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the "james report" in retrospect

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The last full report on the training of teachers before the one now under discussion was the McNair Report, written in 1944. That report was unusual in that it produced on some important issues, not a minority report, but two reports, the Committee being exactly divided, and the pattern for teacher training which was accepted by the then Government was not the one which the Chairman himself had recommended. Since the time of the McNair report a number of factors have combined to meet a growing demand for a re-examination of the methods and organisation of teacher training. Among those factors have been the raising of the school-leaving age to 15 almost immediately after the war, and the prospect of a further raising in 1972, the growth in size of the colleges, the many developments in educational methods and attitudes, and the acceptance of the principle of compulsory training for all teachers. A less precise, but not less powerful, change in the educational climate arose from a more egalitarian approach to education, which leads to a blurring of the earlier rigid distinction between 'Elementary' and 'Secondary' teachers, and to the growth of the various kinds of school organisation including under the general term 'Comprehensive'.

In the final year of the last government there were two responses to the demand for a re-assessment of teacher training. A Select Committee of the House of Commons considered it as a subject for examination, and received a large volume of written submissions from interested parties, and took a great deal of verbal evidence. Parliament was dissolved before the Committee could make recommendations. Secondly, in 1970, the then Secretary of State, Mr. Short, instructed all Area Training Organisations to conduct a survey in their particular area, and outline plans for development which were published during 1971. In 1970 the new Secretary of State, Mrs. Thatcher, appointed a Committee with the following terms of reference:—

'In the light of the review currently being undertaken by the Area Training Organisations, and of the evidence published by the Select Committee on Education and Science, to enquire into the present arrangements for the education, training and probation of teachers in England and Wales and in particular to examine:

(i) what should be the content and organisation of courses to be provided;

(ii) whether a larger proportion of intending teachers should be educated with students who have not chosen their careers or chosen other careers;

(iii) what, in the context of (i) and (ii) above, should be the role of the maintained and voluntary colleges of education, the polytechnics and other further institutions maintained by local education authorities, and the universities

and to make recommendations.'

The Committee that was appointed was unusual in three ways. It was small in number (seven members with one assessor); all but two of its members were seconded from their posts to give full-time service; finally, it was made clear that the Committee should report as quickly as possible, and ideally in a year. In fact the Committee began its work in January 1971, its Report was in the hands of the Secretary of State in December, and the Report was published on January 25th, 1972. The Report was unanimous, although two members added a 'Note of Extension'.
There are several initial difficulties in any examination of the education and training of teachers, and it is necessary that these should be clear to anyone who tries to understand the Report. The first is that no profession embraces a greater variety of intellectual abilities and other qualities. It is right that this should be so, for the task of 'teaching' the elements of literacy to a class of

five-year-olds is very different from, say, teaching the mathematical sixth of a highly selective grammar school, or discussing the kind of problems raised by sixteen-year-olds in a history lesson in an urban comprehensive. The tasks of the 'teacher 'are various: so are the qualities he, or she, requires. It is a realisation of this fact that makes it very difficult to translate such demands as those for an 'all-graduate' profession into realistic terms. Secondly, it is idle to deny that there is still a widespread scepticism about the necessity, or even the value of training. The plain fact is that some of the most distinguished practitioners of the art of teaching have never received any formal training, and there is certainly no other profession where it is possible to be a respected and successful professor of a subject which one has never either formally studied or practised oneself, at any rate at the level for which he is preparing his students. It may well be wrong that this should be the case; that it is so cannot be questioned. It is also somewhat embarrassing that those who teach in universities, a number of whom are concerned with the training of teachers, have not only received no training themselves, but would strongly resist any suggestion that university teachers should be trained. Thirdly, there is considerable doubt in the minds of many people as to what is meant by the study of 'education', and even, indeed, whether such a study exists at all. A certain colour is given to this attitude by the fact that most of the significant advances in the field that we broadly label as education have been made by workers who are in fact psychologists, sociologists, philosophers, historians or economists.

Besides pointing out these initial difficulties in devising an appropriate education and training for 'teachers', two other points should be made concerning the Report, since they concern matters which have been widely misunderstood. The first is that the Report contained no statistics. The reason for this omission is that a number of statistics had appeared elsewhere in published papers. But the principal reason was that figures, e.g. for numbers of teachers and for size of college populations depend on decisions which are either unpredictable or are essentially political. Thus if the recommendations of the Report are accepted concerning the introduction of a Diploma of Higher Education not restricted to intending teachers, it is impossible to say how many students entering higher education will wish to choose such a course. Similarly it is essentially a decision for government to take as to what the staffing ratio should be for existing schools, or how far nursery schools should be developed, and these are two among a number of decisions which determine the size and number of colleges of education in the future.

Secondly, the complaint has been made that the Committee did not publish the evidence it had received. Such a criticism is entirely misconceived. Every representative body published its evidence, and a great volume of other evidence, both from corporate bodies and from individuals, was available to any interested person. Further, the evidence given to the Parliamentary Select Committee a short time before, both written and oral, had been published. Oral evidence given to the Committee was confidential but this did not mean that the greater part of the evidence to the Committee was not publicly available.

Main Considerations in the James Report

Let us now turn to the Report itself. It may be assumed that anyone reading these pages will be broadly familiar with its proposals. It is the major task of this essay to emphasise those points which the authors regard as of major importance. The first of these is, of course, the so-called Third Cycle, that is to say in-service training in all its forms. It is the firm recommendation of the Report that this should be expanded in the fullest possible way. The most novel proposal is that all teachers should have an actual entitlement to one term free of teaching every seven years, to pursue a suitable course of study or training. It cannot be too clearly emphasised, however, that this is in no way a substitute for the various kinds of short course and part-time study that go on at present. Indeed, we would wish to see the provision of these increased and diversified. The reasons for this emphasis on in-service training are obvious enough. They include the rapid expansion of knowledge both in particular

subjects and in the methodology of education itself. There is the need to prepare teachers for a wide variety of particular tasks in a rapidly changing social and educational environment, whether it be the teaching of the deprived or the handicapped, or the assumption of duties of the head of a department, or a school. There is the more nebulous but no less important effect which a term away from the classroom can have on the morale and vitality of the individual teacher. The importance of such periods away from the actual job in which new skills may be acquired, old methods re-evaluated, and fresh ideas explored is not, of course, confined to teachers, and it is probable that the provision of such post-experience courses may well become a major task for higher education in the years ahead. The wide recognition of this kind of argument has led to the third cycle recommendations being the most generally welcomed parts of the Report. There has, of course, been no lack of voices to point out difficulties, e.g. in securing replacements for absent staff, or meeting what has sometimes been, in my view, misguidedly represented as an astronomical cost. But against these must be put the great body of educational opinion (including, for example, that of Sir William Alexander, who might be thought to be aware as anyone of financial implications) which has regarded the Third Cycle recommendations as not only acceptable but necessary.

The second point which those who wrote the Report would regard as of major significance concerns the Second Cycle, i.e. the professional training of the teacher. Here the most significant recommendation is that which seeks to make a reality of the 'probationary year', that is the teacher's first year in a school, after his period of personal education followed by one year of specifically professional education and training, whether in a college or university. Here the Committee considered it vital that on one day a week the new teacher should go to a 'professional centre', which might be in a college, a university department, a polytechnic or in a free-standing institution, for seminars, discussions and further study of particular problems in the light of actual experience. Linked with this central conception is the creation of professional tutors in every school, responsible both for the new recruit and for disseminating information about in-service training. Such an innovation in the opinion of the Committee would not only give the transition from the status of a newly qualified aspirant to that of a full professional more meaning. It would, moreover, increasingly involve actual teachers more closely in the training of their successors, an ideal to which much lip-service has been given.

The third element of major importance in the Report is related to the First Cycle, the stage which is concerned with the personal and general education of the student. This may be a conventional degree course at a university. It may, in the Committee's view, be his or her first two years at a college of education, a polytechnic, or elsewhere, and the proposal is that a new two-year qualification, the Diploma of Higher Education, should be created for those who successfully complete these two years of education which shall contain elements of the general and the specialised, by means of a variety of options. For some, such a qualification would be terminal, i.e. possessing it they would go straight into employment. For others it would be for teachers, the preliminary to specialised professional training. For a third stream, who during their work for it had discovered academic inclinations and potentialities they had not hitherto known, or been uncertain that they possessed, it could lead on to further work for a degree either in the same institution or some other. One of the most important questions is as to who would validate this Diploma. The Report states its hope that the C.N.A.A. would be prepared to do so, although it could clearly not commit that body. Other alternatives would be for some universities to do so, or for a new body to be set up to perform this function. It should be clear from reading the Report that validation by the C.N.A.A. was the method favoured by the Committee. Three points must be made about this proposed Diploma. The first is that in proposing it the Committee may be thought to have trespassed outside the terms of its reference, in the sense that it did not envisage that the Diploma course would be limited to Colleges of Education, and thus what is actually a new kind

of higher education is proposed, which may well be more suitable for some people than the conventional three-year degree. Secondly, it is hoped that the Diploma would attract many other students than those who had definitely decided to teach, and hence the population of many colleges would acquire that diversification which many witnesses urged upon the Committee. Thirdly, the creation of the Diploma ensures for the colleges a future, which a possible contraction in the number of teachers that will be required from them would make at best precarious.

A fourth line of thought in the Report, to which probably nearly all members of the Committee would not ascribe the same importance as to the three which have so far been described, concerns matters of organisation. At present colleges are attached, as readers will know, to an Area Training Organisation, centred on a university, with a Director who is a member of the university staff. It is the parent university which recommends the acceptance of the Certificates to the Secretary of State, and awards the four-year qualification of B.Ed. to the minority of students who take it, the curriculum of this course also being determined by the university. In the view of the majority of the Committee (and though the Report as a whole was unanimous, this was a point on which two members had reservations) the time has now come, not to break the association of the colleges with universities, but to modify that relationship. Instead of being under the general tutelage of a university body in the sense that some aspects of their work require its approval, it was felt that an arrangement was now possible in which area councils could be set up embracing all the interested parties (i.e. colleges, universities, polytechnics, schools and L.E.A.'s) whose composition would give the colleges that greater independence which their present stage of development justified.

Reactions to the James Report

It would not be profitable, if indeed it were possible, in a paper of this length to discuss the other recommendations of the Report. It may be of interest to describe very briefly some of the reactions to it. These reactions, some of which were so vehement as to justify the word violent, occurred well before the Report was published, or, indeed, written. These reactions were based upon a series of 'leaks' of varying accuracy, which in turn arose from the Committee's method of hearing evidence. In order that discussion with various groups of witnesses could be as profitable as possible the Committee spoke quite frankly to them concerning the ways in which its collective mind was moving, and although such discussions were described as confidential, it would have been naive to assume that the word would have much meaning for some of those to whom it was used. In fact, the exercise on balance probably did good, in the sense that there was a discussion going on parallel to the Committee's own deliberations about possible recommendations.

Since the Report actually appeared, reactions have been fairly predictable. The Press has been, on the whole, extremely favourable. The N.U.T., like the N.U.S., has been strongly against the Report, while other teachers' associations have welcomed it. The A.C.T.D.E., while certainly not accepting the Report in its entirety, has been constructive in its criticisms, and clearly prepared to consider it as a starting point for further discussion and action. There are three points against which the strongest criticism has been levelled. First, the alleged destruction of the links between colleges and universities through ATO's has stimulated a remarkable, if somewhat novel dedication to the education of all teachers on the part of the universities. Secondly, the suggestion that the probationary year should be made a reality by calling a teacher during that year a 'licensed' teacher and keeping him under supervision has been criticised by the N.U.T. not only on the grounds of practical difficulties, but less comprehensibly, if still more vehemently, because it would be introducing 'unqualified' teachers into the schools. The idea that a teacher after having successfully completed his probationary year should receive the degree of B.A. (Ed.) has met with little support although it was intended to meet the demand for an all-graduate profession. Apparently the only interpretation of this phrase acceptable, at any rate to the N.U.T., is that all teachers shall possess a university degree as at present understood. Much controversy

has centred on the replacement of the present concurrent course by a consecutive one, in spite of the fact that the 'committed' teacher by choosing appropriate subjects for his or her Diploma course can have all the virtues of concurrence within a framework which, by making diversification possible, ensures a future for the college which a number of them would not otherwise possess. A great deal of criticism has been directed to the suggestion that a minimum period of four weeks should be devoted to 'school practice' during the first year of the second cycle. Most critics have maintained that this period is much too short. They have tended to overlook the word 'minimum' and the recognition that the actual period should be adjusted to the needs of individuals. The minimum period suggested was admittedly short to reinforce the hope that was expressed that other techniques could be used to inculcate some of the skills of the classroom more effectively and economically, in terms of time, than is often at present the case. Nevertheless, it was probably a mistake to include a sentence that proved to be so easily open to misinterpretation. The Diploma of Higher Education has been criticised both on the grounds that no one would want to take it, and also that so many would take it that it would make possible 'higher education on the cheap'.

It has been a cause of great encouragement to the authors of the Report that the CNAA has adopted a very positive attitude to the spirit of its proposals. It was no less encouraging that some institutions, e.g. the North East London Polytechnic, and some Colleges of Education, were quick to realise the possibilities of the Report for their work, and are already well-advanced in devising courses based upon it, whether they be directed to the possible Diploma in Higher Education, or to programmes of in-service training. One thing can, at any rate, be claimed for the Report: it has led to a prolonged discussion of a hitherto somewhat neglected area of education that cannot but in the long run be healthy.

Since the preceding pages were written the Government has published its White Paper, 'Education: a Framework for Expansion'. This, of course, covers a much wider field than the Report we have been discussing, and, indeed, puts forward proposals dealing with every aspect of education. It does, however, contain a full account of the Government's reactions to the proposals of the Report, and the action which it intends to take upon them. It is naturally pleasing to the authors of the Report that so many of their recommendations, and all of the most important, have been accepted. Those that have proved unacceptable include the creation of the four-year B.A.(Ed), and in place of this a Degree of B.Ed. at the end of three years is proposed.

The changes in the A.T.O. structures are not as radical as those proposed in the Report. The term of in-service training every seven years will not immediately be written into conditions of employment, and there are other minor matters where the recommendations of the Report have not been accepted in full. Nevertheless, in all essential ways it appears that the Report will provide the basis on which teachers will in the future be educated and trained. It remains now for those concerned to work out the precise implications of the proposals for individual institutions and authorities. Four conditions are necessary for success. The first is clearly that the means, e.g. for Third Cycle work are provided. Secondly, that the colleges seize with imagination what can be a new independence to experiment with a new kind of higher education. Third, that universities and polytechnics are prepared to enter into a new kind of **partnership** in teacher education, for example by accepting heavy responsibilities for Third Cycle work, and lastly, that a sufficient number of teachers react favourably to the new responsibilities put upon them, and realise that this is a plan which, whatever its faults, aims to raise the status of their profession by preparing people better to enter it, by giving them more control over it, and by giving them greater opportunities to develop both as teachers and as people during their careers.