

## **"The Relationship of Examination Boards with Schools and Colleges: a historical perspective", Cambridge June 2008**

### **My background**

I dub myself a historian but in reality I am not one for looking back, at least in my career which I began as a teacher: I taught in three schools: grammar, primary and comprehensive before joining an examination board. It's ironic that one of the motivations for my leaving a grammar school and moving into primary education was the oppressive nature of the examinations system and its impact on teaching and the curriculum. No escape these days! I found in a primary school all my faults and limitations as a teacher and moved back into my comfort zone – teaching history, as Head of Department in a newly developing comprehensive school where not just GCE O and A levels were on offer but CSE too. That was my first encounter with an examination intended – to paraphrase the 1958 Beloe Report - for the 20% of the ability range below the 20% of whom GCE O-level was designed. For the first time I assessed my students' course work with, as I recall, - but memory may do a disservice to the Board in question – very little guidance as to what I should be doing, let alone guidance on standards. What I well remember, however, is my first visitation from a course work moderator and the anxieties that provoked.

Given that potted history of my teaching career of 7 and a half years, you could say that it is surprising that it ended with my move to an examination board – a CSE Board, the first of the five boards that I worked for in the next 30 years. As I found two years ago when I applied to be the Chair of the CIEA and now with Ofqual, boredom has always been my enemy: in 1971, a long summer term was nearing its

end when a friend – someone who had known me since the age of 11 - saw the advertisement for an Assistant Secretary – what quaint terminology! - to the Associated Lancashire Schools Examination Board, ALSEB, and said, "This sounds like you". Although I had never marked for a Board – other than my students' course work - and had no concept of the work it did, she was right and, you could say, I found my niche and have never looked back. And not looking back has characterised my career: moving after 12 years as Assistant, Deputy and then Secretary to ALSEB, the smallest of the 14 regional CSE boards, to NWREB, the largest, from there to a GCE Board, JMB, and then leading two mergers of 5 boards into 1 – NEAB – and 2 (NEAB and AEB) into 1 – AQA. I've often thought that this restless moving on and liking of new beginnings is a personal weakness; on the other hand, bringing experience to the table but looking at issues afresh could be construed as strength. I hope it will prove to be in Ofqual.

What I intend to do today is to tease out from my knowledge and personal experience of the examination system issues which remain relevant to relationships with schools, colleges and with teachers in today's circumstances. Inevitably that entails telling a story, very appropriate in this 150 anniversary year of Cambridge. The human brain, or so I heard on the radio only last week, is wired for stories. Stories explain and help us make sense of experience –and Cambridge's history is a revealing story: it points to the beginning of an examination system rooted in the 19<sup>th</sup> century when both grant aided and public schools looked to universities for guidance on standards so that they could better prepare their students for entry into the universities or the professions. Oxford (1857), Cambridge London and Durham (1858) responded to the demands of schools by providing syllabuses and examinations which candidates could take locally

in their own schools. Other Universities followed suit: Durham, the three civic universities of Manchester, Leeds and Liverpool which, on gaining their independent charters in 1903, formed the Joint Matriculation Board. The examinations these and other university-linked bodies provided were specific to their needs and were part of the hotchpotch of examinations which characterised the early years of examinations; a far cry from today's national, closely regulated examination system which is central to national accountability and measures individual and institutional achievement. I doubt that the word, qualifications, was then in common usage.

### **Early days**

Those early Boards recognised that teachers had a role to play in examinations and involved them in their structures: the first governing body of the Northern Universities' JMB, for example, had among its membership the Heads of prominent schools – Manchester and Leeds Grammars, Liverpool College and Manchester High School for Girls – but there was a clear majority of university representatives. London, Oxford and Cambridge also involved teachers in their structures and listened to their views on practical matters such as timetabling. However, those who determined the syllabuses, set and marked the examinations and established standards were professors in the universities, with teachers recruited at a later stage, as the entry for examinations grew. The Boards' accountability – and in truth that was not the language of the time – was to their universities, not to the schools and students who took their examinations. But, jumping forward to the 1960s you find JMB trusting teachers to assess subjects like English: in 1967 JMB introduced an O-level English scheme assessed entirely by teachers – the scheme flowed through to Joint 16+

examinations, then into GCSE and was finally killed off when 100% course work schemes were proscribed in the 1990s.

A quick word about the moderation of this scheme: it involved the active participation of teachers - a consortium model which cascaded from the Chief Moderator, through Regional Moderators, to teachers in the region. The overarching standard was set by the Chief and his/her moderators who worked with groups of teachers throughout the process to establish and monitor standards. At the end of the process the regional groups came together to mark samples of work from each school to align the marks of each school/college to the agreed overarching standard. Consortium moderation was widely regarded as an educative as well as effective process, with teachers interacting with their peers and experienced moderators to absorb the standard. It might be going through your mind as you listen to this that it reminds you of TGAT – and indeed it should as the consortium model was the one favoured by Paul Black and his colleagues on the group. However, you will recall that although Ken Baker, the then Secretary of State, welcomed the TGAT Report in 1989, it was in fact quietly forgotten – too expensive, too time consuming for a national system of moderation. Yet, teacher inter-action is still regarded as essential to good assessment – that sharing of good practice by professionals, both experienced and inexperienced. It's at the heart of the *Assessment for Learning* movement and the principle is rooted in the work of the Chartered Institute of Educational Assessors. If teacher assessment is to be taken seriously it needs to be underpinned by their active engagement in a process such as this. The issue is how to do so without huge costs in terms of money and time and time away from the classroom.

But back to the story: those early university-linked boards developed into the boards offering School Certificate, then GCE O and A-levels. Only one of the nine GCE Boards, the Associated Examining Board, formed in 1953 and now merged into AQA, had no university links: it came into existence essentially to meet the needs of students in the FE field and its sponsor was City and Guilds. Only Cambridge University remains directly involved with an existing awarding body, OCR. The northern universities still provide membership of AQA's governing body through Universities UK, the nominating body; the universities no longer enjoy majority status. The withdrawal of the universities in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century from governance of the examination system is another story and one I won't embark on here. However, it is important not to forget that the universities remain important to the credibility of any qualification system. As gatekeepers, their acceptance or otherwise of a qualification for entry to Higher education courses can make or break it.

### **The CSE examination**

I want now to say a little about the CSE boards as their history provides some interesting insights into relationships with schools, colleges and teachers. I'm aware that I might regard this period with a fondness and nostalgia which blinds me to its imperfections. Indeed, for all of us looking at the recent past in which we were players, there is a danger that we do so through rose-coloured spectacles or that we tinge the photographic memory in sepia. A bit like those films of pre-first world war England where the action is slowed down as happy people run through golden meadows in an England where there was no rain. That attitude pervades the standards debate.

### Teacher Control/Modes of assessment

Bearing the risk of distortion in mind, it seems to me that relationships between today's awarding bodies and schools are more distant than was the case 30 – even 10 – or more years ago. In 1972 when I joined ALSEB, the concept of "teacher control" prevailed. CSE boards involved teachers at every level: on the Council where strategic decisions were made – but where the majority voice was that of the LEAs (and on the Finance Committee too); on Examinations Committees where curriculum policy was made; on subject committees which determined the content of the Board's Mode 1 syllabuses; on panels overseeing the approval of the papers, as markers, moderators and examiners, and as the ones who decided the grade boundaries for the award of grades – in other words, as the guardians of standards. In a real way, therefore, the teachers were playing the same role as university personnel in the GCE boards – a truly parallel system of standards and assessment but with an expectation of a real link between the two: the CSE grade 1 standard was defined as equivalent to that of an O-level pass. Given the different personnel involved and the differences between syllabuses and styles of assessment the concept itself was difficult to effect and to convince the wider public of the overlap.

There was also the opportunity for teachers to devise their own syllabuses – Mode 3 – for Board approval, set their own papers, subject to moderation and approval by the Board. Teachers also participated at a local level in discussions and debate with senior

examiners about the Board's provision and saw anonymised scripts to get a feel for how answers were valued by the examiners.

### Philosophical differences

The conditions and philosophical framework in which teachers exercised their responsibilities varied considerably from board to board, the differences sometimes dictated by the strength of teacher politics, sometimes by the character, personality and prior experience of the Secretary to the Board. A surprising number of them came from the Colonial Service (the introduction of CSE coincided with wind of change blowing across Africa) while several others had GCE experience – for example, Peter Lawrence, the first Secretary to ALSEB, had been a Senior Assistant Secretary at JMB alongside Colin Vickerman who later became Secretary to JMB (and whom I succeeded). Paris Anderson of the south East Regional Board (SEREB) came from the Durham Board, Henry MacIntosh of the South Regional Examinations Board, SREB, had been Deputy Secretary at AEB and John Edmundson of the South Western Board (SWREB) worked previously for UCLES.

One interpretation of “teacher control” was that administrators merely existed to manage the process - set up meetings, record decisions and not to advise, constrain or argue with teachers' judgements; at the other end of the spectrum was an expectation that the Secretary and staff would play an active, professional role in the decision making process, particularly decisions relating to standards. Similar tensions between practitioners and managers exist in other walks of life, for example in hospitals between clinicians and administrators. Although my representation of the spectrum of

opinion and arrangements in the Boards might be somewhat crude, it is sufficient, I hope, to convey an important point about the nature of controls which were exercised, particularly in relation to standards.

### Teacher judgement and statistics

Where a Board stood along that spectrum dictated, for example, how grade boundaries were set: were the boundaries determined solely by a consideration of the work of candidates? Were statistics - previous years' awards, size and nature of entry and patterns of change, and the effect of decisions at mark 21, 22 or 23 – to be used? If so, at what stage of the proceedings would they be introduced? The purists argued that the experience of teachers was sufficient to determine the quality of work presented, unadulterated by crude statistics, while others thought it important that judgements should relate to as broad a picture as possible of the year's work.

Those of you from awarding bodies or who are teachers involved in today's examinations will recognise the picture I am painting – the argument is now, I believe, resolved in relation to the evidence to be taken into account as grade boundaries are determined – all laid down in the Code of Practice - but it was one which raged for many years. The differences of practice were particularly noticeable when CSE and GCE Boards came together to form the Groups which offered GCSE when common procedures for the determination of grades had to be established. Within NEA, later NEAB, the candidates' work plus statistics argument was advanced by JMB, ALSEB and NWREB (to which I had moved in 1985) and the purist view held by YHREB and NREB. In that instance, the majority view prevailed.



However, you could say that the division continues to an extent today, where many examiners feel that their expertise should be the last say on standards of awards rather than the sign-off by an awarding body's accountable officer. I won't mention 2002 – almost as provocative as mentioning the war in *Fawlty Towers*.

### Regionalism

The role teachers were able to play in CSE was facilitated by the regional nature of the operation: the 14 Boards each served schools within a geographical grouping of LEAs. The Board for which I worked for 12 years, ALSEB, was the smallest CSE Board serving six LEAs, 166 schools, all within a 30 mile radius of the Board's offices. I knew all the Headteachers, many of the Heads of subject departments, individuals on committees or who acted as senior examiners and moderators – and those relationships have served me well over the years. However, when I moved to the NWREB which served all of the North West of England bar the 6 LEAs which had opted out, I found a somewhat more distant relationship with teachers and schools, dictated by the size and scale of the organisation. So relationships between boards and schools varied then, as I am sure they do now when there are a mere three Unitary Bodies dealing with school/college examinations and the take-up of qualifications is so widespread. How to build relationships with their centres, the structures they need to do so, are matters for awarding bodies and more challenging, I believe, than was the case in previous years.

As an adjunct, it was not just CSE which considered regionalism a means of serving the needs of centres and keeping close contact with them. The entry of many of the

GCE Boards came from particular regions – for example, the Northern Universities’ JMB worked within a self-imposed region – the north and the midlands - until 1978. Only then, as a result of growing interest from schools and colleges in other parts of the country did it market itself more widely. Oxford and Cambridge both had “local” roots; Durham was strong in the north east. And particular sectors – the independent sector, for example - tended to use particular Boards. When the GCSE Groups were formed on a regional basis in 1988, the strong links of the GCE Boards as well as those of the regional boards determined the pattern of entry. Those historic links and concept of serving the interests of centres still remain even though the world has changed and competition between GCSE and A-level providers is stronger than it used to be.

### **Course Work and Mode 3**

The controls exercised over the assessment of course work and Mode 3 examinations also varied across Boards. How much course work should be allowed in the Boards’ own examinations (Mode 1)? Other than in subjects such as Art, there was, arguably, no need for 100% teacher-assessed schemes, such as the JMB GCE O-level English scheme, because Mode 3 – school-based syllabuses and schemes of assessment – was an option. So what form should course work in the Boards’ schemes take? Should it be a defined piece of work – say, the study of an historical period or character? Should it be work undertaken in the field – a sociological study or geography field work? What about the assessment of oral skills in English or Foreign Languages, or the practical components of Home Economics, Physics, Woodwork? Or should it, as was the case in YREB, be an assessment of class work done through the course?

Whatever their nature, should course work assessments be combined with those of the written papers, or reported separately? Those questions led to others: should the Board specify exactly what was to be done in course work – and, if there were parameters within which choice was allowed, should teachers submit for approval their planned schemes? Should the Board give guidance to teachers – and how much guidance from teachers to students was expected or allowed?

In respect of all of these questions there were different views – and good and bad practice across and within Boards. At an extreme there were the excellent teachers who used course work to stretch their students – building on their enquiring minds and challenging them to produce creative work. At the other extreme, however, many students were not given sufficient guidance and embarked on work which was not stretching and whose overall grade was, in consequence, lower than their performance in the externally assessed components suggested. I recall far too many projects centred on Manchester United which purported to meet the requirements of subjects such as History and sociology. But who was to blame? Teachers, or the Boards for failing to recognise that teachers are the gateway to the success or failure of students and those requirements must be clearly stated with checks and balances to safeguard the interests of students?

### Moderation

Generally speaking, course work accounted for only a proportion of Mode 1 syllabuses – where practical or other skills which could not be accommodated in timed examinations were part of the assessment or, in the case of YREB, where the

work done in class throughout the course accounted for 50% of the assessment. Moderation was either consortium based –as described earlier – which was prevalent in SWREB, or samples of work were sent off to a moderator, or a moderator visited the school, the method varying according to the nature of the work. Very rarely in CSE was statistical moderation used: there was YREB’s unique approach to course work where the teachers’ assessments were moderated against the written examination; and the West Yorkshire and Lindsey Regional Board, TWYREB’s moderation of its Mode 3 examinations where some statistical formula was used to determine whether the teachers’ assessment needed to be adjusted. I never fully understood it so please do not grill me on that one! I should add that YREB and TWYLREB merged in 1982 and the methodology of YREB prevailed in the newly formed YHREB.

Statistical moderation was more likely to feature in GCE examinations where course work was assessed – this was, for example, the case in JMB - and some of that flowed through to GCSE. I have to say that where statistical moderation was used to moderate, say, teachers’ assessment of laboratory-based assessments against the written paper it tended to be very contentious among teachers who, not surprisingly, questioned the appropriateness of the moderation instrument. Cost was a factor in the choice of statistical moderation.

### Controls

The prevalence of and degree of control over Mode 3 varied across Boards. At one extreme was TWYLREB, where the default position was that Mode 3 would be the

norm while most other Boards started from the premise that their own Mode 1 offering would meet the needs of the vast majority of schools and Mode 3 would, therefore, cater for a minority of the entry. TWLYREB's position was the logical outcome of teacher-control: where each school determined its own curriculum and syllabuses within each subject and took responsibility for assessing pupils. It was the ultimate and all-embracing involvement of the profession in both teaching and assessment – assessment of and for learning. I do not know how many schools TWLYREB catered for but there were said to be in excess of 10 000 Mode 3s in its area. Moderation was carried out *in situ* – the Board's premises were very small and could never have accommodated candidates' scripts. It was unfortunate that the TWLYREB system gave an impression of a *laissez-faire* approach which came to characterise for many Mode 3 examinations. In my personal experience, Boards generally exercised controls over Mode 3 as effectively as controls over their own syllabus and examination provision.

The controls over Mode 3 provision were related, on the one hand, to the nature of the subject to be assessed and, on the other, to the quality of the alternative provision in a subject already assessed by the Board. In the first instance, the submission of a Mode 3 in a subject not covered in Mode 1 provision – Media, Sports Studies, PE, Dance, drama for example – would spark a debate whether the subject was a fit one for a CSE examination, whether it could be assessed reliably and objectively. A similar debate would be prompted where there was a proposal to extend a Board's own provision – for example, should Mathematics be deconstructed into its component parts with, for example, Arithmetic being assessed separately? (Functional Skills now come to

mind.) Those debates demonstrate the concerns which Boards had about the nature of the CSE examination, whether the inclusion of a subject would undermine the standing of the examination and so on. ALSEB was fairly narrow in its interpretation of what was a fit subject for examination – we were, for example, the very last of the CSE Boards to admit PE to the fold.

The pressures for the inclusion of subjects such as those which I have mentioned came from teachers who realised that examinations conferred a status on subjects which they lacked when outside the examination camp. That view, in many ways, still exists today – hence the concerns, for example, when a subject loses National Curriculum status – will it follow that resources will also be lost?

Boards which exercised control over the admission of new subjects in an attempt to maintain the standing of CSE exercised a similar control when Mode 3 syllabuses within the range of subjects offered under Mode 1 were submitted. In ALSEB's case all submissions were considered by the Subject Committees against whose standards the proposal would be judged. However, increasingly, and particularly after 1974 when the School Leaving Age was raised, submissions were received catering for the needs of specific groups of candidates, often those outside the range of students for whom the examination was theoretically intended. Arithmetic was one of those submissions, as was the strangely named Preparation for Living. This was, you will realise, long before the concept of an entitlement curriculum and I suspect that some students were short-changed in the curriculum which they followed. Engaging students across the ability range, with different interests, in education is a continuing

challenge. The new Diplomas, with their mix of academic, applied and work-related learning may prove more successful than earlier initiatives.

### Where have all the Mode 3s gone?

In many ways the story of Mode 3 illustrates the ever expanding frontiers of examinations and the expectations that the system will embrace all abilities. The frequently asked question when GCSE came into being was whether it would cater for a notional 40% or 60% or all candidates, and different opinions were expressed. The question was, of course, absolutely crucial to the design of syllabuses and the ambiguities were not helpful. Schemes outside GCSE to cater for the wider ability range grew – the Northern Partnership for Records of achievement, NPRA, was one example. Developments such as TVEI introduced modularity into the equation along with the concept of work-related learning and assessment. Some of the new schemes were short-lived depending on the success or otherwise of a particular national initiative. Since the Dearing report, however, there has been a much more systematic development of the concept of a qualifications framework – a ladder of qualifications, interlinked and encouraging the learner to make progress. The QCF takes that notion a step further.

Mode 3 examinations disappeared gradually with the advent of GCSE and National Curriculum: no room for individual interpretation of subjects when Criteria and specific definitions of subjects were introduced and when the concept of externality was introduced into qualifications. However, the concept of Mode 3 lives on in the world of employer-led qualifications: MacDonald, Flybe, the MOD, Norwich College

and others have all been recognised as bodies fit to award their own qualifications. These organisations are required to ensure that arrangements are in place to avoid conflicts of interest between their commercial and awarding body activities and that there is sufficient distance between the business of the organisation and the awarding arm for the qualifications to meet the “external” requirement. A college is already in the fold. Could that open the way for schools – or consortia of schools – to follow suit?

### To train or not to train

Teachers as assessors raise an important issue: what training in assessment techniques, in the recognition of marking standards, and what general support should be available to teachers or students training to be teachers? To my way of thinking, it stands to reason that anyone entrusted with assessment whether of students in school/college or of candidates taking an externally set paper should be trained to do the job well. But even in the heady days of teacher involvement in CSE there was not much emphasis on assessment in teacher training or university PGCE courses.

Universities which were aligned to a GCE Board and whose senior Professors, particularly those in Education Departments, were active in Board affairs were more likely to offer courses on assessment and to be actively engaged in research.

However, I did my PGCE and M.Ed in Curriculum Development at Manchester in the 1970s and cannot recall a single formal assessment course although, later, as a Board administrator, I would be invited to give the occasional lecture at Manchester University on principles of assessment to prospective teachers. But coverage of



assessment was patchy - not a required part of a course. Sadly, I do not think that the situation has changed so much.

There was also an issue as to whether the Boards themselves should take responsibility for training teachers: what was their responsibility to teachers to help them be better assessors and, in the case of Mode 3, to help them prepare better schemes which were built on sound principles of assessment? The Boards were split: on the one hand there was recognition that if teacher assessments were to be reliable and command public trust, if Mode 3 standards were to stand in comparison with Mode 1, then teachers would need preparation and training at least equal to that which the Boards provided their examiners. But who would pay? In the case of ALSEB the Board made use of its local advisory group structure – which existed in each of the LEAs and in every subject offered by the Board – to introduce teachers to the principles of good assessment, share with them best practice, show them mark schemes and students' work. I was appointed to organise that service. Part of my responsibility was to work with schools, particularly those with Mode 3 schemes, to raise teachers' understanding of assessment – devising short courses which introduced concepts of validity, reliability, comparability and manageability. I am sure that similar work was done in other Boards but the practice was neither widespread nor systematic until the advent of GCSE when the Boards were a major provider of the INSET (a new word for most of us in 1986-87) programme for teachers. Now, of course, there are other bodies that provide a framework for training – I'm thinking particularly of the Chartered Institute of Educational Assessors (CIEA) working with training organisations, awarding bodies and bodies with responsibility for teachers' professional development. For the first time there is recognition that assessment is a

professional responsibility and that its status and the status of individuals participating in assessment will be raised through CPD and through the Chartered assessor training which CIEA provides.

### **Radical changes to the system**

What does the past teach us – or, as Henry Ford, would have asked, “Is History bunk?” For me, the major message of the past is the importance of professional engagement in the system. Somewhere over the years that has been lost. Ironically, the disengagement of the teaching profession from the system began with GCSE, that much heralded reform of the dual system of CSE and GCE O-level, which many people, including myself, worked for over a long period. The price of GCSE was national criteria against which syllabuses would be approved. The concept was right in many respects: a much needed uniformity of provision and expectation across the ability range was introduced into the system, particularly in respect of curriculum entitlement and standards of attainment. With the best will in the world it was impossible to say prior to 1984 that there was such a thing as a national standard in individual subjects, the interpretation of which could vary from board to board or school to school. The Plowden Report of 1967 observed, almost as it were a badge of honour,

It is not possible to describe a standard of attainment that should be reached by all or most children. Any set standard would seriously limit the bright child and be impossibly high for the dull. What could be achieved in one school might be impossible in another.

That view is so at odds with the determination of national standards for all that it is almost impossible to think that it could have been voiced by an official committee.

What opened the way to a completely different mindset was GCSE with its National Criteria, and National Curriculum whose introduction coincided with GCSE's first year of operation, and its testing system which came on stream some years later.

The introduction of national standards and targets into the system was a watershed between an era when teachers determined the curriculum and in many cases the examinations of their students, and today's external specifications and examinations.

Other factors - mergers and take-overs of examination boards which created fewer, larger organisations – also cut across the widespread involvement of teachers in the examination system. Competition between awarding bodies – and between schools and colleges - grew. The emphasis was on Performance Tables and accountability.

The powers and responsibilities of LEAs shifted both upwards – to government – and downwards as more responsibility was devolved to schools; we now have a plethora of school and college governance arrangements and groupings, including the new Academies. The Universities' own agendas and priorities changed, leading to their gradual withdrawal from direct involvement in the examination system. At the national level Schools Council which loosely coordinated the examination system from 1964 to 1981 and which had few powers over CSE and even fewer over GCE gave way to SEC and NCC which in turn were replaced by other bodies which, according to the fashion of the time, combined curriculum and assessment, or qualifications across the academic/vocational spectrum. The culmination of those shifts and changes is the creation of Ofqual, with QCA becoming an agency responsible for the development of the curriculum. And, most importantly we now

have a national strategy for qualifications, a strategy for educational attainment and for widening the participation in the qualifications framework by employers, and by students across the spectrum of academic and vocational learning.

### **Professional participation**

Where do teachers fit into this top-down model? Are teachers now mere agents of delivery? They see themselves as such – they teach a curriculum defined by others, their students are assessed by outside bodies. Is there room for their professional creativity? Can we reengage teachers in assessment? Can we encourage them to reclaim their territory? Given all the changes, including the way in which the examination system is now used to hold to account schools and teachers through Performance Tables derived in large measure from examination results, it would be futile to argue for a CSE-style involvement of teachers and centres in the examination system. But can we not strike a better balance between the professional engagement which both teachers and awarding bodies enjoyed and the top-down nationally determined systems which now prevail? The *Assessment for Learning* movement is doing its best to encourage teachers to take responsibility for assessment. Raising the status of assessment, helping teachers to see its importance as a tool for learning and motivating students to look beyond their immediate goals and raise their aspirations is a challenge for us all. The Chartered Institute of Educational Assessors has a role to play here. Is there anything Ofqual can do to support teachers as assessors?

And how can other parties play a professional role in the process of developing curriculum, examinations and tests? Do the LEAs have a role to play? They may no

longer be involved directly in the governance of awarding bodies but they are increasingly the catalyst for schools to come together to work on new initiatives like the diploma and to provide training for assessment. There's a lot of good practice out there and we need to harness it.

The Universities as I observed earlier have to a large extent bowed out of the governance of awarding bodies but, like the LEAs they have much to offer in preparing teachers for a role which increasingly encompasses assessment. Their involvement in the professionalisation of assessment is crucial as is – as I said earlier – their role as gatekeepers to Higher Education courses. In order to accommodate Government's widening participation agenda universities are now looking to a wider range of qualifications than was previously the case. They will look to Ofqual for assurances about the quality and standard of those qualifications. It is important for the credibility of the system that Ofqual includes Higher Education in its deliberations on major issues relating to the reliability, comparability and standard of the range of qualifications on offer.

How has the role of examination boards changed over the years? For a start, we no longer talk of examination boards with all the history of what the boards stood for: now we have awarding bodies. The change of terminology is, I believe, significant: awarding body signifies delivery of the qualification, a much more limiting role than that of the traditional examination board: determinants of the curriculum, developer of the syllabuses, developers of the examinations and the awards, setters of standards. Of course awarding bodies still develop syllabuses – or do they? We now have specifications and that terminology too tells a tale about the narrow nationally-

determined parameters within which syllabus developers work. How much leeway do the awarding bodies have to use their talents – of their staff and the examining personnel they employ – to innovate with new definitions of subjects, new techniques of assessment and, of course, the use of new technology?

What can Ofqual do to encourage innovation and facilitate the creativity of the awarding bodies?

What opportunities do awarding bodies have to engage with schools and colleges, other than as “customers”, throughout the examination process? Given the changes which have occurred, particularly since 1988, it is difficult to see how bodies which are focussed on the delivery of qualifications can involve their centres and teachers in the systemic way that once was the case. What role might teachers play in, say, determining policy and subject content: what educational policies can awarding bodies espouse other than the national agenda? What role can subject specialists play when the curriculum is determined elsewhere?

## **Trust**

As we address those questions we need to be aware of the public’s heightened awareness of potential conflicts of interest and the need for all parties to demonstrate high professional standards and conduct. The adoption of principles and standards of public life and the welcome emphasis on accountability might lead some to question whether it is right for awarding bodies to develop cosy relationships with teachers and the schools and colleges that enter students for their examinations. Is it proper for

awarding bodies to offer training and support to centres? Would that constitute customer service or provide an inside track to good grades. Should awarding bodies provide, and Chief Examiners be involved in courses aimed at candidates? Does that give too much of an insight to some students into what might be examined? Is it right for awarding bodies to publish material for use by teachers in preparing students for their examinations? Is there a conflict of interest? What safeguards are needed to keep commercial and service interests apart? Those are crude questions and not intended to point the finger in any direction, nor am I saying that there is a right or wrong answer to black and white issues where shades of grey are probably closer to reality. But they are as important as questions raised about teachers' ability to make impartial judgements of their own students' attainment, or of teachers playing senior roles as examiners in the process, or being on specification development panels, or on panels approving question papers. All of these issues get to the heart of professional engagement and relationships with awarding bodies.

At the heart of professional involvement in the system is an issue of trust. Trust that those involved in the design of specifications and examinations do so without gain for their own students, trust that marking will be objective and reliable, trust that grades will reflect the true attainment of students; trust in the consistency of the standards of awards; trust on the part of users of certificates – HE and employers; trust of the parents, politicians and the wider public; trust of the students themselves that they will get a fair deal. At its simplest level, the public looks to professionals who know their job – raising the status of assessment through CPD is a vital part of that process. But the public expects and deserves much more: a full understanding of the system through openness and transparency on the part of all the players; an engagement in the

debate about standards. In order for the public to trust the awarding bodies, I suggest that there needs to be a new understanding of the roles people and organisations play: a Professional Code of Conduct for awarding bodies and for assessors whether in schools or working externally, together with a Code of Ethics, might go some way to underpin public confidence in the system.

### **A new dawn**

Regulators can manage systems or work with the professionals to establish common understanding of the issues and acceptance of sound principles and practice to underpin the quality of the operations. The creation of Ofqual provides a new opportunity to create a new framework for regulation, one which has professional trust and involvement at its heart. Trust cannot be determined from on high – it requires all parties to work together to create the conditions in which mutual trust and respect can flourish. I am grateful to Jo-Anne Baird for this last slide which distinguishes between a managerial approach and the professional approach which Ofqual intends to pursue. The last column spells out the territory we want to occupy.



## Public sector management



	<b>Managerialism</b>	<b>Professionalism</b>
<b>Source of legitimacy</b>	<b>Hierarchical authority</b>	<b>Expertise</b>
<b>Goals/objectives</b>	<b>Efficiency/profit</b>	<b>Effectiveness/technical competence</b>
<b>Mode of control</b>	<b>Rules/compliance</b>	<b>Trust/dependency</b>
<b>Clients</b>	<b>Corporate</b>	<b>Individuals</b>
<b>Reference group</b>	<b>Bureaucratic superiors</b>	<b>Professional peers</b>
<b>Regulation</b>	<b>Hierarchical</b>	<b>Collegial/self-regulation</b>

(Exworthy and Halford, 1999)



We want to work with the experts, both teachers in the system, examiners, awarding body staff and researchers, LEA and university personnel to ensure that the system is clear, accountable and respected. We will engage the public in that work. We see it as vital that all of us seize the opportunity which the creation of an independent regulator provides to discuss openly what the system is capable of, how improvements can be made, and how better we can engage the public to earn its trust. The learner – the ultimate beneficiary of the qualifications system – deserves the best that we, the professionals working together, can provide. Together, we have a great opportunity to harness our talents to that end.

Thank you.

Kathleen Tattersall/June 2008