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ACCESS

The ACCESS training programme: A new labour market focus for education?

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ABSTRACT
The ACCESS training programme commenced on 1 April 1987. It replaced all previous state-funded training and job creation programmes, aiming to provide a cohesive, vocationally-oriented and relatively cheap response to high levels of unemployment. In this paper I want to do two things. First, I will consider the ideological discourses surrounding the ACCESS Training Programme. ACCESS is presented and evaluated as a programme to promote labour market skills, and yet has been markedly unsuccessful in placing its graduates into work. Second, I want to examine the future of ACCESS in light of its pending relocation into the new Ministry of Education. This new Ministry has been instructed to include a new 'labour market focus', not only within ACCESS programmes but across the whole range of educational institutions.

The ACCESS training programme commenced on 1 April 1987. It replaced all previous state-funded training and job creation programmes, aiming to provide a cohesive, vocationally-oriented and relatively cheap[1] response to high levels of unemployment. I have argued elsewhere that the ACCESS training programme in practice has been characterised by an increasingly narrow vocational definition of the role of post-school training (Gordon 1989; forthcoming (a) and forthcoming (b)). In this paper I want to do two things. First, I will consider the ideological discourses surrounding the ACCESS Training Programme. ACCESS is presented and evaluated as a programme to promote labour market skills, and yet has been markedly unsuccessful in placing its graduates into work. Second, I want to examine the future of ACCESS in light of its pending relocation into the new Ministry of Education. This new Ministry has been instructed to include a new 'labour market focus', not only within ACCESS programmes but across the whole range of educational institutions.

The ACCESS Training Programme has been moving in two, quite separate, directions. On the one hand, the 'life-skills' component parallels, in particular, programmes developed by schools to cope with the accelerating influx of returning students into the sixth form. The second component, vocational training and work-based training, has become increasingly specialised, focusing more closely on imitating those specific work practices believed to be required by employers. Thus the compensatory and the work experience components of ACCESS are moving further and further apart. As these movements occur, any role for ACCESS in overturning inequalities, providing real opportunities for young people, or changing the conditions whereby young people move into work become increasingly distant. These tendencies will be examined in light of the pending control of ACCESS by the Ministry of Education, and the new role of the Ministry in promoting a labour market focus across all educational institutions.

The ideology of ACCESS

For the past five years, ACCESS has been developed and implemented on the basis of a particular construction of the nature of individuals and the labour market. This discourse is informed by and reflects monetarist assumptions that have been permeated throughout the state, which are evident in Ministerial statements, the work of Officials Committees, the Annual Reports of the Department of Labour and the form and function of ACCESS programmes. These arguments contain a number of contradictions relating to the nature of people, the nature of the labour market and the causes of unemployment, and the transferability of skills from training course to workplace.

The nature of individuals: The ACCESS Training Programme is framed within the notion of 'disadvantage', which determines both what trainees will do on ACCESS and how much tutors will be paid to teach them. The funding system is targeted so that ACCESS providers are paid extra for taking on more disadvantaged people, the level of disadvantage being determined by a system of 'points'. The se are awarded on the basis of a number of factors[2]: no formal school qualifications or less than 3 years at secondary school (this counts as two targeting 'points'), left school within last six months with no formal qualifications, literacy or language problems, single or widowed parent, women training in a non-tradition occupation; and length of registration as unemployed (5 categories for various levels of unemployment)[3].

The concept of disadvantage was adopted by the Government initially in order to create opportunities for those, in the jargon, 'most in need' of training. Under previous schemes, and in particular fully-subsidised job creation programmes, there had been a tendency for assistance to go to pakeha, middle class people; those who might be said to be at the head of the queue for jobs. This was perceived politically to be a major problem ('middle-class capture'), and, as a result, ACCESS was specifically targeted at those 'at the end of the queue'.

However, the concept of disadvantage has been redefined under monetarist ideology, as put forward by Treasury (1987, 1988). In a free market society, they argue, people choose, on a rational basis, their own position relation to the labour market. An inability to make such choices thus signals a problem in the individuals themselves rather than merely a problem of the wider economy[4]. Government intervention is justified (only minimally) on the basis that, in the absence of such choices, training will provide the missing orientation towards work in the individual.

It is within this framework that two concepts can be understood. The first is that of readiness for work. The Department of Labour's 1989 Annual Report noted that only 24.5% of ACCESS 'trainees' gained paid work within a month of leaving the programme in the previous year. For a policy whose main objective is 'helping people gain the skills that will assist them to make their way in the labour market', this was not a good outcome. Nevertheless, the DOL went on to argue that: 'A large majority (85%) succeeded in achieving the objectives of the course, that is they significantly enhanced their work readiness' (my emphasis), even though there was no work for them at the end. The amorphous concept of work readiness, judged on subjective criteria by many different 'trainers', has been used to justify the ACCESS policy in the absence of adequate 'real' results - jobs.

The second concept, a more recent one, extends the notion of work readiness. A new verb has been added to the English language: to 'staircase'[5]. Essentially, the role of ACCESS is to bring people ever closer to the labour market; ascending the flights of stairs, until eventually they reach the top - a job; any job (Officials Committee, CEDEC 1989 p.4):

> ... ideally someone with literacy problems and few vocational skills should initially take an ACCESS or MACCESS life-skills course, then progress to a vocational course of some description ... and then possibly proceed to some form of work-based training or trade training before seeking/taking up employment. In reality ... it may be difficult for some trainees to staircase in this way either within ACCESS and MACCESS or between these two programmes and the others ...

This individualistic ideology does not stand on its own. Related to it is a particular view of the labour market itself, which has been fairly constant throughout the period since ACCESS was first conceived.

The ideology of the labour market and unemployment: The labour market is said to be unbalanced because there are vacancies for skilled workers while unskilled workers are unemployed. This view was expressed as far back as 1985 by the Minister of Employment:

> ... while unemployment still remains high by long. term historical standards, employers are currently reporting difficulty in filling many positions through a lack of appropriate skills in job seekers[6].

This argument has been refined since then, and is now more usually expressed as a 'mismatch' between the skills of people and the needs of the workforce. The use of this construction of unemployment conceals the deeper reality, that there are simply not enough jobs to go around, leaving employers with little need to train workers themselves and able to demand workers who are already trained and experienced. Moreover, whilst there may be some jobs for which few applicants are available, because of the high level of training or credentials that these jobs require, they are not generally the kind of jobs which can be filled by graduates of ACCESS training courses, which are on average 12 weeks long and do not provide high levels of training.

Added to these specific claims about the needs of the labour market, is a more general claim relating to New Zealand's international competitiveness. Stated initially in a Planning Council Document by Vince Catherwood (1985), and repeated in numerous Government publications since (e.g. Pole 1989), it is asserted that New Zealand's record in keeping young people in education or training beyond the minimum school age is comparatively poor. There would, it is argued, be a number of benefits in improving the participation rate in education:

> There would be benefits for young people and the community, if the length of time spent in education could be increased. An increase in the numbers being educated or trained full-time will reduce the numbers of young people entering the workforce and will therefore alleviate the pressures which result in youth unemployment. Further a well-educated population will achieve a greater degree of life satisfaction. Finally, a better educated and trained workforce is more employable and better to able to transfer skills learnt in one occupation to another in the future. Occupational flexibility is likely to become increasingly important for the next generation (Catherwood 1985 pp. 11-13).

Thus, more education is, in itself, of value to the labour force. Interestingly, the option, of raising the compulsory minimum leaving age was not adopted as a response to these problems[7]. The Hawke Report specifically rejected this option:

> The consequences for many schools of having to provide for significant numbers of reluctant returners would be significant. Disruptive students, vandalism, truancy and so on have a powerful effect on teacher recruitment and retention and on the public's perception of secondary schools. But the principal disadvantages lie elsewhere. Providing appropriate curricula and learning activities would not be easy (1988 pp. 21-22).

Instead the Government introduced a set of policies aimed at encouraging young people to remain in school by choice:

1. expenditure on transition education in schools was stepped up, and a series of new options were developed, including the imaginative 'Link' programme in conjunction with Polytechnics;
2. the sixth form University Entrance exam was abolished, and replaced with internally graded sixth form certificate qualifications;
3. two new financial measures were introduced: the Youth Support Package provided a means tested benefit to all young people aged sixteen or above, whether they were in school, unemployed, on a training scheme or in tertiary education, those young person leaving

school before the age of 18 years without a job would now have to wait six months before becoming eligible for the unemployment benefit.

As well as these factors, schools were themselves, as I argue below, to become more orientated to the labour market. Beyond school, ACCESS was to play a role in providing training for a labour market deemed to be short of skilled workers. The failure of ACCESS in terms of its labour market focus has been caused precisely because there is, in reality, no 'market' for any skills the programme may provide.

The ideology of 'skill' acquisition and transfer: The third area of ideology is in the dominant construction of the notion of skill, and in particular the relationship between skill acquisition, transfer and what makes a 'good' employee. In numerous surveys in New Zealand it has been shown that employers tend to value certain habits, such as obedience, punctuality and ability to follow orders, far more highly than they value particular work skills, at least for the kind of jobs that may be available to ACCESS graduates (Manawatu DETAC, 1985).

The official notion of skill acquisition has reached its height in the implementation of the newest form of ACCESS scheme - work-based training. One such scheme, based in the Manawatu district, has a number of trainees working in various jobs, for 30 hours a week with no off-the-job training component, for, on average, $80 per week. What appears to be a highly exploitative scheme is justified by the argument that moving young people closer to workplaces will increase the chances that these people will gain work. Each work-based programme specifies a set of skills to be acquired, and provides a 'test' to ensure that both employer and trainee fulfill their contract. Here is an example of a skill to be learned, and a test to be applied:

Objective three

Given a mixed variety of baked products, and customers, serve the customers. Each customer is greeted with a smile and acknowledged with the words 'Thank you' when a purchase is made.

Skill check

Given the trainee a mixed variety of baked products and customers. Ask the trainee to serve the customer. Watch and listen to the trainees responses. The criteria to be met are: - each customer is to be greeted with a smile - each customer is acknowledged with the words 'Thank you' when a purchase is made[8].

What is interesting here is not merely the sheer mindlessness of the item, nor even the obvious stress on socialisation factors. Two aspects of this exercise stand out. The first is that some important technical skills involved in this interaction are missing. Using complex electronic weighing and pricing instruments to ensure the transaction runs smoothly, and wrapping the fragile products so that they do not break, are entirely taken for granted. Only some of the skills required in this transaction are actually included in the schedule, and there is no clear basis on which these were selected. In other words, the written form of the transaction is not the technical, objective outline of skill development that it purports to be.

More important, however, is that this skill objective entirely ignores the social relations in which transactions of this kind take place. There is virtually no chance that a busy supervisor will actually assess, in so clinical a fashion, the skills of the trainee. Work is just not like that. Moreover, the actual satisfaction of the employer with the trainee will not be judged on the outcome of the skill acquisition process as it is represented here. The criteria used to judge a worker are more likely to involve whether she arrives on time and has clean fingernails. The whole basis of skill acquisition, as it has been applied through the ACCESS Training programme, is little more than frivolous. It reflects the belief that the closer 'training' (or education) comes to the 'needs' of the labour market, no matter what form the training takes, the more likely it is to result in a job.

The ideological construction which underpins and justifies the continuance of the ACCESS training programme can be summed up in the following assumptions, outlined in a recent report to Cabinet's Economic Development and Employment Committee by a group of officials:

> There are some jobs available in the economy but the pool of unemployed do not have the skills to undertake these jobs. Hence, there is a so-called 'mismatch' between job vacancies and job seekers. The role of the state is to 'address market mismatch by altering the characteristics of the job seekers[9].

It is not desirable to change the nature or size of the supply of work, as such a strategy interferes with the free market exchange of labour, hence 'the principal rationale for funding employment and training schemes of this nature is not that they increase the total number of jobs in the economy. Some schemes may lead to additional jobs by reducing the cost of an employer creating and filling a vacancy but the increased taxation needed to fund these schemes could also have been used by the private sector to create additional jobs'[10]. In other words, by creating new jobs the state is taking on a function assumed to be better done by the private sector.

Therefore the role of training programmes is to fit job seekers as closely as possible to the demands of the labour market, literally to match the unemployed with available jobs, in order to serve the current needs of the labour market.

Within these discourses it is relatively easy to identify the 'Treasuryspeak' which has been identified by Grace (1988), Lauder (1987), Codd (1989) and others. Essentially, Treasury is against state expenditure because it deprives the private sector of the funds by which the free market is able to regulate and balance the supply and demands of goods and services, including education and training. Moreover, state provision, and the taxation this requires, is believed to inhibit the market from operating efficiently to supply those services (Treasury 1987).

Despite Treasury's general animosity towards any public sector expenditure (with the exception of spending on what Gramsci calls the coercive functions of the state), this agency sees some continued benefits attached to the ACCESS programme. They argue that although the state ideally has no major role to play in a free market society, it can be useful in helping to foster economic efficiency and economic growth in a deregulated economy, at a time when such growth is in the initial stages. In other words, ACCESS does have a minor role to play in the attainment of Treasury's ideal society, within existing economic circumstances, even though the ideal society would have no use for it. Treasury argues that the timing of the implementation of employment and training schemes is crucial to their ' success:

> If expenditure is made too much in advance of an upturn then the improvements in human capital will have eroded again by the time of the upturn. If expenditure is made too late, then the Government reinforces the cycle of demand for labour, possibly largely wasting public funds.
>
> In New Zealand's circumstances, this suggests that the expansion in ACCESS may not have been optimally timed but that the programme may now be coming more into its own as employment opportunities start to open out again (Treasury 1988).

According to Treasury, then, the use of ACCESS lies in promoting job skills during a period in which jobs are beginning to once again be created as a result of a broader economic upturn. Its use over the past two years, concomitantly, has been of virtually no value because the economic conditions did not exist which would make the programme useful. As a result, they note (1988), skills learned on ACCESS were wasted and were, over time, depleted. In other words, ACCESS training has been a wasted intervention but, given the projected economic upturn, ACCESS may in the future prove useful in providing job skills in an expanding economy.

The future of ACCESS

From June 1990, ACCESS training support will be under the control of the new Ministry of Education. This change was advocated by the Hawke Committee Report of July 1988, and confirmed in the Government policy documents, Learning for Life I and II in February and August 1989 (Minister of Education 1989 a and b). The Hawke Report justified this as follows:

> The ACCESS scheme is to some extent remedial, compensating for failure of the delivery system for education, and Education should not be able to shift its responsibilities elsewhere (1988 p. 50).

However Hawke stated that the new Ministry would not involve merely a change of name, but a whole new approach to post-compulsory education and training:

> ...the education system should be required to accept responsibility for providing the training required to enable people to find employment. It should both want and be able to absorb an input from employers and from N.Z. Employment (within the Department of Labour). Advice about the allocation of government funds between 'mainstream' education and ACCESS programmes should be principally the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Training as part of an 'across the portfolio' approach to policy. The Ministry of Education and Training will have to build better relations with noneducationalists than has been possible for the Department of Education (1988 p. 60).

Learning for Life (Minister of Education, 1989) confirmed Hawke's proposals for ACCESS as well as the general labour market focus for education:

> The arrangement under which the agency works will ensure the agency's responsiveness to the needs of the labour-market and to the needs of the unemployed. It will be negotiated directly with the Associate Minister of Education, with input from the Ministry of Education and the Department of Labour (ibid p. 28).

The Ministry of Education would incorporate a labour market focus across post-compulsory education and training institutions:

> This will be ensured by a variety of mechanisms including: labour-market expertise within the Ministry of Education; union/employer and Government involvement in the composition of NEQA; the tripartite composition of the Regional Employment and ACCESS Councils (REACs) and apprenticeship committees; the labour-market concern of the Training Support Agency; the facility for institutions to establish advisory bodies capable of offering labour-market advice; and appropriate labour-market goals written in the charters of institutions and developed within their corporate plans (ibid, p. 28).

The ACCESS programme that the Ministry will inherit runs three types of courses - life skills (25%), vocational skills (68%) and the new work-based training scheme, which at present accounts for just 7% of trainees[11]. Thus, the scheme is heavily slanted towards vocational skills training, and indeed offers life skills training largely as a prerequisite for some trainees to be able to participate on work-oriented programmes. ACCESS can thus be represented as a hierarchy, with life skills training at the bottom and work-based training at the top. The position of courses within the hierarchy is determined entirely by their relationship to the labour market. The role of trainees, as I discussed above, is to staircase from the bottom of that hierarchy to the top.

ACCESS has about 50% Maori participation, but this is sharply differentiated by course type. 27% of skills participants in October 1989 were Pakeha, whilst over 50% were of Maori origin. At the other end of the scale, 62% of work-based training participants were Paheka, compared with 29% Maori. Pacific Island participants appear to be even more heavily concentrated at the lower end of the hierarchy than Maori. In other words, the status inequalities of the schooling system and the labour market are precisely reproduced in the ACCESS training scheme.

Although it is difficult to gain adequate information about women, there is evidence that, despite some isolated attempts to provide non-traditional vocational training for girls, the overall system of ACCESS is depressingly sex-stereotyped. In one District, 21 work-based placements had

been undertaken by October this year. Although 17 of these were given to females, the overall picture is of strict sex-stereotyping. The male placements were in the areas of: signwriting assistant, pastry maker, carpet cleaner and vehicle repairs (three of these placements led to full time jobs). The female placements were in the areas of: childcare (7), clerical (3), kitchen hand (3), nursing care (1), sales (2) and teachers aide (1). None of them led to full time jobs as they tended to be offered because the employer could not afford paid assistance (this is particularly true in the childcare field). A comment made by Lauder, Khan and McGlinn (1988 p. 38) in their review of ACCESS programmes is pertinent here:

> ... the present structure of provision of post-compulsory education and training merely serves to reinforce current inequalities and does little or nothing to upgrade the skills of the workforce.

There is the possibility that, under the Ministry of Education, ACCESS may move closer towards interrupting the cycle of gender and ethnic disadvantage by offering non-traditional work options. The problem with this kind of initiative is that it tends to be expensive, and ACCESS at present aims to provide the greatest number of jobs at the cheapest price. Even if low-skilled training programmes were offered on the basis of the reversal of sex-stereotypes, they would still be low-skilled. Cost efficiency at present remains a central aim of the policy.

A recent official review of the ACCESS scheme[12] emphasised course evaluation in terms of 'cost per positive outcome': how many jobs were gained at how much cost. A lifeskills course at the Wairarapa Community Polytechnic was praised for having a cost of only $957 per positive outcome, whilst a tourism and hospitality course in Ashburton, at the other end of the scale, cost $5602 per positive outcome[13]. Lauder et al note that 'if courses do not achieve the negotiated outcome criteria they are liable to be dropped' (1988 p. 34). They go on to say that given ACCESS courses evaluate outcomes centrally in terms of where trainees go, it cannot be argued that the scheme is, in fact, about the acquisition of skills.

Not only will the Ministry of Education inherit a programme that reproduces the inequalities of schooling, but it must also contend with a scheme which is evaluated in purely instrumental terms; an approach which Diorio (1987) has called 'population engineering'. The outcomes of training, under ACCESS, are evaluated solely in terms of subsequent success in the labour market, not on the value of the training itself.

Of course, ACCESS life-skills courses are less instrumental in orientation than the vocational and work based programmes. Nevertheless, the nature of ACCESS is such that trainees of life-skills training are expected to 'staircase' up to the summit, increasing their work-readiness as they go, eventually to reach the lauded heights of a 30 hour per week placement at $80 per week on work-based training before, maybe, if they are very lucky, gaining a low-paid and largely unskilled job.

In any evaluation of the ACCESS training programme it is the anti-educational assumptions (Nash 1988) behind both the process and the product of the scheme that stand out. Lauder et al refer to this:

> There is little evidence that ACCESS courses provide any form of education, if we take education to mean developing systematically (1988 p. 35).

The process of the scheme is unsystematic (to say the least) because it relies on bids made by particular trainers which are considered by REAC Councils and approved or not on the basis of often spurious criteria. Although planning for training is part of the REA Cs' brief, a shortage of funds, the part-time, voluntary nature of the Councils' work, and the tyranny of immediacy which characterises their work, not to mention the isolation of Regional Councils from each other (inter-District sharing of ideas and programmes is not widespread), makes it hard to imagine how a systematic programme could be implemented. Essentially, ACCESS programmes tend to have little relationship to each other nor to the outside world.

This is reflected in the product. Because the courses have no other aim than the instrumental one of linking young people to the labour market, there is no way of knowing whether they are of

intrinsic value to the participants. Moreover, given that tutors on these courses are evaluated totally on 'labour market outcomes', it is very unlikely that these course aim for intrinsic educational outcomes. After all, the most educational of ACCESS programmes is likely to be discontinued if none of its graduates get jobs.

Life skills courses are a partial exception to this although, as I noted above, even these are evaluated in terms of labour market outcomes. Such courses have, for a number of years, offered useful and important skills (e.g. driving, craft education, self-defence, etc) which have been missing from the academically oriented senior school and which provide knowledge useful for both ordinary life and for employment. Given the new labour market focus across education, the Government's campaign to encourage young people to return to school, and the financial incentives and coercion contained in the youth support package and the six-month stand down period for the dole, it is likely that school will increasingly offer just those life skills options now contained in ACCESS. ACCESS itself, in fact, may become partially a tertiary educational course in life skills.

The pressure on the Ministry of Education to maintain and increase the labour market orientation of ACCESS, despite its anti-educational emphasis, may be great. Given the dominant ideological impulses of the state, this agency will be required to prove itself able to respond adequately to labour market needs. It is difficult to see how work-based ACCESS, which is neither more nor less than work without pay, will easily fit into the Ministry's brief. Work-based training, however, which includes a compulsory off-the job training component (say one or two days per week) would be the most obvious educational response to this form of training, and may be more beneficial to the young people themselves and more acceptable to union groups.

Finally, the move to the Ministry makes it likely that ACCESS will end up more clearly integrated into post-school educational and training institutions in the future rather than, as now, being a poor cousin. Yet, in their turn, these institutions will have to demonstrate their own responsiveness to the demands of the labour market and to local communities. This puts at risk some of the broader educational goals of these institutions, in particular the universities.

Conclusion

The ideologies that underpin the ACCESS training programmes are based on particular, distorted assumptions about the nature of individuals and of the labour market, and of the relationship between them. These ideologies lead to narrow, ad hoe, anti-educational programmes which inevitably confirm existing education and labour market inequalities. The implementation of a new labour market focus across all post-compulsory educational institutions aims to ensure that these monetarist ideologies are extended beyond ACCESS to the whole post-school sector. In its turn, ACCESS is to be relocated under the Ministry of Education, which will provide impulses towards a more educational focus in these courses, particularly since ACCESS as it stands is demonstrably ineffective in terms of its labour market aims.

The reshaping of the Ministry of Education constitutes an attempt to redefine the whole educational system more clearly in terms of the needs of the labour market. This is, however, both a problematic and a contradictory aim, given that the ideologies on which it is based arise from a narrow and distorted view of the nature of individuals, the economy and society. There are still battles to be. fought by educational agencies over what the labour market is, what it 'wants' or 'needs', and how educational institutions can meet these needs and all the other goals (e.g. equity) that are expected of them under Charters. Roy Nash (1988 p. 31) notes that:

> Perhaps the worst thing about ACCESS transition education is that it has pre-empted the discussion of what kind of extension curriculum, broadly understood, would be most attractive and useful to a largely unqualified group of young people.

ACCESS undeniably has a labour market focus. This is all that it has, even though some very good educational work may be done by individual trainers on individual courses. The challenge for the Ministry of Education is to integrate the useful aspects of ACCESS with useful and relevant education across the whole range of school and post-school institutions. The interpretation of what constitutes a labour market focus, in what ways this can be introduced into educational institutions, and how this may benefit the unemployed and others who at present do not go on to further education (or who find school irrelevant to their needs), are major tasks for all educational agencies in the immediate future.

Footnotes

1. In a report to Cabinet in February 1989, the Minister of Employment noted 'Total spending in real terms [on employment strategies] has been falling lately. Indeed between 1984-85 and 1987-88 real expenditure dropped 34 percent'. (in Briefing papers to Ministerial meeting on economic and employment growth).
2. Source: ACCESS targeted funding system Section VIII, REAC Charter (modified September 1989).
3. Being a Maori or Pacific Island person used to be a targeting characteristic, but this has recently been dropped from the list. The reason given was that giving a point for being a member of a particular ethnic group was racist, as it defines them, essentially, as deficient on the basis of their race. To compensate for the removal of this 'point', the Government awarded an extra point for 'no school qualifications' which, largely, covered the same people (source: John de Wiele, Training Support, Palmerston North).
4. Thus the term 'hysteresis', which notes the tendency that, once the underlying causes of unemployment disappear, unemployment will tend to persist in the form acquired during the period in which the causes of it were present. Confused? See Cross (1988).
5. Source: Officials Committee Report to the Cabinet Economic Development and Employment Committee (1989).
6. Manawatu Standard, 12.3.85 p.1.
7. The reasons for this are unclear, except that the Government has had quite a lot of advice from its officials that it would be an unwise move (e.g. Catherwood 1985). The Treasury (1987 p. 151) argued against raising the school leaving age in the following terms: 'The current age of compulsory education is probably sufficient to guard against individuals or parents making an irremediable mistake by withdrawing from full-time education too early. It is unlikely to have any significant equity effects, however and, in fuelling educational inflation, may exacerbate inequities. Hence there is no case for raising the compulsory school leaving age in a misguided attempt to provide equality 'at a stroke' or to celebrate increased school retention rates at forms 6 and 7 as a good thing in themselves'. Given Treasury's arguments against long periods of publicly funded education, their stance is hardly surprising and appears to have been adopted by the Government.
8. Source: Files, ACCESS Training Support, Manawatu.
9. Cabinet Economic Development and Employment Committee(1989) p. 2.
10. ibid.
11. All figures in this section come from the October 1989 summary prepared by ACCESS training support.
12. Training Support review, General Manager's Office, Wellington
13. Source: Waipa Advertiser, Friday July 28 1989, p. 17.

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This is a slightly amended version of a paper presented to the NZARE Conference, Wellington, December 1989.

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