

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

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IJS - 22 INSPECTING THE INSPECTORATE 7:  
AN IDEAL EDUCATIONAL CONSULTANCY  
SERVICE

44 Canfield Gardens  
London, N.W.6.  
England  
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Mr. Richard Nolte  
Executive Director  
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535 Fifth Avenue  
New York, N.Y. 10017  
USA

Dear Mr. Nolte:

This newsletter is the seventh in a series of newsletters in which I examine the operation of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools in England and Wales.

In this section of the continuing essay, I suggest an ideal educational consultancy service as a device for drawing systematic lessons from the experiences of the Inspectorate. I also indicate how the ideal could be applied in two very different national contexts: the USA and Israel.

I remind you that the pagination of this newsletter follows the numbering of the essay as a whole.

Let me now introduce you to my ideal for an educational consultancy service.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Spitzberg, Jr.', written in a cursive style.

Irving J. Spitzberg, Jr.

INSTITUTE OF CURRENT WORLD AFFAIRS

VII. AN IDEAL EDUCATIONAL CONSULTANCY SERVICE.

One way to provide a critical view of Her Majesty's Inspectorate is to construct an ideal model of an inspectorate serving national constituencies and then compare it with the HMI. This exercise has the added advantage of providing a general model which can then be adapted to other national contexts and educational systems. But we must keep in mind its limitation: any ideal service must be adapted and changed to meet the demands of the particular society and educational system. To illustrate the importance of this caveat, once I have sketched in very broad strokes the outline of a model consultancy service, I shall briefly comment on its application to two very different societies -- the United States and Israel.

A. THE IDEAL SYSTEM.

I shall call the model system a consultancy service -- not because this name especially well conveys the character of the system but because it does not carry with it the sanction enforcing connotations which "inspector" often does. The HMIs are called inspectors for historical reasons. Many people have suggested a change in name for them -- the Select Committee was obsessed with this issue --but for the very historical reasons the Inspectorate is so named, it has been impossible to do so. And quite rightly, I might add!

The appellation "consultancy service" denotes the advice giving character of the proposed system and the fact that it is intended to be a service voluntarily offered whose use by its various constituencies will not be required by law. Even though the British Education Act of 1944 requires inspections and creates an obligation on schools to allow inspection, the fact of the matter is that the use of HMI services by schools is quite voluntary; the same is true of the use of HMI advice by the Secretary. And it is this voluntary, non-sanction enforcing characteristic of the contemporary HMIs, which ought to be the hallmark of any modern consultancy service in the public sector.

The consultant in the ideal system would play both the advising and communicating roles played by the HMIs to similar constituencies -- teachers local authority administrators, and national politicians.<sup>1</sup> He would combine the specialist and generalist functions, as do HMIs.

1. I use the masculine gender strictly to conform to the rules of English usage, because the ideal consultancy service would reflect the distribution of sex (and race, for that matter) in the educational system as a whole .

However, the degree of combination would be more formalized, and even the most senior consultants would be expected to have a list of schools for which they would be responsible.

The consultants in the ideal service would be drawn from a more diverse background than the HMIs. Approximately 75% would be drawn from successful careers in education with an even greater diversity of school and higher educational background. And the remaining 25% would be drawn from successful careers in other professions and crafts -- as well as some from successful careers as parents. This leavening of the consultancy service with successful people from outside of the educational system would likely lead to an opening up of the whole system.

The emphasis on success in first career would be just as strong in the consultancy service as it is in the HMI, but manifestations of that success would be sought far earlier. The age range and career structure of the ideal consultancy service would be quite different from the Inspectorate. The average age of entry of the new recruit into the ideal consultancy would be in the early thirties. The maximum working life of the consultant would be expected to be no more than thirty years, and for most consultants it would be twenty years.

The primary purpose of earlier entry into the consultancy service would be to expose outstanding young men and women interested in education to the sort of learning experience which the diversity of assignments in the life of the consultants would offer. Then many of these consultants would be expected to move on in their forties to outstanding leadership positions throughout the educational system at both local and national levels. After a third successful career in a leadership position, some of these former consultants might return to the service as senior advisers for their last years before retirement. One would hope and expect that this early age of entry would encourage much in and out personnel flow.

Also, in order to encourage consultants to return to the schools, one could devise a retirement policy whereby the consultant could retire on full pay after twenty-five years of service if he returned to classroom teaching or some other approved job in a local educational authority for at least five years. This sort of retirement system would return personnel of the highest caliber to the first-line assignments of local teaching with a breadth of experience very seldom found in the classroom.

A liberal secondment and sabbatical policy in an ideal consultancy service would allow the consultants during their service careers to take to particular educational assignments in constituent systems their insight and experience and then return to the consultancy service with the perspective of their secondment or sabbatical program.

All of these differences in career structure would create a much more open and flexible consultancy service than one finds in the

Inspectorate. And they would enhance the contribution of the service by allocating some of its resources to specific assignments "on the ground" without involving the consultancy service itself in the actual administrative operations of educational systems.

It would be quite important to avoid any sort of administrative duties for the consultancy service. Although the wisdom of consultant involvement may be lost to important administrative activities -- such as decisions about hiring, promotion, and firing, and the allocation of money, especially grants-in-aid -- it would be crucial to the role of the service as an institution whose authority rested upon persuasion that it not be tainted with any sanction-enforcing activities. Some consultants might from time to time be seconded to agencies which make administrative decisions, and the consultants as consultants must play an active role in developing general governmental policies concerning education, but the consultants themselves must be divorced from decisions in particular cases.

The ideal consultant's role in particular cases would be as an adviser to the local teacher or administrator about how to deal with the other educational agencies, not as an adviser to the agency itself about actual local decisions. This proscription of administrative activities involving local decisions by national agencies would distinguish the ideal consultancy service from the Inspectorate. Such a proscription would run the risk of making the advice of the consultancy less persuasive in overall policy development; but if the advice from the consultants is usually sound, then this risk will be minimized. And the benefit of a completely persuasive and non-sanction enforcing relationship between local authorities and consultants would be well worth the risks.

As part of his job, the ideal consultant would be expected to spend part of his time each week in his own classroom, working with a team of teachers and a group of pupils. One of the criticisms often made of HMIs is that they lose touch with the problems of actually teaching. Their response, which I consider to be sound, is that the time they spend in many different teachers' classrooms gives them a much better understanding of the problems of teaching than that of a teacher who never leaves his classroom. But one point which is often neglected by the Inspectorate in response to the general criticism is that the contact which the usual teacher has with pupils on a regular basis gives that teacher a sense of pupil needs and attitudes which visits to other teachers' classrooms cannot. So the HMI does miss something by not having some sort of ongoing teaching responsibility. Therefore, the ideal consultant would be expected to have continuing classroom responsibilities on a limited, part-time basis.

The regular classroom assignment of the ideal consultant could involve an experimental educational project in the consultant's field of special expertise. Therefore, this ongoing classroom responsibility would also provide a laboratory for the consultant's specialist research.

Some consultants, especially though not necessarily those who come from careers outside of the educational system, might get their ongoing field experience through administrative projects for which they would share responsibility through regular local participation: e.g., an accountant may accept a role as financial planner on a team in a local authority. However, each consultant, regardless of his professional background, would be expected to enjoy some classroom experience at various points in his working year.

With these arrangements for continuing field responsibility, it would be difficult to accuse consultants in the ideal system of being out of touch with the demands of actually coping with pupils in the classroom or with the administrative problems of a local authority, even though the extent of coping would never be more than a day a week.

It is difficult to suggest the appropriate size of a consultancy service, because the size will depend upon the population to be dealt with. But a rough rule of thumb could be one consultant for every 2500 teachers in the system, if the system were national and serving local authorities with their own advisory and supervisory personnel to provide primary support to the schools. Should the condition of local advisory services not exist, twice that number -- about one for 1000+ teachers -- would seem to be in order. These numbers are drawn from a consideration of the existing ratio of HMIs to teaching population -- approximately 500 to 400,00 -- which is nearer to the latter than the former ratio, and then adjusted to assume that most countries would have larger teaching populations and would not be able to deal with the larger numbers and still maintain the lower ratio. Indeed, there must be a maximum limit in size in order to preserve some semblance of community within an ideal service: that limit probably lies between 1000 and 2000 consultants. When the population served seems to require more than that number, para-consultants -- short-term recruits from the school systems -- should be used to amplify the services. Such an arrangement would be based upon the model of the I.L.E.A. inspectorate experiment with the use of head teachers seconded to the primary school inspectors.<sup>2</sup>

The new recruit to the consultancy service should be offered a substantial training program. Each recruit should be assigned to a mentor, just as is the practice in the Inspectorate. But in addition there should be a formal training program which emphasized technical information which every consultant would need in his various roles and especially in his generalist functions.<sup>3</sup>

Also, inservice training for all consultants should be an important part of the yearly experiences of the consultants. Each

2. see p. 53

3. For a detailed statement of a training curriculum see p. 59

consultant should be encouraged to take a sabbatical month each year to go on short courses offered by the service or other institutions and/or to pursue his own research.

And the ideal consultancy service should follow the model of the HMI by providing a wide range of inservice training courses to various audiences in the educational system. This contribution by the Inspectorate to teachers and local authorities in Great Britain should be an integral part of the activities of any ideal consultancy service.

In order to provide decision makers in government with optimum access to the advice of the consultancy service, the senior consultants would be paired with particular administrators who would have need for their advice. These senior consultants would function in both generalist and specialist capacities, providing advice themselves when they thought themselves capable but calling on their specialist colleagues where appropriate. These senior consultants would have to develop the same generalist ability to diagnose the problems of central governmental administrators that all consultants need to deal with local authorities and schools.

From time to time consultants in the field would be brought into the central administrative agencies for educational policy decisions for long periods of advisory residence in the agency. These consultants would not be line administrators but would be invited to advise on all of the activities of the educational agency. These consultants would still be in the ideal consultancy service and not seconded to the agency. The right and obligation of decision making should never be vested in an active consultant in order to maintain the appearance and the fact of his independence. However, some consultants might be seconded to the agencies for line administrative jobs; but these men would be on leave from the service.

The scope of educational concern of the consultancy service would be quite wide. The consultants would deal with all levels of education from post-natal to graduate and professional universities and adult education.

In regard to the "higher" levels of education, there should be no problem of academic freedom raised by the existence of the consultancy service, because the use of such services would be strictly voluntary on the part of the institution.

The benefit of having a group of highly qualified consultants, who dealt with the whole range of professional educational problems, to provide advice to the central government would be extremely valuable. Also, there would be the added advantage of having men and women who, because of the breadth of their interest, concern, and responsibility, could initiate a new dialogue among the levels of

education about problems which are common to the system as a whole -- a discourse which is presently sorely lacking in all educational systems.<sup>4</sup>

The success of the ideal consultancy service at any and all levels of education and in respect to the central government would depend upon the caliber of men and women recruited to the service. So the salary level of the service would have to be at the top of the market for educational and academic personnel, just as is the scale of HMIs. Money is not everything, but it does, within limits, indicate the importance placed by society on the work to be done.

The actual organizational arrangements of a particular consultancy would and ought to vary dramatically from society to society. The constitutional arrangement of the state and the geographical constraints of the country will affect the character of the organization. However, the general principle should be one of the greatest possible decentralization of advisory function in relation to local authorities and schools but with a central information and advice system for the central government. The decentralization of local services and the sophistication of central access will be directly related to the size of the consultancy service: the larger the service, the greater degree of both will be required.

I have described the broad outlines of an ideal consultancy service. It cannot pretend to be a detailed model with instant application in all circumstances. But I believe that it does have possibilities for a number of different educational systems and national contexts. In order to illustrate its possibilities, I shall comment on how the ideal might be implemented in two very different social systems: the United States and Israel.

#### B. THE UNITED STATES.

In the United States there are three different possible settings for a consultancy service of the type described: in large urban school districts, at the state level, and in the Federal Office of Education. Ideally, each level should have its own consultancy service, each complementing the other and providing the decision makers at each level with their own advisors and the teachers at the local level with diverse sources for advice.

In large urban school districts there are presently usually supervisors who combine some advisory duties with a large range of administrative responsibilities. However, if these large districts

4. Even, or especially, the British. The problem here is the internal organization of the HMI, which segregates higher and further from other levels of education .

decentralize administrative control to community boards of neighborhood schools -- as I believe should happen -- then a consultancy service much as described above could usefully serve the central political and administrative authority and provide advice also to decentralized community boards. The model would be very much like the inspectorate of the I.L.E.A. but without the role in hiring and firing.

The most likely locus for an effective consultancy service would be the state educational agencies. Having such a service will become increasingly important to the states, if for no other reason than the impact of court decisions affecting school finance.<sup>5</sup> Also the demands of federal financial aid programs place more responsibility on the shoulders of state authorities. And as a matter of state and national constitutional law, states have primary authority and responsibility for education.

Yet historically state educational authorities -- with the exception of New York State--have been quite weak and have been mainly accounting agencies with very little interest in substantive educational matters. Even in regard to minimum curriculum requirements, which are usually a matter of state law, the state educational agencies have functioned as little more than an intermediary between politicians and special educational interests. As a source of advice and ideas about the substance of education, in the past the state educational officers have had little to offer. The organization of a consultancy service working out of the office of the chief educational officer for the state could transform an existing educational agency from what is at best an irrelevancy to a forceful agent for change.

No matter what sort of consultancy service is established at the local and state levels, a national consultancy service working for and out of the Office of Education in Washington seems to be a long overdue innovation. One of the Chief Inspectors of the HMI commented to me that he was amazed to find top officials in the Office of Education acting as nothing more than glorified clerks and accountants. He did not expect to find officials in Washington making decisions about substantive educational policies, but he did expect, he said, to find them involved in the working out of substantive educational problems with the various other authorities involved. This he said he did not find. Indeed, the officials in Washington seemed to have very little feel for what was going on out in the educational institutions around the country. My own impressions, though not quite as negative, support this Chief Inspector's views.

5. See Serrano v Priest, California, 1971, cited in "Serrano v. Priest: Implications for Educational Equality," 41, Harvard Educational Review, pp 501-534.



There is a very good reason for the past lack of explicit federal involvement in substantive educational policy: the fear of federal control over the substance of education and the infringement of the academic freedom of local schools (or really of school districts). But in spite of these fears which have prevented explicit federal involvement, the financial decisions taken in Washington have clearly had a profound impact on what goes on in American schools. And these decisions have been taken without systematic, regular, and relatively independent professional advice -- which is the point of the Chief Inspector's observations. This is the lacuna which a federal consultancy service could help fill.

Also, there is presently much discussion about techniques for decentralising the spending about of federal funds -- these are often called proposals for "revenue sharing" -- which would relieve federal officials of certain monetary decisions, thus freeing federal personnel resources for other purposes. Revenue sharing would also mean that state and local decision makers would need ever more sound professional advice. A consultancy service such as the one described would be quite important to the operation of revenue sharing; and the federal government could provide this service.

A federal consultancy system would have to be adapted to meet the problems of federal organization and a large and diverse population of pupils, teachers, local and state officials. Probably two levels of decentralization would be necessary within such a federal consultancy service -- regional and state.

The federal consultancy service would need a communications and transportation system which would allow federal officials in Washington and around the country to call on the whole range of expertise and experience which a federal consultancy service would have at its command.

The various resources of the federal service should be replicated in each regional division, with coordinating services in Washington and at the state level. Each region would have all of the resources of expertise usually called upon by states and localities in the region. And Washington would maintain a national coordinating panel which would keep each region informed and would know where the particular bit of information needed by a federal decision maker could be found.

The most important characteristic of the ideal consultancy service and of the model of the HMI for an American national consultancy system is the professional norm and its resulting independence. This professionalism and independence would be the most difficult characteristic to establish and maintain in the American context. To achieve this status would require exceptional leadership from the chief consultant, the Commissioner of Education, and the President of the United States.

One possible structural arrangement which might contribute to at least some measure of institutional independence for the consultancy service would be Presidential appointment and confirmation by the Senate of each consultant. The consultancy service could be located within the Office of Education but with some additional lines to the White House to enhance the independence of the appointment process. But of course, no structural or appointment arrangement would guarantee independence and/or professionalism- only time and quality of personnel would accomplish this.

A possible beginning for a federal consultancy service might be found in the "educational extension agents" being established in the Experimental Schools Program of the Office of Education. The purpose of this program is to encourage innovation at a number of educational sites. The educational extension agents are supposed to serve these sites in a manner similar to agricultural extension agents, who in the past have contributed to improvements in American agriculture.

The HMI and the ideal consultancy service seem far more appropriate as models for educational extension agents than the agricultural example. Although the agricultural extension service has provided technical information to American farmers and has been responsible for some major changes in American farming, it has not been in the center of major social reorganization, reform, and even revolution in the way that American educational extension agents must be. And the agricultural extension services have never been known for either their independence from partisan politics or their role as advisers to national, state, and local decision makers; and both of these characteristics are part of the HMI and the ideal consultancy service. which would be important to the success of educational extension agents.

If the role of the proposed education extension agents were changed and in some ways broadened, then the model of the ideal consultancy service would be quite appropriate. And within the limits of the Experimental Schools Program one could test the feasibility of such a service on a larger scale: if successful, this pilot program could evolve into a general federal consultancy service.

So the opportunity for testing and adapting the consultancy model to the American context is at hand. The success of the Inspectorate suggests that this chance should not be missed. And its success (or its failure) in the United States would provide valuable lessons to other countries interested in developing an advice and communications network to contribute to the improvement of education.

### C. ISRAEL.

I shall comment briefly on the role which a consultancy service could have in the State of Israel. My remarks are based upon only limited knowledge gleaned from a short visit to Israel. I had conversations with the Chief Inspector of Israel, a primary school inspector, and Pedagogical Adviser to the Minister of Education and Culture.

The context of a consultancy system in Israel would be an educational system modelled on the Continental organization: decision making for the whole system is concentrated in the national Ministry of Education and Culture. The present inspectors play a very important administrative role in this centralized systems. They set examinations and hire and fire. Their role is quite similar to that of the HMIs in the 19th Century. And in order to understand the national context, it should be noted that the size of the whole educational system is smaller than the I.L.E.A.

Presently there is a great deal of dissatisfaction among teachers and educationalist intellectuals about the role of inspectors in the Israeli system. The Pedagogical Adviser to the Minister of Education and Culture, Professor A. Minkawich, is especially dissatisfied. He is thinking about organizing a group of pedagogical consultants to play a role very similar to that of the HMIs in relation to the schools but without a real advisory role to the national government. His model for the pedagogical consultancy service differs from the HMIs and the ideal service in another important way: he supports an organization of specialists, not a combination of specialist and generalist functions in one consultancy role.

Given the centralization of the Israeli educational system and the administrative and bureaucratic duties of the inspectorate, it would be difficult to reform the inspectorate system without dramatically changing the whole organization of the school system itself. For this reason and because of the relatively strong political position of the inspectorate, it seems that Professor Minkawich's strategy of establishing a separate advisory system is appropriate. However, if the consultancy system were to exist beside the existing inspectorate, one would expect the inspectorate to become an even more bureaucratic and administrative body than it is now, which may not be considered an attractive possibility by the inspectors. Therefore, one could expect a great deal of resistance to the establishment of this competing system.

If Professor Minkawich is successful in establishing a separate consultancy system, I would argue that his mode of organization with its emphasis on specialists is not appropriate and that he would do well to look at the success of combining specialist and generalist functions in the British system and the suggestions in the ideal consultancy service. The combination of generalist and specialist functions would have two positive contributions to make to the success of a consultancy service in Israel: first, it would break down some of the communications barriers which seem to exist between the schools and the sources of academic expertise, because one person, the consultant, would combine both and have access to both worlds; second, the successful combination of both roles will increase the status of the consultant, and nowhere in the world is status more important than in

Israel. And all of the other benefits ascribed to the combination of specialist and generalist functions earlier <sup>6</sup> would accrue as well.

Although the details of the ideal consultancy system would need a number of particular modifications in a social context where one would have separate inspectorial and consultancy arrangements within a centralized system, the overall design and the example of the HMI still seem to provide a workable system for the proposed Israeli consultancy organization. And the implementation of a consultancy scheme along the lines of the ideal model might contribute to the loosening up of what I consider to be an overly centralized system in a very decentralized society. Quite a bonus for the fathers of the Israeli consultancy service.

The fact that the ideal consultancy system and its British model seem to provide appropriate guidelines for educational systems as different as those of America and Israel gives some evidence of the possibilities for such an arrangement in other national systems. Having said this, I must conclude by repeating the caveat I offered at the beginning of this section: one cannot claim for any ideal system that it will work in particular social and educational contexts. Therefore, the ideal must be considered to be no more than a first approximation, with the actually appropriate plan being dictated by the constraints of a given country's special characteristics and needs. Translating the promise of the ideal into the practical requirements of a given system is a task which can never be achieved from outside of the system. If the analysis prompted by the ideal provides the bare outlines, then it has done its job.

In addition to providing a systematic model, the exercise of creating the ideal consultancy service should have helped put the British experience into a critical perspective. And in so doing, I believe that it has indicated the strength of the HMI in any system aspiring to educational quality and academic freedom.

Yet the role which any such organization for the provision of professional knowledge ought to play in the political decisions of such a social system is not clear. It is to this issue that we next must turn: what is the appropriate role of professional judgments in the political decisions of a democratic state? The answers to this question may provide us with a standard by which to evaluate the HMI and the ideal consultancy service.

6. see pp. 41 - 42