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The BBC School Broadcasting Council and the Education System 1935–1971

Steven Barclay

This article seeks to establish connections between histories of education and media by examining long-term institutional and structural factors. In order to establish a role for broadcasting in schools, the BBC formed a relationship with the educational world through advisory machinery called the Central Council for School Broadcasting (CCSB), later reconstituted as the School Broadcasting Council (SBC). In the key period of school broadcasting's development, between 1935 and 1971, the CCSB/SBC was unable to forge a strong relationship with the educational world. Internally, the BBC assumed control of school broadcasting at the expense of the CCSB/SBC. Developments in the early 1960s raised the possibility of fundamental reform. However this was prevented by factors including government policy on both school curricula and broadcasting, and indifference on the part of educationists. This article is largely based on unpublished archive documents.

KEYWORDS School broadcasting; education; BBC; School Broadcasting Council; public service broadcasting; John Scupham

Introduction

From modest beginnings in the 1920s, the range and volume of BBC school broadcasting increased steadily for several decades. Production peaked in the 1970s when more than 130 different series were used by over 90% of UK schools. Following the introduction of the 1988 Education Act and the 1990 Broadcasting Act, school broadcasting declined as it became increasingly marginalised in the BBC and the most influential parts of the educational world, despite its popularity with teachers. This article examines the history of school broadcasting in the key period of its development between 1935 and 1971, a time of significant reform and expansion in schools, radio and television. The examination focuses on the Central Council for School Broadcasting (CCSB), which later became the School Broadcasting Council (SBC) and its relationship with the BBC and the educational world.

The CCSB was a panel founded by the BBC in 1929 to advise on school broadcasting. Panel members were appointed by a range of educational institutions such as the government's Board of Education, the National Union of Teachers and many professional teachers' bodies. The BBC also appointed a number of members, most of whom were prominent educationists. A set of sub-committees advised on particular genres, (geography, English etc.), composed of a mixture of teachers and subject experts, appointed by the CCSB. Each met two or three times a year. In a significant revision in 1947, the CCSB

was renamed the SBC and the sub-committees were restructured based on age-ranges instead of subjects. The CCSB/SBC was supposed to formulate educational policy – both in general and for individual series – and the BBC to produce series according to these policies. Larger than any of the BBC's other advisory bodies, the CCSB/SBC also had an unusual power in that it was in some sense a commissioner. Its approval was required for a series to be produced, though it had no control over budgets.

School broadcasting was given ring-fenced airtime on one radio station and one television channel, but its head had to negotiate with channel controllers on the details of scheduling, budget and resources. The BBC made an important distinction between content considered 'educative', which could be represented by its general output, and the strictly 'educational'. In the case of adult or further education programmes, 'educational' normally meant a direct course of instruction; in school broadcasting it could mean a wide variety of programme types, but always intended for use in schools. Some senior figures at the BBC developed reservations about the scale of the organisation's commitment, and the hope of several director generals including Lord John Reith and Sir William Haley,[1] was that the government would fund school broadcasting directly. Instead, throughout the period, school broadcasting and the CCSB/SBC were funded entirely by the BBC.

Uptake among teachers increased throughout the period, rising from 5,000 schools using broadcasts in 1935 to over 32,000 in 1971,[2] when almost all schools were using them in some form. Broadcasting had a significant, though largely unrecognised,[3] effect on education through its influence on curriculum development and its provision of valuable audio-visual learning resources. The BBC was an educational resource provider with remarkably complete provision in a time when a national curriculum did not exist. This article does not explore the curriculum contributions of school broadcasting in detail (see Parker, Cox and Bignell for particular subjects). [4] It suffices to observe that these contributions did not result in a broader acceptance in government or the most influential parts of the educational world that the BBC, or broadcasting in general, had a significant role to play in schools. The government's reversal in 1988 of a long-standing policy of relative non-intervention in the school curriculum, and the easing of public service broadcasting regulation after 1990 caused the BBC's influence on curriculum resources to wane. Use declined, and the SBC was eventually disbanded in 2000.

In this article I investigate aspects of the CCSB/SBC that affected this outcome. Firstly I set out some of the conditions in which school broadcasting was founded, and I outline the influence of progressivism on the educational world. Then I examine the internal relationship between the CCSB/SBC and the BBC, and the balance between educationist advice and broadcaster production. I then look at the CCSB/SBC's relationship with the rest of the educational world, and its attempts to promote the use of broadcasting among educationists. Finally, I explain particular circumstances in the 1960s, when the growth of school television and a new interest from government raised the possibility of a fundamental reform of the governance of school broadcasting.

School broadcasting has received relatively little attention within media or history scholarship. Briggs is still the fullest account of school broadcasting to 1974, and Robinson of educational broadcasting history in general (without a focus on school) to the

early 1980s, while Cain and Wright and Langham offer summaries up to the early 1990s and Moss to 2000.[5] The influence of interest groups comparable to the CCSB/SBC has been examined by some recent broadcasting researchers, such as Lottie Hoare on the involvement in general broadcasting of the All Souls Group, Allan Jones on the attempts of scientists to influence the BBC, and Caitriona Noonan on religious groups and broadcasting.[6]

Work in the history of education has concentrated on the politics of local and national government, teachers and school (Simon) or the ideas of prominent educationists (McCulloch).[7] It tends to see curriculum innovation as a matter of teacher and classroom practice, neglecting the role of educational resources; however there has been a recent turn to 'materiality'(for example Burke).[8] The history of progressivism in education and its influence on broader ideas of childhood has been contested (Tisdall), as has the relationship between the media and elite ideas about education (Collini).[9]

The Foundation of School Broadcasting

In the 1920s school broadcasting was born into a developing statutory and theoretical framework to which it had to adapt. Mass state education, a relatively recent development dating from the 1870 Education Act, had a roughly dual structure. Elementary schools covered basic education up to age 14, and were intended for the working class. Secondary schools, which overlapped with elementaries in age range, but went higher and could prepare pupils for professional jobs or university, were mainly the preserve of the middle class. A parallel private system dominated access to elite roles. The central government had gradually retreated from prescribing the school curriculum and instead placed this in the hands of local government education authorities (LEAs). Broadly speaking, there were two separate bodies of authority over schools; (1) politicians and administrators who controlled overall policy; and (2) teachers and educationists who operated schools and determined pedagogy. Movements for political and social reform focused on the extension of secondary education to all. A different set of movements for the reform of the process of education were largely motivated by philosophical beliefs, which had recently been given some impetus by theorists such as Freud, Piaget and Dewey.[10] The educational theory and practice of 'progressivism' began to spread as rote learning and the 'three Rs' were replaced with activity methods and a more expansive curriculum. Progressivism was also associated with developmental psychology and the freedom to explore individual interests through discovery, summed up by the characterisation 'child-centred' (contrasted with 'subject-centred').

The BBC's charter referred to 'the great value of the Service as a means of education and entertainment', but specified very little about the content of (any) broadcasts and though Reith intended that the BBC would provide education (including at school-level),[11] he formulated no precise plans. To oversee the development of educational broadcasting, he employed J. C. Stobart from the Board of Education, later called Ministry of Education (MOE) and the Department of Education and Science (DES). A *Radio Times* article of 1924 announcing Stobart's appointment and headed 'A Broadcasting University' stated:

> The BBC is not content to be regarded as merely an entertainer. It is deeply conscious of possessing a medium of communication which improves upon print as much as print improved upon writing … a new era of civilisation has begun.[12]

Stobart wrote to Reith outlining plans for a 'Wireless University'.[13] Through its access to households, broadcasting had implications for the institutional gatekeeping of the education of those who had left school – eventually resulting in the development of the Open University. But the prior existence of an institutional framework for the education of school-age children meant that for school broadcasting to be successful, it would be necessary for the professionals with jurisdiction over schools to agree to use it.

Stobart had not been able to specify what school broadcasting would involve beyond the narrow conception of 'lectures' by 'some eminent scholar',[14] nor had he proposed practical courses of action to promote its use. Mary Somerville, who was subsequently put in charge of school broadcasting, judged that at first 'there was too much missionary zeal' but managed to flesh out some aims that linked it to 'equality of educational opportunity, and … guidance in the acquiring not of 'knowledge split up into subjects, but of experience''.[15] The claim of providing 'experience' recurred frequently in early attempts by the BBC to associate school broadcasting with modern methods and curriculum reform. Producer Richard Palmer's 1947 book *School Broadcasting in Britain*, for example, referred to it as 'an experience on which the teacher can build'.[16] Somerville's most important step in preparing the way for the BBC's success in schools was to lead the 'Kent Experiment', a pilot study whose report endorsed the creation of advisory machinery in 1929. One thing that was obvious was that the lecture approach was unsuitable and that more was needed to engage the school audience.

The progressive trend of educational thought and pedagogy did not help the acceptance of broadcasting in schools. The child-centred turn and the new professionalisation of teacher training were undoubtedly steps forward in education theory and practice, but (understandably) education was conceived of as fundamentally a matter of teachers teaching. There was no apparent widespread interest within the educational world in aural and visual aids. In the new media's infancy this was understandable but, as Cunningham notes, progressivism's aesthetic of ruralism, handicrafts and nature study was at best ambivalent towards any new technology.[17] Perhaps the closest 'analogue' that broadcasting had in schools was books but, unlike the BBC, educational publishers such as Longman had a long precedent of catering to school and teacher needs.

The BBC often repeated that broadcasting could not and would not attempt to replace the teacher.[18] What lay behind the need for this assurance was the risk that broadcasters were encroaching on the jurisdiction of teachers – if not pedagogy then at least the curriculum. There was no national curriculum and no obvious framework within which the BBC could provide curriculum content, and there was some resistance among teachers to the idea of a set curriculum at all.[19] As school broadcasting expanded, it was to furnish teachers with the means of remarkably complete curriculum provision, but this ran counter to the progressive trend of a teacher's control over his or her pupils' learning. Many LEAs, including London County Council, were resistant - partly on grounds of cost, but also because the quality of broadcasts and their usefulness for

the practicalities of teaching seemed dubious. It was partly these difficulties that the CCSB was supposed to overcome.[20] The presence of eminent educationists leant the CCSB credibility and connections, and LEA staff and practising teachers provided relevant opinion.[21]

The CCSB/SBC's Relationship with the BBC

The function of the CCSB was set out in a document listing its 'composition, powers and procedures' in 1928, but its relationship to the BBC was not defined beyond these powers.[22] In 1947 this document was replaced with a constitution which defined the SBC as having 'the duty of guiding the Corporation in the provision of its educational service to schools' and defined it as the 'sponsor' for that service.[23] The relationship between the BBC and the educational world that the CCSB represented was described in terms such as 'cooperation', 'a formal joining' and 'a partnership'.[24]

In the first few years after the CCSB was founded, the relationship was collaborative: in some cases the sub-committees were the originator of series, particularly in geography and history, and commented on scripts and printed materials. But the origination of series also came from the school broadcasting department producers.[25] Two of the principal successful innovations, *Stories from World History* and *Music and Movement*, grew out of the practice of freelancers Rhoda Power and Ann Driver, respectively. The CCSB was not involved in the actual production, and as broadcasting technique developed in the 1930s, the weight of responsibility for the output grew on the department's side. Briefing the director general in 1943, RN Armfelt, Assistant Controller (Home) observed:

> Before 1935 programmes were in fact planned in the fullest sense by the committees of the Council … By 1935 it had become clear that the academic content of a series could not satisfactorily be laid down in any detail round a committee table and handed over to Schools department to turn into a broadcast series … the conception of a schools series had to be a broadcasting conception.[26]

By 1935 the collaborative process had begun to rankle with producers; as Somerville later put it 'it is not easy for the creative spirit to be bound by specifications'.[27] The problem was partly practical - the department had limited staff and resources, and school broadcasting was no easier to produce than other types. The Council and the sub-committees met 70 times in 1935, which meant a lot of time was taken up by BBC programme assistants in preparing, submitting and revising programme plans.[28] Somerville herself was badly overworked and collapsed from stress in 1934.[29]

To separate advice and production (and remove pressure from Somerville) the CCSB was made autonomous by giving it its own staff and secretary. However Somerville wrote in 1943:

> … the original terms of the reorganisation have never so far as I know been formally implemented … with the result that the differentiation of function is clear neither to the educational world, including newcomers to the committees … [nor] people in the corporation.[30]

A further revision was required. In 1947, the main committee was renamed the SBC and the number of sub-committees was reduced to five, which each met twice a year. To rectify the CCSB's 'spasmodic fluctuations in policy',[31] and 'to protect producers from possibly arbitrary judgements on programme plans', the commissioning procedure was simplified to include only 'terms which laid down broad objectives'.[32] Another important effect was the diminution of the Council's powers over the publications that accompanied broadcasts and were a fundamental part of the output. The 1928 CCSB 'power' over the 'supervision and content of school pamphlets etc'. was reduced in the new SBC constitution to the ability to 'Formulate the general educational policy of … associated materials'. The effect of these changes was to diminish the collaborative elements of the early CCSB.

Another problem with the CCSB was that it did not have the capacity to bring a focus of overall educational opinion on any particular subject. In so small a body, the nature of the expertise had to be partial and particular. As Armfelt found;

> … few HM Inspectors and fewer experts ever found time to listen to the broadcasts … Moreover, the experts had a tendency to be guided more by their interests as experts than as members of a sub-Committee concerned with broadcasts. The sub-committees could not themselves be regarded as focal points of educational opinion … [33]

Therefore the subject sub-committees were abolished and replaced by sub-committees based on age group; primary sub-committees I (5-7) and II (7-11), and secondary sub-committees I (11-13), II (13-15), and III (15 and older). This has generally been linked to both the 1944 Education Act, and the growing popularity of progressive, child-centred pedagogy.[34] The 1944 Act was of huge significance to the education system. It abolished elementary schools and introduced primary schools as a distinct stage. It provided secondary education for all, but secondaries were segregated into a tripartite system of 'grammar' schools for the most academic, 'technical' schools for those who were scientifically minded, and 'secondary moderns' for the rest, based on a test at the age of 11. Progressive pedagogy was mostly in evidence in primary schools and secondary moderns as they had more room to experiment; grammar and private schools tended to remain conservative and exam focused (few technical schools were built).[35] The new SBC committee structure did reflect child-centred and developmental psychology, and numerous SBC minutes dwelt on the gradations of what was appropriate for the average child of a particular age.[36] A strict tripartitism was not maintained by the secondary sub-committees, which generally aimed to find series that would appeal widely.

The expertise now sought was not in subjects or the teaching of subjects, but in teaching children of a particular age group. This did not result in a wholesale change to the output: series remained subject-based; of the UK-wide series provided in the school year 1947/1948, 16 out of 31 were still in production in 1964/65; and all output was still schematised by subject in the annual programme sent to schools. Rather, the change to 'developmental' committees should be seen in the context of a further increase of control by the BBC at the expense of the educational world. The advice of specialists was replaced with that of much more amenable generalists, while producers, who were usually subject specialists, consolidated control over broadcasts.

Between 1947 and 1964 the number of series tripled. This also reduced the SBC's oversight as it could not spend as much time on each series. The SBC was able to shape output to some extent and occasionally it rejected proposals. The commissioning system tended to front-load discussion to before new series were produced, and here the Council's influence could be seen in a partial drift away from subject-specific series: when the expansion of school television in 1961 led to Primary Sub-committee II being asked for recommendations, the outcome was the 'miscellany' series *Merry-go-Round*. However, once a proposal was accepted, crucial details of format and execution were generated by producers. For example the producer Claire Chovil, along with Joyce Morris (a consultant Chovil had engaged) developed *Look and Read* in 1964, a pioneering literacy series for 7–9 year olds, which was being used in a quarter of all primary school classes by 1975.[37] The sub-committee had offered Chovil only vague remarks, with one member, M.V. Daniel, author of the influential book *Activity in the Primary School*, objecting because she thought it seemed like 'old-fashioned speech training'.[38] For most producers, the Council was remote from the practicalities of their job; they tended 'to see the Council and its officers as semi-hostile and "interfering" agents'.[39]

This was comparable to the BBC's relationship with other 'institutional domains',[40] though unlike, for example the BBC's Science Consultative Group, the SBC was a commissioner. The term was used by the BBC and the SBC, though it was never defined in the practical terms of normal commissioning. In 1981 the director general expressed surprise when the controller of educational broadcasting said that he did not think it mattered whether the SBC was described as 'mandatory' or 'advisory'.[41] The SBC was in some respects a 'mere rubber stamping body',[42] but it also provided a very useful function: a long-term feedback and response culture, which prevented outright flops.

The CCSB/SBC's Relationship with the Educational World

Another intention of the 1935 reorganisation, which gave the CCSB/SBC a permanent staff, was to improve external relations with the government, LEAs and teacher training colleges. The secretary subsequently became a key figure in giving voice to school broadcasting in the broader world, and the SBC's education officer (EO) force helped to investigate how broadcasting was used in schools. This led to mainstream acceptance by the end of the 1950s, when certain series, such as *Music and Movement* and *Singing Together,* were very widely used. However according to Kenneth Fawdry, the outgoing head of school television in 1974, the SBC ' … was more effective at representing educational world to the BBC than the BBC to educational world'.[43] Fawdry went on to say that in schools, 'The voice of broadcasting has always been more muted than it deserved compared to the Ministry and the LEAs, despite its relevance to practicalities of education, and its following with the grass-roots'.[44] Uptake figures continued to grow steadily through the 1960s and reports on schools by EOs repeatedly proved wide popularity at the 'chalkface'.[45] The reports also revealed some disturbing trends: there was a stigma associated with broadcasts as standing in for proper teaching, and teacher trainers were ignoring school broadcasting.

The status of the BBC/SBC in the most influential parts of the educational world is illustrated by the reports of one important body set up by the government after the

1944 Education Act, the Central Advisory Council on Education (CACE). The CACE was composed of luminaries appointed on a report-by-report basis. In 1967 Elaine Mee, the SBC's research officer, assessed the reports' views on school broadcasting, and found them highly unsatisfactory.[46] She was scathing about the Plowden Report,[47] in which references to school broadcasting were 'brief, marginal and out of date', and showed 'ignorance and prejudice'.[48] Mee argued that in the reports, 'broadcasting [was] still thought of as peripheral and not integral to education', because the authors were being shielded from the extent of broadcasting's importance.[49] The use of broadcasts during lessons was considered abnormal by school inspectors and head teachers and therefore not worth showing to CACE members, many of whom were unfamiliar with contemporary schools.

The most efficient way for the SBC to increase the integration of school broadcasting into education was to convince teacher training institutions to make it part of their curriculum. However, teacher trainers remained largely uninterested and undertook no large research projects involving school broadcasting. At the Institute of Education (IOE) in London in the 1960s, most research money was allocated to sociology and child development,[50] an outcome of a progressive tradition that was then widening and politicising. The opinions expressed at a conference held by the SBC in 1967 at the IOE show the difficulties that it faced. What was then becoming orthodox theory held that media resources would get in the way of activity and experience. The need for standardisation from a remote central source would prevent the individualisation thought to be fundamental to a child-centred pedagogy. An EO commented of one attendee;

> … here was a man basically in favour of the use of broadcasting in teaching maths but unwilling to say so unequivocally to his colleagues because one can only be with it [regarded as knowledgeable by colleagues] if one preaches first-hand experience as the sole basis of primary education. [51]

The grounds of this conflict were not precisely formulated. School broadcasting was certainly not the 'transmission teaching' that the progressives reacted against, but neither was it obviously compatible with (a strict interpretation of) 'discovery' and 'activity' methods. While school broadcasting claimed to offer mainly 'experience' it could sit comfortably alongside a progressive theoretical framework. As it moved to a more central curriculum role in the 1960s, with expansion on television and wider reaching resources for subjects like literacy, it had increasing implications for the practicalities of school education at all levels, for which it required the protection of a powerful liaison body.

The SBC struggled to make its presence felt in the educational world. It had no statutory relation to other significant bodies except for having their representatives on its Council. Off-air and on the ground it had limited resources to operate at the national level, making it a stretch to hold events like conferences. The SBC never had more than 20 EOs and teachers could go their whole careers without meeting one. The SBC came through as something of a remote voice—yet it was one that spoke to many, as uptake figures show. The problem was its lack of presence in practical control structures, which meant that its voice was not appreciated for the importance it had. Because it had been set up and funded by the BBC, those who came across its staff assumed them to be BBC employees, which for all practicalities they were.[52]

In practice the autonomy intended for the SBC's staff was limited; the SBC worked closely with the BBC and it was easy for former EOs, including Scupham and Fawdry, to move into the department. The SBC was keen to avoid the appearance of being controlled by the BBC, even if it did not reflect reality. When secretary of state for education Margaret Thatcher chose the film director Bryan Forbes for a position on the SBC in 1971, the SBC's vice chairman Lincoln Ralphs did not oppose the nomination despite its irregularity, for the reason that 'we must not appear to be trying to control appointments to the Council'. Senior department and SBC staff were free to make suggestions about the BBC's appointees to the SBC, always the largest contingent. Senior Education Officer Kenneth Bailey, for example, judged Hilde Himmelweit, a pioneer researcher on the effects of television on children, too 'individualistic' and 'stormy … really to be a committee type'.[53] It was in the interests of the department and SBC staff, who long outlasted committee members, to exert some control over the SBC so that it could provide useful feedback, without rocking the boat.

The Possibility of School Broadcasting Reform in the 1960s

The landscape of educational broadcasting was transformed by the launch of school television in 1957. The 1960s was the highpoint of the idea that broadcasting had a role to play in education. It coincided with a turbulent period in broadcasting politics, as Independent Television (ITV) had recently arrived, and had pre-empted the BBC by launching its school television first, with its own advisory body. The BBC and ITV quickly realised that competition in this arena made little educational sense and began an informal and rough policy of avoiding obvious duplication in series and scheduling.[54] The existence of this new rivalry inevitably changed the nature of school broadcasting. As John Scupham, the first controller of educational broadcasting later put it, 'in the monopoly days the SBC could speak with one voice, as a unique national institution, for the world it represented. The entry of independent television into the field … (meant there was) no longer an effective overall policy'.[55] Subsequently, two possibilities emerged that could fundamentally reform school broadcasting. One was to use a new (third) television channel for purely educational purposes; the other to remove school broadcasting from the jurisdiction of either the BBC or ITV and place it under some other independent authority. This was the furthest that government policy extended to school broadcasting, with either eventuality requiring positive intervention. Potentially, there would be a publicly funded educational resource provider and broadcasting would have a statutory role in education.

The Pilkington Committee on Broadcasting (1960-1962) was responsible for recommending on the disposal of a third television channel, among other things. Evidence given to the committee by Pye, a television manufacturer under David Hardman, included the recommendation that the third channel be used for education. Meanwhile the Institute for Educational Television was established by Hardman, the Earl of Bessborough, (a director of Associated TeleVision Ltd), John Wolfenden (Vice Chancellor of the University of Reading), the Countess of Albermarle and others. In a letter to the *Times* of 30 November 1961, they announced their intentions 'to set out to convince the Ministry of Education and local authorities that a big expansion of television as

an aid to all forms of teaching is overdue', to 'provide a clearing house for information' and to 'initiate and encourage experimental work'.[56] They specifically associated the Institute with a separate educational channel. This idea had been raised before. Robert Fraser, Director General of the Independent Television Authority (ITA), had in 1958 argued that:

> we need not two but four television services; and of these one, nation-wide and transmitting for at least five or six hours a day, ought to be a strictly educational service … a serious teaching programme … that will be as public in its purposes as the system of public education … for every age and class.[57]

Senior figures at the BBC interpreted the possibility of an independent authority in terms of the politics of broadcasting. The Director General Hugh Carleton Greene suspected that ITV was using educational broadcasting as 'a smoke-screen'[58] to deflect attention away from profiteering. Harman Grisewood, Chief Assistant to the Director General, spoke of relying on 'antagonists of the educational world towards commercial television … [and their] instinctive repulsion to hold Bessborough at arm's length',[59] reflecting the antipathy that existed between the public sector and ITV. Scupham, at the time somewhat at odds with other senior figures, was cautious and content to play the BBC's strong hand carefully. He argued that 'any refusal of ours to cooperate on reasonable terms with the ITA and the commercial companies will only bring discredit on us. The educational world owes us no house loyalty'.[60]

The SBC, for which the Institute could mean disbandment, was also keen to defend its territory and resist major change. The secretary of the SBC argued that since 80% of school broadcasting was then still on radio, over which the BBC had a monopoly, there was little need for coordination between the BBC and ITV. As the Institute's proposals stated that it would commission programmes from the BBC and ITV, the SBC also argued that establishing the Institute 'would already be to return half-way to a dual system'.[61] The SBC pointed out that there had not been a strong demand from teachers for an educational channel, and certainly not for a direct teaching service.[62] Therefore 'To use it even so would be extravagant unless the educational world has reached some radically new ideas in the context about the function of the teacher and the instruments of his teaching'.[63] The SBC was not in favour of the radical change pointed to by Fraser in 1958.

The SBC also realised that if school broadcasting did become the subject of government legislation, the issue of funding would become more important. The secretary quoted from the evidence given to the Pilkington Committee by the Association of Education Committees:

> It is neither dignified nor healthy that the much needed extension of television broadcasting to schools should depend … [on] commercial companies … The schools in the national system are not financed out of the profits from advertising. There is no reason why such an essential service to them as school broadcasting should be so financed.[64]

In other words, the BBC as a public body was the natural home of educational broadcasting. However, it was a contradiction of political precedent that a public body provided

educational resources. It was normal that schoolbooks were produced by commercial publishers and paid for by schools from their own budgets. In a sense, the BBC was operating in this market, as while broadcasts were free for schools, their accompanying publications had to be paid for.[65] The government began public funding for research and development of curriculum materials by setting up the Schools Council in 1963.[66] A year earlier, the MOE set up a research and intelligence branch, which was in favour of an educational channel. By the time the Labour government came to power in 1964, the branch had come down 'flatly and uncompromisingly on the side of the BBC' to run the channel and wanted to start a pilot.[67]

The height of government interest in educational broadcasting came with the Labour government of 1964-1970, with the main result being the Open University. Before this was planned, however, discussions between the DES and the BBC in 1964 resulted in outlines for a 'College of the air'. Robinson and Briggs report this to have been essentially an adult or further education initiative,[68] but as Scupham recalled 'the College of the air would have addressed school age people in technical college as well as Adult audiences'.[69] Chair of the SBC Charles Carter disliked the idea because the DES would want its own plans implemented without interference, bypassing the SBC. The initiative, which was to be funded by the DES, was agreed with the Board of Governors and the director general.

> We worked out the curricula details in evening sessions down in the basement of Broadcasting House, with a team representing the Department of Education … We had all the outline complete. We worked out costs and it was agreed … that the Corporation for the first time in its history should accept a direct subsidy from the Department of Education for an extension of its own home services … it was agreed right up to the Director General and the Governors … . and it was ready to go to cabinet within a week … [70]

According to Scupham, once Jenny Lee took charge of developing what was to become the Open University, she dismissed all existing schemes including the College of the Air, as university status for any new institution was considered politically important. The possibility of fundamental reform passed by for political reasons and the SBC was side-lined throughout.

The Conservative government of 1970–1974 marked the end of positive intervention in school broadcasting. Margaret Thatcher's tenure as education minister included some inquires that amounted to interference, motivated by suspicions of subversive tendencies among producers and the SBC, but these were absorbed fairly easily by SBC staff.[71] No subsequent secretaries of state, despite their routine hosting at Broadcasting House, developed any interventionist policies.[72]

Conclusion

I have argued that the intention of the BBC for broadcasting to play a role in school education was affected by several factors between 1935 and 1971. Among these, the status of the advisory machinery of the CCSB/SBC was of crucial importance.

The creation of the CCSB/SBC had three main motivations: firstly to make sure that broadcasts would be sound as educational resources; secondly, to persuade teachers to

use them; and thirdly, to improve the BBC's relations with the educational world. This was necessary because of the particular character of the audience for school broadcasting. Ultimately the broadcasts had to appeal to schoolchildren, but more importantly they needed the approval of the teachers who controlled their use. However, a third audience existed: of educationists, decision makers and opinion formers at higher levels of status and power, such as LEAs, teacher training colleges and, ultimately, the central government. That audience was never addressed by school broadcasts, but its approval was the most important in the long-term.

To secure these objectives, the CCSB was given an unusual power among advisory bodies—a (diluted) commissioning role. But a truly collaborative relationship between the CCSB/SBC and BBC producers proved not to (or was seen not to) function effectively, and producers assumed real control. Therefore, the CCSB/SBC influenced BBC policy in a broad way, but shaped its programmes in only a narrow way. Where the CCSB/SBC went beyond providing advice, through the permanent staff, it ceased to be part of the educational world and instead became a liaison body, essentially part of the BBC. Among the audiences mentioned above, there was wide acceptance and use by teachers and schoolchildren by 1971, but the higher echelons, particularly the crucial audience of teacher trainers, were largely uninterested and unaware. The prevailing orthodoxy of progressivism, which filtered down to practising teachers, deprioritised educational media, especially broadcasting. Central government kept clear of teaching and the curriculum, and did not interfere with the content of broadcasting. The SBC was not able to operate on the level of strategic national policy and a brief moment of great possibility in the early 1960s passed without fundamental reform.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Notes

1. Briggs, *Golden*, 201; WAC R16/213, R.N. Armfelt to Richards 20th December 1946.
2. BBC *Handbooks* 1935–1971 usually contain relevant statistics.
3. Selwyn for example judges school television to have 'failed to impact on school education' (*Technology*, 47-52).
4. Parker, 'Mediatising'; Cox, 'School Music Broadcasts.'
5. Briggs, *Broadcasting*, 1–5 vols. Robinson *Learning over the Air*, Cain and Wright *In a Class;* Langham, *Teachers and Television*; Moss 'Closing a Window'.
6. Hoare, 'Newsom'; Jones, 'Clogging', 'Elite'; Noonan, 'Piety and Professionalism.'
7. Simon, *Social Order*; McCulloch, *Cyril Norwood*.
8. Burke, 'Architectures.'
9. Tisdall, 'A Progressive Education?'; Collini, *Absent Minds.*
10. Selleck, *Progressives*, 23-47.
11. BBC, *Charter,* 1; Reith, *Broadcast over Britain*, 150.
12. 'A Broadcasting University', *Radio Times,* 13 June 1924, 1.
13. Briggs, *Golden*, 188.

14. 'A Broadcasting University', *Radio Times,* 13 June 1924, 2.
15. Palmer, *School Broadcasting in Britain,* 10-11.
16. Ibid.*,* 30.
17. Cunningham, *Dissemination*, 83.
18. E.g. BBC, *Handbook 1939*, 75.
19. Gordon and Lawton, *Curriculum*, 69-72.
20. Cain and Wright, *In a Class,* 19; Briggs, *Golden*, 189,
21. The inaugural CCSB included H.A.L. Fisher, former president of the Board of Education, Percy Nunn, head of the London Day Training College, and Cyril Burt a prominent psychologist.
22. WAC R16/213, CCSB Composition Powers Procedures, 1928.
23. WAC R78/2738/1, School Broadcasting Council Constitution and Terms of Reference.
24. Bailey, *The Listening Schools* 30, 33; Fawdry, *Alf Garnett*, 106.
25. Palmer, *School Broadcasting in Britain,* 76-97.
26. WAC R16/213, R.N. Armfelt, School Broadcasting Post-war, 2 February, 1945.Roger Noel Armfelt had been secretary to the Education Committee in Devon in the 1930s (Hoare 'Scupham'). He was one of several educational administrators who worked or broadcast for the BBC.
27. Palmer, School *Broadcasting in Britain,* 16.
28. WAC R16/213, R.N. Armfelt, School Broadcasting Post-war, 2 February, 1945.
29. Murphy, *Wireless,* 163.
30. WAC R16/213, R.N. Armfelt, School Broadcasting Post-war, 2 February, 1945.
31. WAC R99/53/1 Report of the Machinery Revision Sub-Committee, 21 October 1946.
32. Fawdry, *Alf Garnett,* 108.
33. WAC R16/213, R.N. Armfelt, School Broadcasting Post-war, 2 February, 1945.
34. Cain and Wright *In a Class,* 41, Briggs, *Sound*, 752, Bailey *The Listening Schools,* 43.
35. Cunningham, *Dissemination*, Hardcastle, 'Rag-bag.'
36. E.g. WAC R98/11, 11 November 1963.
37. SBC, *Research and Evaluation Report*.
38. WAC R98/12/1, 7 February 1964, 1.
39. WAC R99/101/1, Kenneth Bailey, Notes on Questions Relating to the Future of the SBC and its Role in the Development of School Broadcasting. 6 March 1972.
40. Jones, 'Elite.' 720.
41. R78/2738/1. Board of Management Minutes, 23 February 1981.
42. As Bryan Forbes complained after his first SBC meeting. WAC R99/53/1, Memorandum by Robson 9 December 1971.
43. Fawdry, Garnett, 115.
44. Ibid., 115.
45. Files on school broadcasting at the BBC Written Archives Centre contain numerous EO reports, which often provide vivid accounts of the school life of their era, e.g. R103/303/1, R103/304/1.
46. WAC R16/643/2 DES Publications and Broadcasting: A Survey by ECM. 25 October 1967; the MOE's *Half our Future* (1963) was an exception.
47. DES, Primary Schools.
48. WAC R16/643/2 DES Publications and Broadcasting: A survey by ECM 25 October 1967.

49. Ibid.
50. Aldrich, *Centenary*, 177.
51. WAC R16/629/1, L.A. Gilbert, Plowden & School Broadcasting Conferences – The 'Science' Day. 3 April 1967.
52. WAC R16/213, R.N. Armfelt, School Broadcasting Post-war, 2 February, 1945.
53. WAC R99/186/1, Retirements from the Council under Rota 27th January 1971.
54. WAC R98/4, School Broadcasting Council Minutes, 10th November 1961.
55. Scupham, Conduct, 186.
56. WAC R16/667/1, Leaflet Released by the Institute of Educational Television, December 1961.
57. WAC R31/101/2, Speech by Robert Fraser. 1958.
58. WAC R31/101/2, Greene to Marcus Lipton MP, 1 January 1962.
59. WAC R16/667/1 Grisewood, 'Newsletter' – Institute for Educational Television 30 October 1962.
60. WAC R16/667 Memorandum on Educational Publicity John Scupham 6 November 1962.
61. WAC R16/1408/1, Memorandum by the Secretary 10 March 1961.
62. Though in 1962 the BBC began direct teaching on television to remedy a shortage of trained teachers in science and maths.
63. WAC R16/1408/1, Memorandum by the Secretary 10 March 1961.
64. Ibid.
65. Sales were high (10.02 million units sold in 1960-1961, to expand to 12.16m by 1970-1971). WAC R103/271/1, Kenneth Bailey 'The Ordering and Use of publications as related to SBC policies' 3rd December 1970, Barbara Crispin 'Accompanying publications: Future Policy: Relevant statistics', 18 April 1974.
66. Unlike the SBC/BBC, the Schools Council had no production capacity; instead it commissioned books from commercial publishers.
67. WAC R31/101/4, Kenneth Adam, Meeting with Jack Embling, 13 November 1964.
68. Robinson, *Learning over the Air*, 166-169; Briggs, *Competition*, 483-486.
69. WAC R143/112/1, Scupham, John; Cain, John, Interviewer, 24 October 1984.
70. WAC R143/112/1, Scupham, John; Cain, John, Interviewer, 24 October 1984.
71. WAC R99/53/1, John Robson,Meeting of the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Secretary of the School Broadcasting Council with the Secretary of State for Education and Science and Sir William Pile, 11 February 1972.
72. WAC R78/2425/1 DG Lunch with Williams 1 March 1977.

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