

THE SCOTTISH DIMENSION OF TVEI

Colin Bell, Cathy Howieson, Kenneth King, David Raffae

The Technical and Vocational Education Initiative (TVEI) was launched in November 1982 by the Government as a pilot scheme to stimulate the provision of technical and vocational education for 14-18 year-olds within the educational system. It is one of the major innovations in education in recent years and one that, as part of the Scottish evaluation of TVEI, we had the opportunity to observe at first hand. The findings of our evaluation are reported elsewhere⁽¹⁾; this article focuses on two themes, one is the Scottish dimension of TVEI and the second the reality of an attempt to implement an initiative embodying many of the ideas and ambitions of the "new vocationalism". By this is normally meant making education less based on a highly theoretical and academic curriculum geared to high ability pupils which is irrelevant to the 'needs of industry' and demotivates the majority of educational consumers.

Much of the discussion and indeed opposition to TVEI has centred on TVEI as the flagship of "the new vocationalism". Our consideration of this aspect of TVEI does not debate the rights and wrongs of such an approach but discusses what happened in practice and the tensions, contradictions and unexpected outcomes thereby revealed. But first we look at a very neglected area: the development of TVEI in Scotland. In Scotland, TVEI has been confronted with a very different educational system and climate from England and Wales and this influenced both the initial response to TVEI and its subsequent implementation. It has meant that TVEI projects in Scotland have faced unique problems but at the same time have benefitted from the recent developments in Scottish education.

TVEI in Scotland

What does TVEI look like in Scotland? It was introduced in stages in Scotland starting with five projects in 1984, a year after the first starts in England and Wales. These were located in Borders, Dumfries and Galloway, Fife, Renfrew and Glasgow. A single project (in Lothian) began in 1985 and another (in Tayside) in 1986. By 1987 there were projects in all mainland regions in Scotland, and in all divisions of Strathclyde Region. Most pilot TVEI projects are based on a consortium of three, four, five or six schools and colleges, and on a cohort of 200-250 pupils in each of five consecutive year groups. Most pupils enter TVEI at around 14 years at the beginning of third year. They variously choose to be in, were chosen or

picked at random for the first cohort, although the exact procedure varied between projects and between schools. The pilot TVEI projects have set out to "explore and test the ways of organising and managing the education of 14-18 year olds across the ability range" so that various educational aims, discussed below, can be met. They are self-consciously *pilot* projects from which educational authorities are meant to learn. The national extension of TVEI to all schools and all regions was announced in the summer of 1986 in the White Paper *Working Together – Education and Training* (Cmnd 9823). This was actually before the full teams of Scottish evaluators of the pilot projects had been assembled.

TVEI's ambition is to give 14-18 year old boys and girls of all abilities a more relevant and practical preparation for adult and working life. Within the broad criteria set for TVEI by the Manpower Services Commission, projects have taken different approaches. Some have a greater technological slant than others which perhaps pay more attention to personal and social development. It is also the case that whilst the stated aims of TVEI have remained the same, the emphases have changed and been reinterpreted over time. TVEI programmes consist of a *core* that is common to all TVEI pupils, plus *options*. Together core and options range from about 30 to 60 per cent of Scottish TVEI pupils' timetables but the modal figure is nearer 30 than 60. In Scotland the core usually includes information technology, personal and social development, careers education, work experience and a residential experience. Options include subjects chosen by students to meet their needs, such as business studies, computing, catering, textiles, control technology, pneumatics and caring. Many established curriculum areas have also been 'enhanced' through TVEI funding in the sense of adding to existing subjects by providing resources, introducing a more technological dimension into the curriculum or helping to change teaching methods. English, maths, music, art, geography, Latin and home economics are all examples of subjects that have been enhanced in this way. Both in these enhanced subjects and in the TVEI core and options (above) there has been an attempt to introduce technology across the curriculum. There have been equally important changes in the modes of teaching, emphasising a problem-solving approach, experiential learning and more negotiated, individualised study. TVEI aims to give students more control and responsibility for their own learning and thus to motivate youngsters "turned off" by traditional teaching methods. This has been one of the most popular aspects of TVEI.

This description of TVEI in Scotland hints at the "Scottish dimension", for example, the later introduction of TVEI, a year after England and Wales. In fact, although TVEI is one of the largest and most important cross-border initiatives ever seen in British education, its origins and centre of gravity are in the south. TVEI was devised to fit the English education system and framework, for example, patterns of certification, staying-on rates and participation in post compulsory education. The

results of applying an English design in a Scottish context have become evident as TVEI has been implemented and we return to this later. First we consider the response in Scotland to TVEI and the particularly Scottish reasons for its late arrival on the Scottish educational scene.

The Scottish Response to TVEI

The announcement of TVEI was greeted with considerable hostility by many educationalists, politicians and others in Britain as a dangerous extension of MSC's responsibilities into the secondary education sector; as an attack on the comprehensive system; and as an effort to move towards a narrowly vocational education geared to the needs of employers who would be given a direct and damaging influence on the school curriculum. In Scotland opposition had an extra dimension on several counts. Firstly, TVEI was seen as a threat not only because of MSC involvement in schools but also because it represented the imposition of an English system in Scotland, a country with different traditions. Opposition on the grounds of this "colonising" aspect of TVEI was clearly expressed by the Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS) in 1985.

"The involvement of MSC in the education system represents a damaging intrusion from England and Wales into the established pattern of Scottish education ... the whole thrust is assimilative"⁽²⁾

A second distinctive feature of Scottish reaction to TVEI was the strength of opposition to it as undermining the comprehensive principle. Although similar fears were being voiced in England, there was a strong feeling in Scotland that England had never fully taken on the comprehensive ideal and that some there were not unhappy about the direction in which TVEI was moving the education system. This widespread opposition was well captured by the EIS when it stated that

"Scottish teachers and parents are more strongly supportive of the comprehensive system ... than would ever have been thought possible ... TVEI represents a further threat to the comprehensive system. It originates in England and Wales where there is a much stronger ongoing lobby for selective education."⁽²⁾

A third aspect of the Scottish reaction was simply that Scotland did not need TVEI. A common response was that Scotland had already addressed the issues of educational relevance for which TVEI was designed and had come up with its own solutions, better suited to Scotland, in the Standard Grade and Action Plan. Once again, the EIS summed up this feeling

"Little consideration has been given so far to the effect of MSC activities on the ethos of Scottish education. The debate about balance between vocational and general education has been

suddenly overtaken by intervention on one side ... when Munn and Action Plan developments had come near to achieving some kind of consensus in the debate."⁽²⁾

This quote also illustrates the view that Scotland was not only ahead of England in tackling the question of educational relevance but had managed to do so in a way that preserved a balance between vocational and general education unlike TVEI. TVEI was seen as threatening the Scottish tradition of general education, a principle maintained and endorsed by the Munn Report and Action Plan.

Such views of TVEI as divisive, narrowly vocational, unsuited to and redundant in Scotland all contributed to the delay in introducing TVEI in Scotland. The auspices for TVEI seemed to be discouraging: its Scottish launch in 1984 coincided with the start of a prolonged and bitter industrial dispute in schools which involved a boycott of curriculum development work of the kind essential to TVEI.

Paradoxically, these very difficulties may have strengthened TVEI and encouraged its assimilation into mainstream educational developments. Within schools and education authorities, those most closely associated with and committed to TVEI had to spend much time defending it and emphasising its continuity with other education-led reforms. This process forced them to give serious consideration to the philosophy and practice of their projects. It seems that in Scotland, a consequence both of the educational doubts about TVEI and of the industrial action, has been that the philosophy of TVEI is more developed and more explicit as well as more consistent with current educational developments. It may also be better reflected in practice. These same difficulties may also have encouraged the MSC, anxious to see any positive movement in TVEI in Scotland, to be more flexible in interpreting the TVEI criteria.

TVEI was extended to Scotland only after acceptance of COSLA's demand that in Scotland TVEI would have to be compatible with Standard Grade and Action Plan developments. Such an acknowledgement of this Scottish dimension of TVEI is made clear, for example, in the White Paper *Working Together - Education and Training*. In announcing the extension of TVEI it states

"In Scotland, the arrangements will take into account the need to ensure full harmony with Standard Grade and Action Plan developments"⁽³⁾

and

"The Government is publishing a statement of curricula criteria based on the relevant passages of ... for Scotland the Munn Report

and the 16 Action Plan."⁽³⁾

From the beginning TVEI in Scotland was a different animal from that in England and it bore the imprint of the Scottish educational tradition and of its recent developments. It is our impression that the principles of compatibility with Munn and Dunning and the Action Plan have generally been honoured and as a result TVEI has been more fully assimilated into the educational mainstream than seems to have been the case in England. (In making this comparison we are aware of the enormous diversity of TVEI projects in England; our point is not that TVEI in Scotland is different from all English projects, rather that it is more homogeneous, at least in this respect).

The extent of this assimilation is reflected in the option choices offered to pupils after second year where TVEI has been fitted into a structure based on Munn modes. It is also evident in the extent of "enhancement" where TVEI funding has been used to add to or enrich an existing subject in a school. It is significant to note that enhancement is a Scottish invention. There is no mention of it in early literature about TVEI, the idea arose within TVEI in Scotland and later spread to cover English projects. Consequently enhancement has meant that from its inception in Scotland there has been a large measure of "extension" of TVEI to other pupils which has helped to counter some of the criticism of TVEI as a divisive initiative. In Scotland TVEI has been domesticated.

Certifying TVEI

The relative uniformity of Scottish education with the existence of a single examination board and single vocational education body has been another factor in determining the particular shape of TVEI in Scotland. Projects have been able to gain national certification for their activities through SCOTVEC modules and the Standard Grade. (From 1985 a special agreement allowed TVEI projects to offer SCOTVEC modules to 3rd and 4th year pupils). In England certification has been more of a problem: there have been difficulties in finding appropriate certification and with the slow response of the different examination boards to develop suitable provision or validate modules and courses developed by projects. The number and variety of examination boards and the diversity of the non-advanced further education sector in England has created a very different picture in relation to certification. In Scotland projects have been able to offer young people nationally recognised certification and, at the same time, the availability of this certification has reinforced the trend for TVEI in Scotland to resist separate development and to be more integrated into mainstream provision and certification.

Post 16 Problems

Although the particular nature of the Scottish education system has

had a positive effect on TVEI, it has also created difficulties for projects in Scotland and we now turn to this aspect of the "Scottish dimension".

TVEI was conceived of and remains a four year programme for 14 to 18 year-olds. This ambition has presented certain problems in the Scottish context. Although TVEI was introduced with the expectation that it would improve staying-on rates, this has not transpired and both Scottish and English projects face a common problem of retaining their cohorts beyond the compulsory leaving age. (The lack of any real impact by TVEI on staying-on rates is not surprising given the strength of the traditional early leaving pattern in Britain compounded by the fact that the first TVEI cohort had more mid to low ability pupils). In response to the numbers leaving TVEI after two years, projects in Scotland recruited extra pupils (known as "infill") who had not previously taken TVEI to make good the lost numbers.

Once those leaving after two years had done so, English projects can assume that the majority of remaining or new "infill" pupils will stay for the next 2 years. This state of affairs is not shared by Scottish projects which face further difficulties because of the distinctive characteristics of post-compulsory education in Scotland. 48% of the first cohort left at the end of 4th year but in addition projects have to cope with that Scottish phenomenon, unknown in England, of the Christmas leaver: about 3 in 10 pupils are too young to leave at the end of 4th year and have to remain in school for the first term of 5th year. A significant number of pupils therefore leave at Christmas of 5th year. Consequently, TVEI projects in Scotland experience another exodus of pupils at this stage. For example, 31% of the first cohort were still in TVEI in October of 5th year (i.e. 1986) but this figure had dropped to 18% by the following spring. Most of this decline is accounted for by Christmas leavers. Having experienced the flight of the Christmas leavers, Scottish projects then face another migration at the end of 5th year since more Scottish pupils leave from 5th year than 6th year – only 1 in 5 Scottish pupils stays on for a 6th year. Thus TVEI projects in Scotland have to cope with not one but three significant transition points: at summer of 4th year, Christmas of 5th year and the summer of 5th year. In Scotland young people might experience TVEI as a 2, 2½, 3 or 4 year programme or if they join as "infill" at 16 might stay for 1 term, 1 year or 2 years. Confronted with this bewildering set of permutations of possible involvement in TVEI, projects have experienced management and resource problems at the post 16 stage. This situation also makes it very difficult for projects to provide a coherent, progressive and meaningful programme for pupils.

The nature of 5th year in Scottish schools adds another turn of the screw on TVEI projects in Scotland. The majority of those who remain for a full 5th year are those who have been relatively successful in their 4th year examinations and who are attempting Highers. The 5th year is very

pressurised and the timetable crowded because of the nature of the Higher as essentially a 2 term course. There is little room for TVEI if pupils have a full timetable of Highers. We know that such pupils are frequently TVEI in name only since they have little time for any TVEI activities other than perhaps after SCE exams at the end of the year. In an effort to overcome the time pressures, one TVEI projects organises very popular "Twilight Classes" when pupils attend the TVEI centre after school. But in other cases there is a tacit acceptance that for academic pupils TVEI in 5th year will be a very limited experience. In contrast the Scottish 6th year, compared to its English equivalent, is a time when many pupils have a relatively light timetable and so it provides an opportunity either to concentrate on TVEI after little involvement in 5th year or to take TVEI for the first time.

As the first TVEI projects in Scotland have progressed they have been confronted with a set of managerial problems unenvisaged by MSC. These problems have arisen largely because TVEI, although a British wide innovation, in fact reflects the nature and structure of English education and does not fit readily into the different pattern and character of post-compulsory education in Scotland. While MSC have been willing, almost anxious, to acknowledge and accommodate the Scottish situation in terms of curriculum and certification, they have been less so in relation to the management of TVEI in 5th and 6th year. Perhaps this is not surprising: they have had to recognise that the early aims of TVEI as a 4 year programme could not be sustained, that it would be more of a 2 years plus 2 years programme and so have been understandably reluctant to see their ideas further disintegrate by sanctioning a variety of modes of participation post 16. But in Scotland there needs to be the opportunity to schedule TVEI more flexibly across 5th and 6th year to take account both of the numbers leaving TVEI at several points and the varying timetable loads over this period. Projects have had to argue strongly to be allowed to "infill" new pupils after Christmas of 5th year and especially after the summer of 5th year. Moreover when the numbers problem is resolved, it still leaves Scottish TVEI with the major task of constructing coherent programmes suitable for the different categories of youngsters leaving and joining TVEI over these 2 years.

THE NEW VOCATIONALISM IN ACTION?

The announcement of TVEI was greeted by a combination of disapproval and support both based on the same grounds: that TVEI was a radical attempt to put into practice many of the ideas advocated in the debate about the vocational relevance of education. We were particularly concerned with education/industry relationships in our evaluation of TVEI and were able to observe at first hand the reality of the best resourced and most sustained effort of recent years to make education more responsive to the needs of the economy and the wishes of industry and to achieve a

greater involvement of employers in secondary education. We were told forcefully about the issues on both sides of the debate but were perhaps most struck by the fact that whatever the ideological positions adopted on this question and the intentions of practitioners, reality was more complex and full of unexpected and unintended outcomes. It is some of these complexities we discuss in the second part of this paper.

Vocational Relevance

Early statements about TVEI, for example by David Young the then chairman of MSC, demonstrate a belief that by following a programme of vocational education youngsters would be better recruits for employers, thus improving their own job prospects and, later as employees be more able to respond to changing skill requirements and economic circumstances. The criteria set by MSC for TVEI reflected this thinking. Projects were required to ensure that

"They should provide four-year curricula, with progression from year to year, designed to prepare the student for particular aspects of employment and for adult life in a society liable to rapid change;"⁽⁴⁾

and

"The vocational elements should be broadly related to potential employment opportunities within and outside the geographical area for the young people concerned; and there should be appropriate planned work experience as an integral part of the programmes."⁽⁴⁾

Each TVEI project was to be supported and guided locally by a mechanism that would include local industry and commerce; to give details of how co-operation with local industry, commerce and the public services would be achieved especially in terms of work experience provision; and to ensure "close collaboration between local education authorities and industry/commercial public services etc. so that the curriculum has industry's confidence".⁽⁵⁾

In the face of such requirements there was considerable fear of an industry "takeover" of education, that employers would have the major say in determining the curriculum which would be geared to their requirements. In our research (which included over 200 interviews in both industry and education) we found that this has not happened. On the one hand, although many employers we interviewed were critical of secondary education and wanted schools to be more responsive to industry, very few wanted to direct the curriculum closely. On the other hand, the reality of efforts by projects to involve employers highlights vividly the practical issues often overlooked in the frequently heated debates in this area. In

practice, far from industry taking over education, projects have had problems making contact with employers, in getting their support, in sustaining initial interest over time and in transforming promised help into action because of employers' work pressures. Projects have also discovered the limitations of some employers' understanding of education and training and what they could be expected to contribute to courses and modules. The scenario we encountered was not the one that many had expected, hoped for or feared.

TVEI and the Youth Labour Market

If TVEI has not resulted in industry domination, has it had the desired effect of making youngsters better recruits and improving their job prospects? While it would be too much to expect TVEI to have made a marked impact after only 2 years we were interested to see whether there were any indications or trends, for example in the labour market destinations of TVEI leavers and in employers' recruitment practices. But reality belies the simplifications that underpin much of the rhetoric about education and vocational relevance. Aims to make the curriculum more relevant to the needs of industry assume that industry's requirements are known and agreed and that what happens in industry, for example in relation to recruitment and work practices, coincides with its statements. Apart from the lack of even medium-term manpower and skill forecasting in industry, there are other factors that complicate the question of vocational education, its value and its outcomes.

Although the employers we interviewed were all involved in TVEI and supported its aims, they did not appear to translate this approval into practice when they recruited young people. When asked how much account they would take of an applicant's TVEI experience and in particular any course that seemed to be related to their own industry, very few said that a youngster's TVEI experience would significantly influence their recruitment or selection decisions. This seemed to be due to several inter-related factors: the strength of support for and reliance on traditional academic certification both as an initial screening device and as a measure of competence; a greater value attached by employers to academic rather than vocational skills in potential employees; the poor image and low status of vocational education in Britain and its association with the "non-academic" or "less able". Of course, employers' practice reinforces the latter problem. As long as young people know that employers prefer academic certification, they, and especially more able pupils, will take their cue from this, whatever the merits of alternative, more vocationally oriented, courses. Industrialists might call for a more relevant and vocational education but so far they have not demonstrated that they value it.

Employers' disregard of the vocational education of the TVEI

youngsters coming on to the labour market at 16 raises the question of whether such training is seen to be of much practical value. It seems that it is not, at least in any direct way. Employers explained to us that for the jobs and YTS schemes entered at 16, the skill levels required are usually fairly low so that previous experience and training in them through TVEI does not confer an advantage, the necessary skills can be picked up quickly once in the job. This attitude to TVEI is in keeping with the traditional disregard for broad-based vocational education of many British employers.

Another area where there seems to be a gap between the rhetoric of industry and the practice is in the area of enterprise. We hear a great deal these days from the government and from industry about the need for 'enterprise'. We are told that employees need to be flexible, creative, able to use their initiative and tackle any problem that comes up. Education is criticised for failing to produce such creatures. Yet the work practices of many employers do not match their statements. The extent of their demand for critical, enterprising employees is limited in many instances and is frequently related to the level of job. How much enterprise does an employer really want an operative to show? The lower the level of the job, the less employers need workers to be innovatory and enterprising. And even in higher level jobs, when employers talk about employees using their initiative, they frequently assume that the exercise of this initiative will be within fairly narrow parameters set by themselves. This provides another illustration that there is not a simple equation between what employers say they want and how education should respond. It also raises an issue about the likely impact on young people who have experienced a more enterprising education who then find themselves in jobs where they feel bored and their initiative stifled. This is a tension which is not being confronted in TVEI.

Value in the Labour Market

Turning to the other side of the question – the young people concerned – has TVEI improved their job prospects?

When we asked TVEI staff about the types of jobs and YTS schemes that TVEI pupils had found, none felt they could point to any appreciable TVEI influence. From our data on the labour-market destinations of the first cohort of TVEI pupils from the Scottish Young People's Survey⁽⁶⁾ we can see little evidence of a direct TVEI effect on finding employment and training. More than half the TVEI cohort was on YTS, nearly three in ten were unemployed, and only one in five was in a full-time job outside YTS. Those proportions were much the same among the non-TVEI pupils.

Status of labour-market entrants in spring 1987 (percentages)

	TVEI schools			Rest of Scotland
	TVEI in S3/4	others	all	
Males and Females				
YTS	53	53	53	48
Full-time job	20	22	21	27
Unemployed	28	25	26	24
Total	101	100	100	99
Unweighted n	(394)	(901)	(1295)	(2690)
Males				
YTS	52	50	51	48
Full-time job	23	22	22	27
Unemployed	25	28	27	26
Total	100	100	100	101
Unweighted n	(232)	(480)	(712)	(1440)
Females				
YTS	54	58	57	50
Full-time job	15	22	20	28
Unemployed	32	20	24	23
Total	101	100	101	101
Unweighted n	(162)	(421)	(583)	(1250)

Source: 100% sample

The survey also collected data on young people's own perceptions of TVEI's value in the labour market. We asked former TVEI pupils who were in a job or on a YTS scheme, if TVEI had been useful to them in getting their job or scheme and in doing it. In answer to both questions, around a quarter felt that TVEI had been useful. We can contrast their response to these questions with their responses to the more general question of whether they thought TVEI in 3rd and 4th years had been worthwhile or not. More than four in five of these youngsters in jobs or on YTS rated it as very worthwhile or worthwhile in some ways. This suggests that TVEI was valued by its students for considerably wider reasons than its perceived relevance to their employment prospects. They expressed appreciation at being 'treated like adults' and at working in groups as well as getting out of school onto work experience and residential.

It is evident from the implementation and development of TVEI that the debate about the vocational relevance of education, the correct role for

education in the economy and for industry in education is a far more complex affair than some of the protagonists on both sides would maintain. Roger Dale identifies this as a central problem in efforts to promote closer links between education and industry. He points to

"the *simplification* of both the educational attitudes, preferences and requirements of employers and of the available institutional provision and in the consequent *simplification* of the attempts to bring the two together"? (our emphases)⁽⁷⁾

The experience of TVEI reveals the inadequacy of any simplistic answer to the thorny question of the proper relationship between education and industry.

Colin Bell, Department of Sociology, University of Edinburgh
Cathy Howieson, Centre for Educational Sociology, University of Edinburgh
Kenneth King, Department of Education, University of Edinburgh
David Raffe, Centre for Educational Sociology, University of Edinburgh

References

1. Bell, Howieson, King, Raffe *Liaisons Dangereuses? Education Industry Relationships in the First Scottish TVEI Pilot Projects*, Edinburgh University, July 1988.
2. Educational Institute of Scotland *Technical and Vocational Education Initiative*, Minute No 574 (15) (iii), Annual General Meeting, June 1986.
3. HMSO *Working Together - Education and Training* (Cmnd. 9823) London, July 1986.
4. Manpower Services Commission *TVEI Operating Manual*, Annex 3, Sheffield, 1983.
5. Manpower Services Commission *TVEI Operating Manual*, Annex 2, Sheffield, 1983.
6. The Scottish Young People's Survey is a postal survey of a national sample of young people from across Scotland carried out by the Centre for Educational Sociology of Edinburgh University in conjunction with the Scottish Education Department.
7. Roger Dale *Education, Training and Employment: towards a new vocationalism*, Pergamon, Oxford, 1985.