

Community Education and the Education Reform Act

One Day Seminar Presented by
The Welsh Joint Education Committee Education Department

14 October 1938

Working Paper

Introduction

This paper attempts to highlight some of the main issues discussed at the Seminar and is presented as a working document. It is an attempt to move somewhat towards the Seminar's objectives:

- (i) to provide information on important issues arising from the implementation of the Education Act and
- (ii) to provide a checklist of items for further discussion at LEA level.

Hopefully the notes contained in the following pages will contribute to the planning process currently underway. The author is grateful for the contribution of the three group reporters.

1. Key Points mentioned by Stephen Mcfiair and Graham Swain

"FE is not defined as being only for 16-19 year olds, or only for those up to the age of 21. It is for all those over the age of 16". (Hansard (Lords) 7th July 1988 Column 511)

Demographic trends will ensure the conversion of the FE sector into a primarily adult service.

The Act provides an opportunity for us to think seriously about what we are doing, how we are doing it, and why. Also to introduce some creative ideas. Adult Educators are traditionally reticent about their service, a fact which has worked against us politically, we will have to use the mechanism of the act to demonstrate what we can do.

It is apparent that the government has no 'master plan'¹ for the education of adults a marked contrast to what is intended for schools and Higher Education.

The biggest danger will be that of 'accidental damage' that Adult and Youth Education will be ignored and possibly pushed out e.g. last year over 1 million adults made use of school premises for their own educational purposes.

Whilst the Act and circulars speak of strategic planning there is no mention of policy, an odd omission since we cannot plan without a policy.

Policies will need to take account of outputs, thus we need to examine what we mean by the term adequate provision. (See UDACE paper "Securing Adequate Facilities" pp 6-10 for a fuller discussion of this point).

It would be unwise to leave part-time adult education out of LEA policies at a time when the inter-change between FE/AE is increasing.

The Act requires LEAs to take the global sum available to FE and to share it out between their colleges. Should the finance for AE be separated out from this?

The issue of governance is intertwined with the issue of LFi'. The boards of governors stipulated for colleges would be unsuitable for free standing adult/community education services.

If LEAs decide to form governing bodies for AE/C.Ed services they will need to explain their actions to the Secretary of State.

Refer to page 14 of UDACE document 'Securing Adequate Facilities' for an indication of the timescales involved.

From April 1990 power will pass to the Governing bodies of institutions.

The finance needed to support Community Education Services currently using school premises will need to be identified and separated out otherwise C.Ed, services will find that their "original contribution" will not be recognised (in part or in full) resulting in an element of double payment.

This process may prove complex and treasurers departments may be reluctant to co-operate - perhaps suggesting nominal figures. The seminar was strongly advised to avoid this approach and to insist on the identification and allocation of the full sums involved.

Schools that 'opt out'¹ can only provide Community Education services following an agreement with the LEA. Paradoxically it was claimed that schools remaining within the LEA can set up Community Education activities that may compete with those provided by the authority.

Whilst the Act will reduce the role of LEAs as direct providers it will present an opportunity for a greater strategic role.

There have been a number of Youth Service policy reviews but these have tended to be on the margins of LEA planning processes. The Act presents the opportunity for C.Ed, services to be included in the centre of planning activity.

The Act does not mention the Youth Service and attempts to secure a legal base by amendment failed.

Consideration needs to be given to including the contribution of voluntary organisations within LEA policy statements. (Appendix 1 contains a copy of an article from the joint IJCVO/UDACE publication "Partners in Learning" September 1983 Issue tic. 2).

The Act will have implications for the structure of LEAs and will inevitably affect the Community Education Services and the role of officers e.g. a move away from managing/advising to inspecting/monitoring?

UDACE recommends the formation of governing bodies for "free standing" Adult Education centres. These may be on a 'group' or 'consortia' basis. It is possible but not certain that government would accept such proposals.

Note: The UDACE paper which advocated the setting up of governing bodies for AE centres is attached as appendix 2.

2. Group Tasks

2.1 Group 1

2.1.1 Local Financial Management

Would a budget disentangled from schools reflect the extent of the services provided?

Would it be worth retaining a central budget for community education?

What elements would constitute the costings involved - how would they be calculated?

Where would "community education" fall politically into the picture as an extra dimension in the concern of governors of schools?

Alternative? That the financing of post-school services is met by an LIA centrally?

Preserves AE/Y. Service?

Frees schools to allocate space to voluntary organisations, community groups etc., at small or nominal charge.

Significance of community use in supplementing school curriculum/a vehicle for 'bridging' between school and parents/enhances the image of C.Ed.

Cleaning/custodial work and privatisation of services (control becomes vested in contractors?)

Is disentanglement necessarily of benefit ~3 youth arc adult service - will the true total value of "hidden costs" of premises, equipment, heating, lighting, caretaking and cleaning costs be deducted in revised Youth Service/Adult Education budgets?

Notional figures rather than formulae? - 3ut clearly identified within budgets.

Increased costs in terms of wear and tear ~3 be taken into account.

What is status of institutions designated as "community schools"?

What pressure will the community exert upon school governors in order that adult youth and community work is preserved?

Problem that school-funding formula is pupil related and not facility related. How do schools with extra facilities meet the costs of running them? Will heads consider withdrawing from costly extra¹ facilities leaving the financial burden to C.Ed.?

Potential for non-opted out schools to operate their own adult education services - at what costs, to meet what needs, to what standard?

Cross-age learning will become attractive to schools? Where this is already in existence, and successful, should the LEA seek to protect such provision through the inclusion of specific statements?

Does grant maintained status apply to the site as a building - or as an operating institution?

What are the implications for school-based youth facilities should a school opt to grant-maintained status?

Direction to governors should be specific to prevent sums allocated for Adult Education/Youth Service purposes being diverted to school purposes?

2.1.2 Adequacy of Provision

"Adequacy" - how is this defined. Do you need to define adequacy not in terms of volume but in terms of predicted outcomes and/or characteristics?

Status of Youth Service is not clear - included within schemes but not within the Act? It can be included even if Youth Service is not to be a delegated service or its finance allocated locally.

"Balanced provision" - how do LEAs safeguard the interests of voluntary organisations and other providers, What are the mechanisms for consultation?

2.1.3 Governing Bodies

Do we want governing bodies? Will they serve adult education and youth service? Need to be able to maintain flexibility within what may be an inflexible system. Perhaps dual provision - some through schools designated "community" and some central control.

Can the political dimension be ignored? Can Youth Service/Adult Education survive without political backing. Do decision-makers sufficiently value or understand the achievements of adult education and youth service?

2.1.4 Major Points from Group 1

(a) Hidden costs of providing youth service/adult education on school premises - can they be realistically represented and calculated. If they are realistically reflected, would this be politically palatable?

- (b) Adequacy - of range and volume but also in terms of quality of services provided in the name of adult/community education.
- (c) Political support, awareness and advocacy. Essential to preservation of services. Governor training but also "community education" promotion and marketing essential? Relationship to "internal" support groups which centres' may already possess.

2.2 Group 2

2.2.1 Governing Bodies

(UDACE paper on governance attached - see appendix 2)

Role for Adult Education in the training of governors.

REPLAN resource pack being produced.

- Community Education Services may need to: make contact with individual governors if they do *not* have adequate representation.

The group reported a general lack of knowledge of the procedures regarding the appointment/selection of college governors.

2.3 Group 3

2.3.1 'Adequacy' of Provision

The freedom given to colleges will be limited by the control LEAs retain over budgets.

- In attempting to define 'adequacy'¹ it is easier to refer to volume of provision rather than quality.

The group found the concept of adequacy difficult both in terms of defining criteria and in terms of utility.

A practical approach might be to equate adequacy to what is provided and what needs to be done to plug gaps in existing provision.

Refer to UDACE publication "Securing Adequate Facilities" for a full discussion of this issue including a suggested list of qualities - that would characterise an 'adequate'¹ service.

2.3.2 Other E.R.A. Issues

Schedule two Part II Clause 120 need for clarification. (?)

LEAs need to seriously consider consultative mechanisms with other providers e.g. voluntary organisations. WOED will expect to see evidence of proper consultation (see appendix 1).

- Costing the Adult and Youth Service budgets will be a major test and will have to be accurate since Adult Education and Youth Education will in future be "buying in".

2.3.3 4 Major Concerns

- (a) The need to cost the existing services accurately.
- (b) Proactive work of LEAs may be circumscribed by the nature of provision delegated to local bodies. LEAs might wish to consider wording schemes in a way that allows scope for future intervention.
- (c) Where should the Adult Education/Youth Education service be based in terms of securing its future? FE college, school, or run as a central LEA service. (?)
- (d) This group wished to stress concern for the Voluntary Organisations and in particular the effect of LFM on these agencies' activities.