the proportion of church school places.
In fact, the partnership between LEAs and diocesan authorities is usually very close, often from early stages of policy development. But some edge is added to that process by the church representatives voting membership of the committee making decisions about education. Sometimes church representatives have held the balance of power on education committees and quite properly exercised their vote over major matters of policy. That seems right in view of the Churches' strong stake in the system as providers of schools.
This was the Archibishop of Canterbury's point in the General Synod debate, reported in several newspapers as another potential Church/State clash. Recent legislation, the School Standards and Framework Act, has not only preserved the voting rights of church representatives on committees making decisions about education, it has also extended them to representatives of parent governors.
If forthcoming legislation sponsored by the DETR, foreshadowed in a recent consultation paper, replaces the committee structure of local authorities by cabinet government, with or without a directly elected mayor, it is not at all clear that there will be any effective body on which the church representatives and members of the Churches' strong stake in the system as providers of schools.
Local authority committees, perhaps modelled on parliamentary select committees, able to call the executive to account, on which it is suggested the Churches and parent governors might be represented, will need to have very clear and strong powers, to be informed and to comment on the formation of educational policy. If the Churches and parents are to be satisfied that they are to have an effective voice.
The Bishop of Ripon, who leads for the Church on education matters in the House of Lords, spoke in the General Synod debate about the developing understanding in the Diocese of the Church's point of view following a public statement from the House of Bishops in October 1997. The issue of Church representation on LEAs must be satisfactorily resolved. The Church of England wants to work in close partnership with government, central and local, on a whole range of issues, in the work of transforming society.

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while officially admitting implicitly that these are invalid in comparison with value added analyses.

In fact the situation is even worse, since the government is well aware that all rankings of schools using key stage results are very imprecise and most schools simply cannot be separated in a scientifically acceptable way — that is the league tables are misleading when they provide such rankings.

It is not my intention in this article to explore reasons for such apparently deliberate attempts to ignore research evidence and to provide misleading information, but it is worth pointing out that the previous and the present administration have failed to provide any logically coherent defence for their positions on this matter. It is also worth remarking that in other systems, for example New South Wales in Australia, the deficiencies of public rankings are accepted with the result that it is now illegal for anyone to publish such league tables.

Value added comparisons

Several LEAs have been working for some time now on value added systems which allow schools to make detailed comparisons of their pupils' achievements in different subject areas. A feature of all these schemes is that the results are fed back directly to schools, together with all the necessary caveats so that they can be used in conjunction with other locally sensitive and properly contextualised data as an aid to school improvement.

The results, where possible, also report comparisons separately for different kinds of pupils, such as low achievers or boys separately from girls.

Hampshire LEA and the London Institute of Education have been collaborating on such a scheme of value added in Primary schools. The study has looked at individual pupil achievement between baseline and KS1 and between KS1 and KS2. In addition a large number of school and pupil level variables have been analysed to assess their possible impact on pupil progress.

These analyses are among the largest and most sophisticated of their kind so far carried out for the primary phase. Baseline assessments of over 6,000 four-year-olds made in 1994 were matched with their Key Stage 1(KS1) assessments and schools supplied data on 14 factors about individual pupils including gender, free school meal entitlement, special educational needs, nursery education, terms in school, and for many, parents' socio-economic status.

Among the 18 school and class level factors were class organisation, class size, school type and percentage of pupils receiving free school meals.

Hampshire also matched 1992 KS1 assessments for over 4,000 pupils to Key Stage 2 (KS2) assessments and collected similar background data. In future pupils will be matched from baseline to KS2 and the exercise is being repeated each year. The relationships between prior achievement (baseline and KS1 in the two sets of analyses) and outcome (KS1 and KS2) were analysed for Maths Science and English.

Among the preliminary results for KS1 are:

- Baseline assessment in English Mathematics and Science are strongly correlated with corresponding KS1 scores (with correlation coefficients ranging from 0.56 to 0.82).
- After accounting for initial achievement at baseline, factors associated negatively with progress from baseline to KS1 are special needs, free school meal entitlement, school absence, and number of primary schools attended. Among the positive factors are total terms in current school and age at time of completing KS1 assessment.

Gender is also associated with progress; girls tend to do better on reading and writing but worse in Maths and Science.

- Among school level factors, the percentage of children entitled to free school meals has a (relatively small when other factors are included) negative effect on progress. The number of adults in the class and, perhaps surprisingly, vertical grouping, have small positive effects in some subjects.
- Socio-economic group has a strong effect on progress but its effect can be accounted for by a combination of other associated variables, notably free school meal entitlement, SEN stage and level of absence.

Most significantly, schools are differentially effective in the value they add. The value added scores differ by curricula subject and by actual baseline achievement. Some schools have high value added scores in mathematics, but not for English. Some have high value added scores in a particular subject for children with low baseline achievement but are less successful with average children. For the analyses of KS1 to KS2 scores rather similar results were obtained.

Working closely with school heads and teachers, ways have been found to convey the complex pictures revealed by these analyses to each school so that they can place the information within their local context and can discuss any problems revealed with their LEA advisers, and governing bodies.

The caveats surrounding the results are also presented, notably the statistical uncertainties attached to the results so that a balanced picture can be obtained. In effect the results are treated as 'screening devices' indicating potential problems and possible remedies.

The 'private' nature of the data; the fact that they are not associated with public rankings, has encouraged enthusiasm among schools (virtually all primary schools have now volunteered) and led to more openness and honesty about failures as well as successes.

Naturally, schemes such as these are capable of improvement. There is room for debate about the most appropriate analysis to carry out and important issues such as how to interpret year-to-year variation. These additional uncertainties, however, strengthen the need to regard these systems as screening devices, which are inherently imperfect, yet do provide information if used with care and understanding.

In contrast to the national picture where schools are publically ranked in misleading ways, leading often to quite inappropriate behaviour, schemes such as that in Hampshire are providing constructive and helpful feedback in a responsible manner. If government really is intent on raising 'standards' then this is the kind of scheme that offers real advantages.

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