Payment by Results (1862-1897): Ensuring a Good Return on Governmental Expenditure

Brendan A. Rapple
Boston College

"Payment by results" (1862-1897) was a system whereby the annual governmental grant for English and Welsh elementary schools depended for the most part on how well pupils answered in the examination conducted by Her Majesty's Inspectors. In this article I review its origin, its principles, its practice, and its effects. My main conclusion is that it was a narrow, restrictive, Philistine system of educational accountability. It impeded for the second half of the 19th century any hope that England's elementary education might swiftly advance from its generally appalling condition during the first half of the century when the theories and practices scorned in the likes of Dickens's *Hard Times* were more the norm than the exception.

Au cours du XIX^{e} siècle, dans les écoles élémentaires d'Angleterre et du pays de Galles, l'obtention de subsides gouvernementaux était directement liée au niveau de performance des élèves aux examens d'Etat. Cet article a pour but d'examiner ce système, d'abord pour en mettre au jour les origines et les principes, puis pour faire état de la façon dont il était pratiqué et les résultats qu'il a produits. Ma conclusion est la suivante: il s'agissait d'un système étroit, restrictif et plutôt béotien d'imputabilité éducative. Avec ce système, l'Angleterre avait peu de chances de corriger les théories et pratiques dont parlent les Dickens. Les *Hard Times* décrivent, en effet, une situation qui, même dans la seconde partie du XIX^{e} siècle, constituait encore plus la norme que l'exception.

"Payment by results," a rigid method of accountability associated with English and Welsh elementary education during the second half of the 19th century, was a system whereby a school's governmental grant depended for the most part on how well pupils answered in the annual examination conducted by Her Majesty's Inspectors. In turn reviled and lauded by commentators from its inception in 1862, the scheme endured for three and a half decades. This, of course, is a subject well known to British students of educational history. However, on this side of the Atlantic comparatively little attention has been paid to what was one of the most notorious policies affecting elementary schools in England and Wales during the last century. This North American neglect is

without doubt a pity and particularly so when one considers, as Linda Darling-Hammond has aptly observed of the United States context in a recent issue of *Teachers College Record*, that "the issue of educational accountability is probably the most pressing and most problematic of any facing the public schools today" (1989, p. 59).

While it is unlikely that many contemporary critics would advocate the implementation of any system of gauging the outcome of educational practices and of paying by results which was in any respect closely modelled on a 19th century Victorian system, it may be argued that a perusal of a very important precedent of educational accountability still has distinct relevance today, and, at the least, provides a different and valuable perspective on this urgent debate. In the following paper, based primarily on an examination of the annual reports of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Elementary Schools for the years 1862-1897, I review the British system of payment by results, treating its origin, its principles, its practice, and its effects in an attempt to establish whether vilification or praise is its rightful due.

Early State Intervention in Elementary Education

The first money granted by the government to elementary education was in 1833, all schools and teachers' salaries having hitherto been provided by voluntary, generally religious, organizations. However, this governmental benefice was not meant to supersede voluntary activity. For the new grant, intended to assist in the erection of school buildings, amounted to only £20,000 and was given to two religious societies for disposal, the Anglican *National Society* and the Nonconformist *Royal Lancastrian Institution*, later known as the *British and Foreign School Society*. It was also stipulated that local subscriptions for a school should amount to at least 50% of the grant money. Six years later the Queen set up a Committee of the Privy Council for Education under the Secretaryship of Dr. James Kay (afterwards Sir James Kay Shuttleworth) to supervise the limited governmental control over the education of the people, especially the application of Parliamentary money voted for educational purposes. The following year saw the establishment of the position of Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools (H.M.I.), holders of which were charged with the inspection of those schools eligible to receive grants.

The encroachment of the government in the educational sphere, though still painfully slow, continued. For example, in 1846 the state entered the area of teacher training when Kay Shuttleworth, who had earlier in 1840 established his own teacher training college at Battersea, drew up his Minutes on teacher training which provided for grants to be awarded to apprentice and certificated teachers. Under this scheme pupil-teachers at the age of 13 were apprenticed to a teacher for five years and on completion were to compete for the open "Queen's Scholarships" to a normal school. After this latter course the pupil-teacher, now

a trained teacher, received a government certificate and on taking up work in a state inspected school was entitled to an augmentation grant and was promised a pension. Then in 1853 the State introduced a system whereby rural schools could receive capitation grants for the encouragement of regular attendance. As it was soon found impossible to confine this capitation grant to poorer country localities, it was quickly extended to schools throughout the nation, even those in towns. The Committee of Council was accordingly responsible for paying out three major grants: one for the erection of school buildings, a second for the training of teachers, and a third, the capitation grant. In addition, it was the responsibility of this Committee to

> make grants for the purchase of books and apparatus, and afford a certain degree of aid to the education of the children of vagrants and to that of other children who cannot properly be allowed to associate with the families of respectable parents. (Newcastle Commission, 1861, p. 24)

With all these expenses the amount of the grant voted each year necessarily grew until by 1859 it had risen to £723,115, not perhaps an inconsequential amount but one which pales into some insignificance when set beside the nearly £78,000,000 spent on the recent Crimean War (Curtis, 1963, p. 249). Still, Barnard is correct in observing that the tentative period of state involvement was over and that "henceforward the Government was committed to a definite policy in educational administration" (Barnard, 1964, pp. 105-106).

As a reaction to mounting criticism that the condition of education, especially that of the lower classes, still left much to be desired there was appointed in 1858 a Royal Commission chaired by the Duke of Newcastle. This Commission was charged with investigating the state of popular education and with recommending how to extend "sound and cheap elementary Instruction to all Classes of the People" (Newcastle Commission, 1861, p. 4). Though the government was intent on extending education it was a *sine qua non* that it be "cheap" and especially so since the run on the coffers due to the Crimean War. The Commission's findings were a mixture of praise and criticism for England's elementary schools. It was acknowledged that progress had been made since the early decades of the century when the rigid monitorial system held sway. More children were now attending school, the figure adduced being 1 in 7.7 of the population. The figure in 1851 was 1 in 8.36 (Newcastle Commission, 1861, p. 87). However, the frequent irregularity and uncertainty of this attendance was not conducive to good education. Moreover, very few stayed on after the age of 13. Above all, it was found that basic education, the three Rs, was still inadequate despite the recent progress.

Though the commissioners differed over the continuance of the governmental grant, the majority considered it proper that the state should assist in the maintenance of education. It was proposed, however, to change the manner of paying the grant. Henceforward, payment would be based on three features: attendance, the condition of the school buildings, and the H.M.I.'s report.

Furthermore, a system of "payment by results" was to be introduced. Each year, as a method of accountability, a searching examination by competent authority of every child in every school to which grants were to be paid would take place. This would ascertain whether children were learning what they were supposed to, and, as a corollary, would make the prospects and position of the teacher dependent, to a considerable extent, on the results of this examination (Newcastle Commission, 1861, pp. 168, 273, 157). The Newcastle Commissioners were by no means the first to suggest a principle of accountability as there had been a number of precedents during the previous couple of decades. Payment by results had been associated with the pupil-teacher system of 1846 under which the salaries of the trainee teachers and their teachers depended on success in the yearly examination. A scheme initiated in 1853 had the Committee of Council paying a capitation grant to schools provided that a certain proportion of pupils passed an examination conducted by an H.M.I. However, this particular system of accountability did not last very long due to inspectors' lack of time, their neglect, and their absence of consistency. The Department of Science and Art also employed a similar scheme of paying by results in the late 1850s when science and drawing teachers could receive a bonus for meritorious answering by their pupils in annual examinations (Sylvester, 1974, pp. 46-57).

Payment by Results Passed and Set in Motion

The various proposals adduced by the officials at the Education Department in response to the Newcastle Commission's findings and recommendations engendered exceedingly vociferous debate among interested parties throughout the country. The most heated arguments focused on the proposals of Robert Lowe, Vice-President of the Education Department, to introduce an annual examination of every pupil, somewhat on the model of that recommended by the Commissioners. The results of this examination would dictate the amount of grant payable to the individual schools. Lowe was insistent that education must be accountable: "We are about to substitute for the vague and indefinite test which now exists, a definite, clear, and precise test, so that the public may know exactly what consideration they get for their money" (Hansard, clxv, 1862, col. 242). It is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss the varied reaction to Lowe's plans in detail, though it should be pointed out that there was far more adverse than positive criticism. The eventual outcome was the introduction on May 9, 1862, of the much reviled *Revised Code*. Though many of the *Code*'s features clearly grew out of the findings and recommendations of the Commissioners, the more draconian measures sprang from Lowe and his colleague Ralph Lingen (Kay Shuttleworth's successor as Secretary to the Committee of Council) rather than from the Commission (Tropp, 1957, p. 82). The new grant, "to promote the education of children belonging to the classes who support themselves by manual labour" (*Revised Code*, 1862, p. xvi), was

still intended to supplement voluntary efforts and was to aid only those schools which were associated with some religious denomination or where a daily reading from the authorized version of the Scriptures was given. In addition, schools seeking a grant had to accept inspection by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors. The state's augmentation grants to teachers and pupil-teachers instituted by the 1846 scheme were now abolished and a system of capitation grants substituted. Pupils were obliged to satisfy the inspector that they had attended for a minimum number of times in the year. The day pupils satisfying the attendance requirement and over six years of age were eligible for a grant of 8s. if they passed the H.M.I.'s examination in reading, writing, and arithmetic. For each of these subjects failed, 2s.8d. was forfeited. The grant was 5s. for evening pupils, liable to a forfeiture of 1s.8d. for each subject failed (*Revised Code*, 1862, p. xxii). There were six standards in which pupils could be examined, an important proviso being that children, whether they passed or failed the first time, could not be examined a second time in the same or a lower standard.

Payment by results, though the most significant, was not the only provision of the *Revised Code*. There was introduced a fourth class certificate specifically for less able teachers who would be employed in poorer rural schools, thereby lowering the overall standards of the teaching profession. It was also decided, in response to the Newcastle Commission's criticism of the prevailing system, to make payment directly to the managers who would then arrange with their teaching staffs concerning remuneration. This would eliminate the need of the Committee of Council to pay by mail 23,000 certificated teachers and pupil-teachers (Minute of the Right Honourable The Lords, 1862, p. 117, par. 2). Not only was a state guaranteed grant lost by these 23,000 but the government in 1863 also stopped the system of Queen's Scholarships for new recruits. There was also to be a reduction in granting to the teacher training colleges (*Revised Code*, 1862, pp. lix, lvii). Particularly irksome to teachers was the state's decision to do away with the pension scheme which it had been dangling as a carrot since 1846. In short, the emphasis was now to be on efficiency, quantifiable results, and reduction in governmental expenditure on education. As the Liberal and Utilitarian Robert Lowe declared, neatly applying his political philosophy to the educational sphere: "Hitherto we have been living under a system of bounties and protection; now we propose to have a little free trade" (Hansard, clxiv, 1861, col. 736). Of course, the foregoing regulations by no means remained unaltered over the 35 year history of payment by results. Changes were frequently made in details of the annual *Codes* and totally new *Codes* were issued periodically. However, the underlying principle of the system persevered, with governmental grants continuing to be viewed essentially as a reward for results attained.

Payment by Results and Teachers

Robert Lowe had prophesied when introducing the *Revised Code*: "If it is not cheap, it shall be efficient; if it is not efficient, it shall be cheap" (Hansard, clxv, 1862, col. 229). The system indeed proved cheaper, for governmental saving was immediately realized after implementation. The grant for each year from 1861 to 1865 was, respectively, £813,441; £774,743; £721,386; £655,036; £636,806. These were dramatic decreases, all the more marked considering that average attendances had risen each year (Sylvester, 1974, p. 82). However, this reduction in expenditure was not to last; from the mid-1860s onward the parliamentary grant began to increase, and understandably so, due to changes in successive *Codes*, to the great expansion introduced by the 1870 Education Act, and to an ever growing awareness that an enlarged educational provision must be overseen by the government.

But the effects of the *Revised Code* and payment by results must be considered from a broader perspective than the mere absolute size of the annual grant. Teachers, for example, were affected severely. Before payment by results they could be considered quasi civil servants since they received part of their salaries directly from the government. But under the new system teachers, no longer in receipt of state aid, had to bargain with school managers for all their salary, thereby experiencing a manifest loss of status. However, this break in direct involvement with the state was welcome to some; one H.M.I. believed that teachers formerly had little incentive to work to their keenest. "It has removed them from that quasi protection of the State which enervated their character and withdrew them from those general conditions of employment which assign merit and reward to those who earn it" (*Annual Reports*, 1864-65, p. 16). It is unlikely that many teachers would have been swayed by this argument. In addition, many teachers were extremely ill-pleased with the official decree that their competence could be satisfactorily gauged by the number of passes obtained. While most, out of professional pride, attempted to secure the greatest number of passes, there was also a very practical reason for so doing. As the school managers often gave teachers a small set salary and paid them as balance either the whole or a fixed percentage of the grant gained, it was obligatory for them, if they were to survive, to secure as many passes and as large a grant as possible.

Under such circumstances, the educational well-being of pupils all too often became secondary to concerns about the teacher's own livelihood, for there was never any certainty about the numbers of pupils who would pass annually. Perhaps, for some reason or other and not necessarily due to the fault of the teacher, the school may have been discredited, resulting in a low attendance during the year. Even when annual attendance was good there was no guarantee that on the day of the examination every pupil would turn up. Sickness and epidemics, harvests and other seasonal work, and bad weather could wreak havoc and keep attendance low. When this happened, as Inspector Robinson

pointed out in his 1867 Report, the teacher lost money for each pupil absent, thereby resulting in

> a sore discouragement, which he does not fail to feel keenly, both on account of the labour of teaching thrown away as far as that day's result would show, and because it is so much bread from the mouths of his family. (*Annual Reports*, 1867-68, p. 213)

Robinson also painted the scenario of a teacher taking over a disorganized and poorly taught school where most of the pupils had already been examined and failed in standards too high for them. As it was against the rules for the teacher to present them again at the same level, he had the option of declining to present them and thereby losing the grant, or presenting them at a higher and more difficult level "for the chance of earning something trifling in this as well as in future years" (*Annual Reports*, 1867-68, p. 214). Still, some inspectors argued that the *Revised Code* had the beneficial effect of compelling poorer teachers to pay greater attention to their duties. For instance, Mr. Kennedy in 1867 praised the result if not necessarily the means of payment by results:

> For managers will no longer go on putting up with a master whose scholars cannot earn an average grant, and in very many cases the master is stimulated by receiving a fixed share of what is earned by those scholars who pass. I have seen much good result in inferior schools from this double stimulus of fear and reward applied to teachers by the system of "payment by results," though whether this same good might not be accomplished in another way, and whether the system of "payment by results" has not certain grave objections, are other questions. (*Annual Reports*, 1867-68, p. 171)

Teachers were often very nervous on the day of inspection. With so much of the salary dependent upon a good result, "each year seem[ed] to leave the marks of increasing care and anxious toil on the appearance and manner of the teacher" (*Annual Reports*, 1867-68, p. 133). The inspector was the supreme arbiter of the latter's livelihood and how he conducted the examination was naturally observed with attention to all minute details. Indeed, a particularly sad effect of payment by results was that many teachers came to regard the inspector as an adversary who was to be outwitted rather than as a helpful guide or colleague in the educational process. As we shall see later, some teachers even resorted to cheating. While such a practice may not have been morally justified it was perhaps understandable. For it certainly became clear soon after the implementation of payment by results that teachers had reason to worry about the unreliability of their income, since in many cases they received a smaller salary, complementing the general reduction in the grant earned by schools. Average salaries were less in 1869 than in 1861. And this was at a time of rising prices (Tropp, 1957, p. 96). Mr. Robinson's comments in his 1865 report about the schools in Buckingham and Hertford were also applicable to other districts:

> Nearly all the schools have received less, some much less, from the annual grant of the Revised Code than they were accustomed to receive under the old, and the whole expenditure in them has been, for the most part, reduced by the

> amount of loss they have in this way sustained, nor does it appear likely that this deficiency can be in any material degree made good by increased voluntary effort, for the local resources have been, in most cases, already tried to the uttermost, and little more can be expected from the payments of the children. (*Annual Reports*, 1865-66, p. 164)

In most schools, in the early years of payment by results, teachers frequently received less from the annual grant than they previously earned as a fixed salary. As a consequence, many became peripatetic, changing their positions from school to school in search of greater remuneration. It was even said that, when seeking a position, some teachers calculated the percentage of passes in different school districts and were influenced by the scores in making their decision (*Annual Reports*, 1871-72, p. 34). A multitude were sacked for securing poor grants; managers, declares Edmonds, "appointed and dismissed their teachers just as they ordered slates in preference to copy-books or vice-versa" (Edmonds, 1962, p. 77). Many others, leaving teaching entirely, migrated to different occupations. Inspector Robinson had little doubt of the reason, declaring that, if teachers "were sufficiently paid any excuse for rapid change, under ordinary circumstances, would be taken away" (*Annual Reports*, 1869-70, p. 196).

With the removal of the state guaranteed salary fewer pupil-teachers decided to take up the profession of teacher. This is not surprising considering that a pupil-teacher's salary had fallen from £15 under the 1846 scheme to less than £13 10s. in the later 1860s. Nor did the abolition of the Queen's Scholarships help recruitment. Moreover, teachers were less motivated to take on apprentices as they no longer received any payment from the state for so doing (Tropp, 1957, p. 94). There is also much evidence that those who did enter teaching were of a lower caliber than formerly; their attainments, aims, and work habits frequently left much to be desired (*Annual Reports*, 1864-65, pp. 145-6; *Annual Reports*, 1866-67, p. 212; *Annual Reports*, 1867-68, p. 169;). The training colleges naturally suffered; because of the decline in students they received smaller grants and two were even obliged to close. Generally, admission requirements to the colleges were lowered and there was often a complementary narrowing of the curriculum. Since getting as many children as possible to pass a mechanical examination of a mechanical knowledge of the three Rs was the government's main requirement from teachers, there was really very little need to ensure that they received a broad liberal education. Again, with fewer coming forward to train as pupil-teachers but with a corresponding rise in the number of children in the classroom an increase in the student-teacher ratio in the elementary schools naturally resulted.

Payment by Results and Children

Every pupil now counted equally in a financial sense; that is, every pupil who passed the examination was eligible for the same grant. The junior standards, all too often neglected in the past, naturally benefitted, for teachers now took pains

in preparing them for passing. Moreover, the teacher tended to pay more attention to the less able pupils also, children who had often been ignored as nuisances before payment by results (*Annual Reports*, 1864-65, pp. 154-155; *Annual Reports*, 1865-66, p. 60; *Annual Reports*, 1866-67, p. 31). At the same time, there was a decline in simultaneous class teaching together with an increased concentration on preparing children for individual examination, a method of pedagogy and testing much praised by many inspectors (*Annual Reports*, 1864-65, p. 34; *Annual Reports*, 1872-73, p. 76; *Annual Reports*, 1881-82, p. 443). However, it was also strenuously argued that brighter students were suffering because of the resultant striving for uniformity of attainments (*Annual Reports*, 1865-66, p. 25; *Annual Reports*, 1866-67, p. 116; *Annual Reports*, 1867-68, pp. 216-217). For there was little financial incentive to help the clever children realize their full capabilities. The brightest were not alone in being neglected, for the very weak pupils, those perceived as unlikely to pass, often received scant attention from teachers, especially in the period immediately preceding the examination. Only those who had a chance of being financially remunerative would be carefully prepared for the tests. Sometimes dull children were refused admittance to schools altogether. Furthermore, neglected students were not always those of the weakest intelligence, as frequently children of the most socioeconomically deprived backgrounds, who found little reinforcement in their family life and were all too often distinguished by a lack of regularity in school attendance, received the least attention from teachers. And, needless to say, these were the very children who required the most looking after.

Many were the reasons why children failed to be present on the day of the examination. These ranged from necessity to work to supplement the family income, especially at seasonal labor, to not having new clothes to wear in honor of such an auspicious day (*Annual Reports*, 1865-66, p. 61; *Annual Reports*, 1866-67, p. 141; *Annual Reports*, 1876-77, p. 621). Harsh weather was also a frequent cause of low attendance as was sickness, particularly when an epidemic ravaged a school district. The most common epidemics were those of smallpox, whooping cough, scarlatina, and measles. Where they raged, the grant for that year was inevitably low. Because the government grant was so important to the manager, the teacher, and the welfare of the school, pressure was often put on parents to make sure that even very sick children were present on the inspection day. A striking account of the pressures wielded by the tyranny of the grant is provided in Mr. Warburton's *Report* for 1865:

> At a time when scarlatina was epidemic in a thickly populated district, I had children brought to be examined with throats bandaged and skin peeling, who ought certainly to have been in bed, and one of whom had to be taken away during the examination. On another occasion the manager of a school, after the examination was, as I thought, completed, came to me, and said that he would be much obliged if I would examine five children who were waiting in the classroom, as it was unsafe to introduce them into the schoolroom; and I subsequently found the mother of one of these children crying outside the door

> from anxiety respecting her little boy, who had been brought out of his sick room in order to be present at the inspection. (*Annual Reports*, 1865-66, p. 225. See also *Annual Reports*, 1864-65, p. 107; *Annual Reports*, 1866-67, p. 117)

Sometimes pupils qualified by the requisite number of days in attendance were kept back by their teachers and school managers from examination. It was even alleged that slower children were occasionally told in person or through their parents to stay away from school on the inspection day (*Annual Reports*, 1865-66, p. 59; *Annual Reports*, 1870-71, p. 244; *Annual Reports*, 1877-78, p. 463).

Furthermore, it was soon realized that many managers and teachers were refusing to present students at the standard appropriate for their attainments and intellectual abilities. The rationale was to ensure that they were kept the longest time in the school and to secure as many grants as possible. Such a situation was understandable, if not excusable, for teachers had little financial incentive to present pupils at the upper levels. The grant was the same as at the lower levels, while the chances of failing were correspondingly higher. This was especially lamentable as the examinations, particularly at the lower standards, were usually not very rigorous and it would not have been beyond the capability of many students to go through the work of two or more standards in one year under the guidance of a good teacher. It is true that quite a different criticism of the system of payment by results was also proffered concerning the rule that children who failed in one standard must nevertheless be offered for examination in a higher standard the next time. For, as Inspector Kennedy objected, if a pupil had for some reason been placed in too high a standard at first and failed in it he would still be "obliged to be examined year by year in an ever rising standard . . . never [having] a chance of being duly grounded and acquitting [himself] with credit" (*Annual Reports*, 1867-68, p. 173).

Pedagogy and Curriculum

Kay Shuttleworth, a great opponent of the *Revised Code* and payment by results, had written in 1861, before the new provisions had been set in motion, that Lowe's plans could

> be briefly described as an attempt to reduce the cost of the education of the poor, by conducting it by a machinery — half trained and at less charge; — to entrust it to a lower class of ill-paid teachers, and generally to young monitors as assistants; — to neglect the force of a higher moral and religious agency in the civilisation of the people; — and to define national education as a drill in mechanical skill in reading, writing and arithmetic. The State would pay less, and be content with a worse article. (Kay Shuttleworth, 1862, p. 429)

Subsequent results showed that Kay Shuttleworth had indeed proved prescient. Soon eagerness to secure a good numerical result frequently caused decreased attention to whether or not a true education was being imparted. It was not with tongue in cheek that Quick declared that if Pestalozzi had been teaching in England:

> no doubt his work would have been pronounced a terrible failure by the Joint Board or by H.M. Inspectors. He would not have passed 50 per cent., and his Managers would have dismissed him for earning so poor a grant. But, if left to himself, he would have turned out men and women capable of thinking clearly, of feeling rightly, and of reverencing all that is worthy of reverence. These are extra subjects not at present included in our curriculum. (Storr, 1899, pp. 146-147)

Far too many teachers thought their job consisted of stuffing the children's minds with such facts and answers which it was anticipated would be sought by the H.M.I.s, with the best method that of mechanical repetition (*Annual Reports*, 1869-70, p. 293; *Annual Reports*, 1870-71, p. 152; *Annual Reports*, 1876-77, p. 546). Admittedly, many teachers before the *Revised Code* resembled that overtrained advocate of facts, Mr. M'Choakumchild of Dickens' *Hard Times*. However, since the state by its 1862 action actually rewarded, rather than discouraged, factual, mechanical cramming, a dramatic increase was ensured in the type of teacher whom M'Choakumchild's manager, Thomas Gradgrind, would have profusely lauded:

> Now, what I want is, Facts. Teach these boys and girls nothing but Facts. Facts alone are wanted in life. Plant nothing else, and root out everything else. You can only form the minds of reasoning animals upon Facts: nothing else will ever be of any service to them. This is the principle on which I bring up my own children, and this is the principle on which I bring up these children. Stick to Facts, sir! (Dickens, 1984, p. 47)

Memory, all too often, was stressed at the expense of understanding, with many pupils being drilled "into performing certain exercises with parrot-like facility" (*Annual Reports*, 1870-71, p. 221). In reading, while children were often possessed of "a mechanical readiness of utterance" which would enable them to secure a pass, they frequently had little notion of what their reading actually meant (*Annual Reports*, 1867-68, p. 134). For years after the introduction of payment by results the annual examination in reading had to be from some book used in that particular school; that is, the inspector could not examine from a book of his own choice. Accordingly, it was common practice for the teacher to choose a short book with easy words and for the 12 months before the inspection day to drill each page into the pupils until most of them had learned the whole work by heart (*Annual Reports*, 1867-68, p. 217; *Annual Reports*, 1870-71, p. 153). In 1869 Inspector Temple reported that it is

> very amusing to watch the look of blank dismay which comes over a teacher's face when I tell some fluent urchin to shut his book and go on with his lesson by rote, and the scholar, proud of his accomplishment, obeys me. (*Annual Reports*, 1869-70, p. 239)

To counteract this memorization some inspectors even asked pupils to read backwards (*Annual Reports*, 1866-67, p. 76)! Of course, the primary reason for this abysmal practice of memorizing the book was that it facilitated the securing of a good grant: "It *pays*, even in the hands of an inexperienced teacher, when

the aim is to make the class *get up* a reading book. This is too often the one aim and object" (*Annual Reports*, 1879-80, p. 451).

A book's easiness and short length often constituted a teacher's main criteria for choosing it, with small concern paid to intellectual and literary content. Long term educational benefits were sacrificed to short term financial rewards. Plenteous complaints were also lodged regarding the inadequate teaching of arithmetic (*Annual Reports*, 1867-68, p. 134; *Annual Reports*, 1873-74, p. 193). Again, it was a common criticism that the major concern of the manager and teacher was too often financial, namely having as many pupils as possible pass the narrowly prescribed syllabus, and that everything which was not conducive to meeting this goal was to be ignored. As Inspector Robinson observed: "a slight deviation from the beaten track causes instant consternation" (*Annual Reports*, 1867-68, p. 218). Certainly, where the main aim was merely to get children sufficiently skilled to answer correctly the mechanical working of a sum, it is understandable that many were left ignorant of how to apply arithmetic in day-to-day life (*Annual Reports*, 1867-68, p. 125; *Annual Reports*, 1873-74, p. 31; *Annual Reports*, 1878-79, p. 600). Nevertheless, though too many pupils had little inkling of how to apply what they learned in the arithmetic class it is likely that the sheer mechanical accuracy of doing basic computation improved (*Annual Reports*, 1865-66, p. 136; *Annual Reports*, 1868-69, p. 111).

There were also numerous complaints about the debasing of the curriculum. What facilitated earning the maximum grant was very frequently the main criterion for curricular inclusion. The result was that all too often "Her Majesty's inspector felt himself to be little more than a mechanical index of proficiency in the 3 R's" (*Annual Reports*, 1876-77, p. 529). During the first years of payment by results only the three Rs were eligible for grants; accordingly, for the most part only the three Rs together with religious knowledge which was compulsory, were taught. The teacher, wrote Inspector Alderson, "thinks he has done quite enough when he offers the State its pound of flesh in the shape of so much reading, writing, and ciphering. Thus the unpaid subjects will never compete with the paid subjects" (*Annual Reports*, 1865-66, p. 246). This was an opinion with which Inspector Morell clearly agreed:

> That which was fixed as the minimum for gaining the grant on every child, becomes the maximum of the teacher's aims and efforts, and everything else is, not perhaps intentionally, but certainly *practically*, discouraged by the enormous value attached to the required subjects. To make the *essential support* of the schools depend on reading, writing, and arithmetic has, I know, struck the death knell in many a school to that higher teaching out of which intellectual stimulus is well nigh *exclusively* drawn. (*Annual Reports*, 1866-67, p. 261)

In fact, it was reported in 1864 that, with the rapid demise of grammar, geography, and history, the only subject left for testing pupils' intelligence was religious knowledge (*Annual Reports*, 1864-65, p. 119).

Evidence is abundant that subjects other than the three Rs received less attention after the implementation of the *Revised Code*. Even where such subjects as grammar, geography, or history continued to be taught, they were generally set aside for the two or three months prior to the inspector's visit, in order that full time might be devoted to the examinable subjects. This decline in the higher subjects frequently heralded a dramatic change from the pre-1862 situation. Inspector Bowstead in 1866 spoke of that large number of schools, which besides teaching the three Rs in previous years "also cultivated the intelligence of the children" by teaching the higher subjects. He acknowledged that in the old days when the government paid directly for the pupil-teachers the regular teachers had more time for a broader curriculum. But now with far fewer assistant teachers, due to the schools being obliged to pay for them out of their own funds, it was frequently found to be impossible to teach a broad range of subjects. He concluded that "It may be that the reading, writing, and ciphering in such schools are better, on the whole, than they used to be, [still he was] persuaded that this gain, if gain there be, is more than balanced by the loss in another direction" (*Annual Reports*, 1866-67, p. 247). It was also argued that teachers frequently ignored the extra subjects, realizing that there was usually little time on the inspection day for the H.M.I., if he did not have an assistant, to examine in these subjects.

Under the old Code, however, there was usually much more time for testing subjects other than the three Rs and indeed for examining processes rather than mere results. The inspector then could scrutinize the school premises, equipment, books, methods of teaching, financial arrangements, and so on. There was generally a class examination in which the pupils as a group were assessed, as opposed to the testing of individual children (*Annual Reports*, 1864-65, p. 184; *Annual Reports*, 1864-65, p. 198; *Annual Reports*, 1866-67, p. 278). However, some were not particularly upset about the decline in the higher subjects, arguing that when these received excessive attention, the three Rs might be adversely affected. D.R. Fearon in his 1876 work *School Inspection* wrote that many schools

> those for example in rural districts, or those amid a very poor and fluctuating population — could not really do justice to the elementary subjects, and at the same time teach such subjects as geography, grammar, and history. And in so far as the Revised Code forced such schools to give up their more tempting and showy work, and to apply themselves to the drudgery of the essentials, it did good service. (Fearon, 1876, p. 44. See also *Annual Reports*, 1868-69, p. 187; *Annual Reports*, 1876-77, p. 556)

It was also pointed out that a pupil who failed the examination in the three Rs in one standard would find it very difficult to pass at a higher standard the following year, never mind pass in a higher subject (one could not be presented twice in the same standard). However, after the *Minute* of 20th February, 1867 was issued, which provided that schools under certain conditions could be

eligible for extra grants if pupils in Standards IV-VI passed an examination in "specific subjects," many teachers began providing instruction in another subject, usually geography or grammar. The rationale that there was no time to teach them was now, with the lure of a money payment, conveniently forgotten. While some H.M.I.s welcomed this change Matthew Arnold, for one, did not, maintaining that mechanical examination whether in higher subjects or the three Rs was anathema as far as true education was concerned.

> More free play for the inspector, and more free play, in consequence, for the teacher, is what is wanted; and the Minute of February with its elaborate mechanism of the one-fifth and the three-fourths makes the new examination as formal and lifeless as the old one. In the game of mechanical contrivances the teachers will in the end beat us; and as it is now found possible, by ingenious preparation, to get children through the Revised Code examination in reading, writing, and ciphering, without their really knowing how to read, write, or cipher, so it will with practice no doubt be found possible to get the three-fourths of the one-fifth of the children over six through the examination in grammar, geography, and history, without their really knowing any one of these three matters. (*Annual Reports*, 1867-68, p. 297)

Though the three Rs remained the bread and butter of a school's grant, as changes were made to successive *Codes* the prominence given to the higher subjects increased (*Annual Reports*, 1868-69, p. 43; *Annual Reports*, 1872-73, p. 51; *Annual Reports*, 1875-76, p. 360). But again, the main rationale for teaching the latter was usually financial rather than truly educational.

The Examination Process

Though most Victorians implicitly believed in the efficacy of examinations and would have found little to criticize in Holman's 1898 declaration that "education without results, which can be tested by a reasonably-conducted examination, is a contradiction in terms" (p. 171), it is undeniable that there were many problems associated with the payment by results system. For example, there was often a distinct lack of uniformity in examining, despite the oft-repeated argument that an important benefit of payment by results was its standardization of the testing process. Some inspectors were stricter than others and failed children who might have passed in another district. Again, though most of the H.M.I.s were honorable and capable men, some were ill-suited to the job, having little inkling of child psychology and pedagogy. A few were detested by teachers for their sadistic delight in humiliating children, for asking them incomprehensible contextual questions totally above their age level, and for their linguistically tricky dictation passages (Maclure, 1970, p. 63). The variation in the H.M.I.s' expectations and manner inevitably led to anxiety and resentment among school managers and teachers. Some teachers became cunning, suiting their teaching to the ways of an accustomed inspector, a ploy which sometimes resulted in panic when a different one arrived and conducted the examination according to a different method. Another major cause for complaint was that,

before the introduction of the merit grant in 1882 which rewarded especially good answers, there were no variations in the money for different levels of result. A particularly good performance by a pupil or a class received no bonus; a bare pass was counted the same as a distinguished one. It was often argued that such a system failed to engender a striving to achieve excellence and that many teachers were tempted just to aim for the lowest common denominator. Understandably, change was frequently advocated specifically to institute different levels of grants to correspond to variations in the scale of merit in answering. But it was to be 20 years after the introduction of payment by results that the merit grant was instituted. However, then the criticism was frequently voiced that, complementing the lack of uniformity in assessing the three Rs, there was sometimes a great disparity in awarding the merit grant (*Annual Reports*, 1885-86, p. 330; *Annual Reports*, 1886-87, pp. 312-13). In fact, one inspector during the Cross Commission which reported in 1888 complained that all this grant accomplished was "to reward the rich and favoured schools and to punish the small poor schools" (Cruickshank, 1963, p. 57).

The propensity of schoolchildren to copy during tests was certainly not dampened during the period of payment by results. Indeed, many inspectors complained of a high incidence of copying or "looking over" during the examination (*Annual Reports*, 1864-65, p. 160; *Annual Reports*, 1866-67, p. 190; *Annual Reports*, 1876-77, p. 587). Mr. Tremenheere, for example, in 1879 declared that he had detected such dishonesty in no fewer "than 46 of the 210 'adolescent' departments" visited by him during the year (*Annual Reports*, 1879-80, p. 424). Mr. Pennethorne wittily advised in 1875 that authorities should take special care that they appoint no short-sighted Inspectors (*Annual Reports*, 1875-76, p. 381). However, ploys to fool the inspector were not confined to the pupils. There were frequent complaints that teachers sometimes endeavored to obtain copies of the arithmetic questions set by the H.M.I.s in other schools and then drilled their pupils in them in the hope that the same or similar questions would be asked in their own schools. Spencer relates that when he was a teacher he and his colleagues used to copy down the arithmetic questions from the inspector's cards and to forward them

> to friends in other schools not yet examined in order that they might put in some quite useful practice. This was quite fair, so it appeared to us. Towards our colleagues in other schools it was, indeed, chivalrous, for it gave them a chance of outdoing us; towards the inspectors we also considered it to be cricket; they were our examiners, and it was lawful to outwit them, if we could, by any device not plainly in the nature of a verbal lie. (Spencer, 1938, p. 92. See also Swinburne, 1912, p. 77; Dunford, 1980, p. 30)

However such a practice was viewed by some inspectors as cheating. Mr. Steele remarked that a teacher acting in such a fashion "is guilty of a fraudulent design; and if his design succeeds, he is obtaining money and credit on false pretences." Steele, accordingly, recommended that sums be changed very frequently (*Annual Reports*, 1876-77, pp. 586-87).

Conclusion

By the final years of the 19th century little remained of Lowe's 1862 *Revised Code* and payment by results was no more. In this paper I have been quite critical of this system of educational accountability. I believe that it was a system essentially anti-educational, illiberal, aiming at social control, and one which for the most part remained throughout its 35 year reign true to its mean-spirited, expediency-stressing beginnings. However, payment by results has not been seen by everyone in a pejorative light. Besides its own supporters in its own day, a number of modern revisionist critics, if not lavish in their praise, have a least stressed that some aspects of the system were beneficial in their effects. For example, Sylvester, in his 1974 work on Robert Lowe, insists on the necessity of studying the *Revised Code* and payment by results in the context of the second half of 19th century Britain rather than in that of a century later when the whole social, economic, political, and educational climate is so different. Considered in its own historical context, declares Sylvester, Lowe's system, though by no means all good, was certainly not worthy of condemnation on all sides either (Sylvester, 1974, pp. 80-82). Similarly, John Hurt argues that a study of payment by results in the context of its own time reveals the difficulty of seeing

> how the administrative problems of the day could have been solved except by the introduction of some form of objective test. In the state's struggle for control over public education, the imposition of a predominantly secular syllabus in 1862 was an important prelude to the breaking, eight years later, of the monopoly previously enjoyed by the religious societies. (Hurt, 1971, p. 222)

Nevertheless, there is still no obligation to accept that such a rigid and narrow system of payment by results was inevitable and that it was, in fact, of considerable benefit to the pupils. For it was bad, frequently horrendously so, and the sad thing was that a better system, with a little foresight and daring, could have been implemented. Certainly, the great Victorian sage Matthew Arnold was adamant that the educational system was so appalling that it could only be improved. Arnold, 35 years an H.M.I. and one who probably knew more about his nation's schools than the vast majority of his compatriots, reiterated over and over that England's malaise was primarily due to the inadequacies of the educational structure, with payment by results coming in for particularly harsh criticism. He insisted on the necessity of doing away with the mechanical nature of the system, of broadening the curriculum so that pupils might be imbued with that foundation so essential for the growth of his desired "culture," of treating children in a more humane fashion, of improving the training and remuneration of teachers, of substituting true education for the mere "machinery" of education, and of eradicating the pervasive notion that economics, value for money, and education were inextricably intermingled. He repeatedly advised that much could be learned from Continental educational

systems which were far more enlightened than those existing in England and which, furthermore, did not employ the system of payment by results. Nor was Arnold alone in his antagonism to domestic educational iniquities and his advocacy that far-reaching changes were urgently required, especially the abandonment of payment by results. Many others, teachers, educational theorists, social critics, and intellectuals were vociferous in their condemnation of the mechanical, routine, anti-educational, and thoroughly impersonal nature of this system. This becomes very clear from a reading of the voluminous evidence presented to the 1888 Cross Commission. Moreover, the teachings of Pestalozzi, Herbart, and Froebel were becoming increasingly known in England; an important ingredient of these teachings was the insistence on treating children as individual persons requiring love, understanding, and respect, a notion far removed from the prevailing treatment of children as essentially grant earning entities. But it seems that the Education Department, in the 1860s and 1870s at least, had little inkling of such educational theorists with their child-centred approach to education. The bureaucrats who implemented and maintained payment by results for all these years just did not know very much about children and pedagogical theories. Nevertheless, knowledge of child psychology and pedagogical advances was available and could have been consulted to the great benefit of the nation's education. On the contrary, however, children were invariably seen in terms of money, with the personnel in the Education Department consistently failing to recognize "the sheer futility of attempting to regulate education by economic laws" (Edmonds, 1962, p. 79). But none of this was inevitable. If the civil servants and politicians had paid more attention to advances in educational and psychological theories, and if they had opened their eyes to what was happening on the Continent, elementary education might very well have proceeded along far different lines in the latter half of the 19th century.

Payment by results is also to be condemned for its rigid association with social control. Those wielding educational power, especially in the earlier years of the system, treated the offspring of the children of the poor and workers as being necessarily and rightfully confined within the limits of their subservient social class. Simon (1965) quotes Tawney's view expressed in 1924: "The elementary schools of 1870 were intended in the main to produce an orderly, civil, obedient population, with sufficient education to understand a command" (p. 119). Payment by results was a constituent part of an undoubtedly reactionary policy which provided an inferior education to working class children, one of its principal aims being to strengthen social control and to hinder upward mobility. For the most part, the three Rs were considered sufficient for such pupils. What use were higher subjects for children who would inevitably become agricultural laborers, inland navigators, or unskilled factory workers at the age of 11 or 12? In fact, advanced knowledge might be distinctly dangerous in the wrong hands. Even when higher subjects were offered they were more often than not considered as frills and, in practical terms, never worth

very much for grant purposes. As Selleck declares, throughout the whole era the very nature of the grant system "ensured that when the teacher looked to the grant-bearing potential of the curriculum it was on the Three Rs that his eye first fell" (Selleck, 1968, p. 39).

Payment by results was a narrow, restrictive, Philistine system of educational accountability which impeded for the second half of the 19th century any hope that England's elementary education might swiftly advance from its generally appalling condition during the first half of the century when the theories and practices scorned in the likes of Dickens's *Hard Times* were more the norm than the exception. I leave it to the philosopher of history to determine whether lessons might be learned from this episode in British educational history. I am well aware of the dangers of drawing conclusions applicable to late 20th century North American education from a British Victorian system. However, there are clear analogies between the two time periods and the two societies. Certainly, calls for economic efficiency and teacher accountability in both Canadian and American public schools are increasingly shrill today. At any rate, I believe that a study of a national, long-lasting, and very thorough system of accountability by the state, whose main goal was to ensure a good return on governmental expenditure, might provide at least a broader perspective with which to contemplate the multifarious educational problems pervasive in this society today. Finally, if indeed it is possible to point a simple moral from this dismal episode in England's educational history, perhaps it is that true accountability in education should not be facilely linked to mechanical examination results, for there is a very distinct danger that the pedagogical methods employed to attain those results will themselves be mechanical and the education of children will be so much the worse.

I wish to express my sincere gratitude to Professor George Alan Karnes Wallis Hickrod, The Distinguished Professor of Educational Administration and Foundations, Illinois State University, for the generous help which he provided for an earlier version of this paper: Rapple, B.A. (1990). *Payment by Educational Results: An Idea Whose Time has Gone.* Normal, IL.: Center for the Study of Educational Finance, Illinois State University. (MacArthur Spencer Special Series on Illinois School Finance, no. 14).

References

Annual Reports of the Committee of Council on Education 1861-1897. (1861-1897). London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office.

Barnard, H.C. (1964). *A history of English education from 1760.* London: University of London Press.

Cruickshank, M. (1963). *Church and state in English education: 1870 to the present day.* New York: St. Martin's Press.

Curtis, S.J. (1963). *History of education in Great Britain.* London: University Tutorial Press.

Darling-Hammond, L. (1989). Accountability for professional practice. *Teachers College Record, 91*(1), 59-80.

Dickens, C. (1984). *Hard times*. Middlesex: Penguin.

Dunford, J.E. (1980). *Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Schools in England and Wales, 1860-1870*. Leeds: Museum of the History of Education, University of Leeds.

Edmonds, E.L. (1962). *The school inspector*. London: Routledge and Paul.

Fearon, D.R. (1876). *School inspection*. London: Macmillan.

Hansard's parliamentary debates. Third Series. London: T.C. Hansard.

Holman, H. (1898). *English national education: A sketch of the rise of public elementary schools in England*. London: Blackie.

Hurt, J. (1971). *Education in evolution: Church, state, society and popular education, 1800-1870*. London: Rupert Hart-Davis.

Kay Shuttleworth, J. (1862). Letter to Lord Granville, 4 November, 1861. In Copies of all memorials and letters which have been addressed to the Lord President of the Council or to the Secretary of the Committee of Council on Education, on the Subject of the Revised Code, by the authorities of any educational society, board, or committee, or of any training school. *British sessional papers, House of Commons*. London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, XLI.

Maclure, S. (1970). *One hundred years of London education, 1870-1970*. London: Penguin.

Minute of the Right Honourable The Lords of the Committee of the Privy Council on Education Establishing a Revised Code of Regulations. 29 July 1861. (1862) *British sessional papers, House of Commons*. London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, LXI.

Newcastle Commission, 1861, British Parliamentary Papers, Education General (1970). Shannon, Ireland: Irish University Press. Vol. 3.

Revised code. (1862). Report of the Committee of Council on Education, 1861-2. London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office.

Selleck, R.J.W. (1968). *The new education*. London: Pitman.

Simon, B. (1965). *Education and the labour movement, 1870-1920*. London: Lawrence and Wishart.

Spencer, F.H. (1938). *An inspector's testament*. London: English Universities Press.

Storr, F. (Ed.). (1899). *Life and remains of the Rev. R.H. Quick*. New York: Macmillan.

Swinburne, A.J. (1912). *Memories of a school inspector: Thirty-five years in Lancashire and Suffolk*. Saxmundham, Suffolk: A.J. Swinburne.

Sylvester, D.W. (1974). *Robert Lowe and education*. London: Cambridge University Press.

Tropp, A. (1957). *The school teachers: The growth of the teaching profession in England and Wales from 1800 to the present day*. New York: Macmillan.