

FROM THE EDITOR

Jill Duffield and I welcome you to the new edition of the Scottish Education Review. We are delighted to be editors of this Journal and hope that, with your assistance, we can publish articles which demonstrate an understanding of key educational issues for Scotland and for Scotland in the wider world.

These are crucial times for education in Scotland, not least because as international political pressures accumulate, education may slip down, still further, in the financial pecking order. So, as we begin editing the SER, our task is to locate education quite firmly in a global, macro-economic and political context.

Given this concern, it is fortuitous that in October 2003 the four Ministers of Education of the UK will host, in Edinburgh, the 15th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (15CCEM). Only once before, in 1959, at the inaugural Conference, have Ministers met in the UK: we are delighted, therefore, that this is the year in which they return not only to the UK but to Scotland. The Conference theme, 'Access, Inclusion and Achievement: Closing the Gap' will provide an opportunity for discussions by Ministerial delegations on policy analysis and debates and also enable considerations of best practices towards the efficacious implementation of these policies.

The theme of Access, Inclusion and Achievement provides, also, the focus of our two Journal editions for 2003. In this first publication, an extended editorial sets out the nature of the gap from a Commonwealth perspective. Following this, articles delineate the nature of 'the gap' and elaborate upon the importance of research as a tool for informing policy-making. As this edition will be read by education policy makers from throughout the Commonwealth, we take seriously this commitment to ensure that policy-making is informed by well-structured, coherent and thoughtful educational research. We are united in our view that research is not the prerogative only of university researchers, but is undertaken by all of us, everyday, in our lives as educationalists. School teachers perform 'action research', 'teacher practitioner research' through their observations and reflections upon interactions in classrooms, within schools, with regional and local authorities and through their relationships with those in positions of central government.

Commitment to action research by teachers has long been expressed by the Scottish Educational Research Association (SERA) especially through its networks and seminars. We hope that this commitment can be developed still more widely among the contributors and readership of SER. It is interesting that new university courses and the Chartered Teacher programme are currently extending opportunities for involvement in action research and collaboration, leading to positive impacts on practice.

Indeed, we would like the new era of the SER to bear witness to this commitment and will look favourably upon teacher practitioner research undertaken by those working in schools, perhaps submitting reports on projects which are the result of collaborative relations between teachers and university researchers. There is much to be developed in relations between Higher Education and Basic Education and we would wish to aid dissemination of the products of this relationship.

In this vein, we are pleased to publish an account of research undertaken by Beth Cross on storytelling and language development in schools in two countries of the Commonwealth, Jamaica and Scotland. Cross draws attention to the different understandings of narratives and knowledge held by both teachers and children in schools in these two countries and also to the differences within schools in each country. She notes that class and gender play important and defining roles in both

geo-cultural contexts. However, the ability to negotiate sophisticated market-driven messages seem to vary between communities in Scotland: there may be cultural, social and political influences - cultural capital - in being able to relate to storytelling, to read and to organise visual images. This article makes fascinating reading and is a delightful introduction to what it means to work with teachers' own definitions of their professional activity.

Our second article on Citizenship also addresses 'inclusion' but through the democratisation of the school system. Ross Deuchar notes the importance of participation and dissent for pupils and teachers alike in assuming roles of active citizenship within and ultimately beyond their schools. In the small-scale study of Scottish schools, on which Deuchar reports, expressed espousal of values of participation is not always borne out by the evidence of the different actors.

Inclusion is the key theme of the article by Jean Kane et al. Kane and her colleagues argue that Individual Education Programmes not only aid inclusion of those with special education needs and their parents, but also work towards achievement in education. Kane et al.'s key themes are participation and collaboration of parents and pupils. While the development of Individual Educational Programmes (IEPs) aims to extend participation, the team's research for SEED highlights the complexities of applying the policy in practice.

Ian Thomson's article takes an historical perspective on a policy contest of past decades, the struggle of teachers of physical education on the one hand to assert professional status, and on the other to contest the way forward for a highly gendered aspect of education. In a critical account built up from the multiple readings of a group of key actors, Thomson's article makes an interesting companion piece to that by John Nisbet, whose article describes developments in which he was himself a player.

This edition of SER sees the launch of a new section to feature the memoirs of distinguished educationalists. We are very pleased that Professor John Nisbet and Professor Peter Williams inaugurated this section. Nisbet's article gives a personal account of a key period in the institutional development of education in Scottish universities. As his article argues, efforts to establish collaboration across Scotland came to be frustrated by pressures for institutional competition, while the unfortunate gulf between research and professional preparation was further entrenched during the 1960s and 1970s.

Finally, in addition to these articles, we are pleased to include reviews of recently published books. This edition's reviews contribute further to the themes of access, inclusion and achievement with consideration of work on low self-worth, policy developments in relation to special educational needs, and the requirements of primary teachers with regard to mathematics. Our Reviews Editor, David Miller, will be pleased to receive notice of books for review or the reviews themselves. It will be noted that there is not the usual 'Education in the Scottish Parliament'. This section will return to the SER in November 2003, this being after the elections to the Scottish Parliament which were held in May.

GARI DONN
Editor