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Oddi wrth Ysgrifennydd Gwladol Cymru

The Rt Hon Nicholas Edwards MP

From The Secretary of State for Wales

Prime Minister 2

The press notice is 30 May 1986
much, much better than

the English version. Invite Mr Baker
also to consider the possibilities mentioned
at X below, in Mr Edwards' letter?

*Yes please Mr
John Willie*

You will know from Keith Joseph's letter of 19 May of the practice of publishing HMI Inspectorate Reports on the effects of local authority expenditure policies on education. A similar report is produced by the HMI Inspectorate in Wales and it has been our practice in recent years to publish it. 30/5.

I enclose for your information a copy of the 1984-85 Report which we propose to publish on Thursday 5 June, and the accompanying press notice. The Report will be made available generally and copies will be sent to the news media, all Welsh MPs, local authorities, teacher organisations and other interested bodies in Wales.

Our decision to publish this document has been taken only after a good deal of heart-searching here. Like its recent predecessors this Report contains a number of criticisms which will doubtless be used against us. I conclude, however, that we could expect more adverse publicity if we do not publish it than if we do. The publication of the equivalent English document leaves us with little real choice.

X I am, however, reluctant to go on publishing these reports in their present form. I have been giving some thought to the possibility of producing next year a more balanced and wide-ranging document drawing on the reports covering individual schools, the actions the Government is taking to restore the status of the teaching profession and other relevant information. Our thinking on all this is still at a very early stage, but it is something that I intend to pursue.

I am sending copies of this letter to the Prime Minister, other members of the Cabinet, David Swinton and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

J. Evans
Alu

The Rt Hon Viscount Whitelaw PC CM MC
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EFFECTS ON THE EDUCATION SERVICE IN WALES OF RECENT LOCAL AUTHORITY
EXPENDITURE POLICIES : AN ASSESSMENT BY HM INSPECTORATE

This report covers the academic year 1984/85. Its findings are based upon the assessments of HMI resulting from inspection visits during 1984/85. No institution has been visited solely for the purpose of assessing the effects of LEA expenditure policies. It is the task of HMI to evaluate the nature and quality of students' work and their judgements on the effects of expenditure policies derive from that function.

SCHOOLS

The quality of provision encountered in classrooms by HMI is affected partly by the educational and financial policies of the LEA, partly by the curricular and organisational policies of the school and partly by the nature of the teaching, including the use of resources. When these 3 major influences work in the same direction, then the best use is likely to be made of the resources available. If they do not, it is likely that, in a time of pressure on resources, the quality of provision will be adversely affected.

The expenditure policies of LEAs take changes in rolls into account, but in many cases the adjustments in expenditure consequent upon falling rolls and those occasioned by pressure on resources are combined in such a way as to make distinctions between them difficult. New sources of, or arrangements for, funding, for example specific grant, education support grants and the MSC, have introduced additional complicating factors, as have the continuing, sometimes substantial, contributions made by parents.

Staffing

In general the staffing of schools has been adequate to meet their principal needs. Pupil/teacher ratios have changed very little in the period under review. Two LEAs continue to apply ratios with particular strictness and in certain circumstances, for example, when primary heads resume full-time responsibility for a class, numerically marginal changes have substantial impact. Some subjects, including Latin, German, needlework, geology and drama, have been discontinued in a few schools. In other cases the availability of subjects at particular stages has been reduced, for example, the discontinuing of an A-level course in religious education, of GCE O and A-level courses in music, of craft courses in the first and lower sixth years of secondary and of needlework in the fourth and sixth years. There has also been an increase (in some schools) in the teaching of subjects in lower secondary classes by non-specialists. On the other hand, some subjects, for example, computer studies, have attracted additional resources and facilities. Most LEAs continue to provide some measure of positive discrimination for small school

bilingual schools and schools which face particular problems of disadvantage; in general, however, there is less room for manoeuvre in this respect. The combination of tight staffing and falling rolls has reduced the ability of many schools to plan well ahead.

In some LEAs the amount of additional help provided by visiting teachers has been reduced. There are fewer remedial staff and the criteria for their provision have been tightened, so that less time is now available for individual schools. In 2 LEAs, peripatetic remedial and Welsh teachers have been redeployed to fill vacant posts in schools or to act as supply teachers. Several LEAs have maintained external support for schools in music and drama.

In adjusting the staffing of schools to falling rolls and to the resources available to them, LEAs and individual schools are obliged to ensure continuity and progression in pupils' learning and to maintain a balance between logic and compassion. Both LEAs and schools act with due responsibility, but the effective planning and implementation of educational change at school level is sometimes frustrated by policy changes at a late stage. In addition, individual secondary schools may face financial uncertainty because, in the light of the many new courses being mounted for older pupils, they find it difficult to make reliable estimates of future numbers and needs.

LEAs apply strict conditions to the provision of supply cover. Except in the case of the smallest and most disadvantaged schools, there is a general expectation that schools will cover absences from their own resources for an initial period. The current industrial action has exacerbated the already unsatisfactory nature of such arrangements and the deficiencies in present provision are keenly felt in schools, not least in relation to in-service education.

LEAs have shed a good many teachers over recent years as a consequence of falling rolls. Redeployment and early retirements continue and have had a significant effect on the profile of staffing. For example, in one LEA in a 2-year period beginning in September 1983 there have been at primary level 75 headteacher and 52 deputy headteacher appointments over some 275 schools. Comparable changes have occurred in other LEAs. Many new entrants to teaching are engaged on temporary contracts (often of 1 year but occasionally for shorter periods). There is an increasing (but, overall, still relatively small) number of teachers being redeployed from secondary to primary schools. Combined with the effects of pressure on resources, these factors make for uncertainty and instability in schools.

In-Service Education of Teachers (INSET)

Those LEAs which have over the years evolved a reasonably consistent policy for INSET have generally been able to preserve at least the framework of adequate provision. Those LEAs lacking such a policy have tended to experience a further diminution of already unsatisfactory provision. INSET activities in all LEAs have been adversely affected, to a greater or lesser extent, by the current industrial action and by decisions taken about supply cover.

In general, the pattern of primary INSET has continued relatively unchanged; secondary work has been more substantially affected by pressure on resources. Most of the initiatives in the education of older pupils have been protected by the earmarking of funds, though several schools have been obliged to suspend at least some of the INSET proposed in preparation for the introduction of new courses because of industrial action. Rationalisation has brought a welcome improvement in INSET arrangements in 2 LEAs, and there have been slight improvements in aspects of provision in others. There has been a substantial reduction in secondments in one LEA but little change in the remainder. The introduction of specific grants and education support grants has ensured that certain priority areas are protected. Overall, however, INSET provision remains vulnerable to ad-hoc decisions on financial priorities.

Provision for probationer teachers has generally deteriorated. Most of the more substantial LEA initiatives of the past have been discontinued and considerable onus is now laid upon individual schools to ensure adequate induction. Moreover, because the number of probationers has decreased and many of them are employed on short-term contracts, some in more than one school, their probationary experience is often less consistent than is desirable.

Advisers

In most LEAs the slow decline in the number of advisory posts has halted (though the reduction over recent years has been considerable in some LEAs, nearly a third of the establishment in one case). However, the imbalance of expertise among most advisory teams remains a matter of concern and some widely disparate responsibilities are allocated to individual advisers. There is little evidence of LEAs taking early steps to remedy the deficiencies. The advent of ESG has meant some increase in the range of advisory teacher support available to schools, but the absence, even in the more generously staffed LEAs, of advisers in key areas hinders curriculum development. Many advisers are also involved in the management of early retirement and teacher

redeployment and continue, as in previous years, to take on an increasing range of administrative tasks. Responsibility for responding to new government initiatives and to the findings of HMI reports has meant additional demands on some advisers. Nevertheless, the organisation of the work of advisers has been subjected to scrutiny in several LEAs and some improvement in efficiency has resulted.

Non-Teaching Staff

Where changes in non-teaching staff have occurred, they have tended to reduce further the kind of assistance which is at an unsatisfactory level in all LEAs.

There has been a small but general reduction in the hours of clerical support available to schools (no support is available for some schools) and classroom ancillaries may be required to take on clerical duties when vacancies occur. These changes occur at a time when new curriculum initiatives and new courses are increasing the demand for clerical and technician support.

The reduction in the number of nursery assistants continues. Non-replacement of these assistants poses considerable educational problems in schools, which are only partly resolved through voluntary assistance.

Premises

The condition of school premises remains of great concern. There is evidence over large areas of Wales of considerable deterioration in the maintenance of buildings and of deterioration in pupils' learning environment. The signs of this deterioration are to be seen principally in the fabric and decoration of schools and in the worn and damaged furniture. Although it remains generally the case that where there is hazard to pupils, LEAs respond quickly, in a few instances authorities have acknowledged the existence of potentially hazardous defects but have been unable, through lack of resources, to deal with them. The increasingly protracted cycle of maintenance and redecoration has made for additional difficulties in those schools, mainly primary, which because of their age and design constitute a less than satisfactory environment for pupils' learning.

Previous reports have drawn attention to the considerable backlog of repairs and maintenance in many LEAs which will be cleared only at major cost. In an attempt to tackle this problem, two LEAs have earmarked substantial sums to begin the work, though the rate of deterioration is such that even such sums may prove ineffective. The scale of the problem is indicated by the decision of one LEA to spend £1½m to improve the maintenance of schools, by the fact that within the same LEA £½m has

been spent in the past 5 years on repairs and improvements to one secondary school, and by the need in one district alone to spend £ $\frac{1}{2}$ m in dealing with dry rot in older schools.

The general picture in most LEAs is depressing and there appears to be little hope of immediate large-scale amelioration. Many schools have succeeded, sometimes with the help of parents, in organising effective self-help schemes and staff and pupils also endeavour to improve the learning environment through colourful and effective display. These efforts, however, can do little to arrest the general decline in standards.

Capitation

The considerable range of provision can be illustrated by reference to the fact that a primary school of 160 pupils in one LEA received in 1984/85 a capitation of £3,500 and a primary school of 170 pupils in another LEA a sum of £1,162, that a few (mainly small) schools receive directly from parents more than is received in capitation from the LEA, and that in one case TVEI funding exceeded a secondary school's total capitation.

There have been substantial reductions in 2 LEAs. In one, 25% of the capitation was withdrawn at short notice, placing schools in considerable difficulties and effectively disrupting forward-planning. In the other, capitation for 1984/85 was set below the level for the previous year (20% in the case of primary, 10% in secondary) and 25% of the allowance was subsequently withheld, a sequence of events similar to that experienced the previous year. The scale of such reductions is illustrated by the case of a large comprehensive school where capitation was reduced from £30,000 to £20,000 (without a matching reduction in roll). In 3 of the remaining LEAs there have been reductions in capitation; small increases in the remainder have not matched the greater cost of books and materials.

In secondary schools, books and other materials are increasingly worn in appearance, there is some sharing of books and texts are frequently issued for use in class only, with implications, usually adverse, for methods of teaching and learning, revision and homework. Many schools make substantial use of photocopied materials for younger pupils and less able older pupils, sometimes to supplement books, sometimes to substitute for them. Good rental facilities and good quality reproduction make their use educationally sensible in many cases, though even the best cannot match the colour, quality and vividness of commercial materials. However, when poorly reproduced materials used instead of textbooks become worn, the quality of pupils' learning suffers. In those departments in secondary schools which make heavy use of consumable resources, for example, science and crafts, the

steeply rising cost of equipment and materials means that class demonstrations tend to supplant individual or group experiments by pupils. The additional cost of the increasing use in craft courses of materials such as plastic is considerable. Departments show much ingenuity in the discovery, collection and use of waste products but devices of this sort go only part of the way to solving the problems. Some kinds of curriculum development, particularly those concerned with technologically-oriented activities, practical and applied approaches in science and resource-based learning in other areas of the curriculum are especially demanding of capitation resources. In a few cases, schools have had to postpone some of their proposed new initiatives not supported by outside funding, because of inability to meet resource implications.

Resources are generally adequate in primary schools, many of which continue to be sustained by those acquired in former years. However, schools find it increasingly difficult to purchase large items or adopt new schemes unless at the expense of other important areas of need. Schools with small capitation are disproportionately disadvantaged in this respect. Many books, especially reference books, are shabby in appearance and unlikely to stimulate pupils.

Financial contributions by parents continue at a high level, though there are occasional signs of reluctance. Parental contributions are used for a wide variety of purchases; indeed, there are no areas of schools' life and work which do not now benefit from them. They are an increasingly significant factor in schools' ability to undertake new developments. There is, therefore, growing evidence of disparity of provision according to the nature of a school's catchment. One secondary school in an area of considerable unemployment makes no demands on its parents; other schools serving more favoured areas collect many thousands of pounds annually.

Summary

The relationship between resources and standards of work is a complex one. An adequate level of resources is clearly necessary if pupils' learning is to be effective, but effective learning is also dependent upon schools' perceptions of pupils' needs, levels of expectation and provision of appropriate learning experiences. In most primary schools there are still adequate resources to meet pupils' needs. In many, however, this adequacy is dependent upon parental support which, even where it is generous, may not always be directed towards the school's perceived priorities. Where primary schools serve disadvantaged areas and are unable to call upon substantial help from parents, provision is adversely affected.

Secondary schools are particularly vulnerable to the increasing costs of materials required for learning specialist subjects. They are also being required, as a result of central and local initiatives, to undertake the development of new courses which are more directly dependent than the traditional on the provision of a range of practical apparatus and equipment and ancillary help. The fall in rolls, allied to pressure on resources, is putting some subjects at risk. Schools are questioning the viability in terms of staff and resources of certain minority subjects, some of which have already been removed from the curriculum of a number of schools and are in imminent danger of being removed in others. In some cases the contribution of the subject to the general education of pupils is adequately embodied in other, better supported, subjects; in a few, however, its removal leaves an unfilled gap. The senior staff of secondary schools give much attention to the management of resources and there is little evidence of any reluctance to take hard decisions when required, except, occasionally, to redeploy teachers in the interests of a better match of responsibility with specialist qualifications. However, the complexity of the process of reducing expenditure and achieving greater efficiency of management is considerable. In one particularly difficult case, a comprehensive school has in the period of review been coping with falling rolls, preparing for tertiary reorganisation, adjusting to redeployments and appointments of staff to the tertiary sector, and rationalising its use of accommodation (including specialist facilities) on a number of awkwardly related sites.

LEAs have attempted, successfully on the whole, to maintain existing pupil-teacher ratios in primary schools. The ratios are in general strictly applied but exceptions can be made. The handling of early retirements and redeployments has been, in general, compassionate and carefully considered. On the other hand, uncertainties about capitation and about support for INSET, coupled with some diversion of advisory effort away from curriculum matters to administration, have made it difficult for schools to plan ahead with confidence.

The period 1984/85 has been one in which new demands, principally for the development of the curriculum, have been placed on schools and LEAs. Some of these have been accompanied by specific funding, for example, ESG and TVEI. Others have been of a more general kind, many of them generated by the schools themselves in response, for example, to published HMI reports, to the government's White Paper 'Better Schools' and to publications in the HMI discussion series 'Curriculum Matters'. The period has also been one in which preparations for the introduction of a new 16+ examination system have gathered pace. The effort involved in responding to these initiatives and in implementing change has been considerable and has not been facilitated by the need to engage at every stage in the strictest scrutiny of the

implications for resources which are already stretched. Nor does the continuing neglect of the learning environment encourage staff and pupils in taking on new tasks. Although adequate resource provision is not the only prerequisite for effectiveness in teaching and learning in the schools, it is a major factor.

FURTHER EDUCATION

Recognition of the need to support training and staff development in FE has been slow to develop on the part of LEAs and some college managements, and both the Welsh Office and the MSC have taken special steps to encourage specific funding and special arrangements for these initiatives. Staffing policies and budgetary controls on part-time hours and inservice course attendance have in several LEAs resulted in reduced effectiveness and flexibility in course provision and staff deployment. The use of an increased proportion of part-time staffing, for example, to meet MSC and YTS requirements and for short term industrial updating, has meant increased responsibility for course management, tutorial and pastoral responsibility and course development and fewer training opportunities for full-time staff. In several colleges in different authorities, costs of part-time staff exceed 25% of total teaching budgets; in one department of business studies the proportion of part-time teaching is over 45%. In some colleges, the objectives in extending use of part-time staff are less concerned with obtaining contributions to courses from individuals who have up-to-date experience of industrial or business developments, than with meeting a short-term need, or are otherwise constrained by the LEA's controls on full-time staffing budgets. In general, although some authorities provide specific opportunities for staff updating in information technologies and computer applications, and for in-house training related to new course development, the great majority of teaching staff have received no systematic professional training opportunities and have been able to update themselves only through whatever means their own local contacts and initiatives have made available to them.

In spite of this, there have been numerous examples of effective course and curricular development in different disciplines, in both advanced and non-advanced sectors. Among these have been art and design, catering courses in rural colleges, information technology and electronics, a fashion and textile technician course in Mid Wales (with funding from industrial organisations mainly in England) and extensions of pre-vocational courses linked with school provision. In several

colleges and LEAs there has been significant improvement of provision for special educational needs, though in other places little or nothing has been done to develop such provision. In several rural and industrial valley areas where part-time craft and technician course enrolments have continued to decline, sensible rationalisation of BTEC courses has been undertaken; in other areas low enrolments have resulted in closures, though some colleges maintain uneconomically small classes of doubtful educational effectiveness. In cases of underused capacity, colleges and LEAs have commendably sought to keep important opportunities open by various forms of rationalisation, including combined class teaching; students are willing to travel long distances to reach part-time day release advanced classes - weekly round trips of over 100 or 150 miles are encountered. One rural LEA has introduced further rationalisation of full-time and part-time courses which has resulted in reductions of overall provision even where demand for places has not fallen.

Although there has been active development of courses in some colleges and LEAs, there remain many areas where provision and capacity do not meet demands. In almost all parts of Wales there is continuing evidence of adequately qualified applicants being turned away. Examples include full-time courses in catering services, hairdressing, beauty culture, business studies, social care and nursery nursing. There has been a marked increase in the demand for places on art foundation courses and certain technician courses. The general extent of underprovision has been reduced somewhat as capacity has been increased and the size of year groups has declined. There has been some reduction of YTS demands from the MSC but a significant increase in part-time day and evening enrolments on the part of adults, both in employment and unemployed, seeking to gain job-relevant qualifications, for example, in electronics, computing and word-processing.

Overall, the matching of course provision to need and demand has remained uneven. The MSC has helped in some instances by provision of short-term capital funding for additional accommodation. However, the general restrictions on staffing budgets have militated against extensive adjustment of course provision, and also against special developments in the short course field, in spite of the availability of funds through the PICKUP, REPLAN and the MSC adult programme. In a minority of colleges, planning for change and development has been affected by financial uncertainties and short-term constraints. The lack of specific LEA advisory services in further education has resulted in wide variations in organisation, initiative and responsiveness on the part of colleges.

Capitation levels have been cut in some LEAs, marginally in some cases; in other LEAs, capitation has been maintained at levels set following some reduction in earlier years. There is considerable disparity among LEAs and between colleges in their freedom to manage their own resources. One LEA provided a nominal capitation but 'froze' a percentage of it, allowing colleges to spend from the frozen sector only against urgent needs. Among the results of this were constraints on and sometimes deterioration in library collections, facilities (for example, shorter opening times) and accommodation. Release of frozen allowances has occasionally been too late in the financial year for sensible purchases to be made. Colleges have on occasion been constrained to look elsewhere (for example to sympathetic employers) for materials for practical work on some technical courses. Other LEAs and colleges have learnt to manage within their reduced budgets partly by buying fewer materials and small items of equipment, for example, in some construction courses; others by simply time-tabling less practical work. Maintenance contracts on some equipment (for example, office equipment for office studies teaching) have been reduced or terminated, the college relying on day-to-day maintenance of the higher proportion of machines which are out of commission at any one time. Other effects include postponing replacement of obsolete machines, such as manual typewriters. Only the availability of funds from MSC sponsored courses has in some instances allowed the purchase of up-to-date equipment. In a small number of colleges, software collections for micro-computer applications in teaching have not been updated. The channelling of funds from MSC-sponsored courses has in some instances allowed the purchase of up-to-date equipment. In a small number of colleges, software collections for micro-computer applications in teaching have not been updated. The channelling of funds from MSC-sponsored courses and DTI support have helped in the purchase of equipment; however, the 50% LEA college contribution to CAD/CAM purchases has in a few cases been taken out of capitation headings for other much needed course provision. Similar redistribution of capitation has occasionally occurred to meet the college/LEA 30% components of ESG projects. The gap between the well-resourced, developing colleges and departments and those less effectively planned and provided for continues to increase, though there are indications that this may be as much a result of differences in managerial effectiveness as of expenditure policies at LEA level.

The most significant and visible cumulative effect of expenditure constraints has been on the maintenance of college buildings and teaching accommodation and on the replacement of obsolete and dated equipment. While there are examples of well maintained and well resourced teaching accommodation, the incidence of poor external and internal conditions, of deterioration of fabric and of teaching environments, is increasing. Lack of adequate funds for the maintenance of buildings and of

non-teaching staff for the upkeep and storage of equipment has led to numerous examples of cluttered or inadequately cared for (and in one instance potentially dangerous) practical teaching facilities, workshops, kitchens and laboratories.

Capital projects have continued to be undertaken in a significant proportion of colleges in Wales. Most have taken the form of extensions and upgradings of sectors of college capacity; major new extensions were opened in 6 institutions and there were also extensions to provide for tertiary development in other colleges. In one case a new and well equipped annexe, located in a town centre some miles away from its college and designed to meet local needs, has been built. There were also a number of smaller extensions and remodellings financed partly out of MSC funds.

Summary

There is, in general, much variation in the effectiveness of professional college managements and LEA administration and support of FE. Change and development arising out of the requirements of examining and professional bodies, out of the initiatives of employers and the MSC, and out of the pace of technological and commercial change itself, have presented both NAFE and AFE colleges with major challenges in terms of the upgrading and development of staff, courses and curriculum. The response of departmental and college staff and their managements has often been professionally sound and promising. LEA decision making has not always been well aligned with developments, and in consequence the effectiveness of resourcing and professional commitment of staff have in some cases been impaired. Examples of good practice in course teaching and resource development, and of competent, realistic planning and professional leadership serve to indicate the significant part that good management can play at departmental, college and LEA administrative levels, in effecting improvements.

YOUTH PROVISION AND ADULT CONTINUING EDUCATION

Earlier assessments in this series have referred to considerable disparities in the level of provision in these non-statutory areas which have become more apparent in the period of review.

The youth service is in general being protected and in at least 4 authorities is being allocated extra funds from grant aid to provide additional facilities in urban areas and on large housing estates which lack communal facilities. Gradually, over the last 4 or 5 years, a number of LEAs have extended the opening hours of youth clubs, others have also increased the number of centres: one authority, for example, lengthened the opening hours of each part-time youth club from

to 12 hours per week, and another the number of centres from 34 to 40. Other authorities are protecting their limited service from additional cuts but are unable to innovate and adapt to changing needs. One authority continues to reduce funding; its service now consists of a restricted programme in a small number of centres.

Disparities in level of provision are equally apparent in adult continuing education, with the length of terms varying between 8 and 12 weeks and the duration of individual classes between $1\frac{1}{2}$ and over $2\frac{1}{2}$ hours. Course fees range from 50 to 80 pence an hour; a number remain at the 1984 level and where increases have occurred they are generally in line with the rate of inflation. In some LEAs the adult service is buoyant, with some promising curriculum developments to meet emerging needs. In a number of areas there is increased use of premises by self-funding groups and societies. Elsewhere economies have reduced the service to a point where opportunities for adults are characterised by a narrow range of shortened courses. The restricted scope of courses inhibits progress, especially in studies which benefit from regular tuition and regular contact with fellow students.

At least 2 authorities have re-examined the aims and objectives of their services and allocated resources in line with agreed priorities; as a result innovatory work is now possible with adults and professional support for youth clubs has improved without increased expenditure.

The impact of cuts in both youth and adult education bears particularly hard on some rural areas, where authorities seek to base the provision in fewer centres. The majority of these centres are open in the evening only, and attendance is often difficult for those without private transport. The cost of travel in these areas is considerable and in a number of instances students' travelling time exceeds the length of the class.

In some authorities youth provision and adult continuing education are benefiting from government funded schemes, such as Urban Aid, PICKUP, REPLAN and some MSC funded projects. The impact of such funding is particularly marked in the more urban areas and in at least one authority central government funds for short term adult education projects exceed threefold the LEA's budget for the sector. The injection of such funds generates additional work that requires the attention of officers, often to the neglect of mainstream adult and youth provision. In the youth sector comparatively small inputs under Urban Aid have enabled authorities to develop work of quality in areas of special need. A number of

authorities continue to reserve funds in support of the unemployed, especially the young unemployed. The ability and readiness of LEAs to absorb the on-going costs of such developments when government funding ends is variable; few, however, are firmly committed to the continued funding of successful projects. During the year, work of quality in basic education within two authorities was considerably reduced with the ending of fixed term funding from central government.

Staff development is being provided on a modest scale in most authorities, with 2 developing an ambitious programme for their full-time staff. The LEAs offering the more limited opportunities are invariably also those where the service has been reduced most severely. Staff in these authorities are becoming increasingly concerned at the lack of recognition of their work implicit in the rundown of the service.

Recognising that the bulk of the youth work in Wales is undertaken by voluntary organisations, LEAs have traditionally offered assistance in the form of grant aid and the use of premises and equipment. During the past year 4 authorities have maintained their support to the voluntary sector in line with inflation, 2 have maintained the level of the previous year while 2 have reduced their grant aid.

Over the years LEAs have offered adult continuing education in partnership with the Extra Mural Departments of the University of Wales, the Workers Educational Association and the YMCA who, to varying degrees, receive some financial support from LEAs. Grant aid in 1985 from 3 authorities continues at earlier levels and at a token level in 2, but 3 have withdrawn grant aid to some or all of the providers and hire charges have been introduced when classes are held in LEA premises.

Much adult education is offered in school premises where the neglect of the decor and of maintenance has resulted in a poor environment for many classes. Similarly, lack of maintenance is contributing to unacceptably sub-standard environments in youth clubs. Much of the equipment in centres is ageing and in poor condition and the opportunities for introducing modern technology in teaching and learning are limited by lack of funds. Where facilities are provided jointly with lower tier authorities, standards are generally satisfactory.

Marked variations in LEA expenditure policies and the urban emphasis of many short term government funded projects are resulting in pronounced differences in the level of provision for youth and adult continuing education. If current policies continue, the disparities will become even more pronounced, with some authorities

Offering a viable service and continuing to meet some emerging needs while others provided a very limited service. In consequence, the number and variety of opportunities available to both young people and adults will depend very largely upon where they live.

HMI EXPENDITURE REPORT 1984/85 - DRAFT PRESS NOTICE

A Report* submitted by Her Majesty's Inspectorate to the Secretary of State for Wales on the effects of local authority expenditure policies on education in Wales was published today.

The Report begins by making the point that the quality of provision encountered in school classrooms "is affected partly by educational and financial policies of the LEA, partly by the curricular and organisational policies of the LEA, partly by the nature of teaching, including the use of resources". It goes on to say that "when these 3 major influences work in the same direction, then the best use is likely to be made of the resources available. If they do not, it is likely that, in a time of pressure on resources, the quality of provision will be adversely affected". The Report goes on to record the diversity of response encountered by the Inspectors. It notes how authorities have dealt with the various challenges and problems with which they have been faced in such matters as the development of the curriculum, teachers experience and availability, in-service training, ancillary staff, teaching materials and premises. In the further education field there was considerable variety in the standard of provision, but the Inspectors found that the response by departmental and college staff and their managements to the major challenges presented had often been sound and promising. In the youth and adult areas, considerable disparities in the levels of provision were noticed. In all sectors of education, the Inspectors found examples of poor standard of building maintenance.

Commenting today on the report, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State Mr Wyn Roberts MP said:-

"The Report does not shy away from the problems involved in making effective use of limited resources. But the most striking feature is the message it delivers time after time that the effectiveness of management at authority

and institution levels is of crucial importance in determining the standard of educational provision made available to our young people.

If their policies and management at local level are wrong, then resources are not being used to the best effect, and the quality of provision will be adversely affected.

There is a lot of nonsense talked about cuts in education spending. The facts are that during this administration local authorities have increased expenditure in real terms (£601.8 million in 1979-80, £628.5 million in 1984-85). Over this period the number of pupils in schools has fallen by over 54,000, a very considerable reduction equivalent to the population of some 300 primary schools and about 15 secondary schools of average size in 1979. This has released substantial resources for deployment elsewhere by the authorities, as was borne out during the series of meetings which the then Minister of State and I had with local education authorities last year. There has in fact been a rising trend of expenditure per pupil so that we are now spending an additional £100 per head in real terms compared with 1979-80.

The report indicates where the pressures are being felt; secondary schools in particular are being required to undertake the development of new courses more directly dependent on the provision of a range of practical apparatus, equipment and ancillary help.

* **The Effects on the Education Service in Wales of recent Local Authority Expenditure Policies: An assessment free of charge from the Education Department, Welsh Office, Cathays Park, Cardiff CF1 3NQ. Telephone 0222 82336.**

In the FE field, the report draws attention to the numerous examples to be found of effective courses and curricular developments in different disciplines, including extensions of pre-vocational courses linked with school provision, a very desirable example of facilitating the transition from school experience to participation in the FE sector.

The references to inadequacies in the provision of classroom materials and apparatus cause me some concern. Although the importance of the provision of teaching materials comes behind that of the calibre and enthusiasm of the teachers themselves, deficiencies of this kind can have harmful effects on morale and motivation. I hope that those authorities with problems will look carefully at their priorities and be willing to learn from other authorities and indeed from the searching and helpful reports from the Audit Commission.

I am also concerned at the references to poor premises provision in the schools, FE and Youth and Adult sectors. This is the accumulated result of inadequate expenditure on the repair and maintenance of the building stock over many years. On the other hand, I am encouraged to note that capital projects have continued to be undertaken in a significant proportion of colleges in Wales, where 6 major new extensions were reported to have been opened. To encourage this kind of provision, and to enable authorities to raise the standards of their school buildings and to undertake improvements which will result in revenue savings, we have increased provision for educational capital building to £39 million in 1986-87, an increase of 30% in cash terms on last year's allocation.

The report deserves to be widely read. The deficiencies reported are not met in all of the authorities. Some have by skilful management, found ways to attain acceptable levels of provisions. I hope that all authorities

will be encouraged to look again at the way they manage the considerable resources which are at their disposal in the light of this report."

NOTES FOR EDITORS

The report is the fifth published in a series of annual reports by HMI. It is based on HMI's visits to schools and colleges during the academic year 1984/85.

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