

now some 700 members of the ACU with an “associate member” category open to non-Commonwealth institutions.) This new “network of higher education” largely belongs to the “South” – populous developing societies who were soon making their own claims for skilling and social advancement in a post-imperial world order of nations. As historians of education we have great opportunity to explore that theme more closely, while taking inspiration from Dr Pietsch’s bold analytic study.

In short: this important first book does more than fill a major lacuna in the place of “settler universities” within the educational history of Empire. It powerfully interrogates assumed historical orthodoxies together opening new questions and perspectives. Readers will here indeed encounter revisionism at its measured best: “Not all readers will be sympathetic to this endeavour, but I hope this book will encourage them to think in new ways about the history of subjects and institutions they know well” (p. ix). That it certainly does, while also strongly announcing the arrival of an original and creative scholar. Dr Pietsch is surely set to change the way we think about higher educational history.

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The Institute: a centennial history of the Institute of Senior Educational Administrators, formerly known as the Institute of Inspectors of Schools and Senior Educational Administrators, and before that as the Institute of Inspectors of Schools of NSW

Reynold Macpherson

2015

Strategic Book Publishing & Rights Co.

Keywords Schools, History of education, Restructure, Leadership

Review DOI 10.1108/HER-02-2016-0014

This *Centennial History of the Institute of Senior Educational Administrators* offers an extensive and discerning account of its subject and makes an important contribution to the understanding of leadership in Australian education. Founded in 1914 to represent and promote the interests of all NSW school inspectors, the Institute today acts for just a small group of mid-level educational administrators. Reynold Macpherson skillfully appraises the enormous influence that the Institute and its members once wielded over the NSW public education system and the steady decline that followed.

In a story that is as rich as it is long, the history of the Institute is essentially the history of public education in NSW. Its establishment was readily agreed to by the Director of Education, Peter Board, who called inspectors his “missionaries”. The Minister of Education, 1984-1988, Rodney Cavalier lauded inspectors as “the eyes and ears of the Department”. Every permanent head of the education department up to 1992 worked their way up from the ranks of the inspectors. Although the Institute was dealt a near mortal blow when the inspectorate was disestablished, it survived, but only as a shadow of its former self.

For most of its history it has stood at the hub of power in NSW education. At its peak, its members had control of curriculum, student assessment, school certification

and development, and the training and career prospects of teachers. In this scholarly, entertaining, well-written book Macpherson examines how the Institute achieved and exercised such enormous influence in NSW education and why it has suffered a progressive marginalization of its role in recent decades.

Macpherson proves an intelligent guide to the eclipse of the power of the Institute. Drawing on a range of documentary, interviews, oral and archival sources Macpherson gives the reader a sense of how this elite policy community operated. He puts the familiar criticisms of the Institute and the inspectorate into the context of what else was happening within the education domain and in the wider political environment and locates different nuances in a familiar picture. From the mid twentieth century as the New South Wales Teachers Federation grew in strength it succeeded in progressively curtailing the power of the inspectors. Another curb was the rapid expansion of Commonwealth involvement in state education formerly a responsibility of the states and territories.

The most compelling section of Macpherson's history is his analysis of the reforms that followed the election in NSW in 1988 of a Liberal/National Party under Nick Greiner. The turning point for the Institute came in 1989 when the Scott Report abolished the inspectorate and devolved power to school principals.

The Scott Report also introduced merit selection of staff and required senior administrators to be appointed on contracts that forbade industrial representation. The Institute kept its welfare and professional development roles and its industrial representation but only for a small group of middle management education officers. The 1989 Carrick Report delivered a further reversal when it removed curriculum from the control of the education department.

The serial restructuring under the Labour governments that followed Greiner destroyed what remained of the old culture and the Institute's influence and membership rapidly dwindled. At its nadir it was nearly de-registered and forced to amalgamate with the New South Wales Teachers Federation. Today, it is peripheral to educational policymaking in NSW. In his final chapter Macpherson proposes strategies to improve its chances of survival and ways it might regain influence.

In 2014 the new Board of Studies Teaching and Educational Standards, as a single authority, took control of curriculum, student assessment and teacher quality: all previous functions of the inspectorate. The Institute, which was once centre stage as a storehouse of memory, of what worked and what did not, and advised on policy without fear had become a minor supporting character in the story of NSW education.

The book has much to recommend it but at more than 650 pages it is, to put it mildly, too long. Although for the most part interesting, the work is frequently extremely self-indulgent with too much attention to minor players and insignificant meetings and conferences. The acrimony of the bureaucratic battles is at times depicted in effusive and tedious detail.

Nevertheless, Macpherson demonstrates the talent of being able to write for a non-academic readership without diminishing the scholarly integrity of his work. His lucid analysis of the culture and operation of the Institute provides ample evidence of its terminal fixation on promoting bureaucratic centralism so as to concentrate power in the hands of a professional cartel.

Offering a wide-ranging and insightful account of its subject, this book adroitly evaluates the role of the Institute in the development of NSW education. Through his investigation of the experience of the Institute and its members Macpherson explains

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how the NSW education system worked at its highest levels and the extent to which it served the interests of the Australian public. In doing so, Macpherson makes a unique and significant contribution to enhancing our understanding of what should lie at the heart of leadership in public education.

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