

THE LOCAL GOVERNANCE OF EDUCATION IN TRANSITION: REORGANISING EDUCATION AUTHORITIES

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INTRODUCTION

Both the local government and the education system in Scotland have undergone significant reform during the past decade and continue to be subject to changes in structure and purpose. The combined impact of these reforms has been particularly pronounced for education authorities. Therefore, within processes of the changing governance of education and shifting roles for local government, this article focuses on the implications and impact of Local Government Reorganisation in Scotland for education authorities in particular. The article presents research conducted with education officers and headteachers during the process of implementing Reorganisation, exploring their changing perceptions and developing experiences throughout this period (Campbell 1999; see appendix A for details). These findings are placed in the wider context of local governance in transition, in which developments such as Devolved School Management and the creation of the Scottish Parliament have important implications for the roles of education authorities and their relationships, nationally with the Scottish Executive and locally with schools.

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GOVERNANCE IN TRANSITION

It has been widely proposed that the policies affecting the nature and structure of local government and education have undergone considerable transformation in recent years (Campbell 1999). Such processes are taken to indicate shifts towards a new form of governance. For example, writing about local government reform, McGarvey (1997, p.624) concluded:

The central orthodoxy now is that old, traditional local government institutions characterised by cultures of paternalism, bureaucracy, departmentalism, hierarchy, and closed local democratic elitist, corporatist policy-making structures have undergone fundamental transformation. They have been replaced by enabling councils working in conjunction with a range of other agencies to achieve local governance of their areas. There is undoubted consensus that things have changed and there has been a movement to what is termed either 'enabling' or local governance.

However, as McGarvey (1997, p.624) continued to argue, there is considerable debate as to what the terms 'enabling' and 'governance' mean in principle and, importantly, in practice. For example, the late Nicholas Ridley (1988) promoted a political model of the 'enabling' authority, linked to New Right ideals, in which the role of local government would not include the direct provision of services, but rather the agreement of contracts with other providers of services. Clarke and Stewart (1988, p.1) argued that such a notion of enabling was 'limited'. Rather they proposed a 'broader view' (Clarke and Stewart 1988, p.1), in which the enabling authority focused on meeting the needs of its local community through a range of methods, including direct service provision and developing a network of other potential service providers and contributors.

More recently, Kooiman (1999, p.68) provided an overview of the 'governance scene'. He summarised ten current common definitions of governance:

- ◀ Governance as the minimal state where governance becomes a term for redefining the extent and form of public intervention (Rhodes 1994).
- ◀ Corporate governance, which refers to the way big organizations are directed and controlled (Charkham 1994).

- ◀ Governance of new public management making a difference between government and governance, as expressed in Osborne and Gaebler's often quoted phrase: 'less government and more governance' (Osborne and Gaebler 1992; Rhodes 1997).
- ◀ Governance as advocated by the World Bank under the heading of 'good governance' (World Bank 1989).
- ◀ Governance as socio-cybernetic governance ... [recognising the dynamics, diversity and complexity of socio-political systems] (Kooiman, 1993)
- ◀ Governance as self-organizing networks (Rhodes 1997).
- ◀ Governance as 'Steuerung' (German) or 'Sturing' (Dutch)... the role of governments in steering, controlling and guiding societal sectors (Kickert 1993).
- ◀ Governance as (international) order, where several authors in the field of inter-national relations have taken up governance as a central concept such as in 'global governance' (Commission on Global Governance 1995).
- ◀ A use of the concept governing the economy or economic sectors (see Wade 1990).
- ◀ Finally, a school of thought under the heading of governance and governmentality which draws very much on the legacy of Foucault (Hindess 1997).

(Kooiman 1999, pp.68-69).

Clearly, such conceptions have differing implications and, therefore, 'present a problem in understanding governance' (Kooiman 1999, p.70), at local, national and international levels.

However, Kooiman (1999) attempted to provide two mechanisms to facilitate a better understanding of 'governance'. First, he suggested that there are common features of the ten definitions above, with the central concepts being:

- ◀ rules and qualities of systems;
- ◀ co-operation to enhance legitimacy and effectiveness;
- ◀ new processes, arrangements and methods.

Local Governance of Education in Transition

(Kooiman 1999, pp.69-70).

Second, these transformations are occurring at what can be perceived analytically as three levels of governance. Kooiman (1999, p.78) refers to 'meta-governance' as being the 'broad principles that concern the way governance itself ... takes place': the principles governing 'governance'. Within these broad principles, 'second-order' governance concerns the institutional settings and conditions in which governance occurs. 'First-order' governance concerns the 'day-to-day activity of public and private actors in concrete governing situations; these may be routine governing activities such as solving concrete social-political problems or more future-oriented social-political opportunities' (Kooiman 1999, p.78). The important point is that new forms of governance are deemed to be necessary to meet the diverse and complex needs of contemporary society.

Research concerning the reform of local governance impacting on local government and schools suggests that change is occurring in terms of 'meta-governance'; for example, the shifting conception of the welfare state (see, Cochrane 1993) involving a move away from 'bureaucratic paternalism' (Hambleton, Hoggett and Tolan 1989) to market forces and managerialism. This has involved transitions in local governance at institutional levels (second-order governance) and in daily practices (first-order governance) within education authorities. In these transitions, there has been an emphasis on New Public Management prescriptions (Kooiman's definition 3) for policy and practice. The term New Public Management is a broad one, which incorporates a range of principles (see, Hood 1991), potential policies (see, Walsh 1995) and practices (see, Fairley and Paterson 1995, for details concerning Scottish education and local government). However, as Walsh (1995) summarised, the key components of New Public Management have:

generally involved two main strands: the introduction of managerial techniques from the private sector, and the development of market mechanisms within the public sector.
(p.xii).

These principles and associated practices have not only resulted in reform within the public sector, but also altered the relationship between central government and institutions in the public sector, including education authorities, as encapsulated in the phrase 'steering at a distance' (Raab 1994, p.17, linking with Kooiman's definitions 1 and 7). This involves an enhanced strategic and evaluative role for central government. Hence, Fairley and Paterson (1995, p.29) concluded that the decentralisation available through

market models and managerialism in Scottish education was limited, 'imposed' and 'operational' rather than 'relating to the fundamental goals of education'. In the process of decentralising management to schools and centralising strategic powers to central government, it has been suggested that education authorities have been placed in a precarious position (Campbell 2000a).

REFORMING EDUCATION AND RESTRUCTURING LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Since the 1970s and particularly from the late 1980s onwards, the education and local government systems have been reformed and restructured. During this period there has been increasing political interest, and central government intervention, in both local government and education. There has been a focus on ensuring greater economy and efficiency and, particularly in local government, there has been an emphasis on expenditure constraints. Writing in 1989, Young argued:

Of all of Mrs Thatcher's confrontations with the institutions, that which she has fought with local government has been the most prolonged and most significant.
(Young 1989, p.124).

This perceived 'attack' on local government continued under the Major governments (Leach and Davis 1996).

In England, there were concerns that local education authorities had been particularly identified for reform and challenges during the 1980s and early 1990s (Cordingley and Kogan 1993; Ranson 1992; Tomlinson 1994). Important in such processes was the increasing centralisation of powers to central government, for example over issues of curriculum and assessment, and the decentralisation of managerial and financial responsibilities to schools, through local management of schools and grant-maintained schools. Whitty, Power and Halpin's (1998) research indicates that school-based management has become particularly pronounced when linked to a political rationale emphasising consumer powers and market forces. In England, devolution to schools has resulted in a reduced and reformed role for local education authorities (Levacic 1995). Rather than direct service providers, local education authorities were proposed to have strategic, regulatory and more limited 'enabling' roles as a consequence of educational reform (Audit Commission 1989).

Local Governance of Education in Transition

In Scotland also, it has been suggested that a reformed role for education authorities has resulted due to educational restructuring (Campbell 2000a). Under Devolved School Management since 1994, involving the delegation of at least 80% of school-based budget to school-level, a more strategic and 'enabling' role for education authorities was promoted by the then Conservative Government (Scottish Office 1993). However, there are significant differences in policy detail between devolved management in Scotland and England (Campbell 2000b; Raab, Munn, McAvoy, Bailey, Arnott and Adler 1997). For example: the greater flexibility afforded to Scottish education authorities in determining the detail of Devolved School Management for schools in their area; the larger proportion of budget retained by Scottish education authorities; less reliance on predominantly pupil-led formulae in Scotland; and budgets devolved to head teachers, in consultation with school boards, rather than directly to governing bodies as in England. This combines with a different context, where traditionally, in general, the relationships between schools and local government have been less strained in Scotland and market forces have not been introduced with the same force (Adler, Arnott, Bailey, McAvoy, Munn and Raab, 1996; Raab et al 1997). In England, it is the particular form of financial devolution, predominately linked to pupil numbers, and parental choice which create market forces and which impacts on the role of local education authorities (Whitty et al 1998). By contrast, in Scotland, research indicated that differences in 'tone and substance' of education policies, particularly Devolved School Management, resulted in a more limited and different form of operationalising market forces (Arnott, Munn and Moore 1993). It has been suggested that the nature of Devolved School Management may favour the 'producers' of education authorities and headteachers, rather than asserting 'consumer' power (Munn 1992).

Nevertheless, in order to implement and support Devolved School Management, the roles of education authorities and their relationships with schools were reformed. Financial, managerial, accountability and service roles and relationships altered (Campbell 2000a). The consultation documents concerning Devolved School Management indicated that a reformed role for education authorities was expected. Several roles were identified:

Authorities, who have a statutory responsibility, will continue to provide general support and advice to schools. They will also remain directly responsible for strategic decisions on the general provision of schools and school buildings and for other aspects of education provision which are sensibly provided at education authority level, such as school transport,

bursaries, recruitment advertising and in-service teacher training. They would also be responsible for the allocation of delegated budgets to schools.
(SOED 1992a, s. 3.2)

However, it was signalled that 'a fresh look' should be taken at the nature and provision of services by education authorities, suggesting a shift away from direct provision by education authorities (SOED 1992b).

In research exploring the implications of Devolved School Management and Reorganisation for schools and education authorities, a Director of Education concluded:

I think Devolved School Management is the biggest change in management that we have seen in one hundred years just about. That strengthened the role of the headteacher, allied with the school board. And that made a big, big difference. And it's changed the role of educational administrators.
(Quoted in Campbell 1999, p. 402).

An education officer suggested that Devolved School Management 'challenged the way that the Centre (education authority) manages and organises itself' (quoted in Campbell 1999, p. 453). Furthermore, he proposed that Devolved School Management had reorganised and restructured education authorities 'without (local government) Reorganisation' to such an extent that the wider Reorganisation was arguably unnecessary and inappropriate (Campbell 1999, p. 453).

Consultations concerning Local Government Reorganisation and a movement to Devolved School Management were occurring during a similar period (see table 1). Both policies shared linkages to restructuring the public sector, emphasising managerial reforms, and developing new forms of local governance (Fairley and Paterson 1995). Concerning the combination of Reorganisation and Devolved School Management, the then Conservative Government had assured:

no action stemming from the Government's consideration of this issue [Devolved School Management] will remove education authorities' statutory responsibility for ensuring the provision of education in their areas, and education authorities will continue to provide, *or arrange for the provision of*, a wide range of support services for schools, their staff

Local Governance of Education in Transition

and their pupils.
(Scottish Office 1992, s.31 - my emphasis).

A later consultation document proposed:

While the introduction of Devolved School Management will shift much of the day to day management of school education down to school level, the new authorities will retain a strategic, enabling and supportive role under these schemes. They will ... still be responsible for ensuring adequate and efficient provision of school education in their area, as required by statute.
(Scottish Office 1993, p.5)

However, the operation of these roles in practice remained to be developed and were to be influenced by, and have an influence on, the nature, structure and development of education authorities during and after Reorganisation.

Table 1
Timing of Devolved School Management and Local Government Reorganisation Policies

Timetable	Devolved School Management	Reorganisation
1 April 1994	1st Tranche of Schools Operating Devolved School Management	
6 April 1995		Election of 'Shadow' Councils
1 April 1996	Devolved School Management in Primary (except very small) & Secondary Schools	New Councils Assume Full Powers
1 April 1997	Devolved School Management in special schools	Councils to have produced 'Schemes of Decentralisation'
1 April 1998	Devolved School Management in remaining primaries	

LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION AND EDUCATION AUTHORITIES

The 1994 Local Government etc (Scotland) Act legislated for the reorganisation of Scottish local government. The Regional, District and Island councils were to be abolished and replaced by 32 unitary authorities, with effect from 1 April 1996. The movement to single-tier, small scale unitary authorities was to have significant implications for the structure and workings of education authorities. Furthermore, the precise nature of an 'education authority' was called into question with the removal of the statutory requirement for a Director of Education and associated Education Committee. Therefore, the reorganisation of local government presented a further reform of the local governance of education. As Midwinter and McGarvey (1994, p.110) predicted: 'The current proposals for the reform of local government will have far reaching implications for Scottish education'.

The findings reported in this article are derived mainly from research conducted during the period prior to, during and immediately following local government reorganisation (1995-1997). Research was conducted with senior education officers (12 in total) in three Regional authorities and headteachers in 25 schools (12 secondary, 13 primary) pre-Reorganisation. Following Reorganisation, these headteachers were interviewed again and interviews were conducted with senior education officers (17 in total) in the eight new unitary authorities in which the sample schools are now located. The authorities selected were chosen to represent a range of different experiences of Reorganisation and to reflect different socio-economic and geographical circumstances and political compositions. The schools were selected to represent a range of sizes of school, socio-economic intake and geographical location (see Appendix A for details). Therefore, the findings represent the perspectives and experiences of the fieldwork headteachers and education officers particularly. While the findings may have wider implications, they are not intended to be generalisable as representative of all experiences and perceptions across Scotland.

Initial Perceptions of Reorganisation

In the debates about and reactions to a proposed reorganisation of local government, there were particular concerns about the implications for the local education service. In the lengthy proposals for Reorganisation, there was limited discussion of the education function specifically. Therefore, concerns were voiced about a lack of sufficient consideration and an allegedly inappropriate reform of education authorities which 'threatened' the

Local Governance of Education in Transition

nature of the future education service (Corsar 1994; Hart 1994; Maginnis 1994; Midwinter & McGarvey 1994; Scottish School Boards Association 1994).

All the education officers and headteachers interviewed pre-Reorganisation were seriously concerned about the likely impact of Reorganisation on education. In particular, they were concerned about reduced economies of scale and ongoing financial constraints. They were concerned that the quality and extent of services provided by the education authority would diminish, with non-statutory services being perceived as particularly vulnerable. Indeed during the transition to Reorganisation, budgetary considerations were resulting in reductions in support services, developmental work and non-statutory provision, and attempts to close schools.

However, a minority of headteachers and education officers recognised that the two-tier system of local government had manifested some problems, especially in communication, 'duplication of bureaucracy' and confusion over responsibilities. It was suggested that smaller, reformed education authorities may overcome these problems. In particular, it was hoped that smaller scale authorities would enable a closer working relationship between schools and education authorities. The education officers hoped that headteachers would recognise their responsibilities and roles within a devolved management system. The headteachers hoped education authorities would become more responsive to the needs of their schools. A minority of headteachers suggested that, within the new education authorities, 'new faces' and a 'fresh approach' may make a positive difference. Consequently, it was proposed that some improvements in the nature and quality of the local education service may result.

Nevertheless, overall there was a perception amongst the majority of headteachers and education officers that Reorganisation was an unwelcome policy resulting in an inappropriate reorganisation of the local education service. A minority of interviewees argued that the Conservative Government's intention was to eradicate education authorities; for example, a Director of Education proposed that Devolved School Management combined with Reorganisation would result in reduced personnel and resources in the central Education Department with the possibility that the future would witness the 'closure of headquarters' (Campbell 1999).

The Need for a Director of Education

A particular and pronounced concern was the removal of the statutory requirement for a Director of Education and Education Committee. The need for a professional educational Directorate, with specialist expertise and understanding of education, was widely advocated (Hart 1994; Corsar 1994; Kirk 1995; Scottish School Boards Association 1994). Furthermore, it was argued the existence of an education committee ensures democracy, which alongside the Director of Education provides a forum to represent and reassure parents and schools, fulfilling the democratic and local responsiveness principles of local government (Scottish School Boards Association 1994). Hart (1994) argued that without these mechanisms, the education budget would be vulnerable within local government and the education system would be subjected to increasing Central Government control.

The vast majority of headteachers (23 out of 25 interviewed) firmly supported the need for an educational Director of Education (or equivalent), Education Department and Education Committee. The notion of 'generic management' was not popular:

the whole problem when you get the idea of the 'generic manager', you end up with a situation like what has happened in the health service, and that has been a disaster. There was a failure to distinguish the role of the generic manager, as opposed to the professional and specialist manager, which is necessary for education.

(Director of Education quoted in Campbell 1999, p.410).

Educational Directors of Education were perceived as 'professional', 'skilled', 'knowledgeable' and therefore commanding support and respect from headteachers. In the event, contrary perhaps to the then Conservative Government's intention, all the fieldwork authorities appointed a specific 'Director of Education', with an educational background, as head of an 'education department', although their remit was often extended to include other services, such as leisure.

Restructuring Education Authorities

A lean central administration was advocated as beneficial by the education officers within the fieldwork unitary education authorities. However, this was not related simply to the scale of the education authority, but also to the

Local Governance of Education in Transition

political choices of the council and, on occasions, the expressed preference of the Director of Education. One Director of Education explained that reorganising the education authority involved reorganising the nature of the roles and relationships between school and education authority:

the headteachers are basically officers of the authority, they just happen to be based more locally than we do. We are trying to bridge that gap between central management, central support and the managers of the schools out there.
(Campbell 1999, p. 414).

In a context of devolution to schools, resource constraint and changing local governance, a leaner education authority was perceived as appropriate. As another Director of Education explained:

We are very tight [lean central administration]. But it's recognition, partly of our finance, but also of the fact that we should be running smaller teams if we are expecting heads to take on more of a role.
(Quoted in Campbell 1999, p.412).

Changes in local governance required structural reform and also cultural changes in working practices.

Given arguments about smaller scales, leaner organisation and closer relationships, many of the authorities were developing a more corporate approach, involving attempts for the different traditional departments in local authorities to work more closely together, including the potential integration of different departments, for example education and social work. This was more popular with the elected members than with the officers. A Director of Education explained:

Yes, they [councillors] want us to be corporate. We are always round the Chief Executive's team table ... But the big juggernaut [Education Department], to some degree, still rolls on ... I think it is true to say that certainly [Education] staff, generally speaking see themselves as focused on the Education service, and while they are willing to be and should be corporate beings, in terms of working with integrated policies at the local level ... but the core of thinking in Education, the core of our thinking is done with an Education hat on.
(Quoted in Campbell 1999, p.473).

The drives to a corporate approach emerged from various factors. First, the practical impact of compulsory competitive tendering and budget cuts made a corporate approach more attractive. Second, members were politically committed to developing a corporate approach. Third, corporate working may be appropriate in a small, lean central structure. Finally, a corporate approach to addressing local needs and policies may be advantageous - for example, tackling deprivation. Generally, it was the last strategy which officers supported most as it may be appropriate for specific policy issues, but it does not necessarily involve a complete shift to corporate working for the education authority. There remained support amongst the education officers for retaining a distinctive approach to education within local government.

Support for the distinctive treatment of education was evident in the development of Schemes of Decentralisation within local government also. In all the fieldwork education authorities, officers and headteachers were concerned about the Schemes' impact on education. It was generally argued by education officers that the education service was already decentralised through schools and Devolved School Management. Therefore, the Scheme of Decentralisation was perceived as unnecessary and inappropriate. Tensions between core education authority, area level and school responsibilities were emerging or predicted by education officers and headteachers. Indicative perhaps of the general disjunction between the nature of the education service and the Council's Scheme of Decentralisation was the fact that in no education authority would the area structure, determined by the Scheme, fully accord with Education's area structure. Indeed, in one education authority, creating an 'area structure' was deemed wholly inappropriate as it would destroy the principle of single-tier management. There were concerns that the area structure would create additional bureaucracy and cost implications, which could adversely affect the level of budget and management responsibilities devolved to schools.

The Conservative Government had advocated also the creation of joint arrangements for service provision, for example for specialist services. This principle and practice were not especially popular, and arrangements were not being significantly developed during the fieldwork of the present research. Generally, joint arrangements existed mainly for the cross-boundary transfer of pupils, especially in moving from primary to secondary school, and for specialist Special Educational Needs provision (which had always existed). Mostly, the new education authorities wanted to provide their own services and to avoid entering arrangements which were considered to be potentially problematic, especially politically and financially. This point was illustrated by an education officer discussing the difficulty of maintaining or creating

Local Governance of Education in Transition

joint arrangements with neighbouring authorities (which were all previously part of the same Region):

That's one thing that has and I think will disappear, any inter-authority co-operation ... we had hoped to keep the Schools' Library Service running as a joint operation for a year. It's lasted six months ... politically, culturally, we are fundamentally different to ... [neighbouring authority A] ... And completely different philosophically ... And we never hear of ... [neighbouring authority B] now, they just do their own thing. So basically we will go our way, we will do our own thing.
(Quoted in Campbell 1999, p.418)

This officer concluded that such transitions were 'sad' as 'what it [Reorganisation] has done has fragmented what one could argue was a relatively coherent education service [pre-Reorganisation]' (quoted in Campbell 1999, p.418).

Issues of Scale and Purpose

The issue of scale had been a key contention in the consultation concerning Reorganisation. Ever since the Wheatley Report in 1969, there has been debate about what is the most appropriate scale of an education authority. Wheatley argued that a population of 200,000 was the most appropriate scale, although this figure has never been fully justified. However, as Midwinter and McGarvey (1994) have analysed, many of the new education authorities post-Reorganisation are significantly smaller than this scale (24 out of 32 authorities in their analysis in 1994). Defining an appropriate scale for an education authority remains contentious and complex. In general, larger education authorities are perceived as appropriate for ensuring adequate service provision and economies of scale. Smaller education authorities are perceived as more appropriate for ensuring local responsiveness and being more democratically accountable. There are ongoing tensions between the service provision and democratic roles of local government, which have differing implications for scale and purpose. During the Reorganisation of the 1990s, the Government had argued that education authorities were to move away from a service provision model and focus on local responsiveness and accountability, involving a movement away from direct service provision to an enabling model involving contractual arrangements and internal markets (Scottish Office 1992). Hence, the shift from larger scale education authorities to smaller unitary authorities was advocated, according with the

emphasis on managerialism and market forces in a new form of local governance.

Post-Reorganisation, the headteachers and officers interviewed identified some benefits associated with smaller scale education authorities. There could be a closer working relationship between the education authority and schools. For some areas, the more homogeneous nature of the education authorities, compared to the Regions, was perceived as advantageous as it enabled appropriate, coherent and targeted policies to be developed, for example in tackling deprivation and under-achievement. Therefore, small unitary authorities were perceived as being potentially more 'local' and more responsive than the larger Regions.

However, overall, problems associated with the boundaries, scale and nature of the education authorities were identified by education officers and headteachers also. For example, the population base and composition in the majority of fieldwork authorities was felt to be too small and skewed to enable adequate local taxation revenue to be accrued, particularly in deprived areas. Therefore, there were concerns about losses in terms of finance, structure, scale, personnel, policies and capacity to fulfil the education function. Overall, there were serious concerns that the boundaries and scale of the new education authorities may have been inappropriate to enable adequate and efficient provision of education services in all education authorities.

Evaluation of Reorganisation and Education

In the year following Reorganisation, the education authorities were evolving and developing their policies and approaches. There remained concerns about the impact and appropriateness of Reorganisation, but there was hope that improvements in the system could develop.

However some 'losses' for education were perceived by headteachers and education officers linked to the processes and outcomes of Reorganisation. Many losses were linked to budgetary constraints also. Although cutbacks and constraints pre-dated Reorganisation, the new authorities faced the legacy of expenditure constraint plus the expectation to achieve 'new authority savings' also. Furthermore, against constrained expenditure, there was the need not only to maintain the education service but to develop it and introduce new policy requirements. All the fieldwork education authorities were having to operate within budgetary constraints (see Appendix B for further details). The fieldwork authorities reported cuts ranging from 2% to

Local Governance of Education in Transition

10% of their education budget between 1995/96 and 1996/97 (these were generally smaller proportions than the overall councils were subject to as there were attempts to protect education funding). A common approach was to reduce or charge for non-statutory provision, for example closing outdoor centres or charging for music tuition. Support services were reduced, for example psychological and advisory services. Various budget headings at school-level were 'cash-conserved', whereby they were held at the same level as the previous year, for example capitations (spending available for books, stationery etc). A secondary school headteacher explained the impact on his school's budget:

there's just the general cutback in expenditure. We've lost £10 per pupil head and a variety of budget headings have been reduced. So basically, we're being asked to do the same job with less money.
(Quoted in Campbell 1999, p.394).

Similarly, a primary school headteacher, in a different authority, argued that schools were expected to operate 'in exactly the same way' as previously, 'but with a funding budgetary crisis, that is certainly more real than imagined' (quoted in Campbell 1999, p.387). Therefore, there were serious concerns about the levels and quality of services which could be provided and maintained and about the difficult choices facing schools 'managing the cuts' (headteacher quoted in Campbell 1999, p.394).

In the fieldwork education authorities, staffing posts were left unfilled and voluntary severance and early retirement packages were offered at school and education authority levels. Within the education authorities, there were concerns about a reduction in staff at authority level, especially those with specialist expertise. There were more general concerns about the 'loss' of expertise due to the relative inexperience of some new officers and councillors.

There were perceived losses resulting from the nature of the new education authorities compared to the previous Regions, for example in terms of economies of scale and the appropriateness of new structures. In a minority of the new education authorities, headteachers were concerned about the nature of policies being developed. For example, in one of the authorities, because of the smaller scale and closer relationship between education authority and school, all the headteachers interviewed were concerned about a perceived move to centralise control and be overly prescriptive at school level. By contrast, in another education authority, a secondary school headteacher commented on a feeling of 'insecurity' and an apparent 'policy vacuum' that

had resulted in the upheaval of and transition to Reorganisation. Therefore, there was a need for careful consideration of the changing relationship between schools and education authorities, including the nature of involvement and extent of intervention exercised by education authorities.

Nevertheless, in all the education authorities there was a perception amongst headteachers and education officers that some benefits were emerging or potential as a result of Reorganisation also. Pre-Reorganisation, headteachers and education officers had hoped that Reorganisation would result in an improved relationship between schools and education authorities. In particular, all the headteachers wanted a more responsive, communicative and consultative education authority. In some education authorities, post-Reorganisation these hopes were beginning to be realised. Officers in five of the education authorities spoke of trying to develop a 'culture' which encouraged 'consensus' between school and the education authority, enabling teachers to be 'involved not done to'. All the headteachers in these authorities welcomed improved communication and the feeling of 'being listened to'. In these education authorities, education officers were encouraged to have very close working relationships with schools. In one of the larger education authorities, the Director of Education explained the need for his officers to have a local presence:

we've tried hard to make sure now, that you've got an area role, be out in the school, be seen. I think that's been successful ... [it] also means that when we come to make decisions, you actually know what it's like in the reality of a school, you haven't spent the last three or four weeks sitting in here [education authority central office].

(Quoted in Campbell 1999, p.425)

In another fieldwork education authority, councillors were encouraged to be more actively involved with schools also. Where this closer relationship between education authority and school worked well, it was perceived to have positive benefits by all involved. However, in two of the education authorities, the rhetoric of communication, consultation and a closer relationship had not yet been realised (during the fieldwork period). Headteachers were concerned by an apparent 'empty consultation' with the education authority. In one education authority, the movement to a 'close relationship' was perceived as centralising and frustrating by the headteachers interviewed. By contrast, in another education authority, where a 'closer relationship' was not perceived, the headteachers were dismayed at the lack of the 'smaller, more personal touch' that they had anticipated pre-Reorganisation.

Local Governance of Education in Transition

Overall, in the initial period post-Reorganisation, there remained serious concerns that Reorganisation had been a 'political mistake' (headteacher quoted in Campbell 1999, p.427) with costly consequences for local government and education. One headteacher argued:

I think it was just another Government ploy. As far as I can see, it's only cost more money, a lot of aggravation ... All I can see is more frustration ... And there were offices set up in the High Street where there wasn't one before. They were in an old office, and as far as I could see they delivered the service perfectly adequately ... [they] had to appoint new staff. There's a colossal amount of work been generated by it [Reorganisation]. Which I debate whether it was really necessary at all. And I don't think the public are necessarily any better served now... from my experience on joining this school and as a citizen, I am not aware of any improvement as a result of Reorganisation.
(Quoted in Campbell 1999, p.428)

Furthermore, in a different education authority, the two headteachers interviewed were concerned that the financial cost of Reorganisation would have adverse effects on headteachers, in terms of their schools and as citizens. There was a general feeling that the money 'could have been better used' (headteacher quoted in Campbell 1999, p.428).

Of course, these perceptions were promoted while the transition and development of the new education authorities was still underway; therefore they are not representative of current perceptions. In terms of perceived and potential benefits, the key issue was the development of a strengthened relationship between an education authority and its schools; arguably this was counter to the then Conservative Government's intention and promotion of a limited 'enabling authority' (Clarke and Stewart 1988).

THE ROLES OF THE EDUCATION AUTHORITY

During the consultation on Reorganisation, it was proposed that education authorities would have a 'strategic, enabling and supportive role' (Scottish Office 1993, p.5). Although the nature of the 'enabling' authority remains controversial (McGarvey 1997), the then Conservative Government proposed this as one in which the education authority would have a minimal role in direct service provision. By contrast, traditionally, a fundamental rationale and justification for education authorities was to provide and co-ordinate education services. However, from the start of the Reorganisation

consultations, the Government argued that this required reform. In **Shaping the New Councils** (Scottish Office 1992), it was argued that the expectations of planned economic development throughout the public sector and comprehensive service provision manifested the two-tier system of local government in Scotland. The document suggested these expectations no longer held true and, in light of economic and political changes, a monopolistic and direct provision of public services was no longer necessary. Rather following the model of the 'enabling' authority and internal markets, services were to be provided by the private sector, other public providers or voluntary organisations, as well as the education authority. The Government proposed: 'councils should no longer assume that the best service is the one that is provided directly by staff from a central location' (Scottish Office 1993, p.4).

However, the proposal for reduced service provision and assumed nature of the 'enabling' authority for education have been problematic. Midwinter and McGarvey (1994) argued that, despite reform, direct service provision by the education authority would remain. Importantly, amongst all the headteachers interviewed, the provision of services was consistently perceived as the most important role for education authorities (Campbell 2000a). Headteachers wanted education authorities to provide professional, advisory, support and technical services. They wanted education authorities to take responsibility for managing services subject to competitive tendering also. A minority of headteachers argued that they would consider purchasing some services, such as advisory, library and careers services, from suppliers other than the education authority. There was a recognition that some services, however supplied, could be provided more efficiently and could be more responsive to the needs of schools. However, overall, there was a strong preference amongst the vast majority of headteachers for direct service provision by the education authority. It was argued that the nature and 'localness' of the education authority meant that headteachers knew who they were dealing with and vice versa. Primary schools in particular wanted to retain education authority services. Therefore, generally, a narrow interpretation of the 'enabling' education authority was not supported.

The Government had suggested strategic and support roles for education authorities. These were advocated also by the headteachers and education officers interviewed, but interpreted widely (Campbell 2000a). The strategic role of the education authority was proposed to be broad and include 'determining policies and priorities' at the local level and 'adapting national policy' to local needs. The notion of the education authority as an educational 'leader' providing 'vision' and 'proactive management' was advocated. Similarly, the 'supporter' role of the education authority was interpreted

Local Governance of Education in Transition

widely, to include educational support, advice and service provision. Strategic and support roles influenced also the perception of education authorities having roles as a 'staffing agency', 'banker' and 'monitor'. Education authorities were perceived as being 'facilitators' encouraging co-operation between schools and education authority at the local level. Furthermore, the education authority was urged to act as an 'advocate' of schools, defending education within local government and protecting schools from central government. This role involved a perception of the education authority as an 'ombudsman' ensuring that schools were treated fairly by parents, local politicians and national policies. Therefore, all the headteachers and education officers were supportive of an extensive range of roles for the education authority, crucially involving service provision and a close involvement between education authority and school.

THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN EDUCATION AUTHORITIES AND SCHOOLS

In the post-war period, the notion of 'partnership' conceptualised the relationship between education authority and school. Although contentious, it is apparent that a reasonably close relationship between education authorities and schools has existed in Scotland (McPherson and Raab 1988). However, pre-Reorganisation and particularly related to Devolved School Management, there was a perception that the relationship between schools and education authorities was changing. A Director of Education explained: 'if you look at the pervading socio-economic political philosophy of the present time, then it's largely new managerialism' (quoted in Campbell 1999, p.482). This philosophy advocated the devolution of powers to school level and the creation of market forces throughout the education system. There was a perception amongst headteachers and education officers that Devolved School Management had devolved powers to schools and was resulting in the erosion of the traditional hierarchical relationship with the emergence of more diffuse relationships. However, there were serious concerns that these 'diffuse' relationships may create 'fragmentation' of the education service to the extent that a local education system no longer existed (Campbell 1999). These concerns about fragmented and reduced services were prominent in discussions about Reorganisation also.

It was apparent that shifts in the relationships between schools and education authorities were occurring, but were not entirely straightforward. There was a general recognition that increased powers had been devolved to schools. A minority of headteachers expressed the opinion that the power of the

education authority had been reduced and that officers had resisted such a trend. However post-Reorganisation, there were concerns that school 'autonomy' was being reduced because of budget constraints and the potential for new education authorities to become perceived as interventionist and centralist by headteachers. Given that schools wanted education authorities to have some involvement at school-level and fulfil a range of roles, there was a general perception of the relationship being based on 'freedom within a framework'. However, the balance between a relative conception of 'freedom' for schools and the overarching 'framework' of the education authority could alter and be problematic. In response to claims of being centralist, an officer explained that to establish and operate a decentralised structure, there remained a need for a strong central core. The majority of education officers interviewed, both pre- and post- Reorganisation, commented on the unwillingness of schools to take on additional responsibilities, as appropriate to a decentralised structure and leaner education authority; as one Director of Education concluded: 'with devolved management, comes devolved responsibility' (quoted in Campbell 1999, p.460). Overall, there was a majority perception, amongst education officers and headteachers, that the relationship between schools and education authority was based upon a shifting power relationship but involved an element of dependency on both sides.

Post-Reorganisation, there was support for a reformed and re-invigorated 'partnership' between schools and education authority. A Director of Education commented:

we want them (schools) to feel as partners in the management of the service ... Staff should feel more involved ... taking the headteachers with us as senior colleagues. So the relationship is different than you would have found say ten years ago, when it was very much the dominant authority and headteachers subservient ... it's much more an equal partnership ... trying to work out with our schools the direction of the Authority. Giving them freedom to develop and to suit local circumstances, but always being there to back them up and to help them and to advise them ... it's partnership.
(Quoted in Campbell 1999, p.462)

Although the separation of the 'relative roles' of education authority and school under a devolved management system could be problematic, another Director of Education argued that a culture of partnership should be developed based on:

Local Governance of Education in Transition

professional trust and respect for each others roles. And it's best summed up by we know what each other does, but we don't try to do each others' jobs ... it's a total change in style and emphasis.
(Quoted in Campbell 1999, p. 463)

The potential to identify the 'relative roles' of schools and education authorities, and the general acceptance of 'freedom within a framework' by headteachers, suggested the creation of a new form of partnership, which was not based purely on the then Conservative Government's promotion of market forces and managerialism in educational restructuring. This reflects the differing forms of governance identified by Kooiman (1999), where new processes, arrangements and methods are developing, encouraging co-operation to enhance both legitimacy and effectiveness. However, amongst headteachers and education officers, there was considerable debate about the nature of co-operation and importantly the balance of power within the partnership between schools and education authorities.

THE SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT AND EDUCATION AUTHORITIES

The creation of the Scottish Parliament and Executive is resulting in further reform of the local governance of education. Sinclair (1997) argued that the Scottish Parliament provides an 'opportunity ... to look afresh' at services. However, he was concerned also that the Scottish Parliament may result in increased central intervention in education and local government which may be inappropriate and undermine local accountability.

It is clear that the relationship between education authorities and schools and, crucially, between education authorities and the Scottish Parliament will continue to develop and requires development. Alexander (1998, p.28) argued:

There is a need to be clear about the proper balance between Scotland's Parliament and Scotland's councils on issues of policy, strategy and service delivery. Part of the apprehensiveness in Scottish local government about the creation of a Parliament derives from the view that it may suck up powers from local government as well as drawing them down from Westminster.

Midwinter (1997, p.33-4) commented: 'It would be sad if a measure intended to decentralise power should lead to further centralisation', and consequently advocated the need to 'reinvent partnership'. This need for a careful

consideration of the new and developing relationship between the Scottish Parliament and local government was central to the remit of the McIntosh Commission. However, as the McIntosh Commission explained in their second consultation document:

A partnership between the legislature, or the executive, and local government cannot, as a matter of fact, be a partnership between equals, since one partner ultimately holds authority over the other.
(Scottish Office 1998, s.30).

Contrary to development in the 1980s and early 1990s, they suggest:

it is desirable, in the interests of good government, that central and local government should both be 'strong' - it is unhealthy that central government should dominate local government. Hence the desire for partnership.
(Scottish Office 1998, s.33).

The notion of a balanced partnership was supported by the headteachers and education officers interviewed for the present research also. They were concerned that debates concerning the Scottish Parliament, education authorities and schools would become polarised focusing on the merits of decentralisation versus centralisation. Rather an approach emphasising the importance, contribution and respective roles of each body, based on a partnership relationship was endorsed.

The McIntosh Report advocated the need for strong local government in this developing partnership, linking the traditionally important and ongoing roles of local government:

We see two essential features of local government:

- ◀ Local government serves the people. Public service provision has always been a prime function of local government...
- ◀ Local government represents the community. Councils are elected. They represent the people of their areas ... [they] have a democratic legitimacy ... [and] representational function.

(Scottish Office 1999).

Local Governance of Education in Transition

Although these features are long-standing, the McIntosh Report argued the need for further reform. It suggested a strong local government based on principles of subsidiarity, mutual respect and a 'parity of esteem' between central and local government. However, in the interests of 'healthy government', they argued the need for local government renewal and modernisation appropriate to contemporary circumstances, involving the reform of structures and working processes within local authorities. The McIntosh Report indicated:

The programme of action stemming from the recommendations in this report is designed to bring about a quantum change in the character and quality of Scottish local government.
(Scottish Office 1999).

Furthermore, there is a need to develop a new way of working with, and relationship between, local government and central government. In such a development a new partnership is argued to be crucial, as Wendy Alexander proposed in the Scottish Executive's response to the McIntosh Report: 'It is time for a new partnership, not of words, but of actions' (Scottish Executive 1999). It is clear that further reform of the local governance of education will continue, creating changes in principles (meta-governance), institutions (second order governance) and practices (first order governance) (Kooiman 1999).

CONCLUSIONS

The research reported in this article was based on fieldwork before, during and after Reorganisation, involving interviews with headteachers and education officers. There were serious concerns about the implications and impact of Reorganisation for education during this period. Nevertheless, while there was some resistance to the changes being introduced by the then Conservative Government, there remained a willingness to develop the new structures, practices and policies in order to develop Scottish education and local government. Overall, amongst all the headteachers and officers interviewed, there remained a strong belief in the local education system and the education service (Campbell 2000b). These beliefs countered concerns about the promotion of market forces and managerialism apparently being encouraged by the Conservative Government.

The notion of partnership has been pervasive throughout the development of the post-war education system. However, as a Director of Education

commented, 'I think the traditional idea of partnership has been quite spurious', requiring an attempt to clarify the 'respective roles' of the different partners in education (Campbell 1999, p.456). Writing about England and Wales, the Audit Commission (1998) argued that partnership has recently been re-invigorated by the New Labour Government. However, they propose that with 'changing partners' at national and local levels, the nature and definition of partnership is changing also. In Scotland, the notion of 'changing partners' and a 'changing partnership' is vital to exploring and developing the relationships between a New Labour UK government, the Scottish Executive, reorganised education authorities, and schools with devolved management powers. The local governance of education has undergone major reform and continues to be going through a period of transition - from the reforms of the 1990s, reported in this article, to the modernisation agenda of the early twenty-first century. Such developments and transitions require further analysis of the 'rightful place' of local government and education in 'the heart of the New Scotland' (Alexander 1999).

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APPENDIX A

The research reported in this article is based on a larger project which researched the combined implications of Devolved School Management and Local Government Reorganisation for the roles of schools and education authorities, and their relationships with each other, in the management and governance of education. Full details of the research can be found in Campbell (1999). Semi-structured interviews and documentary evidence were collected from schools and education authorities.

The sample was selected to represent a range of experiences of both Devolved School Management (length of experience of policy of school-based management) and Reorganisation (the extent to which the boundaries of the existing Regional authority were being changed), along with a range of

Local Governance of Education in Transition

socio-economic and geographical circumstances. Three Regional authorities were selected for fieldwork interviews from 1995 to 1996.

Strathclyde Region had the largest population in Scotland - a total of 2,287,800 in 1994 (Rating Review 1996). It had a diverse geographical and socio-economic nature. Strathclyde had the greatest experience of devolving school management, as they had piloted a scheme since 1990. The Labour-controlled Strathclyde education authority was committed to devolving management. For Reorganisation, Strathclyde was divided into 12 unitary authorities.

Highland was selected as the second research site. The boundaries of Highland Regional Council remained largely intact post-Reorganisation (although this involved the amalgamation of the eight previous districts). For Devolved School Management, Highland had only limited experience by 1995. They had piloted a project in two secondary schools prior to national Devolved School Management, but the main impetus to reform was the Government policy. Highland was one of the smaller regions in terms of population - 207,500 in 1994 (Rating Review 1996). However, it covered a large, predominantly rural, geographical area. Highland council was independent controlled.

The third research site was Grampian, as it had less extreme experiences of both Devolved School Management and Reorganisation compared to Strathclyde and Highland. In terms of Reorganisation, Grampian was fragmented into three unitary authorities (although this involved the amalgamation of five districts). Grampian provided intermediate experience of Devolved School Management, as by 1995 it was further into implementation than Highland but not as far as Strathclyde. Grampian had a population of 532,000 in 1994 (Ratings Review 1996). It was geographically smaller than the other two Regions, but contained a mixture of urban, suburban and rural areas. It was politically mixed also with support for Labour, Conservatives, Liberal Democrats and the SNP strong within different parts of the Region.

Within these three Regions, semi-structured interviews were conducted with education officers who were involved in Devolved School Management and also preparations for Reorganisation. A total of 12 officers were interviewed (4 in each Region).

Within each Region, a sample of schools involved in the initial piloting of Devolved School Management was selected. All schools selected were non-

denominational. For each secondary school selected, one feeder primary was selected also (see table A1). In Strathclyde, there were six pilot secondary schools. These schools represented a range of sizes, socio-economic circumstances and geographical locations. Post-Reorganisation, these six secondary schools and their feeder primaries would be located in different authorities. A similar situation existed in Grampian. Four different 'types' of secondary school were pilots. Post-Reorganisation, these would be located in two different authorities. In Highland, the situation was different as the Devolved School Management pilot operated within one district area only. Post-Reorganisation, all six pilot secondary schools (and their feeder primaries) would remain in the same authority. Therefore, in Highland, it was decided to select only three secondary and three primary schools to represent the experiences of small, medium and large sized schools (determined by pupil numbers).

Access was granted in a total of 25 schools (only 1 secondary did not give permission). In these schools, the headteacher was interviewed twice – once before Reorganisation (1995 to 1996) and once following Reorganisation (1996 to 1997).

Following Reorganisation, semi-structured interviews were conducted with education officers in the unitary authorities in which these schools are now located. One education authority did not agree to be involved in the research; therefore a total of 8 unitary education authorities were involved (see table A2). A total of 17 education officers were interviewed during 1996 to 1997.

APPENDIX B

There were concerns that the total education budget within the local authorities was not sufficient to fund the cost of maintaining services, financing new policy initiatives and covering increases in staffing costs. Table B1 provides evidence of a net expenditure trends in education for Scotland. Table B2 compares actual local authority expenditure in the first year of Reorganisation, compared to the needs assessments.

Local Governance of Education in Transition

Table A1
Fieldwork Schools

School Sector	Education Authority Pre/ Post Reorganisation	No. of Pupils in school 1995 (Trend in Pupil No.s)	Geographical location	Socio-economic location
Secondary	Grampian/ City of Aberdeen	820 (Rising)	Urban	Mixed
Secondary	Grampian/ Aberdeenshire	1652 (Stable)	Rural	Mixed
Secondary	Grampian/ Aberdeenshire	1601 (Stable)	Urban	Mixed
Secondary	Grampian/ Aberdeenshire	455 (Rising)	Rural	Mixed
Secondary	Highland/ Highland	426 (Stable)	Urban/Rural Mix	Deprived
Secondary	Highland/ Highland	654 (Stable)	Rural	Deprived
Secondary	Highland/ Highland	1190 (Stable)	Rural	Deprived
Secondary	Strathclyde/ North Lanarkshire	650 (Falling)	New Town (Urban)	Mixed
Secondary	Strathclyde/ South Lanarkshire	1025 (Rising)	Urban	Mixed
Secondary	Strathclyde/ South Ayrshire	632 (Stable)	Rural	Mixed
Secondary	Strathclyde/ Argyll & Bute	490 (Stable)	Rural	Mixed
Secondary	Strathclyde/ City of Glasgow	420 (Falling)	Urban	Deprived
Primary	Grampian/ City of Aberdeen	165 (Falling)	Urban	Mixed
Primary	Grampian/ Aberdeenshire	6 (Falling)	Rural	Mixed
Primary	Grampian/ Aberdeenshire	456 (Stable)	Town school (Urban)	Affluent
Primary	Grampian/ Aberdeenshire	312 (Rising)	Rural	Mixed
Primary	Highland/ Highland	170 (Falling)	Rural	Mixed
Primary	Highland/ Highland	240 (Stable)	Rural	Deprived
Primary	Highland/ Highland	497 (Falling)	County Town (Rural)	Mixed
Primary	Strathclyde/ North Lanarkshire	210 (Falling)	Urban New Town	Mixed
Primary	Strathclyde/ South Lanarkshire	590 (Stable)	Urban	Mixed
Primary	Strathclyde/ South Ayrshire	35 (Stable)	Rural	Mixed
Primary	Strathclyde/ Argyll & Bute	442 (Rising)	Rural	Mixed
Primary	Strathclyde/ City of Glasgow	105 (Falling)	Urban	Deprived
Primary	Strathclyde / East Renfrewshire	340 (Stable)	Suburban/ Rural	Mixed

Authority	Population (1996 – Rating Review)	No. of Primary Schools (SOED 1993)	No. of Secondary Schools (SOED 1993)	Political Control (1996)
Aberdeen, City of	217260	62	13	Labour
Aberdeenshire	227430	162	16	No overall control
Argyll & Bute	90840	85	10	Independent
East Renfrewshire	88080	20	7	No overall control
Glasgow, City of	616430	209	40	Labour
Highland	208700	199	27	Independent
North Lanarkshire	325940	126	25	Labour
South Lanarkshire	307450	127	22	Labour

	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90	1992-93	1993-94	1994-95
Education expenditure for Scotland (£s)	317.63	346.28	378.79	477.19	445.49	454.52
Percentage increase over previous year	10.2%	9.0%	9.4%	6.9%	-6.64%	2.03%

Source: Rating Review 1991 and 1996

Authority	Needs Assessments (1) £000	Actual Expenditure (2) £000	Variation Columns (1) & (2) Cash £000	Variation Columns (1) & (2) Percentage Cash %
Aberdeen	200,257	215,823	15,586	7.8
Aberdeenshire	212,243	213,632	1,389	0.7
Argyll & Bute	104,274	123,380	19,106	18.3
East Renfrewshire	80,798	82,108	1,310	1.6
Glasgow	761,770	836,795	55,025	7.0
Highland	235,006	252,363	17,357	7.4
North Lanarkshire	337,019	349,023	12,004	3.6
South Lanarkshire	309,984	342,544	32,560	10.5

Source: Rating Review 1998