

Chapter 12: The King is dead! Long live the King!

The 1996 Education (Scotland) Act came into force on 18 September 1996, and the Scottish Qualifications Authority became a legal entity on 1 October 1996. Much had to be done before the new body took over responsibility for all the functions of the SEB and SCOTVEC, namely, 5-14 National Tests, Standard Grade, Higher Grade, Certificate of Sixth Year Studies, Short Courses, National Certificate Modules, Scottish Vocational Qualifications, General Scottish Vocational Qualifications and other Group Awards, and Higher National Certificates and Diplomas. As from the year 2000, it would also assume responsibility for certification of the various Higher Still qualifications.

Just as the Scottish Certificate of Education Examination Committee (SCEEB) had started its work several months before it officially took over responsibility in 1965 for national examinations in Scottish schools, so steps were taken to ensure that the SQA had the opportunity to shadow the SEB and SCOTVEC for some time before it succeeded them on 1 April 1997. It was important to have a reasonable period of transition, not only to enable the new Authority to organise its committee structure and get its new procedures properly in place, but also to avoid jeopardising the viability and credibility of the various examinations and awards.

David Miller, who had been Chairman of both the SEB and SCOTVEC since 1 January 1995, was appointed Chairman of the SQA in September 1996, and to him must go much of the credit for the smooth transfer of responsibility to the SQA. He had long been an advocate of a combined certifying authority. In an interview given to the TESS in January 1995, immediately after he had added the Chairmanship of the SEB to that of SCOTVEC, he had intimated that he wanted the two organisations to work as if they were one, despite their different assessment arrangements and different spheres of operation. In his view, the implementation of Higher Still was not realistically possible without a merger. He said that what he wanted was one agency directing *"a seamless progression of certification from school to employment and beyond"*; and, anticipating that a merger was bound to come sooner or later, he had steered the two bodies into collaborative ventures. From March 1995, the Chairman, his Committee Conveners and Chief Executives began meeting regularly to discuss problematical areas. SEB Examination Officers sat as Observers on SCOTVEC Sector Groups, and SCOTVEC staff were appointed to SEB Subject Panels. There was also increased activity between the two bodies to find a means of harmonising their IT systems, which would be particularly important for a two-site SQA. In the last SEB Annual Report, David Miller paid tribute to the *"constructive contacts and cooperation between the SEB and SCOTVEC at all levels"*.

As befitted someone who had been in charge of personnel in his working life, Miller said that one of the first things that had to be sorted out was what he called *"the people problems"*, i.e. removing the fear which existed in the minds of both sets of staff that they would be "taken over" by the other organisation and compulsorily transferred to a single site, or even declared redundant. To allay these fears, he announced, immediately after his appointment as the new SQA Chairman, that the SQA would operate from two sites and staff would not be required to move, at least in the short term. Also, in line with the commitment which both SCOTVEC and the SEB had already made to the Investors in People Standard, workshops on core issues were run for all staff to keep them fully informed about developments in the critical period before the

establishment of the SQA. Besides improving morale by helping staff to handle their inevitable anxiety over the forthcoming organisational changes, these workshops did much to unite the staff and win their loyalty to the SQA. For those who did not wish to step into this new territory, the Scottish Office in November 1996 approved identical schemes of early retirement for both organisations.

Just as important as the appointment of the Chairman was the selection of a Chief Executive. Hamish Long, Chief Executive of the SEB, and Tom McCool, Chief Executive of SCOTVEC, had both indicated that they were to take early retirement on 31 March 1997, and so the field was open for a completely new broom to tackle the difficult task of harmonising the work of two very different organisations. At the beginning of December 1996, as the members of the Board of the SQA had not yet been appointed, interviews were conducted by a panel consisting of the SQA Chairman, the Permanent Secretary of the SOEID, the Senior Chief Inspector of Schools and a former Depute Principal of a university. From a strong leet, the appointment went to Ron Tuck, one of the people who had been most involved in Scottish Office thinking regarding the feasibility of merging the two bodies. For the previous five years, he had also been at the centre of planning the introduction of Higher Still. There was therefore unlikely to be a tug of war between the Higher Still Development Unit, which was producing Higher Still syllabuses and materials, and the SQA which would be responsible for putting the proposals into practice. Tuck took up his post on 1 January 1997, and from that point on McCool and Long worked very closely with him in planning arrangements for the transfer. They and their staffs continued their joint planning and pulled out all the stops to ensure that the new Board was in an informed position to take strategic decisions on such issues as finance, staffing, a possible organisational structure, information technology needs, and systems of communication with schools, colleges, training providers and employers.

Towards the end of January 1997, the names of eighteen members of the SQA Board were announced. They had all been appointed by the Secretary of State as individuals in their own right and not as representatives of interested bodies. Many of them, in fact could be said to cover a range of interests. Nevertheless, the main areas from which they were drawn did not escape notice. Six came from industry and commerce, three from Higher and Further Education, three from Education Authorities, three Secondary Headteachers, and one each from the STUC, the Adult Education Forum and the Scottish Parent Teacher Council. The Educational Institute of Scotland immediately complained that there were no "*chalk-face*" teachers or lecturers. At the beginning of March, a Depute Headteacher, a Principal Teacher of Learning Support, a Depute Principal of an FE College and a university Professor were co-opted to the new Board to boost the representation of schools, further education and higher education.

The new Board held its first meeting on 17 February, and the Scottish Office ran an induction seminar for them on 4-5 March. By the end of March, interim committee and organisational structures had been approved, a mission statement written, corporate goals and objectives devised, and a new corporate logo and crest approved. Because of the impending General Election, the official launch of the SQA and other promotional activities had to be postponed until May.

The 1st of April 1997 did not altogether complete the work of either the Board or the Council.

The valuations of the assets of the two organisations had been completed before the hand-over, but there were still several financial transactions to be concluded. SCOTVEC authorised its Chairman and Convener of Finance and Planning to pay certain outstanding accounts and to transfer assets, liabilities, rights and obligations to the SQA, while its officers were authorised to take all necessary steps to facilitate the transfer of SCOTVEC property. The SEB made similar arrangements to deal with its assets. It was the end of November 1997 before the SEB and SCOTVEC were finally put to rest.

To commemorate the SEB's achievements over the past thirty two years and SCOTVEC's over the previous twelve, the Scottish Office hosted a reception for members of both Boards in Edinburgh Castle on 20 February. Both organisations held their own farewell celebrations to thank their staffs and members who had served on their Boards and major committees. The SEB held a farewell dinner for Board members, past and present, and other distinguished guests in the Signet Library in Edinburgh on 12 March 1997. A Ceilidh for the SEB staff was held on 21 March. The SCOTVEC Board had a special lunch following its final meeting on 26 March, and there was a reception for staff in the Forte Posthouse Hotel on 27 March. SCOTVEC also held a special dinner in the Concert Hall in Glasgow at which the Secretary of State and the Secretary of SOEID were the invited guests.

So what had been achieved?

As we approach the end of the 20th century, we would think it strange if public bodies did not consist almost entirely of lay people and practising professionals. Up to the mid-1960s, however, this was virtually unheard of in Scottish education. Certainly, prior to that, national committees containing some lay members would occasionally be set up to bring forward recommendations for dealing with some problem or other; but actual decision-taking and the administration of policy were always controlled by the Establishment. So it was with the Leaving Certificate. For the seventy years after the "*Highers*" were introduced in 1888, the awarding of Certificates was a secret operation controlled by the Scottish Education Department, using HM Inspectors of Schools as its agents. The examination papers were set and marked by HMIs, with some help from the universities, and Chief Inspectors were the chief examiners who decided on pass marks. The study of statistics was very much in its infancy, and decisions were based largely on professional judgement supported by years of experience. There was a small breakthrough in 1958 when a small group of practising teachers was recruited to widen the pool of markers, and some of the secrets began to be explained. The success of this tentative experiment encouraged the Department to relax its hold on the certification of national school examinations, and in 1965 it handed over all responsibility to the Scottish Certificate of Education Examination Board. Three-quarters of the SCEEB Board were practising educationists, and almost half of these worked in schools. Its subject panels were predominantly school teachers. Civil servants and Inspectors attended only as Assessors or advisers. However, because many in the Establishment regarded the SCEEB as a risky venture, it and its successor were hemmed in by legislation and numerous regulations which, throughout their existence, severely restricted their ability to respond quickly to the needs of schools.

The Examination Board took over a highly respected set of qualifications, but one which was geared towards the needs of only a relatively small section of the school population, namely, the

more academically gifted pupils who attended the selective Senior Secondary Schools. The Board coped admirably with the explosion in numbers following the introduction of Ordinary Grade, but its examinations were still aimed at academic pupils, and its Constitution prevented it from extending beyond that until Standard Grade came along in the mid-1980s. The magnificent achievement of the Board in establishing these new examinations and carrying out the consequent revision of the Higher Grade and CSYS examinations can be read in detail in Chapters 56-59 of *The Higher Tradition*. Not only was the administration brilliant, but the change in educational thinking brought about in schools by the work of the Board laid the foundations of the revolutionary work contemplated in Higher Still. Of particular importance was the speed with which the teaching profession was won over to criterion referencing. Further experimentation was unfortunately limited by the external supervision exercised by the Secretary of State acting through the Department; and even the granting of permission to introduce Short Courses was given only reluctantly.

The Board inherited not only the conservatism of the Scottish Office but also its reputation for efficiency; and, over the years, it had enhanced that reputation so that it was recognised world-wide as one of the leaders in assessment and certification. It will never be possible to eliminate subjectivity entirely from examinations, but the Board devised a multitude of checks and cross checks which were seldom found wanting. These procedures were increasingly backed up by a range of computer techniques which ensured that standards were maintained and candidates were treated fairly. The quality control which the Board exercised was such that its work commanded universal confidence and produced qualifications which were valued by all concerned - pupils, parents, teachers, colleges, universities and employers.

I described the achievements of the Examination Board in great detail in *The Higher Tradition*, and there is really not much more that I could add except to say that my admiration for it was maintained to the end. So I have left the final word to David Miller, its Chairman, who in the Board's final Annual Report summed up the Board's achievements excellently in the following tribute:

"As an industrialist, I can only comment that, if industry conducted so complex a business to such tight timescales with such a low error rate, the country would be extremely well served I have been Chairman of the Board for only two years and it is an experience I have thoroughly enjoyed. I have been associated with a high class organisation, staffed by able and industrious people who are very dedicated to their work. That too goes for all setters, examiners, markers and others without whose co-operation and commitment the Board could not exist. The consistency of approach and performance has ensured that the qualifications for which the Board is responsible have remained in high esteem."

SCOTVEC did not receive very many mentions in *The Higher Tradition* because it came on the school scene quite late in that history. However, its achievements were also remarkable, but in a completely different context. By the early 1980s, it was clear that radical steps would have to be taken to sort out the further education scene. SCOTEC and SCOTBEC had each in its own sphere been very successful in promoting further education qualifications, but both had operated in an *ad hoc* way, producing tailor-made courses to meet the individual requests of diverse sections of industry and commerce. The courses were good but isolated from one another, so

that there was a great deal of duplication, and it was difficult for students to use passes in elements of one course if they wished to transfer to another. With constantly changing conditions in employment, more flexibility was essential to meet client needs.

When SCOTVEC was established in 1985, therefore, the Scottish Office did not hem it in with the same restrictions as had hampered the Board. It had to be a body which not only embraced the flexibility of the modular structure introduced by the Action Plan but one which was also geared up to react quickly to new developments. It was given commercial freedom to do this and took full advantage of the opportunity. It completed the work started by the Action Plan and eventually produced a National Certificate catalogue of over 4,000 modules for non-advanced further education. Encouraged by the success of that, it then unitised advanced further education courses to bring flexibility to them. By 1997, it had produced a catalogue of over 5,700 Higher National Units, and the number of candidates had more than trebled.

Such was the expansion of the work of SCOTVEC that, in the ten years from 1986 to 1996, the number of staff working in its headquarters more than doubled, from 160 to 350. In addition, it employed many others out in the field, mainly on a part-time basis. Though SCOTVEC had taken over an organisation which dealt almost entirely with FE colleges, it quickly extended the range of centres so that in the end it dealt with over 1,300 centres in the public and private sectors, including almost all secondary schools, all FE colleges, higher education institutions, training organisations and numerous workplaces, large and small.

Early in its existence, SCOTVEC realised that it could not apply traditional assessment and quality control methods to the National Certificate because of the wide range of candidates and centres and because flexibility of timing was required in their assessment arrangements since candidates did not all complete the modules at the same time. It therefore focussed on encouraging centres to accept professional responsibility for assessment themselves and on ways in which confidence in the management and operation of assessment by the centres could be assured. The quality assurance system covered:

validation	the process of approving new qualifications,
approval	the process of ensuring that centres had the resources to carry out assessment and qualification procedures, and
verification	the process of ensuring that assessment judgements were made accurately against the national standards

To emphasise the importance it attached to quality assurance from the outset, SCOTVEC so organised its management structure that one of its four directorates was dedicated to that function. It delegated to individual centres the tasks of preparing courses based on the descriptors in the modules catalogue and of carrying out the assessment of the outcomes; it was even prepared to accredit new courses which individual centres (including employers large and small) had devised. The centres had to put the quality control checks in place; SCOTVEC's task was to guarantee quality. Before a centre was approved, the courses it planned to offer were validated; and it had to satisfy SCOTVEC that it had the staff and resources to do the job properly, and also had an assessment strategy and internal verification system in place. To ensure that standards were maintained and the internal assessments were properly carried out by the centre,

SCOTVEC used specially trained external verifiers to make visits to centres on a targeted sample basis to check that internal assessment complied with the national standards. Further refinements followed the findings of a thorough quality assurance review considered by the Council in January 1991; in 1992, SCOTVEC carried out a quality audit of its centres, following which it delegated responsibility for quality assurance to certain centres that had demonstrated the excellence of their systems and had signed a quality contract with SCOTVEC. As a result of a formal assessment of SCOTVEC's quality assurance carried out by Lloyd's Register Quality Assurance, SCOTVEC became the first UK national qualifications body to achieve certification against British Standard BS5750.

Very important in ensuring quality was the detailed work carried out by its eighteen Sector Boards, each of which covered a particular occupational area. These Boards contained experts in their field, who willingly gave of their time to oversee the design of the qualifications in their sector and to act as members of validation panels. In this way, SCOTVEC benefited from the expertise of some 400 individuals, and through a regular turnover of personnel on these sector Groups it ensured that qualifications were constantly kept up to date.

On the one hand, one of SCOTVEC's greatest achievements was the replacement of traditional examinations mainly externally assessed with outcome-based modules which were assessed internally; on the other, this was its Achilles' heel for, despite all these achievements and its very large number of customers, its qualifications did not quite command the same widespread respect as those of the SEB precisely because they were not assessed externally. That was the problem which the Higher Still proposals were designed to tackle. It was also the challenge facing the SQA. How could it create a unified structure for post-16 education, training and qualifications by combining the flexibility of internal assessment with the integrating value of external assessment to get the best of both worlds? And how could it at the same time cope with the huge number of candidates?

SCOTVEC could take great pride in the contribution it had made to educational and training developments (**Note 35**). It had piloted group awards of various kinds and had done particularly valuable work in producing Skillstart, Wordstart, Numberstart, Lifestart and Workstart awards which were designed to help students with special educational needs to improve their employment prospects or enter further education or training. The range of courses it covered was staggering, from very elementary work to degree level. By providing attainable targets for students of all abilities and by creating a structure which built in the credit transfer of previous achievements, it had helped to lay foundations which could eventually make the slogan "*lifelong education*" a reality. The innovative work of SCOTVEC gave it, like the SEB, a world-wide reputation for excellence and won it consultancies in Europe, South America, Africa, the Middle East, Australasia and the independent republics which emerged from the former USSR.

The following two quotes, taken from *The Story of SCOTVEC* by Dick Loudon, were made by two men who knew at first hand the impact which SCOTVEC had made on the work of colleges and schools. Michael Leech, Principal of Stevenson College in Edinburgh, had this to say:

"Its administration and its internal quality were always of a high order. It made a strong impact on employers, with senior captains of industry prepared to serve on its committees. It was a

steady ship, ably steered and managed, but it was always at the cutting edge of innovative developments. Stamina was needed to see all its initiatives through and SCOTVEC possessed that in abundance. There were some issues of controversy which wouldn't go away, like the question of over-assessment, but SCOTVEC, both at home and abroad, earned its high reputation through the quality of its work."

From the school sector came this tribute from James McVittie, Head Teacher of St Ninian's High School in East Renfrewshire:

"I don't know what we would have done if it hadn't come along. In terms of the large increase in numbers staying on beyond statutory school age, we needed a coherent and structured approach for these youngsters that SEB wouldn't have been able to offer. SCOTVEC helped schools to look at their curriculum in different ways through its approach to flexibility, assessment and reporting. It also provided many bridges to further and higher education. Its commitment to quality and standards was very impressive. It gave credibility to a modular system which in the initial stages was looked upon by many people as second class."

As I write this concluding chapter, the first contingent of students is about to embark on the new Higher Still courses (**Note 36**). A great deal of preparation has gone into these and only time will tell whether they will succeed in their glorious aim, namely, to establish a national scheme of certification which will stretch from age 5 to whatever age people wish and will give parity of esteem to academic and vocational qualifications in secondary education, non-advanced further education and advanced further education. Nowhere else in the world has this been achieved so far. It will not all be plain sailing, however; and, not surprisingly, there is a lot of anxiety around. Certainly, the combined legacy which the SQA inherited from the SEB and SCOTVEC has provided a sound foundation on which to build this ambitious scheme, and there is the added advantage that everyone seems to want the plans to succeed.

Both the SEB and SCOTVEC have been rightly proud of their achievements, each in its own way meeting the very different demands of its clientele. Each has had its devotees who still fear that the merger will damage what they most admire. School teachers will yearn for the rigorous procedures of the SEB and wonder if the influence of SCOTVEC's lighter touch will damage credibility. They will continue to be concerned, too, about the increased use of internal assessment and whether it will work without submerging them in paperwork. College lecturers, on the other hand, will have to come to terms again with external assessment which has not interfered with their professional judgement for the past fourteen years. Pupils, probably wrongly, feel that they are about to enter on courses which are completely different from what has gone before, and parents are understandably concerned that their children are being used as guinea pigs in a huge experiment. End-users (employers, colleges and universities) will have to work hard to rid themselves of traditional prejudices regarding the worth of the different qualifications and realise that they are not the only people with a stake in the system.

It has been a sea-change also for the staffs of the two organisations. Although initially they largely continued the work of two separate organisations as far as assessment and certification were concerned, they are now having to operate the new integrated system introduced by Higher Still. Independent reviews have commented on the dedication of the staffs of both organisations.

What these reviews did not mention was the fact that this dedication and loyalty sometimes extended into a kind of rivalry between the two, each group of staff thinking that its own organisation was superior to the other, largely through not understanding the philosophy of the other.

I cannot say how far that ethos still pertains. Certainly, having a Chief Executive who was at the heart of Higher Still developments from the start, and at least four senior staff who have continued on part-time secondments to the Higher Still Development Unit over the past five years, as well as other staff who have given intermittent help to that Unit, should mean that, at the top at least, they should all be singing from the same song sheet. Time will tell whether this new philosophy has worked its way down through the ranks. Much of the residual rivalry should have been eliminated when the fear of disruption to family life through compulsory transfer or even redundancy was removed for at least most of the staff.

In *The Higher Tradition* (Chapters 62 and 63), I argued strongly against a merger of the SEB and SCOTVEC. That opposition was based on two considerations. The proposals for merger which had been put forward up to that time had concentrated only on the outward appearance of merger. The creation of one certificating body and a single certificate to record examination successes would have achieved nothing because no basic change in the structure of courses and examinations had been proposed, and attitudes towards the various qualifications would have remained unchanged. I now strongly support the merger because the issue has been tackled from the proper end. The thrust of the Higher Still Development Programme has gone into changing the courses and the forms of assessment so as to remove the rigid academic/vocational divide, while at the same time producing both progression and diversity that will cater for all levels of ability. People may disagree over whether this seamless robe has any tears in it or not. What they cannot doubt, surely, is the legitimacy of the noble aspirations of the Higher Still developments. Once this radical course was embarked on, the only way to give it a chance of success was to merge the two organisations so that the competing philosophies and attitudes could not derail it.

That leaves the question of the size and composition of the new Board. The Board of the SEB was heavily weighted in favour of educationists, who understood the school situation and could protect pupils against the vocational demands of the universities, business and commerce; on the SEB Board, industry and commerce were badly under-represented. The Board of SCOTVEC, on the other hand, had a preponderance of representatives from industry and commerce which formed the majority of the end users, and input from educationists was mainly at Sector Group level. The SQA Board has a reasonable balance of educators, administrators and end users of various kinds, and most of the members have experience in more than one field. Nevertheless, the SQA now covers a vast range of sectors - primary education from 5-12 (possibly soon to include nursery education), secondary education (with all its diversity of academic and vocational courses), special educational needs of various kinds, and the more specific needs of further education, higher education, industry and commerce. Each of these has its own specialised agenda, and it is asking a great deal of Board members to be really knowledgeable about even a few of them, let alone the complete range. Therefore, if the Board is to avoid the views of a few members and/or the recommendations of the full-time officers being simply rubber-stamped by the rest, they will have to have a better record of attendance than their

predecessors on the Boards of SCOTVEC and the SEB. The average absence rate at SCOTVEC Board meetings was 24%; at SEB Board meetings it was 40%. I hope that persistent offenders in this respect will be dropped quickly to ensure the best possible representation of views. The Board will also have to be good listeners and place great reliance on its sub-committees on which there are sufficient members with first-hand experience of each sector and the needs of its end users to guarantee a reasonable spread of experience, type of institution, geographical location and educational views. My own personal view is that one of the main reasons why the Howie Committee made proposals which were so much out of tune with the real situation in schools was that the Committee was not sufficiently representative of Scottish education.

The range of qualifications which the SQA controls puts it in a very powerful position to influence the future of Scottish education, and great care will have to be taken to ensure that forceful advocates of any particular agenda do not swing the Board too far in any one direction. A balance has to be struck between the demands of the economy and society on the one hand and the wellbeing of our young people on the other. Despite the rhetoric to the contrary, there are already signs in the education system that the personal wishes of students have to give way to financial efficiency and ease of administration. The state knows what is best for individuals! Although it has more commercial freedom than the SEB had and COSLA has no direct say in its financial dealings, the SQA must nonetheless operate within the financial and curricular policy laid down by the Secretary of State. How restrictive these controls will be in practice remains to be seen. The SQA has the potential to open up educational opportunities for all of our citizens, but that potential will not be realised if students become mere cogs in an administrative wheel. I am sure that the idealism is there in abundance at present, and also the will to make things work. The test will come when the economy hits another trough and financial and administrative expediency demands that corners be cut, or when political dogma takes precedence over what is educationally desirable.

The quality of the staff and also the organisational legacy that SQA has inherited should guarantee that standards are maintained and its credibility is not in doubt. It is now a huge business concern, but I hope that it will never become so monolithic that it forgets one of the main guiding principles of its predecessors, namely, that qualifications are ultimately not about pieces of paper, but about people and what they want to make of their lives.

One final comment on standards. Modern journalism could not exist without controversy. If there is nothing controversial, the media can always be relied upon to ensure that "*a row has developed*" over something or other in order to fill its front pages. One of the most fashionable things at present is to disparage Scottish education. Assertions, which are often based on the subjective misuse of statistics, are put forward as evidence by journalists to sell newspapers and by politicians to keep themselves in the public eye. Claims are made that any drop in the pass rate is due to falling standards, while a higher pass rate can only have come about because the examinations are easier. Schools cannot win.

I find it ironic that in earlier days, when standards depended very much on the subjective views of Inspectors backed up by very basic statistics and the blunt instrument of standardising factors to check on the quality of marking, no one thought to challenge the standard of the Highers. The line which everyone followed was that the Highers provided a gold standard which was

unequalled in the world. The SQA still has at its disposal the professional judgement of Principal Assessors and senior officers whose job it is to moderate standards from year to year; but their judgements are now supported by an array of very sophisticated statistical techniques using computers which can check not only the standard of whole examination papers, but also the quality of individual items within a single paper. Never have there been so many checks and cross checks to ensure that standards are maintained from year to year.

Time will tell whether Higher Still will achieve all that it aims to do. One thing is certain. If it does not succeed, the fault will not lie with the SQA. My personal experience over very many years of working very closely with the Board, reinforced by the research I have done for this and the previous volume, convinces me of the professional integrity and expertise of the staff who run the examinations. What would they have to gain from diluting standards? The task of the SQA is to maintain the standard of the examinations, not to maintain the reputation of the education system or of individual institutions. The SQA's predecessors were admired the world over for the quality of their work, and I cannot see it jeopardising that reputation to curry popularity with politicians, teachers or the media. The future reputation of the SQA will depend, not on the "glossies" on which all bodies unfortunately have to expend vast amounts of time, energy and money these days, but on continuing to ensure that the motto "*Pride o' Worth*" which appears on its certificates does indeed guarantee quality.

Note 35: An internal analysis of the uptake for all Scottish qualifications carried out by SCOTVEC towards the end of its existence suggested that 90% of individuals in the age range 16-19 were pursuing a national qualification of one kind or another. The same analysis suggested that only about 11% of the 20+ group were pursuing a qualification. Much has therefore still to be done if the challenge of lifelong learning is to be fully met.

Note 36: One of the manifesto pledges of the Labour Party in the 1997 General Election was that, if it won, it would postpone the introduction of Higher Still by yet another year because of concerns within the teaching profession that preparations were not sufficiently far advanced to go ahead as planned. Having won the election, it changed the starting date, so that first examinations for Higher Still courses were now scheduled to take place in May/June 2000.