it contains exactly the same kind of educational interest group as dominated policy making until Thatcher squeezed them out;
- it is consulting with exactly the same kinds of people who were consulted with up to the 1970s, including, I should say, academics;
- and it will almost certainly yield, therefore, the outcome that higher education itself wants.

We should not be cynical about that.

A consultative process managed by New Labour will be more responsive than Scottish educational policy making was under Thatcher.

It will be more public than when consensus was being constructed in the old union, and to that extent will be better also.

But structurally it will not be fundamentally different from the political processes that have shaped Scotland today.

4. Politics

The problem, however, is politics.

As I mentioned earlier, we didn't get here by elite planning.

We didn't get Scottish home rule by rational debates on the constitution.

We got here by nationalism, fuelled also by an angry sense of social justice that was focused on the poll tax.

That's why the body we have here is called a parliament, not an assembly, and it's home rule or self government, not devolution:
• the names ‘parliament’ and ‘self government’ expressed an aspiration, and a rejection of Westminster sovereignty.

The CES papers do not discuss nationalism, nor social justice, they tend to use the term nation as merely a category of data description, and they use ‘assembly’ as if it were synonymous with the proper name for the Scottish legislature (and they fail to note that the official title of the Welsh body is ‘national assembly’).

But politics are utterly unavoidable.

Three kinds now matter.

4.1 Party Politics

The first is simple party politics.

Proportional elections make a difference:

• that is the only reason why we have a committee of enquiry on tuition fees,
  • not at all because of any enlightened wish to experiment with different forms of student finance.

In due course, as Labour slips, they will lose power,

• and the most likely resulting coalition will probably be of the SNP, the Greens and the Scottish Socialist Party, which between them won over one third of the proportional vote even in May 1999, and are regularly now getting some 45% of the vote in opinion polls.

That will not happen at the next Scottish general election,

• but it is very likely to be the outcome of the one after that, in 8 years time.

That will be a much more populist regime.

It will interpret social justice in a more radical way.

And it will want to tie social justice to matters of Scottish identity, and hence to nationalism of a civic sort.

Let me give you one example.

• The CES paper uses the term ‘academic drift’ in Scotland to describe the more dominant role here than in England for school-based routes beyond age 16.
• That kind of term is the sort of thing beloved of rational planners advised by academic researchers.
• But a new coalition of the type I have envisaged is likely to say that this isn't drift at all, but a conscious resistance to developing a separate vocational track. on the grounds that the best educational preparation for work is actually academic or general study.
• There are lots of examples of nationalist (not SNP) writers celebrating the academic character of what is claimed to be the true Scottish educational tradition
• we had one just last week from the Scottish Association of Teachers of Language and Literature.
• So the new unified Higher Still could find itself under a lot of political pressure to shift in an increasingly academic or general direction, not ‘drift' but deliberate.

You see, nationalism will simply not go away.
4.2 Challenge to civic elites

The second type of populist politics will concern the tensions between the parliament and the civic institutions which have run Scotland.

Despite the large volume of rhetoric about consensus politics at the moment,

- for many radical home rule campaigners the whole point of a Scottish Parliament was to challenge the respectable civic institutions which had maintained Scottish identity in the Union.

For example, here is a quotation from Tom Nairn summing up this sense of frustration with the civic elites:

- 'Institutional identity seems to me broadly the same as managerial identity or, less flatteringly, ... "bureaucratic identity". The self-management of civil society historically found in Scotland implied a class which administers and regulates rather than "rules" in the more ordinary sense of political government or direction.

- 'Bureaucracy had an egalitarian side to it and within limits was a social leveller, especially in contrast to aristocracy or older, class-bound societies. But that should not be confused with democracy.'

The same frustration with conservative civic culture has been expressed over and over again by writers about Scottish education.

For example, Walter Humes said this about the leadership class, the pluralistic policy community:

- 'Those qualities with which members of [the leadership class] have been associated - bureaucratic expansionism, professional protectionism and ideological deception - hardly amount to a vote of confidence in their collective achievements.'

This analysis has probably been accepted by quite a lot of the members of the Scottish parliament

- and more importantly, it has almost certainly been quite influential on the less powerful segments of the same civic institutions, notably here teachers, demoralised by what they feel to be endless criticism from politicians and the printed media.

For opposition groups, added to this is the dominance of Scottish civic institutions by Labour.

To the extent that this radical critique of the civic institutions is effective politically, it is bound to disrupt the rational, technocratic pluralism that the rational exponents of constitutional reform like to favour.

4.3 Constitutional politics

And then that, finally, brings me to the biggest political question of all.

Scotland will not settle down into rational and consensual 'experimentation' so long as 40% or more of the electorate is voting for parties that favour much stronger home rule than we now have, and so long as three quarters of them are telling social surveys that the Scottish Parliament ought to matter much more than Westminster.

Again let me give you just one example.
Yesterday, the Scottish government announced that it aims to eradicate child poverty in two decades.

Part of that aim are ambitious targets for education.

But both the British and Scottish Labour parties have repeatedly denied that poverty is, in the last analysis, about the structure of employment:

- not just the lack of skills of individuals, but the structural disadvantage that ensures that some people live in poverty precisely because other people don't.

My point is not to argue at the moment that the New Labour view is wrong, but simply to observe that lots of people in Scotland apparently believe it is wrong:

- in the British Election Survey of 1997, we found that - with the exception of education itself - Scottish social attitudes most differed from the English in areas concerning wealth redistribution and the core principles of the welfare state.

The Scottish Parliament can, at the moment, deal only with the supply side:

- only with the lack of skills of individuals.

And the UK government do not seem to be radical enough on redistribution to satisfy Scottish preferences.

If this New Labour approach fails to eradicate poverty, then the opportunity would be perfect for the SNP to point out the lack of economic and re-distributive powers of the Parliament,

- and to compare Scotland unfavourably to Scandinavia.

That would pose a challenge to the UK constitution that goes far beyond mere marginal experimentation.

5. CONCLUSION

In summary, I have suggested here:

- first, that the merely home rule parliament we have now in Scotland can do no more than renovate the Scottish pluralism that was working quite well until about four decades ago;
- second, that, so long as matters go no further than that, there will be lots of scope for the kinds of detailed analysis of marginal policy differences which the CES papers exemplify;
- but third, there are good reasons to believe that Scotland will not settle down nicely to new pluralism.

To the extent that politics is therefore about to become stormy, it will be political reality that will challenge the very basis of the common polity on which 'home international' comparisons are based.
I thought I would start off by just saying a few things about education in Northern Ireland. Quite often, when we get into comparative analyses, whether it’s between countries or within countries, in order to effect some sort of generalisation, the detail goes. Consequently, I wanted to put some detail on it in terms of description of Northern Ireland education. I guess there are two characteristic features of Northern Ireland education that make it a bit different. Segregation of the school system between essentially de facto rather than de jure in Protestant schools and de jure rather than de facto Catholic schools and the relatively small, although growing, integrated sector, which accounts at the moment for 4% of school pupils. That constitutes a very small return for an awful amount of public policy and encouragement and cash flowing towards the integrated sector, both from public and private sources.

The second defining characteristic is selection, which David has gone into, but as I heard him describe Northern Ireland as having a selective system, I kept going, “Ah, but…” and the ‘ah, but’ is that we do, in essence, have a selective system, but it is broken down in various ways and various localities which are not selective. We’ve got an area around Craigaven, which isn’t selective. It has a junior and senior high school situation, but because it’s not an autonomous region in its own right, people leak out of that into grammar schools alongside. But also, in rural areas, there is the development of a number of all-in schools, in effect, which are functioning as quasi-comprehensive schools. Also there’s a major fact that the largest single school in Northern Ireland, defined as a girls’ secondary school, St Louisa’s in west Belfast, which is functioning in effect as a comprehensive school. So those sorts of factors, plus, and this is the crucial one, the basic refusal of a lot of schools operating in working class areas to even enter their pupils into the transfer procedure, as it’s known euphemistically - the rest of us call it the 11 plus - means that only two thirds of pupils at the age of 11 are actually doing the 11+. So, yes, we do have a selective system, but it’s a selective system which is cracking and disintegrating in various ways, but boy, is it supported by the two middle classes – the Catholic and Protestant middle classes are both keen supporters of a selective system. The reason is, about 40% of secondary pupils end up attending grammar school.

One of the beliefs in the Northern Ireland education system is that we’re better than what goes on in England. The trouble is that when you put that comparison together with an international comparison, of course, those differences shrink down to virtually nothing and it’s a UK comparison with everywhere else, which is more important. I’ll give you the anecdote about how that was forcefully brought home to an element of the policy-making community in Northern Ireland. I was adviser to the Northern Ireland Affairs Select Committee in 1997, who were having a look at education under-achievement in Northern Ireland and the Northern Ireland Department of Education sent the two senior civil servants with, in essence, the task of telling the Select Committee “we have a good news story: we’re doing slightly better than England.” The Select Committee turned round and said, “but that’s not the comparison. The comparison should be international. Why do you want to tie yourself
to a failing school system?” I think that emphasises one of the problems in Northern Ireland. The belief that we’ve got a good quality education system and the way in which that judgement is derived is by comparison with England. A recent strategy 2010 document, which is an attempt of the Northern Ireland government departments to chart a way ahead economically, reinforces exactly that sort of nonsense – “We’ve got the best education system and this will enable us to progress our way into the future.”

The second thing I thought I would say about the education system in terms of terminology is that we’ve got the most Byzantine structure in terms of titles, controls and funding because we have seven different funding formulae in place, with 1.6M people, which is quite ridiculous. All Catholic primary and secondary schools are known as ‘maintained’ schools. Up until very recently they got all the current funding with up to 85% of capital funding. The new system introduced in the early 1990s after an interesting research project, pointing out some of the inequalities. Those schools have now been offered 100% funding in return for some alteration in the balance of school governance.

All Protestant and this is de facto, not de jure, because de facto, they are state schools - primary, secondary and a small number of grammar schools are known as ‘controlled’ schools and although they constitute the state sector, the governing bodies of these schools are heavily influenced by Protestant clergy, so that they’re ‘state schools with a difference’.

All Catholic and most Protestant grammar schools are voluntary grammar schools. They have now actually diverged because under the arrangement that was offered to Catholic maintained schools for full 100% capital funding, all Catholic grammar schools have now opted for that, but no Protestant grammar schools have done so. I think that’s quite interesting. Protestant grammar schools are basically saying, “We don’t need the extra on capital funding ‘coz we’re well enough off to get the money that need from our parents!” but the Catholic community is saying, “We need it”. So we’ve now got variation there.

Even our integrated sector is divided into two. Grant-maintained integrated schools, which are in effect new schools, integrated schools and controlled integrated schools which are formerly controlled schools that have voted to become integrated that in, former Protestant schools which have become integrated schools.

But, now this is fascinating. The Department of Education has been collecting this information for some time but has only recently published it. It’s not quite published in this format, but what I’ve done is aggregated that, just to give you an idea. If any of us have a sense of a system breaking down in terms of segregation, I think this gives it the lie. This gives a different social context to an education system, where if you say there are Catholic schools in Northern Ireland or Catholic schools elsewhere, you haven’t got Catholic schools like this, compared to us. 4% of Protestants are in Catholic secondary schools, 3.5% Catholics are in Protestant secondary schools and 0.5% of Protestants are in Catholic grammar schools – now there’s a big difference if ever there was one and the one which I thought would be much bigger, the percentage of Catholics in Protestant grammar schools, which is 4.7%. Even in the integrated sector, we’ve got a slight problem and that is only around 40% of kids in integrated schools are Protestant and in fact, if you look at the individual school distributions, there are a lot of schools that are struggling to get a balance of Protestant and Catholic. By and large it’s an under-supply of Protestants. Protestants
don't go for integrated schools as much as Catholics. If you think about what integrated schools are for, it's a bit of a problem.

The result of having this multitudinous divisions of schools - we also have a lot of single sex schools, as well, disappearing at primary level quite rapidly and starting to disappear at secondary schools but not really disappearing yet at grammar schools in a big way - which means we have some extremely small schools. 53, or a third of our secondary schools have pupil numbers less than 400. Again, this is a structural difference, I think, David, which in terms of offering curriculum, curriculum choice and so on, is quite substantial. Even our grammar schools are quite small. 17%, almost 1 in 5 of the grammar schools have less than 600 pupils. So, a result of having selection, segregation, the integrated sector, single sex schools, is that we've got a plethora of lots of little schools. Now, you don't have to be a Thatcherite to say, "Is this an efficient system in terms of use of educational resources?"

So, I thought I'd just give you the few characteristics and now I'll say something about policy making in the respect of education. Two key periods. We had devolved Government. Nobody wants to talk about it because it's generally regarded as an unfortunate experience, but we had it from 1921 – 1972. And what evolved in that period, especially as a result of the creation of the welfare state was something known as the 'parity principle' and if you talk to any Northern Ireland civil servants in the last 15-20 years, parity is a key issue. What emerged initially was the idea that parity meant 'the same as'. "If there's going to be a National Health Service in Britain, we will have a NHS in Northern Ireland. If you're going to have a social security system as part of the welfare state of Britain, we will have a social security system in Northern Ireland." So that parity principle was about having the same level of services delivered in Northern Ireland as was the case in Britain. That required a whole new financial arrangement between the devolved administration and Westminster because basically Northern Ireland couldn't afford any of these things from its own tax base. The original conception of the devolved government was that it would be financially independent. That collapsed with the creation of the welfare state and a new financial relationship had to be introduced and in effect it became a dependent relationship which has become quite appalling in some senses, now, the level of dependency on Westminster is very static, even if you strip out the cost of defence and security.

After direct rule was instituted in 1972 parity itself became more refined, more sophisticated and this was quite a clever game played by Northern Ireland civil servants, basically to get more cash out of the Treasury. They began to elaborate the concept. You could argue and you could always construct your arguments around, well, we need parity of input, ie, resources. We need parity of output or we need parity of outcome. The parity of outcome is an interesting one because we want to get from wherever we are to the same place that you are and that doesn't mean parity input necessarily. That was used very powerfully in the 1980s and early 90s to dramatically increase public sector housing provision in Northern Ireland. It became so bad, or so good towards the end of the 1980s, that when Treasury officials were coming to Northern Ireland to discuss how the Northern Ireland block was to be made up for the coming year or whatever, great attempts were made to try and keep them away from this glorious public sector housing that's been created, which was so manifestly better to that in Merseyside, Manchester and so on. So that quite circuitous routes were supposed to be used to get civil servants through the last bits of the worst housing.
Alongside parity as a general principle, there have been 4 forms of policy making in the Northern Ireland context and I’ve called them: adoption; adaption; initiation; and inertia. Policy adoption is essentially where a policy is adopted from England and minor changes are made. Then you’ve got policy adaption where you take the basic policy idea but you put it into a Northern Ireland version, you’ve got a more local input. You’ve then got policy initiation, which might be something which is distinctive and exclusive to Northern Ireland and then you’ve got policy inertia – don’t do anything. I’ll just give you a few educational examples.

Crucial one in the 1950s was an adoption, was to accept that the general certificate of education (GCE) would be the form of secondary certification for the Northern Ireland education system and that was such a crucial decision because it meant that everything thereafter was shadowing whatever happened in England in that sort of public certification of secondary education. I would love to have a research student to go back through the public record office files and have a look through what was the thinking and so on, but clearly you had a government that didn’t want in any way to pull itself away from what was happening in England and there is this issue about having recognised certification for people to move around the UK. And clearly if you replicate what’s been produced in England, that isn’t a problem.

Then we have something that was adapted, the 1988 Education Act and that was adapted in Northern Ireland in a very interesting way or one element of it was and that was the vote for grant-maintained schools. Opting out of Local Authority control in England was not introduced in the same way in Northern Ireland. It was adapted to Northern Ireland circumstances and it allowed the schools to opt to become integrated. So, we didn’t have a voting system where schools could opt out of Local Authority control because that doesn’t have quite the same connotation in Northern Ireland. Under the ‘89 order, which is the ‘88 Act in England, schools can vote to become integrated. Now, the number of schools that have done, voted from their existing circumstances to become integrated, is tiny. I think it’s about 7 or 8 schools that’s happened in the last decade.

Policy initiation - two examples would be the cross curricula theme in the Northern Ireland curriculum, education for mutual understanding and the introduction of cross-schools community contact scheme, that is to get Protestant/Catholic kids to go away and do things together. So they are two ideas of trying to initiate something which is exclusive to Northern Ireland.

Finally policy inertia - well, I can think of quite a few things here. The whole debate on comprehensives in the 1960s, largely passed Northern Ireland by. It was activated in the 1970s and the last old Labour government attempted to introduce comprehensives, but it collapsed.

Coming to the contemporary situation very quickly. The form of devolved government that we’ve got for Northern Ireland is essentially about ending the Troubles. It’s a form of government which is designed to get everybody in. It’s like having your rainbow coalition plus the Tories, plus the SNPs, plus Old/New Labour, plus the Lib Dems plus anyone else who’s hanging around. The idea is to be inclusive to try and create some sort of political structure from which everybody will identify and that’s an heroic thing, if you think that we’ve had a 30 year guerrilla war about the rejection of that political structure. I mean by and large,
the IRA and Sinn Fein rejected the idea of Northern Ireland existing so creating something which actually gets them to buy into it is a heroic thing and we shouldn’t be too disappointed that it’s taken quite a while to get there. So we’ll have an executive which is made up of the Ulster Unionists, the SDLP who’ll both have three seats each plus the first minister, the deputy first minister, one Unionist, one SDLP, two Sinn Fein and two DUP. Now, I just have to mention those last two parties for you to realise what the nature of the collective executive decisions are going to be. I was talking to a civil servant who will be on the front line hopefully within a week and he said, “Well, yes, they’ll operate at this level” and then formally the DUP will say, “we’re not even spitting on SF let alone collaborating with them”. But on another level once decisions start being made, once cash starts flowing around the system, the worst of enemies will find some way of working together. You just have to point to Northern Ireland’s local Councils, where despite at one stage when SF first joined the table, the DUP moved their chairs away from the table to make a point, things have happened. Now, our local Councils don’t have control over anything that matters, but the mere fact that people can sit down and talk about things and do things around economic development and whinge about closing the hospitals and so on, means that some form of co-operation begins to take place. So one pessimistic view might be to say, “My God, who on earth would design this?” on the other hand, there’s a chance. If they’re going to agree to actually set it up, then they’re going to try and make it work. There’s no point in trying to set it up just to have it collapse straight away. The DUP know which side their bread is buttered. Once things start going out to constituents and initiatives start to be delivered in the constituency, the DUP will want to be in on that process as well. What makes life even more entertaining is the process by which the executive seats will allocated. None of us knew of this Belgian political scientist (D’Hondt), until he mysteriously appeared in the Agreement. But the fine fellow means the parties choose their portfolios in order of the size of their vote. So, the Unionists get first choice, then the SDLP, then the DUP, then SF, then you go back to the top again. So, there’s all sorts of lists being lined up and there’s been no agreement between the pro-agreement parties, you understand.

So at this stage, it’s an absolute lottery. That’s compounded within the Assembly by complex voting procedures that any matter which is deemed of high political importance has to have a majority comprising 40% of those designated as nationalist parties and 40% of those designated as unionist parties. The others, who don’t wish to be designated don’t count in that calculation. So, the running of the Assembly could be quite interesting in its own right. We’ve got proposed committee structure which is actually quite powerful, the Chairs, the committees will have a role in initiating legislation. The Chairs, again, will be selected by parties on the basis of the D’Hondt principle. You go down the list, nobody knows how it’s going to work out except, that whichever party holds the ministry, will not hold the Chair of the committee. What we’ve got in terms of the departmental structure is 10 departments. These have resulted from the break up of the existing 6 departments in order to create enough seats for the 4 parties in the executive. This is why I say this is a form of devolution which is about ending the Troubles, not necessarily the structure for ‘good government’.

Parallel in Wales, we’ve got the split up of the education portfolio, we’ve got the schools and pre-school provision up to 16 and we’ve got F/HE training and some responsibility for employment services in a separate department. The interesting thing will come if the DUP, the betting at the moment is that the DUP will take one of the education portfolios and SF will
get the other one. You’re talking about joined up government. It’s going to be absolutely fascinating to watch this, in a sense, “you have the boring forms of devolution. We’ve got the exciting model! And if we can make this work, just think what you might be able to learn from it!” So, there’s bags of potential. Some of the limitations, we’ve had 25/28 however many years as a direct rule plus the experience of a devolved government before that, which basically had one idea behind it and that was shadowing England – the parity principle. There was no incentive really to construct a distinctive Northern Ireland policy around education or much else at all. I think that’s going to be a powerful cultural break on policy initiation, trying to construct something which is distinctive for Northern Ireland.

And allied to that, a bit like overload, when you’ve got a very small number of civil servants within the department of education and then you split them, the actual number of bodies, we’ve probably got them in the hall actually – the number of people who are going to have to carry a substantial part of F/HE. It actually is going to be a very important issue and you’ve already picked it up, Gareth. The other thing is that because we’ve had no control over anything for 25 – 30 years, the political parties have hardly got a thought! The standing joke of British journalists at the time of any general election was to go to the Unionist election campaign and ask them what their education policy was, because they hadn’t got one. It’s all about the conflict, it’s all about the troubles, so we’re starting with a huge, blank sheet of paper, which isn’t in terms of ‘this is a good idea’, it’s a blank sheet of paper because you haven’t got a thought! But there’s potential and that’s where policy learning from various contexts can be very important.

Up until now, we’ve got a peculiar form of devolution, but it’s within the UK context. That devolution isn’t confined to the UK context. We have got a set of special, additional arrangement attached to our devolved situation, which potentially could be quite interesting. First of all we’ve got 6 new cross border – that’s the north/south of Ireland – implementation bodies. None of them relate to education and as a result of the hard bargaining that was done in the lead up to the Agreement they are restricted in their range. They’ve got inland waterways, food safety (which probably is important if we want to stay alive), aquaculture – relatively small-scale stuff, but the point is, it’s a platform, it’s a start.

Alongside the six implementation bodies, there are a number of other named areas for collaboration on a north/south basis and they don’t include education. The trouble is that under the heading education includes teacher and pupil exchanges, reconciling teacher qualifications, special education needs and researching educational disadvantage. Again, you can see the power of the negotiating process at work here. There’s been an attempt to cut these down to as innocuous areas as possible, but there’s a start. The other thing created on a north/south basis is a formal North/South Ministerial Council, where the ministers of the Assembly and the Irish Government will meet, discussing the implementation and collaboration areas.

But, I was absolutely fascinated and kept my mouth shut most of the day when people said, “How can we conduct policy learning?” or whatever it is, nobody mentioned the formal mechanism that has been created under the Agreement. Nobody mentioned it! Which confirms my suspicion that nobody else gives a damn about it apart from poor old David Trimble. And what has been created is the British-Irish Council which will bring together representatives of the Scottish Parliament, the Welsh Assembly, Northern Ireland Assembly,
UK Government at Westminster and the Government of the Republic of Ireland. Potentially it could act as quite an interesting new forum in these islands, but it would require all of the participants to treat it with equal seriousness. The one group that we know will treat it seriously is the Unionists. It remains to be seen if anybody else pays it much attention.

What I’m suggesting to you is that new mechanisms have both constraints but also opportunities for innovation and policy learning in the general area of education and training and across all other policy areas. But Northern Ireland will be pulled in two directions. There will be a set of ministers drawn from the SDLP and SF, who will want to integrate more and more with the Republic and there will be ministers drawn from DUP and the UU, who will want to go east. So that within the Executive we are going to have tensions of people saying, “Uh! but we should do what they do in Dublin” and we’ll have ministers saying, “Ah! But we should do what they do in Edinburgh, Cardiff or London”. Particularly if the two education ministries get landed with two separate parties, it’s almost inevitable that one could end up looking east and the other, south. Nobody would design a camel. Who would design this?

That’s why it’s about ending the troubles and making it work as best we can rather than necessarily creating the best environment for good government. The final thing, which, I think, is optimistic from an education and training point of view is what is this coalition’s programme of government going to include? Well, it’ll have to operate at a high level of what my colleague Bob Cormack calls BOMFOG rhetoric, ‘Brotherhood of Man, Fatherhood of God’. Yeah, high level of generality which everybody could buy into and that means more jobs equally shared and in that context education and training should get a fair crack of the whip.

**QUESTION & ANSWER SESSION**

**BG** I’m Bill Gatherer from the Gordon Cook Foundation. I’ve been working with Carmel Gallagher and Alan Smith and others in the EMU sphere in Northern Ireland. It sounds like a real old Irish cock up that you’ve got there, but I believe that it really might work. I think it will because the professional people involved, the civil servants and all the professional people in Northern Ireland want it to work. They’re going to do their damnedest to make it work and will also agree because Northern Ireland is not isolated. There’s been a great deal of communication with Europe and British structures and also with the structures south of Northern Ireland, too. I think there’s a lot to be said for it. Do you agree?

**BO** Oh, yes. I’ve been slightly flippant in a way, but the yearning for this to work is palpable and the sense of desperation that happened last July when we had this part of the Assembly sitting in empty seats and the gloom that descended over us for the whole of the summer was awful. Nobody actually believed that we would get to where we apparently are within a few days of things setting off. It’s down to that patient, withered George Mitchell, who, unlike Tony Blair and Bertie Ahearn last July, attempted to stage-manage the whole thing with their own spin well in operation. George Mitchell just quietly and unassumingly got behind the scenes and magic-ed it. Talked to people, allowed people to talk to each other and wasn’t in it for his own political interests.
Fred Forrester, EIS. Could I, for an interesting sort of proposition, here, I might get shot down in flames, but I think what we've just heard from Northern Ireland supports Raffe and Croxford rather than Paterson. Could I explain why that's the case? You've had Northern Ireland as a polity, to use Lindsay's expression, for, what, 79 years? It strikes me as remarkable that the educational policies of the Irish Republic have not had more impact on you than they have. They don't seem to me to have had a great deal of impact on you. And I know from teachers in Northern Ireland, for example, whether they are Unionists or whether they are Republicans, they seem to respect the fact that there is something called Northern Ireland and they work within that unit. For example, the Irish National Teacher's Organisation has a separate northern organisation office and works within the context of Northern Ireland. Now, if you take Lindsay's theory, I'm wondering why this is so, because Lindsay tells us that in Scotland, going away back, there have been nationalist influence with a small 'n', which has created different practices in Scotland. He then talks about 'radical dissidence' in civic society, who will change that. Given that you have in Northern Ireland a large minority who are apparently alienated from the British state. (I say 'apparently' because there's a question mark over that, but on the face of it they are alienated from the British state and they believe in an Irish state.) Why are they not radical dissidents under-mining your system? Why are they apparently co-operating with your system? And therefore, is Lindsay right that within the UK as we understand it, there is a divergence, agenda based on what he has called radical dissidence within civic society and I don’t see that in what you have told us about Northern Ireland.

Well, I haven't told you all about Northern Ireland! There are two points, there. One is the function of a separate Catholic education system, which I didn’t refer to in great detail other than you can quite clearly see it functions as a separate system in the sense of most Catholics attend Catholic schools. The role that Catholic schools played in Northern Ireland well into 1970s was that it acted as a redoubt for the Catholic community. It was the one institution that Catholics controlled or had some control through the church in Northern Ireland and it provided a stream of good middle class jobs. So that there was a vested interest in the Catholic system remaining a Catholic system and tied to the Catholic system. Having looked at Scotland in a research project when we went back to Northern Ireland and talked to some of the Catholic bishops and said, “Maybe you should have a look at Scotland.” The response was “Come on! They don’t even own their schools!” The whole issue about owning your schools and running your own schools is about protecting your community. Now, the interesting question, post-devolution, if we get it and it runs is, if you have your community represented in the government of the territory, SF and SDLP, as of right and you've got an institutional representation in cross-border institutions, do you need to hang on to the one thing that you had before, which was Catholic schools? I suspect that if the devolution arrangements do progress, we get to another set of elections and they move on into the next stage, then the case for holding on to separate Catholic schools will be queried more and more inside the Catholic community. That debate is already beginning to surface, so that's the first part of the answer and the second part of the answer is, well, we have had radical
dissidence. We’ve had 18% of people support SF and SF are the political wing of an insurgency group who have used the most radical means possible to try and bring down the state for 30 years.

S2 You did say that all your comparisons of education were with England. Was there never a time when there were any comparisons with the Republic of Ireland?

BO Very, very little. Virtually none. During the devolved administration from 1921 – 1972, the only comparison with the Republic of Ireland was “Ha, ha! They’re not doing as well as us. Let’s rub it in!” No, they can’t say that now and that’s the interesting thing. I think a great deal of attention has been looked at the role in which the former regional technical colleges play in post 16 education, post 18 education in the Republic. They’re now institutes of technology. There’s an awful pressure in the Republic for those institutes, to use that horrible phrase ‘academic drift’ and that is, they want to become universities and they’ve already acquired degree courses and so on, so far, and they’ve got quite a lot of money out of a recent tranche of major research funding. But by and large, up until now, no. There’s been very little looking south of the border. The political orientation is try and get parity with England.

LP It does seem to me, the primary reason why we’ve got this far in Northern Ireland is popular pressure and not rational planning. It’s exactly the Alistair Campbell spin that suggests that the credit is due to Tony Blair or maybe John Major and Bertie Ahearn and maybe Reynolds. I mean, they didn’t cause it. What caused it was a combination of extreme political divergence, but that was actual 18%. Actual people voting for SF and the DUP, not just opinion polls but actual people voting for a party associated with violence and that is the most extreme form of popular pressure you can imagine. But probably far more constructively and more important in the long term, was the civic organisations, the civic forum and all the various cross party groups that perhaps didn’t have enormous popular support on the ground, but were very, very crucial indeed, in developing ideas, that had underpinned this. All that stuff with very complex structures of convention and Executive and of Assembly and of committee structures and so on, emerged as much from the civic forum networks as it did from any Whitehall or Northern Ireland office civil servants. That was my main point.

What then happens with the popular pressure, of course, depends on the social and political context. Because of the extreme polarisation of Northern Ireland society, the general consensus will be to avoid either strengthening or weakening the devolved administration once it’s set up, because if you weaken it, you displace SF. If you strengthen it you displace the DUP and the UUP. So actually, that’ll be where it’ll largely remain for quite a long time. Of course, that’s not the situation in Scotland. So if popular politics is driving the processes in the two countries, then it drives it in a different direction in Scotland from the way it drives it in England. The only way to imagine that the Scottish set up is not going to be strengthened and not going to move in the direction of greater powers in the parliament, the only way you can foretell that is to predict the collapse of the SNP and I can not see a circumstance in the next 10 or 20 years in which that might happen. Of course, it may well happen eventually, but immediately, it’s highly unlikely to happen and therefore there’s always going to be pressure on Scottish Labour and on the other Scottish parties to
strengthen the powers of the Scottish parliament. It’s the different contexts, but the same origins of political forces produced in the two different places.

RD Robson Davidson from Northern Ireland. One thing that struck me listening to colleagues from Wales and Scotland is really the degree to which having got devolution but really we haven’t seen a terribly radical review of any of the structures that existed here before, with due respect to the [DHE?] report. I just want to ask Bob… He’s quite right in saying that the political parties have disengaged really from policy on education for a considerable length of time. Certainly there are manifestos for the ’97 election were very scant on education. Does he think that whenever local power does devolve, that what we’ll get is an explosion of interest in education policy, where in effect, all the balls are thrown up in the air at the one time, or does he think it’ll take some considerable time to fill that vacuum and to consider thoughtfully and rationally what’s going to happen?

BO I suspect something Tony Worthington did in his brief stint is actually going to mean that the debate is going to get pretty hot and pretty heavy, pretty quick. And that is the major research programme that he initiated on the effects of selection. Tony was only there a year before he got caught up in New Labour’s first machinations and left. But he launched just over a hundred thousand pounds research project on the effects of selection and that is going to be dropped into, just as we get going, the devolved structures, just after Christmas, the report is due in the Jan/Feb period. That is going to take off, because people have already got wind that it’s coming. They’re lining themselves around it and I think there’s going to be fairly substantial pressure to do away with selection. The dilemma for those who want to do that is, they’re all just so used to looking at England rather than Scotland, the consensus view in Northern Ireland about comprehensives is, “Oh God, they’ve failed! Look at those awful places in England!” And there is very little attempt to look at the model that has developed here and I think one of the important things in that debate, is to get the Scottish evidence into it about how comprehensives are created. Because, I mean, at a straightforward social geography level, if you like comprehensive schools outside of the big conurbation have developed as single schools in small towns. We’ve got a lot of those in Northern Ireland, so the model could sit quite comfortably, but of course we’re bedevilled by, we would have to have, a Protestant comprehensive school and a Catholic comprehensive school and, God help us, an integrated comprehensive school!
NORTHERN IRELAND

PROFESSOR BOB OSBORNE, UNIVERSITY OF ULSTER

SLIDES
Education in NI

[Slide 1]

- Segregation (integrated sector accounts for c4% of pupils- emphasis on ‘transformation’ rather than new schools);
- Selection - approximately 65% of pupils do 11+ and approximately 40% attend grammar schools.

Education in NI

[Slide 2]

- Three areas:
  - Societal context;
  - Admin system and structures;
  - Social relations and processes of education.

Education in NI

[Slide 3]

- Problems of comparative study:
  - Level of generalisation vs unit detail eg NI selective;
  - Comparing different units of different size - NI population 1.6M - tiny!
  - Data and terminology - ‘voluntary’?

Education in NI

[Slide 4]

- Although selection exists, outputs much the same as in England - tendency in NI to believe system is ‘better’ but this based on small differences which disappear in international comparisons - (NIASC, 1997).
**Education in NI**

**[Slide 5]**

**EXTENT OF SEGREGATION**

- % PROTESTANTS IN CATHOLIC SECONDARY = 0.4%
- % CATHOLICS IN PROTESTANT SECONDARY = 3.5%
- % PROTESTANTS IN CATHOLIC GRAMMAR = 0.5%
- % CATHOLICS IN PROTESTANT GRAMMAR = 4.7%
- % PROTESTANTS IN INTEGRATED (SECONDARY) = 41.7%

**Education in NI**

**[Slide 6]**

- **SCHOOL STRUCTURE IS COMPLEX:**
  - ALL CATHOLIC PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS ARE KNOWN AS MAINTAINED SCHOOLS;
  - ALL PROTESTANT PRIMARY, SECONDARY AND A SMALL NO. OF GRAMMARS ARE CONTROLLED SCHOOLS (‘STATE’ BUT……).

**Education in NI**

**[Slide 7]**

- ALL CATHOLIC AND MOST PROTESTANT GRAMMAR SCHOOLS ARE VOLUNTARY GRAMMAR SCHOOLS;
- INTEGRATED SCHOOLS CONSIST OF TWO TYPES - GMIS AND CONTROLLED INTEGRATED.

**Education in NI**

**[Slide 8]**

- **RESULT OF SELECTION, SINGLE-SEX AND SEGREGATION IS A MULTIPLICITY OF SCHOOLS - SOME VERY SMALL EG**
  - 53 (32%) OF SECONDARY SCHOOLS HAVE <400 PUPILS; 30 (18%) HAVE >800 PUPILS. MANY NO PROVISION 16+. EVEN 17% GRAMMAR <600.
Education in NI

POLICY MAKING:

TWO KEY PERIODS 1921 - 1972; 1972 - ?

- PERIOD UP TO 1972 DEVOLVED GOVERNMENT EMERGENCE OF ‘PARITY PRINCIPLE’ STARTED AS ‘THE SAME AS’ ESPECIALLY IN TERMS OF CREATION OF THE WELFARE STATE - NHS, ‘44 BUTLER EDUCATION ACT IN ‘47 IN NI.

Education in NI

1972+ PARITY BECAME MORE SOPHISTICATED: OF INPUT; OF OUTPUT AND OUTCOME. USED TO GREAT EFFECT IN 1980s TO GENERATE HUGE EXPANSION OF PUBLIC SECTOR HOUSING;

ALONGSIDE PARITY, GENERAL APPROACH TO POLICY MAKING HAS RECOGNISED 4 BROAD APPROACHES.

Education in NI

- ADOPTION: POLICY ADOPTED AND MINOR CHANGES FOR LOCAL CIRCUMSTANCES;
- ADAPTION: TAKE BASIC POLICY IDEA BUT PUT IT INTO NI VERSION;
- INITIATION: NEW POLICY JUST FOR NI;
- INERTIA: SIT ON HANDS!

Education in NI

- ADOPTION: GCE FOR PUBLIC CERTIFICATION;
- ADAPTION: 1988 EDUCATION ACT AND VOTING FOR INTEGRATED SCHOOLS RATHER THAN GM;
- INITIATION: EMU/CROSS COMMUNITY CONTACT;
- INERTIA: COMPREHENSIVES IN ‘60s.
Education in NI

[Slide 13]

• Devolved government unique to NI - mainly as a means to end ‘troubles’ rather than ‘better government’;
• Executive: UU; SDLP; SF; DUP;
• Portfolios by D’Hondt.

Education in NI

[Slide 14]

• Complex voting in Assembly - parties designated as Unionist, Nationalist, Other;
• Committees powerful - can initiate legislation - chairs by D’Hondt;
• New departmental structure to facilitate executive - 10.

Education in NI

[Slide 15]

• Education up to 16;
• Further and higher + training (previously DED);
• Great potential but:
  • Civil Service more used to shadowing England rather than initiation - culture change.

Education in NI

[Slide 16]

• Relatively small civil service at upper middle and senior ranks;
• Political parties very little thinking on policy matters;
• Political control between SF/DUP no collaboration?
Education in NI

[Slide 17]

- 6 NEW X-BORDER IMPLEMENTATION BODIES - NONE YET IN EDUCATION BUT COULD BE;
- SPECIFIED AREA FOR ‘COLLABORATION’ INCLUDES EDUCATION;
- NORTH/SOUTH MINISTERIAL COUNCIL.

Education in NI

[Slide 18]

- BRITISH-IRISH COUNCIL;
- INTERGOVERNMENTAL CONFERENCE (PARLT, UK, IRISH, SCOTTISH, WELSH ASSEMBLY, NI ASSEMBLY).

Education in NI

[Slide 19]

- NEW STRUCTURES HAVE BOTH CONSTRAINTS BUT ALSO OPPORTUNITIES FOR INNOVATION AND POLICY LEARNING IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING;
- NI WILL BE PULLED BOTH SOUTH AND EAST AND THE TENSIONS OF THOSE FORCES REFLECTED IN EXECUTIVE.

Education in NI

[Slide 20]

- LIKELY THAT COALITION’S PROGRAMME WILL EMPHASISE ‘ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, GREATER PROSPERITY FOR ALL’. EDUCATION AND TRAINING WILL LIKELY BE AT THE HEART OF THIS SCOPE FOR POLICY LEARNING.
SESSION 3

GENERAL DISCUSSION
I would like, this afternoon, to concentrate on two things:

- First, I want to comment on the ‘exam’ question – convergence or divergence? Of course, my comments will be anecdotal and intuitive, because I cannot rely on the massively authoritative (or perhaps just massive!) data sets which the research team was able to construct;

- Next, I would like to reflect on what the lessons of the research are for English education. England, as the largest constituent nation in the United Kingdom, is the most diverse – but its diversity is not straightforward (like the contrast in Scotland between the Central Belt and the rest, Highlands and Islands and Borders; or the religious divisions in Northern Ireland). And its diversity is buried under centuries of centralisation and imperialism. So drawing simple lessons will be difficult.

**CONVERGENCE OR DIVERGENCE?**

First, then, convergence or divergence? I want to try to answer that question on two levels – first in terms of the political evolution of the UK; and second, with reference to the research findings.

The ‘message’ from politics, of course, seems to be that the ‘home international’ education systems are likely to diverge. No question. The whole point of devolution – presumably - is that, in the past, natural differences have been suppressed, but now can be freely expressed (although I am not sure that this message has got through to the New Labour Government in its Millbank fortress – if the farce over the selection of Labour’s candidate for mayor of London is any guide). But I think we should consider two possibilities:

- The first is directly linked to what I have just said about New Labour. To what extent is devolution a super-structural rather than a structural phenomenon? Clearly the contingencies of politics – the threat posed by the SNP to Labour’s dominance in Scotland – were important. Certainly it would be difficult to explain devolution in terms of pressure for policy and administrative adjustments. So maybe our assumption that divergence follows devolution like night follows day is incorrect – or, at any rate, premature?

- The second possibility is that it is in pre-devolutionary environments rather than in devolved arenas that divergence is emphasised. Not only do policy and administrative structures get caught up (and ‘used’) in the arguments between supporters and opponents of devolution; they also may become proxies which relieve the frustrations of politics. Put simply, there may be less need to emphasise ‘difference’ when the goal of devolution has been attained.
Now that devolved governments have been established in Scotland and Wales (and will soon be established in Northern Ireland) the inexorable process of globalisation will reassert themselves. Of course, they have never gone away. Set against the global reach of multinational companies, the round-the-globe hurry of late capitalism, the imperialism of mass culture/mass consumption, the UK-wide powers of the Treasury of the Foreign Office are puny.

I believe there may be ‘messages’ in the research which may support this revisionist interpretation (an interpretation which I am not sure that, as a historian, I accept, but certainly is worth considering):

- Again and again the similarities between the four UK systems are emphasised. For example, the ‘Catholic effect’ appears to be the same in the context of education in Scotland, Wales and England, despite differences between the detailed arrangements for Catholic schools and between the political impact of Catholicism in our three countries.

- The differences highlighted by the research – for example, the counter-intuitive finding that social class has a greater influence over educational achievement in Scotland than in England – are recognised by the researchers to be volatile. Such oscillations in the data may suggest, first of course, difficulties with the data itself, but also that these differences reflect short-lived trends of limited significance.

- Some of the differences seem to be essentially timing differences; more young people in Scotland stay on at school initially but participation falls off more sharply.

It is perhaps a risky business to construct elaborate cultural explanations on such slight, and maybe contingent, administrative differences – however seductive appeals to the ‘Democratic Intellect’ may be. Of course, we can explain the different constitution, and perceptions, of further education colleges in Scotland and England in terms of ‘deep’ cultural differences – a greater attachment to the ideal of the comprehensive school north of the Border (perhaps as a kind of dim ‘folk’ memory of the parish/school); or to a peculiarly Scottish notion of liberal education. But it is just as possible to explain the differences between English-style and Scots-style FE in much more down-to-earth terms that are not pregnant of deep cultural meanings. Much the same can be said of the greater involvement that Scottish FE colleges have in higher education. No doubt the particular academic culture of Scottish universities have played a part in this – but there are also big differences between the scale of FE-in-HE in the English regions where no such cultural explanations are available.

So my guess is the jury is out on the issue of convergence or divergence. Of course, devolved governments in Scotland and Wales means that, in policy and administrative terms, there is no longer an instinctive default to UK, ie English, models. The DfEE is no longer the ‘lead’ UK ministry. But there is another factor which comes through the research strongly – and that is the theme of unification. Across all the ‘home international’ education systems that there is a trend not only to soften (and eliminate?) past distinctions – for example, between academic and vocational education, and also to ‘join up’ policy in once-separate arenas (and I am using ‘joined-up’ not in the shallow PR sense).
The fact that we have a Scottish Office Industry and Education Department and a Department for Education and Employment is surely significant; the links between education and training, and labour markets and community development is now far more clearly articulated – in a bureaucratic sense – than ever before. This process of unification is also at work between different sectors of education. Scotland, for example, has the most unified youth training system, but similar trends are visible in 14-19 education in all four countries. I would also argue that the abandonment of the binary system in higher education, although triggered by tension within the English system, is another example of this process of unification. As a result I think it is difficult to predict how the balance will eventually be struck between divergence and unification, two processes that are not entirely inconsistent but surely in tension.

LESSONS FOR ENGLAND

Let me now turn, more briefly, to the lessons of this research for the English education system. I would emphasise two points: the first is that exploration of the (comparatively minor) differences between the four UK education systems is potentially important in both theoretical and policy terms. In theoretical terms because it may give us a better understanding of the articulation between ‘internal’ and ‘external’ dynamics of development in education systems (why have small but nevertheless differences persisted, in the case of Wales, almost half a millennium after its incorporation into England and, in the case of Scotland, three centuries after the Union? These differences are really ‘Unionist’ phenomena); and in policy terms because these small differences illuminate policy choices in ways that big differences cannot (French system, for example, is so different from the English system that comparative analysis is not really relevant to analysis of policy options within the latter, but by examining the smaller differences between Scottish and English systems we can learn a lot about policy development in either).

Having made this general point, I have been trying to think of some specific examples where this process of cross-illumination can be observed. In higher education, the sector with which I am most familiar (but is least differentiated between the four UK systems and so may be atypical), I can think of one example. The Scottish Higher Education Funding Council chose to use the results of the Research Assessment Exercise in a more selective way than the Higher Education Funding Council for England (perhaps because of the former polytechnics had more political clout than the former Central Institutions). But the Scottish example has given HEFCE confidence to be more selective itself in distributing the R component of its grant.

Two things, it seems to me, happened in this case. First, SHEFC’s policy encouraged HEFCE to re-examine its approach to research selectivity. The two systems were too close for one to ignore what was happening in the other. After all, they were using the same data, the results of the UK-wide RAE which they had jointly organised. This would never have happened if, for example, Sweden had changed the way it funded research in universities. Second, paradoxically perhaps, the existence of a separate system stimulated a convergence of policy. Of course, there have always been suggestions that new policies were trialed by the UK Government in peripheral parts of the UK – the best, and most
paranoid example, was militarised policing in Northern Ireland (although that has been thrown into reverse by the Patten report).

But it can be argued policy borrowings may actually increase within a devolved UK. In the high noon of unionism, the English-dominated UK State was not especially interested in Scottish or Welsh policy deviations; they were regarded as of local, and probably historical, significance only. Now that is changing. The process of devolution has emphasised the multi-national character of the UK State – which, in turn, has raised the profile of non-English policies and practices, and reduced the reluctance to take these policies and practices more seriously.

The second lesson for England is that devolution in Scotland and Wales has produced instability and imbalance within the wider framework of the UK – on the one hand there are now Scottish and Welsh executives and corresponding Parliament and Assembly (even if there is still some doubt about the true independence of the latter); on the other hand you have England, in effect a slightly shrunken version of the UK State. The political will to proceed to further devolution within England is clearly lacking for the present – the proposal to establish US-style mayors is a PR diversion, and there is an unwillingness to allow Regional Development Agencies to become anything more than bureaucratic co-ordinating (and patronage) agencies.

In a powerful sense unitary government remains the UK norm (because of the domination of England) and devolved government in Scotland and Wales the exception. The true impact of devolution will not be felt until that is changed. So the main lesson for England is simply the example of Scotland and Wales, the growing recognition (hopefully) of the attractions of devolution in terms of policy innovation and political responsiveness. Then the devolution revolution south of the Border cannot be long delayed – with immeasurable political consequences (not only for England, but also for Scotland and Wales if I am right to argue that the potential of devolution will continue to be frustrated so long as a shrunken UK State continues to exist); but also with important consequences for policy in all areas – including, of course, education.

It is worth remembering that at a time when Scotland and Wales have been moving towards devolution, England has been moving in the opposite direction – towards greater centralisation (the erosion of the power of local education authorities is the best example). Many of the most distinctive educational policies of the past decade have been products of this process of centralisation. Any reversal of this process might lead to greater differentiation within England – which, in turn, might stimulate greater divergence between ‘home international’ education systems. But I am moving far beyond my brief into the areas of speculation. I have also run over my time. So I will stop. Thank you for inviting me to take part in this seminar. And, once again, let me congratulate the research team on the quality and significance of their work.
So much has been said and I find these discussions so fascinating. I’ve had to rewrite my notes about four or five times I’m not sure I can read what I was going to say. I find the discussion and the papers fascinating. From outside it looks a single system until one starts looking at the detail. I think what the papers have done is to show that indeed there are quite significant differences, both in the underlying philosophies and cultures of the systems, which I think maybe we didn’t pay enough attention to. Also, that these will continue and perhaps now find expression in ways that they couldn’t previously. I want to come back to that.

I’m not totally taken by this view that you can learn most from those who are closest to you. Brown’s view of comparative sociology was that one of the reasons you did it was to understand your own system because it was all taken for granted.

In many respects, the UK is peculiar with its different systems, so I think one wants to be very careful about that. And in terms of making choices in the Scottish case, it may be important not to always compare with others within the UK because they have already taken certain strategic choices which other European countries haven’t taken, or they have taken very different strategic choices. I think that needs to be clear. I discuss two of them, first, the policy on post 16 to 19 education. The view in most north west European countries is that that’s full time up to 18. Perhaps there are differences between Germany and others when one looks at France or The Netherlands or Scandinavian countries. It’s quite a different choice and that choice was taken quite deliberately in most cases, and that has significant effects.

I think the other strength in the UK, which was not paid attention to if I look at the other choices that have been built historically, is the strength of Further Education and continuing education within the UK; the extraordinary strength of it, when you compare it to others. It’s post-school: the ability to come back, the ability for second chances, the ability for part time education, education, which isn’t there in other systems. It’s just not there. The strength in the UK in that sense is very important looking at it all the time. I just gave two examples.

The other thing which I wanted to pursue is the difference between a region and a state. I want to come back to this. What in reality are the degrees of freedom? And if Scottish education is constrained by the Treasury, if educational and training policy is constrained also by the UK Government in other respects, how many degrees of freedom has it left if it wanted to go radically in another direction? I think that’s a crucial question that needs to be answered quite clearly on this.

I think the second issue is tied to it, and it is the extent to which the State mediates and expresses, sometimes strongly, sometimes well, the interests of the front interest groups and that that is done at a central State level. And I could give you an example. To what extent are Scottish industrialists and Scottish employers mediated through the British institutional
arrangements to Westminster, but to what extent would they mediate their interests through Scottish institutions? Because that connection between economic interests or the way within which the States relates to how the economy develops, the relationship between the education system and the economy in a strategic sense over a long period of time, depends on how that is mediated and on which level it is mediated. If I could just give an example.

In the Irish case certain cultural decisions were taken 20 years ago but they depended on that particular kind of relationship between economic interest groups mediated at a neo-corporatist level, at a national level in which there is agreements as to what was needed, what funding was needed and how it was to be done. It was very specific if in a sense, the state cannot mobilise that kind of support, which was needed both at a school level, at a school or institutional level, institutional provision level, but also at an economic level. It would be difficult to change.

What one finds certainly in our case is that the pace of economic change, the pace of technical and economic change, is so fast that one has to mediate that. One wants to, in a sense, produce output from the educational system. I see it purely in that way. I’m looking purely in that sense of the relationship between the education and training system and a rapidly changing economic, technical and occupational change occurring. You’re trying to prepare a system which has long life. It takes quite a long time to get that right. I think in many respects we’ve been just lucky that that occurred at this time in the past 10 years. But there was a lot underlying it which might not have paid off; as it happened, it did. Take the unification of post-16 education. It is very interesting how that is developing in Scotland and how the Higher Still planning is going on. But to what extent will that operate in the same way? Give the same output in a sense, as if you have taken an alternative pathway as in the French or Dutch which is different, or the Irish which is different again. Different kinds of solutions are taken there. I think the other issue, which is worth drawing attention to, is the role in our place where we have insisted on a bi-polar third level system, for very particular economic reasons, for a number of institutional economic reasons which also apply to a lot of other European countries. I think Austria has serious problems with universities. Because they are autonomous, they won’t change and they are guaranteed in the Constitution and you cannot almost effect because everybody who gets an …has a right to go through, into it, and that they can stay there for 7 or 10 years although they still have to be supported, but they cannot get the universities to change. They have major problems with the universities in getting them to change over towards a system of education and a professionalised education which was appropriate to the kind of economy and economic development that was occurring. Because of their institutional strength. I think that’s one reason. The second one is really the nature of the way the economy developed that it didn’t need 40% of people going on to university and all the estimates will say 20% is sufficient and we need the intermediate skills level and higher skills level. We need rather different kinds of educational system. These are strategic differences that are found. The third one that did strike me is attitudes and expectations… I think what the research is showing is that there isn’t much difference among the UK systems. But that is not much difference in a situation where the institutional arrangements or the opportunity structures are not that much different from each other. But if you were to change the opportunity structures, then I think attitudes will change, particularly in the context within which such change more closely related the underlying philosophies and the underlying cultural assumptions that may be different from one country
to another. Because certainly in our case, as the system changed expectations changed very rapidly. After some time, where there was an attempt to change back to differentiated second level education, it just would not be allowed by parents. The pressures become too strong.

Thank you very much for having us. I have certainly learned an awful lot in looking at it. I think what we’ve learned from looking at the Scottish system, and we’ve been looking at it for quite a long time, is really the significance of the organisation of the educational post-16 system and the way in which the educational and training system is unified. Or is potentially unified: we won’t see the effects for quite a while. I think that is really an extraordinary change because it’s one which we certainly don’t have and it’s one which we suffer from significantly for those who do not want to go on to third level, and particularly those who fail in the second level system. In a sense there isn’t a third level post-15 or post-16 system.

I see the time, I’ll leave it at that. Thank you very much for having me.
LINDA CROXFORD

Linda Croxford is a senior research fellow at the Centre for Educational Sociology. She has worked at CES since 1983 with research interests in social inequalities in curriculum, attainment and experiences of school. Her current research includes evaluation of the Early Intervention Programme in Scottish primary schools, the Scottish School Leavers’ Surveys Special Studies, gender and pupil performance, target-setting, and methods for monitoring pupils’ progress.

DAMIAN HANNAN

Damian Hannan retired early in 2000 as Head of the Sociology and Social Policy section at the Economic and Social Research Institute, Dublin, where he held a Research Professorship. He was previously Professor of Sociology in University College, Cork. His work has covered a wide range of issues including migration, family and kinship patterns, education and training and the labour market. He is a member of the Royal Irish Academy and he has served on a wide range of policy and advisory committees.

PETER GROOTINGS

Peter Grootings is Deputy Head of the South East Europe Department at the European Training Foundation, Turin. He is a former staff member of CEDEFOP and from 1993 to 2000 worked as an independent Vocational Education and Training policy adviser to most of the Central and East European countries, including the Russian Federation. He is a regular collaborator with UN organisations and the OECD. He was recently teamleader of the Phare Vocational Education assistance programme to Slovenia.

BOB OSBORNE

Bob Osborne has a Chair in Applied Policy Studies in the School of Public Policy, Economics and Law, University of Ulster. He is also Co-Director of the Centre for Research on Higher Education which is a joint Centre of the University of Ulster and Queen’s University, Belfast. Since August 1999 he has been a member of the Equality Commission, foreshadowed in the Belfast Agreement and created through the 1998 Northern Ireland Act. (It groups the Equal Opportunities Commission, Fair Employment Commission, Commission for Racial Equality and the Disability Council.) Bob Osborne’s most recent publications include Higher Education in Ireland: North and South.
LINDSAY PATERSO

Lindsay Paterson is Professor of Educational Policy in the Faculty of Education, University of Edinburgh. He has written on many aspects of the sociology of education – in particular on the effects of social disadvantage and on the expansion of higher education – and he has written widely on Scottish politics and culture. His publications include *Education, Democracy and the Scottish Parliament* (Scottish Local Government Information Unit, 1997); *A Diverse Assembly: The Debate on a Scottish Parliament* (Edinburgh University Press, 1998); and *The Autonomy of Modern Scotland* (Edinburgh University Press, 1994).

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David Raffe is Professor of Sociology of Education and Director of the Centre for Educational Sociology. He has worked at the CES since 1975, with research interests including post-compulsory education, vocational education and training and the transition from school to work. He has worked on a number of studies for the European Commission and the OECD. His current research includes a comparative analysis of transitions from education to work in Europe and a three-year study of the introduction of Higher Still.

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Gareth Rees is Deputy Director of the Cardiff University School of Social Sciences, where he is Professor of Education Policy. His research interests include: patterns of participation in lifelong learning; vocational education/training and regional economic development; and the changing governance of education policy. He is currently working on an ESRC-funded research project on the impacts of the establishment of the National Assembly for Wales on the governance of economic development (with Kevin Morgan). He is also co-ordinating a project on ‘learning regions’ for the OECD.

PETER SCOTT

Peter Scott is Vice-Chancellor of Kingston University. He was formerly Professor of Education and Director of the Centre for Policy Studies in Education, University of Leeds. Prior to his time in Leeds, he was Editor of *The Times Higher Education Supplement* 1976-1992, and previously a leader writer on *The Times*. He was originally an historian, and was educated at Oxford University (Merton College) and the University of California at Berkeley (Graduate School of Public Policy). He holds honorary doctorates from the University of Bath and the CNAA, is Honorary Fellow of UMIST, Fellow of the former SRHE, and Member of the Academia Europaea.
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<tr>
<td>Ruth Jonathan</td>
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<td>Panos Koutouroussis</td>
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<td>Eleni Kouvarnta</td>
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<td>Alastair Lavery</td>
<td>Education Policy Adviser</td>
<td>Royal Society for the Protection of Birds Scotland</td>
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