

REVIEW: TEACHING THE TEACHERS

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Margaret Harrison and Willis Marker (1996), **Teaching the Teachers: the History of Jordanhill College of Education**, Edinburgh: John Donald, pb, £15, ISBN 0859764362, xii+228 pages.

The recent wave of mergers and promotions within Scottish higher education may be one reason for a welcome surge of interest in the history of those colleges which were long overshadowed by the four ancient universities. Butt's history of Strathclyde University, Begg's of Queen Margaret College, and Ferguson's of Glasgow School of Art are joined by this collective history of Jordanhill College, which marks its amalgamation with Strathclyde in 1993. All of these institutions apart from Strathclyde were particularly significant for the education of women, which may help to explain their previous neglect.

Although Jordanhill did not open in its present buildings until after the First World War, it was created in its modern form by the teacher training regulations of 1906, which amalgamated and secularized the rival church colleges. **Teaching the Teachers** has six historical chapters (four of them written by Willis Marker) which trace the general story back to David Stow, and ten chapters which look at different areas of the college's work, written by past and present members of staff. The history of the precursor colleges is covered fairly briefly, but there are some interesting data about the social, geographical and denominational origins of students. The inter-war years do not receive much more attention, though the foundation of the Scottish School of Physical Education in 1931 was a significant step in

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diversification, to be followed after the war by the development of speech therapy, social work education, community and youth work, and the training of further education teachers. These were to provide the college with a lifeline when the demand for primary and secondary teachers fell off.

In Willis Marker's account, the years 1959-76 were a golden age, when the demand for teachers seemed insatiable, especially in the West of Scotland, when society seemed not to question the prestige of teachers and teaching, and when progressive ideas could be introduced into the curriculum without a chorus of disapproval from politicians and the media. Marker gives great credit to Sir Henry Wood, as Principal from 1949 to 1971, for guiding the college away from its engagement in the inward-looking school world into a broader system of higher education, and for helping it to throw off the traditional and authoritarian attitudes which had tended to mark its staff. The Scottish Education Department, formerly a stern bureaucratic master, now encouraged the colleges of education in independent initiatives, and the Council for National Academic Awards was a valued ally in developing new degree programmes.

From the late 1970s, however, the college had a rougher passage. Two general considerations emerge from the story. First, whereas post-war expansion was grounded in consensus, since the 1970s the British political system has seemed incapable of laying down consistent lines of educational policy, even though power has mostly been in the hands of one party. Within Scotland, this is perhaps compounded by the progressive loss of autonomy and authority by the SED/SOED/SOEID. As the account here of in-service training shows, new initiatives have often been reversed after a few years, and there is a climate of constant instability. The result has been loss of morale and collective purpose, and this is very apparent in the contributions to this book. At the end of the story lies amalgamation with Strathclyde University, but this comes over as a protective or defensive move rather than a triumphant culmination of the college's progress to university status: the tone is distinctly elegiac, not celebratory.

The second point is the rationale of the dismantling of Scotland's version of the binary system. This has been accompanied by remarkably little public debate, and there has been a common assumption that university status is an unquestionable advantage, and that bigger must mean better. But the 1992 Act went against the recommendations of the Scottish Tertiary Education Advisory Council in 1985. Is this perhaps one more example of a policy imposed on Scotland as a by-product of changes in England? Does it make

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sense to expect every teacher in higher education to engage in research? And while there may be general agreement that vocational and 'academic' education should have equal status, is this best achieved by amalgamation, rather than by maintaining two strong sectors with distinctive identities? The experience of Jordanhill, and the success of continuing 'monotechnic' institutions like Queen Margaret College and Glasgow School of Art, suggest that future historians may find more than one answer to these questions.

September 1996