

REVIEW: THE MANAGEMENT OF EDUCATIONAL POLICY

Pamela Munn

Walter M. Humes and Malcolm L. Mackenzie (eds). **The Management of Educational Policy: Scottish Perspectives**, Harlow: Longman, £16.95, pb, 1994, ISBN 0582245680, 192p.

There is very little research or serious writing about education policy on Scotland. To be sure, policy-related research is commissioned by the Scottish Office and other bodies. This kind of research, however, typically focuses on the impact of particular policy initiatives, such as the curriculum programme for pupils aged between 5 and 14, or seeks to get a handle on emerging policy concerns, such as exclusions of pupils from school or part-time degree provision. The policy process itself is rather neglected. Two notable exceptions are McPherson & Raab's **Governing Education: A Sociology of Policy Since 1945**, published in 1988, and Humes' **The Leadership Class in Scottish Education**, published in 1986. Each of these books had thought-provoking things to say about education policy, and were best sellers in the world of education and related professions. How does this new volume compare?

The first thing to say is that the title is misleading. If one defines management as the ways in which policies are put into operation, then the book does not deal with, for instance, how parental involvement in schooling has been managed at local or national level through the setting up of systems, nor does it offer a critique of such systems. If on the other hand management is seen as an integral part of the policy process, in the sense that managers interpret and construct the meaning of policy and are often key players in

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policy formation, then the book does not deal with this either. Indeed it is not until we reach the final chapter, by Humes, that key questions about the meaning of policy and management are addressed. This is a pity because the management of educational policy in Scotland is a fascinating topic. Some questions the book might have addressed are:

- How do educational quangos work?
- Is the cult of managerialism - evident in an obsession with quality assurance mechanisms, target setting and performance criteria - a way of coping with a collapse of consensus about the purposes of education?
- Has the role of HM Inspectorate changed and, if so, in what ways?

The second thing to say is that questions about the distinctive nature of Scottish education are rather underplayed. Very few of the contributors allude to comparisons with other constituent parts of the UK and fewer still draw comparisons with the rest of Europe, or beyond. The Scottish perspective element in the title derives from the fact that all the contributors are working in Scotland, rather than from any systematic attempt to map distinctive or universal features of Scottish education.

These remarks should not be taken as a judgement on the worthwhileness of the book. Rather they point up the importance of choosing a title that reflects its content. So, what is the book about? Essentially, each contributor takes a key policy and discusses its implication for management, somewhat loosely defined. Thus Angela Roger takes the policies of wider access and quality assurance in higher education and shows how they are in tension with each other. Frank Pignatelli examines market models and managerialisation in education and concludes that Scotland has escaped the worst excesses of both 'given the strong commitment to consensus and partnership which has been the hallmark of public policy development in Scotland'. How this consensus is achieved and what partnership means are not explored, although the role of education policy makers and managers in Strathclyde Region, the largest education authority in Europe, in these matters must have been substantial. There are chapters on curriculum and assessment, on further education, on parental rights, on devolved school management and on images of the teaching profession. There is a useful chapter on management and values, where Bart McGettrick highlights the moral nature of education. Similarly, Alison Cameron, in a persuasive piece on equal opportunities, highlights that education is a political and moral activity.

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The book, then, presents a rich diversity of topics, helpfully introduced by Malcolm MacKenzie and rounded off by Walter Humes. Humes' concluding chapter is particularly well written and persuasive, making a plea to bring together education policy and management studies. This useful collection of papers, in my view, misses the opportunity to do just that.

REFERENCES

- Humes, W. (1986). **The Leadership Class in Scottish Education**. Edinburgh: John Donald.
- McPherson, A. and Raab, C. (1988). **Governing Education: A Sociology of Policy Since 1945**. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

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