

Surname: Hoare

First Name: Lottie

Title: Dr

Position: Teaching Associate, Faculty of Education, University of Cambridge

Title of Project: *Roger Noel Armfelt's contribution to Educational Reform, 1918–1955*

Main Aims and Objectives

This study set out to revise our understanding of the role of Roger Noel Armfelt in representing mid-twentieth century educational legislation about secondary education. The project examined his work as a teacher, HMI, Director of Education and Professor of Education. It revisited his fictional and non-fictional publications. It also explored his work in BBC broadcasting between 1941 and 1949. An analysis of Armfelt's educational career has not been previously undertaken and published either by historians of education or historians of broadcasting. He held the post of Assistant Controller of the Home Service during World War Two and played a significant role in Schools Broadcasting and monitoring war time coverage of the representation of democratic education in the United Kingdom. His working life demonstrated many evolving aspects of the interlinked relationships between educational reform and the media and this project sought to identify some key themes.

Research Questions

- **RQ1** Can we identify Armfelt's distinct contribution to both representing and enacting educational reform, between 1918 & 1955 and how was his outlook shaped by the communities in which he worked ?
- **RQ2** How did Armfelt work to promote public confidence in the laws of educational reform in the mid-twentieth century?
- **RQ3** Were the practices of Roger Armfelt imitated or revised when it came to the representation of later educational legislations such as the 1988 Education Act by the media.

Research Methods

Most of this research took place in archives as I attempted to retrace Armfelt's career and establish what ideas he was trying to promote and support as secondary education provision developed throughout the mid twentieth century. I carried out research at the BBC Written Archives; Devon Archives and Local Study Service; Dulwich College Archive, London; Exeter University Special Collections; Kent History and Library Centre, Maidstone; Kings College Archive, University of Cambridge; Leeds University Special Collections; The Bodleian Library Special Collections, Oxford and the National Arts Education Archive, West Bretton, Yorkshire.

I am very grateful to the Society of Educational Studies for making all these archive trips possible. I also very grateful to archivists in these various collections who helped me with my enquiries: in particular Jeff Walden at BBC WAC, Anne Entwistle at the Kent History and Library Centre and Freddie Witts at Dulwich College who retrieved school registers from the 1920s and matched up Armfelt's pupils with the scholarship lists available for that period. Without such attention to detail from Archivists I would not have been able to support my arguments with such confidence.

I am also very grateful to Dr Kate Murphy, Principal of Department of Humanities and Law at the University of Bournemouth, who in the process of updating a list of people working on aspects of BBC history came across this Society of Educational Studies project and made contact with me to introduce me to Armfelt's surviving daughter, Robinetta Gaze, and one granddaughter, Harriet Gaze. The oral history interviews I then conducted enriched my understanding of Armfelt's working life and his outlook on educational reform invaluable. Using the archival fragments as a scaffold I now had his eldest daughter's testimony as someone who had visited school openings with her father and argued about aspects of education with him and had sought to persuade him to recognise the education of girls as equal to that of boys, in practice rather than as a matter of paperwork and planning.

Summary of Findings

During the course of my research my findings developed under four main themes: monitoring the development of secondary education for all; Think Tanks, and committees; reflecting on secondary educational reform in print and the shifting intersection between education and the media across the late twentieth century. These themes will be developed in forthcoming publications but for the purpose of this report I will summarise findings in relation to my original research questions.

RQ1: Can we identify Armfelt's distinct contribution to both representing and enacting educational reform, between 1918 & 1955 and how was his outlook shaped by the communities in which he worked ?

Armfelt's distinct contribution to both enacting and representing educational reform appear to have come about through his taking a consistent interest in the development of secondary education for all in the 21 year period in the run up to the 1944 Education Act. His role as an observer of education and the frustrations he experienced when working in LEA's in the 1920s and 1930s shaped his sense of having an educational mission longer term. In turn these early experiences determined what he considered it important to include in the broadcasts and publications with which he was involved in the last 14 years of his life from 1941–1955. From 1941–1949 he monitored BBC discussion and output relating to secondary education in broadcasting, including schools broadcasting. His fictional and non-fictional publications discussed the consequences of educational legislation. A key finding from this research was that Armfelt played the role of informer and observer in his LEA work and acted as an advisor in BBC broadcasting concerning secondary education. He fed back his perspectives on what should be represented regarding secondary education reform both to colleagues and other influential figures with whom he interacted socially. This does not mean he was always listened to or that his influence was consistent.

RQ2: How did Armfelt work to promote public confidence in the laws of educational reform in the mid-twentieth century?

When it came to establishing how Armfelt worked to promote public confidence in the laws of educational reform in the mid-twentieth century I recognised that I must not jump to conclusions as a historian working with fragments of evidence. Surviving archival evidence was mainly concerned with Armfelt's public voice, what he chose to present within his professional records of his working life and while I strove to trace as many of these sources as possible I was still aware that there could be a gulf between the reactions to educational reform which Armfelt sought to cultivate in practice to enhance the public optimism and his own reservations about aspects of educational reform which were not evolving as smoothly by the late 1940s as he would have wished. Archival resources did not present his more private and outspoken reflections concerning his own interpretations of how education reform was developing in practice. One of the distinct advantages of having the opportunity to conduct oral history interviews with Armfelt's daughter and granddaughter was that both the consistencies and the contradictions between his public and private outlook on educational reform could be reflected on in those conversations. We could discuss the elusive elements of Armfelt's working life which also kept his profile below the radar of straightforward historical storytelling.

RQ3 Were the practices of Roger Armfelt imitated or revised when it came to the representation of later educational legislations such as the 1988 Education Act by the media.

Whether the practices of Roger Armfelt were imitated or revised when it came to the representation of later educational legislations by the media, such as coverage of the 1988 Education Act, was obviously not suggested as a research question where I was looking for exact replications. It was instead proposed in order to offer reflections which could build bridges towards further research on the overlapping relationships between education and the media. In the final months of the project I embarked on interviews with several former education correspondents who had been involved with reporting on the 1988 Education Act and we discussed the ways in which relationships between education and the media had

evolved since the mid-twentieth century. These discussions contributed directly to my thinking on 'Recommendation for Future Research'.

Recommendations for Future Research

The shifting intersection between education and the media across the late twentieth century developed as a significant theme in this recent research and remains one which demands further research. I embarked on research on Roger Noel Armfelt as an example of one individual whose working life overlapped with the media and education in the mid twentieth century. To develop future research I think the historical focus could shift towards the later decades of the twentieth century and confront the central themes of media reporting on secondary education. I am therefore hoping to organise some seminars and focus group discussions which draw on the representation of secondary education reform in the media in England since 1944 and invite former education correspondents to give their perspectives on how they reported educational reform in the post war decades. These seminars would seek to bring together an intergenerational audience and would hope to benefit students and educators working in a variety of fields of educational research. In the company of former education correspondents we would also discuss short moving image clips from historic news coverage on educational reform post-war. Subsequent research would interrogate both the reactions to documentary evidence of those who had not lived through post-war educational history, and the former journalists' perspectives who had been covering the events contemporaneously. The former journalists would discuss where they covered education in relation to their own personal reactions and prior knowledge, for example their experiences of visiting actual schools to enrich their knowledge beyond press conferences. They would also address where their message was steered by newspaper editors to meet the requirements of a particular newspaper or broadcaster's wider social mission. We would discuss key changes in mainstream educational provision post-war and how journalists and broadcasters responded to those shifts in their coverage. There is a need for this research in time to reach beyond the coverage of secondary education and to look also at media reporting of university education but the coverage of secondary education should be addressed first, as that concerned the majority of the population in ways that the media reporting on universities did not.

The memories of educational correspondents working lives stretch far beyond the edited records which exist in newspapers and broadcasting. Their contributions were edited at the time to meet the requirements of those who distributed their stories but their recollections of the bigger picture in terms of the intersections of media and education remain and deserve to be collected for the benefit of future historians, so that historians of the future have another layer of evidence which is otherwise absent in the records of media and educational history.

I would like to thank the Society for Educational Studies for their support of this research. This research has helped me to develop my own research skills through regular and sustained visit to archives and through interviews and other conversations with participants who contributed valuable insights in this research. The opportunity to present at the Society for Educational Studies Colloquium in September 2019 also provided thought provoking questions and insights which challenged my research in a very constructive way.

Lottie Hoare, April 2020