
education review

Diversity and comprehensive education



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contents

volume 15 • number 1

Preface <i>Doug McAvoy, General Secretary NUT</i>	1	The greener grass of home <i>Neil Foden, headteacher of Friars School, Bangor, and member of the NUT Executive</i>	63
We need your help to make a difference <i>Rt Hon Estelle Morris MP, Secretary of State for Education and Skills</i>	2	School differences and social segregation <i>Dr Linda Croxford, University of Edinburgh</i>	68
Selective systems of education – blueprint for lower standards? <i>Professor David Jesson, University of York</i>	8	The effects of selective education in Northern Ireland <i>Professor Tony Gallagher, Queen's University Belfast and Dr Alan Smith, University of Ulster</i>	74
Why one size does not fit all pupils <i>Sir Cyril Taylor, chair of the Technology Colleges Trust</i>	15	Foundation schools – building on success: a view from FAVASA <i>Joan Binder, chair of the Foundation and Voluntary Aided Schools Association</i>	82
Race equality and education policy <i>Professor David Gillborn, Institute of Education University of London</i>	21	Transformation not reform <i>Matthew Horne, DEMOS</i>	87
Government not achieving success <i>John Bangs, Assistant Secretary, Education, NUT</i>	27	The government agenda for secondary education reform <i>Dame Tamsyn Imlison, formerly headteacher of Hampstead School</i>	92
Do we really want more faith schools? <i>Frank Harris, Lay Reader at the University Church</i>	32	A system of comprehensive schools or education for all? <i>Dr John Marks, Educational Research Trust</i>	99
Modernisation spells destruction <i>Professor Clyde Chitty, Goldsmiths College University of London</i>	37	International student assessment and its implications for schools <i>Ulf Fredriksson, Education International</i>	104
Can there be an end to the 11+ ? <i>Margaret Tulloch, Secretary of CASE</i>	45	Schools*: building on success – a personal response <i>Christine Whatford, Director of Education, Hammersmith and Fulham LEA</i>	110
Specialist schools – the end of comprehensive education? <i>Cllr Graham Lane, chair of the Education Committee, Local Government Association</i>	51	The work of the Sutton Trust <i>Peter Lampl, chair of the Sutton Trust</i>	115
What is wrong with our educational assessment and what can be done about it? <i>Dr Dylan William, King's College London</i>	57	Book Reviews	120

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Preface

THIS edition of the Education Review, the first in its new format, takes comprehensive education as its theme. This topic has been brought into sharp focus by the Government's proposals for reforming the secondary sector, in particular, the establishment of "a flexible and diverse system", with an increase in specialist schools, City Academies and faith schools, as outlined in the article by the Secretary of State, Estelle Morris.

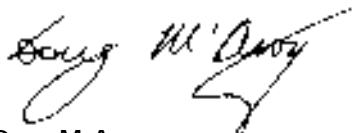
This emphasis on diversity within the secondary sector has raised alarm about the creation of a two-tier system. Clyde Chitty, Margaret Tulloch, Christine Whatford and Graham Lane, outline the successes of the comprehensive system of education and voice deep concerns about the potential to expand current selective admissions arrangements, implicit in many of the Government's proposals. Matthew Horne and Tamsyn Imison focus on the necessity for teachers to be engaged with the process of change.

Leading academics – David Jesson, David Gillborn and Dylan Wiliam – present formidable research evidence on the impact of selection on secondary schools' standards, the educational attainment of minority ethnic pupils and the shortcomings of statutory assessment methods.

In terms of diversity, Frank Harris questions the wisdom of an expansion of faith schools in the current climate. Cyril Taylor and Joan Binder present the case for specialist schools and foundation schools, respectively. John Marks proposes doubling the current number of grammar schools and Peter Lampl explains the work of the Sutton Trust.

Approaches to secondary education in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland are surveyed in articles by Neil Foden, Linda Croxford and Tony Gallagher and Alan Smith. An international perspective is given by Ulf Fredriksson. John Bangs for the NUT analyses the White Paper, "Schools Achieving Success".

This edition of *Education Review* contains an extraordinary breadth of views, passionately argued. There could no better way of demonstrating the NUT's continuing commitment to being at the centre of educational debate or of launching the *Education Review* in its new format and new partnership with the Education Publishing Company.



Doug McAvoy

We need your help to make a difference

Estelle Morris

Estelle Morris was elected MP for Birmingham Yardley in 1992. She has been School Standards Minister and Minister of State at the Department for Education and Employment and was promoted to Secretary of State for Education and Skills in June 2001. Estelle Morris is a former teacher in an inner-city comprehensive school.

Abstract: *In its White Paper, Schools Achieving Success, the Government focuses on secondary education. Changes start this term with the key stage 3 strategies, designed to improve standards in English, maths, science and ICT in the early years of secondary school. After consulting the teaching profession, the Secretary of State is confident that the changes are 'challenging but achievable'. She aims to strengthen 14-19 education as a whole, while making improvements in vocational education by tailoring work-related courses for 14- and 15-year-olds. The most controversial part of the programme is increasing the number of specialist schools.*

FOUR years ago, we joined primary teachers on an important crusade – to improve the ability of our children to read, write and do arithmetic. Together, we have made a huge difference to the lives of tens of thousands of youngsters. We know that teaching can be a challenge and we are working to alleviate the problems of workload and teacher shortages. These issues should not obscure the fact that an enormous amount has been achieved.

With the proposals in our White Paper,¹ we need our secondary teachers to join us in a drive of similar determination, backed by real resources, to improve standards in schools right across the country. We know that when pupils are around 14, their motivation and levels of achievement can fall. We must tackle this 'dip' in performance, starting with core subjects. Ultimately, however, the strategy will be about raising standards in all subjects.

With the literacy and numeracy strategies in place in primary schools, the quality of teaching improved significantly, leading to better test results in English and maths. We kept our side of the bargain too: we provided much better training for teachers and we introduced materials which most teachers

say are practical and useful. In addition, we introduced summer schools, homework clubs and parent guides to support teachers' work.

We have also started to make teaching a more attractive career, with better pay for experienced teachers, salaries for trainees and better professional development. There is more money for schools to spend on books and equipment and we have embarked on the biggest school building and repair programme for decades.

When we were elected for a second term in June, nobody was in any doubt that the transformation of our public services was at the top of the public's agenda. That means we need continued year-on-year improvements in investment, but it also means important and sometimes difficult reforms.

There are several strands to reform in secondary schools. We recognise that there is considerable diversity and variety at this stage of a child's education, so we want to ensure that what we are able to provide meets the different aptitudes and interests of each pupil.

Improving standards at key stage three

This term, the key stage 3 strategies, designed to improve standards in English, maths, science and ICT in the early years of secondary school, will begin to be implemented. Results in the pilot schools have been encouraging but, equally importantly, most teachers found that the training that went with the strategies helped them to improve the pace and usefulness of their lessons. The pilots also helped us develop the right flexibility for teachers to adapt the strategies to meet their own needs.

We have set targets for the key stage 3 tests at 14. They are as demanding for youngsters of that age as the key stage 2 targets were when we first set them. We did make some changes after consulting the profession, to ensure that they are challenging but achievable. We are also making a total of £428 million available to support the strategies over the next three years.

We are focusing on this stage of education for two main reasons. Firstly, we want to maintain the pace and build on the achievements of primary schools in the core subjects. Secondly, secondary schools understandably devote most attention to GCSEs (and A levels, where they have sixth forms). The danger is that the early secondary years are not used as well as they might be and that by the age of 14 pupils may not only have fallen behind, they may also have lost interest in learning.

More opportunities for work-related learning

Our second strand of reform will strengthen 14-19 education as a whole and will represent a substantial improvement in vocational education. We have already made it easier for schools to tailor work-related courses for 14 and 15 year olds, with 50,000 young people currently spending a day or two a week

at college and gaining work experience. With new vocational GCSEs from 2002 and two-stage modern apprenticeships, we are determined to develop a high quality vocational route, which will tailor learning to pupils' individual aspirations and aptitudes.

This will not be a second-class route for some pupils, as some fear. It is about recognising what I know from my own time teaching and what most teachers know from their daily experience: unless we enable those who want practical courses to take those opportunities, they often become bored and disaffected, making it much harder for everyone else to learn too.

We have to ensure that this vocational route has real parity of esteem with academic GCSEs, otherwise it will be seen as second best. If Germany can value technical education, we must end the "British disease" of devaluing the vocational. I believe that as many as one in six, or 200,000, young people might opt for this route in the future.

Two key things will raise the status of vocational education: firstly, it will be a route to higher education, both through vocational GCSEs and A-levels and through work-related routes. Secondly, as the White Paper sets out, taking part in at least some vocational education might become the norm rather than the exception.

Modernising comprehensive education

Our third strand, diversity, has attracted most controversy. Specialist schools have had a lot of nonsense written about them. In fact, they are modern comprehensives which gain better results when compared with similar schools, which set more challenging goals and which are supported financially to do so. Under changes which we made four years ago, they must work with other neighbouring schools and contribute to the wider community.

They are supported by some business sponsorship, but the range of specialisms on offer will mean that in inner city areas there is genuine diversity in comprehensive schools. The idea that comprehensives should be about "sameness" or low expectations would have astonished those who pioneered them.

While I see no reason why any school ready and willing to do so should not have a specialism, their presence has not created a "two-tier" system with 600 schools and will not when there are over 1,500 in four years' time. City Academies, of which we have announced 13 to date, will follow similar principles, but will enable new schools to be built in our inner cities with Government and business funding.

Far from concentrating success in a few schools, diversity is about motivating individual schools, spreading excellence, sharing success and working collaboratively. The diverse system we want to build will be one where schools differ markedly from each other in the particular contribution

they choose to make but where all are equally excellent in giving their students a broad curriculum and the opportunity to achieve high standards. This is at the heart of specialist schools.

We are learning the lessons of diversity from the Excellence in Cities (EiC) initiative. Since EiC was launched in 1999, it has proved to be extremely popular with the urban and suburban schools that have benefited from its programme.

Learning mentors are ensuring that those pupils and families needing extra attention get it, while enabling teachers to focus on all their pupils. Learning Support Units are helping to tackle less major discipline concerns and the Gifted and Talented programme is ensuring that brighter youngsters are enabled to fulfil their potential.

Far from concentrating success in a few schools, diversity is about motivating individual schools, spreading excellence, sharing success and working collaboratively.

EiC has expanded this term, so that around 90,000 pupils now benefit from the programme. City Learning Centres are becoming a focus for the whole community, equipped with the latest technology. The approaches successfully pioneered in urban secondaries are being used with older primary pupils and some are being made available in other parts of the country. Backed by £200 million a year, Excellence in Cities will continue as an important strand of our secondary reform programme.

Success in turning around failing schools

When we started to tackle failing schools with a mixture of pressure and support, there were complaints from some that we were being too tough. However, with the hard work of the headteachers and teachers involved and support both from LEAs and central Government, 778 schools have come successfully out of special measures.

We should not under-estimate the importance of this collective achievement. Tens of thousands of young people have a better chance of succeeding. The morale of teachers at those schools is far greater than it was when the schools were sinking into despair.

However, there are still over 100 schools which either had to be closed or where, because closure was not felt to be an option, LEAs decided to give the school a Fresh Start. Sometimes it has worked, but in other cases it did not. While the majority of schools can be turned around by conventional means, I believe there will be cases where new solutions are needed. In the cases where

schools fail their pupils, the priority must be to get the children back into a decent education as quickly as possible. Although huge progress has been made, there are a few tough cases where existing policies have not worked.

That is the context in which we start to examine what role the private sector can play. If another school can take over a weak or failing school, and turn it around, that is fine by me. If the LEA can do it, let them do it.

There will be cases, however, where the best chance of success is offered by a not-for-profit or private provider: if we are interested in what works best for the pupil, we should be ready to give such alternatives a chance. This is not privatisation of schools. It is about making sure that we strengthen the delivery of public services by using all the expertise we can.

I hope that where we need such outside support, you will give us your backing. In return, we will set demanding targets on any outside provider: if they do not measure up, they will lose their contract.

Recruiting the teachers we need

We have worked hard on tackling problems with teachers' workload and teacher shortages. We have opened new career paths for teachers, helping to recruit and retain the best teachers. These measures are not isolated initiatives. They complement each other and they come alongside further measures which we are taking to make teaching more attractive. We want to see more teacher-training based in schools, so this term's intake of 1,280 to the Graduate Teacher Programme is a welcome addition to over 28,000 graduate trainees entering teacher training colleges.

We also want to see a closer working relationship between universities and schools. Some universities will introduce teacher-training modules into their undergraduate degree programmes, while some teachers will work part-time at universities so that education research is better rooted in good classroom practice.

Of course, we need to do more to recruit and retain good teachers, but the signs are that training salaries and other incentives are beginning to make a real difference.

The new post-threshold pay scales are intended to encourage more teachers to stay in the profession. These are significantly better than the maximum available to a classroom teacher in the past. We will do all we can to assist schools, particularly in high cost of living areas, to recruit the staff they need this year.

A Government that listens

I have been ready to listen to teachers in the classroom and to headteachers where our reforms needed to change. We have improved the key stage 3 strategies as a result. We have changed our focus on exclusions from targets to more support for discipline. We have also reduced the number of tests taken

for AS-levels. I am more interested in making sure that what we do is right on the ground, than sticking with something that is not working to save face.

As a Government, we are trying something different. Instead of expecting reform without investment, as happened in the early Nineties, we are providing more money for schools. More is going directly to headteachers and governors to set their priorities than ever before. Unlike some governments in the past, we also see the opportunity of such unprecedented extra investment as our best chance of securing the improvements needed to make our education system as good as it can and should be.

That will mean hard work, though I hope the workload study we set up with NUT backing helps us to cut out unnecessary paperwork and form-filling. Initially change might seem difficult, but we will do all that we can to support teachers with the right training and materials.

We must work together with the teaching profession. For example, we have not just listened to teachers on the key stage 3 targets, we have developed them every step of the way in partnership with expert classroom teachers, piloted them extensively and refined them in the light of that experience. I want all our reforms to reflect what works in schools. I am confident that together we can make sure these reforms deliver the higher standards that we all want to see, so that many more young people will have the chance to succeed as a result. ■

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Selective systems of education - Blueprint for lower standards?

David Jesson

Professor David Jesson is Associate Director of the Centre for Performance Evaluation and Resource Management, University of York and Advisor to the DfES on value-added issues. He previously spent 20 years at the University of Sheffield. He has taught in almost every type of secondary school – public, grammar, secondary modern and comprehensive.

Abstract: *Since grammar schools regularly top the league tables, it is not really surprising that many responsible parents assume that selective schools offer the best education. There is, however, a growing body of evidence that suggests that all is not well in selective areas. There is clear evidence that selective school systems depress educational performance, but conversely it should not be assumed that all non-selective schools do well by their pupils. Disseminating good practice requires a sharp focus on high achievement for all as an essential component of the school system.*

THE election of a new Government and a reiterated concern for 'raising standards', not tinkering 'with structures', makes this an appropriate time to look again at the issue of selection in secondary education. There are 150 local education authorities in England and just over 160 grammar schools; however the neat 'average' of around one grammar school in each LEA is very far from the truth. One hundred and eight of the nation's grammar schools are located in just 15 LEAs, over half of these in just three LEAs (Kent, Lincolnshire and Buckinghamshire); the remaining 54 are in a further 19 areas but serving only a small part of each. Most areas (116 LEAs) do not organise secondary schools on a selective basis. Annually around 20,000 pupils enter grammar schools, out of a total maintained secondary school population of over 500,000.

Grammar schools regularly appear at the top of both local and national league tables of examination results and this has tempted their supporters to claim that selective schools offer the 'best education'. The crucial questions to be asked are: "do they?" and "where's the evidence?"

Matters for concern

Evidence is accumulating which strongly suggests that all is not well with

schools in selective areas:

- **Schools in Special Measures** (OFSTED's category of 'failing' schools). There are relatively few secondary schools nationally in this category, but in the 15 selective LEAs the incidence of failing schools is substantially higher than in the 116 non-selective LEAs.¹
- **Schools facing challenging circumstances.** This is a new classification of schools - it includes schools which achieved 25% or less A* to C passes at GCSE in 1999, 2000 or both or which had free school meals percentages in excess of 35%. There are over 600 of these schools nationally. For non-selective LEAs the average is around 18% facing challenging circumstances whilst for selective LEAs the percentage is close to double this figure at 36%. Given that selective LEAs serve relatively 'advantaged' communities (see Table 2 below) this figure is surprisingly high.²
- **DfEE's evaluation of comparative performance for the 25% 'brightest' pupils** showed that the 'top' quarter of pupils in comprehensive schools did as well if not better than their peers in grammar schools. At a stroke this destroys the myth that grammar schools are somehow 'better' at educating the top talent in the country.³
- **Value-added evaluations of all pupils' GCSE performance** give clear indications that pupils in selective areas do less well than their peers in non-selective areas. This appears true both for the 'gold-standard' measure of the percentage of pupils achieving five or more A* to C passes and the more comprehensive measure based on the average number of GCSE points each pupil achieved.⁴

The present situation (and location of selective LEAs) is summarised in Table 1

Table 1 the incidence of grammar and non-selective schools across the country

<i>System</i>	<i>LEAs</i>	<i>No. of schools</i>	<i>Grammar</i>	<i>Non-Selective</i>	<i>% in Grammar</i>
Selective*	15	350	108	242	28%
Partially Selective	19	637	54	583	6%
Non-Selective	116	2213	0	2213	0%

(* Bexley, Bournemouth, Buckinghamshire, Kent, Kingston, Lincolnshire, Medway (Rochester & Gillingham), Poole, Reading, Slough, Southend-on-Sea, Sutton, Torbay, Trafford, Wirral)

Clearing the ground

Selective education involves choosing more able pupils for entry into grammar schools, the rest go to non-selective schools, often, but not exclusively, described as 'secondary moderns'. These latter schools educate only those who

have failed to gain entry to grammar school. Selective education in the 15 selective LEAs therefore embraces two types of school, grammar schools and secondary moderns. Judging how well selective school systems perform requires an evaluation of all pupils' results, not just those of the grammar schools. Table 1 shows that the average rate of selection for grammar schools in these areas is just over 25%, (although this does vary according to local circumstances): this means that the majority of pupils in these areas, the remaining 75%, go to non-selective schools.

Recent advances in the availability of national data on pupil and school performance means that we are now able to categorise pupils, schools, LEAs and areas using performance measures which have national currency. The DfES Autumn Package of performance information classifies secondary school pupils into five 'prior attainment' or 'ability' groups based on their test results in key stage 3 tests taken at age 14. For ease of reference we have grouped pupils who have 'above average' prior attainments together, and similarly for 'below average' pupils. Using this information we show how LEAs organised on fully selective lines differ from those which are not.

Table 2 shows the distribution of pupils in each of the three prior attainment groups (described above) for LEAs with each type of secondary school organisation. The table also shows the average free school meal eligibility for each area.

Table 2 the 'social' and 'ability' profile of LEAs by type of secondary school organisation

<i>Pupils' 'ability' group</i> →			<i>Below Avg</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>Above Avg</i>	<i>Mean</i>
<i>School Admission type</i> ↓	<i>%FsM</i>					<i>(KS3Points)</i>
Selective (15 LEAs)	13%	28%	19%	53%	34.5	
Partially Selective (19 LEAs)	18%	32%	21%	48%	33.5	
Non-Selective (116 LEAs)	18%	36%	22%	42%	32.5	
Overall	18%	35%	21%	44%	32.9	

Each area type has similar proportions of pupils of 'average' ability, but the fifteen selective areas have proportionately more pupils of above average ability than the rest of the country – as well as substantially lower levels of free school meals. The information in Table 2 might be summarised as showing that selective LEAs serve relatively more advantaged communities than those organised on non-selective lines.

Evidence is now accumulating that there are serious issues to be addressed in those areas which have retained 'selective systems' of school organisation. Far from providing indicators which support claims that selective schools deliver the 'best' education, there are increasing signs that these areas are

contributing to the ‘long tail of underperformance’ that was once endemic in the English educational scene and which successive Government initiatives have sought to address.

Value-added estimates of pupil and school performance

Comparisons of educational performance across different forms of school organisation clearly need to take account of the achievements of all pupils, regardless of the type of school they attend. It is only by ignoring this basic premise that supporters of grammar schools have tried to claim that the facts of selective school performance “speak for themselves”. One of the outcomes of this paper is to show that when they do, they show how selective school systems have delivered lower levels of examination performance than those not organised along these lines.

Comparing performance of pupils in non-selective and selective systems

Government is committed to bringing value-added assessments into national school performance tables; we have utilised the principles of value-added modelling of performance for reporting on the differences in performance between pupils in selective and non-selective systems of secondary education. Value-added methods involve taking all the information about pupils’ gender, prior attainment and GCSE outcomes, then ‘modelling’ these so that we can estimate what is the average (or ‘expected’) outcome for pupils with specific characteristics. We have applied this to the most recent GCSE performance data relating to all pupils nationally, classified by whether their performance was achieved within selective or non-selective LEAs. A parallel, but more extensive, account of principles and methods will be found in *Evaluating Performance at GCSE in LEAs and Schools of Differing Types*.⁴

Table 3 shows the results ‘average’ pupils achieved in the two contrasting educational systems:

Table 3 the performance of average pupils in LEAs of contrasting types

	% 5+ A* to C passes	GCSE Points
Non-selective (116 LEAs)	45.3	37.0
Selective (15 LEAs)	43.1	35.9
Non-Selective Advantage	+ 2.2%	+ 1.1

Table 3 shows that similar pupils in non-selective schools outperformed their peers in selective schools by more than two percentage points. Since the

improvement in national performance for this outcome is only around one percentage point annually, Table 3 shows that *non-selective schools' performance is well ahead of that in selective schools.*

Other ways of comparing selective and non-selective school systems

Another way of looking at this information is to use the benchmark framework used in OFSTED reports and the Autumn Package to characterise pupils' performance levels in the two contrasting school systems. The benchmark framework we have shown lists pupils' value-added estimates of GCSE performance from 'worst' (the bottom five percent of the population) to the 'best' (the top five percent). This is shown for the two major GCSE performance indicators: percentage gaining five or more A* to C passes and the average number of GCSE points achieved.

The methodology used for these evaluations is explored in greater detail in *Educational Outcomes and Value-Added Analysis of Specialist Schools for the Year 2000*.⁵

Table 4 Value-added estimates of pupils' performance in selective and non-selective LEAs

	National Classification of Value-added Performance						
	BEST						WORST
	<i>Top 5%</i>	<i>Next 20%</i>	<i>Next 15%</i>	<i>Mid 20%</i>	<i>Next 15%</i>	<i>Next 20%</i>	<i>Bottom 5%</i>
LEA Type	Value-added Performance for 5+ A* to C passes at GCSE						
Non Select	5%	20%	15%	20%	15%	20%	5%
Selective	3%	18%	16%	22%	16%	20%	5%
LEA Type	Value-added Performance for GCSE Points Score						
Non Select	5%	20%	15%	20%	15%	20%	5%
Selective	4%	18%	15%	21%	17%	21%	5%

Table 4 confirms the 'depressing' effect of selective education on the overall evaluations of performance of pupils educated within them. Pupils in selective LEAs appear less proportionately in the two highest categories of GCSE performance (21%/22% compared with 25% in non-selective areas) whilst there are greater proportions in the average and below average categories.

These findings, based as they are on the GCSE results of many thousands of pupils, indicate that the claim that "grammar schools provide excellent performance" is at best only a half-truth. No one would wish to deny that grammar schools get 'good results' for the able pupils they select, but remember that these results are similar to, or slightly less than those achieved

by equally able pupils in non-selective schools. The crucial fact is, however, that what actually happens in selective areas is that pupils who are not selected for grammar school go into secondary modern schools, where their low GCSE performance then depresses those communities' overall performance. This is inevitable given that the majority of pupils in selective areas, by definition, go to non-selective (mainly secondary modern) schools. The consequence is that *selective systems of schooling result in lower educational performance.*

Discussion

The good performance of grammar schools is, of course, dependent on these schools selecting only those likely to do well in GCSE and other examinations. However, this version of 'good' performance by grammar schools in selective areas masks the *overall under-performance of the whole community of pupils educated within this system.* By concentrating on the high levels achieved in 'selective grammar schools', supporters of the system have attempted to distract attention from the unpalatable truth that this is at the expense of *poor overall performance*, and in particular amongst the majority of pupils who did not succeed in gaining entry to grammar school.

Now that we have both the data and the methods by which to explore the functioning of systems of educational provision as a whole, rather than concentrating on the results of individual schools, we can see how damaging the role of selection really is. *Selective education depresses the performance of whole communities, and this at a time when the emphasis is on doing everything possible to enhance the nation's educational performance.*

Conclusion – where do we go from here?

Whilst we have found clear evidence that selective school systems depress educational performance, it should not be supposed that all non-selective schools automatically do well by all their pupils. In a report published for the Technology Colleges Trust⁵ it was shown that there are very substantial differences in 'effectiveness' between different non-selective schools: some have high levels of value-added, some do not. What is clear from much of the work currently being undertaken to help disseminate good practice in secondary schools is that a sharp focus on high achievement for all must be an essential component of the school system of the future. This is the one essential ingredient of success for all.

To move towards this goal we need to avoid unnecessary divisions of pupils and their schools into selective and non-selective types, since this only appears to exacerbate lower performance. We need also to build on the example set by many of the newly designated (non-selective) specialist schools which have, over the past few years, shown significant and substantial improvements in performance along with highly significant value-added

assessments of their performance.

Grammar schools and secondary moderns have no place in this new world. The sooner we remove these artificial divisions and move towards genuinely high-performance secondary education for all, the more likely it is that we can achieve the high standards on which our continuing competitiveness in the modern world so strongly depends. ■

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Why one size does not fit all pupils

Abstract: *The growth in the number of specialist schools, outlined in both the recent Green and White Papers, is the most controversial part of the Government's programme for raising standards in secondary schools. Many fear that it will lead to a two-tier system. This article seeks to show that it will not; that specialist schools will strengthen the comprehensive system not weaken it.*

THE rapid growth in the number of specialist schools since they were first introduced in 1994 - there are now 700 out of the total 3200 eligible secondary schools - raises important questions on the value of diversity within the comprehensive school system. The Government's Green and White Papers propose increasing the number of specialist schools to 1,500 and even beyond by 2006 - nearly half of all secondary schools. Critics have complained that this will lead to a two-tier system of education, with schools that do not have specialist status being at a disadvantage.

This article seeks to persuade the reader that this view is mistaken.

1. Specialist schools are intended to strengthen the comprehensive school system, not to threaten it. All the 700 specialist schools, except for 30 grammar schools, are either comprehensive or secondary modern schools. They are a representative cross-section of all schools, with 65% of them being community schools whose admissions arrangements are controlled by their LEA. They are not performing better because they are an elite group but for a variety of reasons, including the actual process of seeking and retaining specialist school status. One third of their specialist funding is spent on partnerships with other schools.

Cyril Taylor

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2. Specialist schools, by introducing an element of choice and diversity without using academic selection, can add considerably to fairness.

The idea that all pupils should attend the school nearest to them can be unfair since in some cases the quality of the secondary school your child attends will depend on the value of surrounding houses. Unpalatable as it is, the truth is that a large number of successful schools as defined by the percentage of pupils securing 5 A* to C grades at GCSE are located in the leafy suburbs or wealthier sections of our cities. The TC Trust believes that all pupils are entitled to attend a decent school wherever they live and creating more specialist schools is a way to help, not hinder, this.

3. The introduction of specialist schools has led to an improvement of results in secondary schools

as defined by a number of measurements, including the percentage passing GCSE with 5 A* to C grades (53% for specialist schools compared to 43% for other comprehensive schools), the average point count at A-level (16.5% for specialist schools compared to 15.52% for other comprehensive schools) and the value added of specialist schools (+5.4% for specialist schools versus minus 1.1% for other schools) comparing actual results with predicted results. (All figures based on 2000 outcomes).

4. The expansion in the number of specialist schools to 1,500 will not lead to a two-tier system.

The implication that any school which does not seek specialist school status will somehow be a “bog standard” comprehensive is completely unjustified. Use of the term was in any case entirely misplaced. The Prime Minister has promised that over time there will be sufficient funding for all schools wishing to apply for specialist status. There may be, however, many very fine existing comprehensive schools which will not wish to apply for specialist designation. It is our belief that there will be many good schools involved in other initiatives such as beacon schools, Excellence in Cities or Education Action Zones, which will prefer to concentrate on these programmes.

Before discussing in detail each of the above points it may be helpful to remind readers how the specialist schools’ initiative works.

Application process

The decision to apply for specialist status is entirely voluntary and is made after wide consultation with the staff, parents, governors and the local education authority. Schools must raise £50,000 of sponsorship from either businesses, philanthropists or foundations. The schools located in more disadvantaged areas (about 40% of our schools are in these areas) where fund-

raising is difficult, are helped by central fundraising done by the Technology Colleges Trust.

Once sponsorship has been secured, schools submit a detailed application to the Department for Education and Skills. They receive help in doing this from the TC Trust. The application must show (a) how the school will raise its overall standards of achievement, (b) which specialism it is seeking and how the school will raise performance in that subject and (c) how they will support both feeder primary schools and at least one partner non-specialist secondary school

There are two bidding rounds each year – one in October and one in March. Typically, about half of bids are successful and some schools may bid three or four times before success. Bids are evaluated rigorously on a completely independent objective basis by a team of former HMI or OFSTED inspectors. There are now no restrictions or caps on bidding whatsoever and schools may bid for whatever specialism appeals to them the most.

Number of specialisms and requirement to teach the National Curriculum

A common misunderstanding of specialist schools is that they do not teach the National Curriculum and that it is too soon to start specialist studies at age 11. This is incorrect. All specialist schools must teach all the subjects of the National Curriculum but they give particular attention to their chosen specialisms. Some of our schools do have a longer school day in order to do this. Schools may bid for Technology College status (which specialises in Mathematics, Science and Design Technology), Performing Arts (and Graphic or Media Arts), Languages or Sports. Three new specialisms are proposed for next year in Business and Enterprise, Engineering and Science. Frequently, the greater emphasis on the specialist subjects takes place at age 14 rather than upon entry at age 11.

Financial arrangements

If successful, the new specialist school receives a £100,000 capital grant from the Government to double match the £50,000 sponsorship. This capital grant is typically used to pay for information technology infrastructure, science laboratories or other facilities to support their specialism. In addition, each specialist school receives an annual top-up recurrent grant of £123 per pupil equivalent, for a 1,000-pupil school, to £123,000 a year. One third of this extra funding must be spent on supporting their partner schools. It should be noted that this extra funding, although important, is only equivalent to 3-4% of a typical school's overall funding.

Moreover, it is important to bear in mind that in comparison with the wide variation in the per capita funding for all schools, which varies from as much

as £4,000 per pupil in some areas to as low as £1,800 per pupil in other areas, the additional specialist funding of £123 per pupil is modest.

Rebidding

Each specialist school is only designated for an initial period of four years and must rebid for redesignation (by submitting a new development plan) at the end of each four-year period. Typically, around 5% of those schools applying each year have failed to secure redesignation each year.

Let us now return to the four points of principle introduced at the start of this article:

Specialist schools are intended to strengthen the comprehensive school system, rather than threaten it

It is crucial to note that 65% of the current specialist schools are community schools whose admissions are handled by their local education authority. The remaining 35% are either foundation or voluntary-aided schools who handle their own admissions. However, overall only 7% of all existing specialist schools use the provision to choose up to 10% of their pupils on the basis of aptitude for their specialist subject.

Specialist schools admit pupils with a wide range of ability and do not select on the basis of academic ability. This is proven by the research by Professor David Jesson of York University¹ who examined the average key stage 2 points per pupil for specialist schools in 1995 (data for only some two thirds of schools was available) and in 1996 and 1997 when almost complete data was available. This data shows that the specialist schools admit pupils with almost the same levels of attainment as other comprehensive schools.

Table 1 Average Key Stage 2 points per pupil

	<i>Specialist schools</i>	<i>Other comprehensives</i>
1995	24.9	24.4
1996	25.4	25.1
1997	25.9	25.4

The above data clearly shows that specialist schools do not form part of a dark plot to bring in selection by the back door. Perhaps even more telling is the latest OFSTED free school meal eligibility data for all the 700 specialist schools (including 30 grammar schools) which now averages 17.4% compared to 16.5% for all pupils (including post-16 pupils) in all maintained schools (including grammar schools).

If specialist schools do not select on the basis of academic ability, why do they perform so well? Our own view is that the very process of bidding

and rebidding both for initial and redesignation is a crucial reason for their success.

A recent paper by Tooley and Howes, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective Schools*² analysed in depth some 50 specialist schools. The authors identified seven techniques for improvement which seem to be present in all 50 schools:

1. A focus on creating a high achieving, high expectation ethos.
2. Strong leadership and management.
3. A focus on students learning through individual targets of achievement for each pupil.
4. The use of innovative learning techniques, including computer-based learning software to improve literacy and numeracy and broadband width access to the internet.
5. Continual measurement of student performance and emphasis on quality control.
6. Organisational structures to support the ethos of the school, with considerable delegation of authority to both individual teachers and department heads.
7. Strong links with parents and the development of community links.

There are of course many good non-specialist schools, which also use some of these techniques, but Tooley and Howes found that all the specialist schools researched *employ all of these techniques*.

Introducing choice and diversity without the use of academic selection will add to fairness

Most comprehensive schools were founded in the late Sixties and early Seventies as a reaction to the perceived unfairness of the 11+ examination. It was assumed that all pupils would attend their local comprehensive school. What this policy in the Sixties failed to foresee was the substantial unevenness by area in the increase of prosperity which took place in the Eighties and Nineties, with many communities failing to benefit from the overall increase in economic growth and prosperity. This has meant that there are now considerable pockets of poverty in England, especially in urban areas, where there are high levels of social deprivation and communities face enormous challenges.

Perhaps inevitably schools in these areas have ceased to be comprehensive in the diversity of their social intakes. Some of them now consistently perform poorly in public examinations. If your local school is indeed in this situation it is clearly unfair that your child must attend it just because it is the nearest school. That is why specialist schools, some of which use wide catchment areas and use their limited powers to choose pupils on the basis of aptitude, can actually help to alleviate this particular unfairness.

The introduction of large numbers of specialist schools has led to a sharp improvement in standards

Professor Jesson's detailed independent research using official DfES data for the entire cohort of 600,000 pupils in 2000 taking GCSEs³ shows that the comprehensive specialist schools in operation in that year achieved 53% 5 A* to C at GCSE compared to 43% for other comprehensive schools. At A-level, specialist schools achieved an average point count of 16.45 compared to 15.52 for other schools. Possibly even more important, for those specialist schools for which key stage 2 data was available in 1995 (about two thirds), their actual GCSE results of 54.7% in 2000 compared to predicted results of 49.3% – a value added of +5.4%. However, other comprehensive schools with key stage 2 data available achieved only 42.8% compared to predicted results of 43.9% and thus had a value added of -1.1%.

The expansion in the number of specialist schools to 1,500 will not lead to a two-tier system

We have already shown that the great majority of specialist schools are comprehensive schools which do not select pupils on the basis of academic ability. We have also demonstrated that the additional funding, although important, is comparatively small and is certainly much less than the very wide difference in per capita funding which exists throughout the country (from a low of £1,800 per pupil to a high of £4,000).

The fact that many specialist schools are so successful, of course, makes them popular with parents but the answer to this problem is to create more of them. The goal of 1,500 specialist schools by 2006 is challenging but one which the TC Trust is confident will be achieved. The Prime Minister has already indicated that additional funds will be made available if more schools than 1,500 wish to apply (and satisfy the bidding requirements). In conclusion, the TC Trust believes passionately that expanding the number of specialist schools, especially in inner city areas, will substantially help to improve the chances of every child in the country being able to attend a good school. ■

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Race Equality and Education Policy

Abstract: *How far does current education policy, and especially the 2001 Green Paper,¹ contribute to the Government's stated objectives of improving standards of racial justice and, in particular, raising the educational attainments of minority ethnic pupils? The author illustrates how Government educational initiatives will compound the inequalities and stereotyping which minority ethnic pupils experience, rather than the reverse. Recent GCSE statistics show that Pakistani and Bangladeshi pupils are falling even further behind their white peers, while the gap between black and white pupils in GCSE achievements is narrowing. This suggests that there is a lack of any consensus on the appropriate role of race equality in deciding targets.*

UNDER the first New Labour administration there were some welcome, and long overdue, improvements in the educational attainments of children of minority ethnic heritage. The publication of *The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry*² put 'institutional racism' on the news agenda but its consequences in education have not been clear. The response of the Department for Education and Employment (now the Department for Education and Skills) has been particularly disappointing. For example, Macpherson's first education recommendation called for changes in the National Curriculum. Although claiming to 'accept' this recommendation, the DfEE actually rejected the need to make any significant changes in the National Curriculum, pointing instead to existing opportunities in subjects such as history, geography, music, art and personal, social and health education.³ In other words, the Department claimed existing curricular practice, limited to a few subjects, was sufficient. Additionally, the Department trumpeted already-announced initiatives, especially around citizenship education and offered the assurance that "We will take close account of the views of the DfEE's Advisory Group on Raising Ethnic Minority Pupil Achievement." As far as I can ascertain, that group has subsequently been wound up.

David Gillborn

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One positive outcome of the rhetoric surrounding Macpherson has been to change the official stance on 'anti-racism'. Once derided as meaningless political correctness, the Government is now committed to anti-racism and, for example, the NUT is currently renewing its guidance on anti-racist education. This is welcome news, but we should not pretend that it would necessarily translate into genuine change without a great deal more work and struggle.

Labour's first term of office was especially significant for its focus on inclusion and social justice. Policy makers at last recognised the legitimacy of these issues and some important progress was made. The gap between black and white pupils in GCSE achievements, for example, has finally begun to narrow, though it remains unacceptably high and the number of black pupils permanently excluded from school has begun to fall, though the sudden absence of ethnic monitoring data in the latest official statistics is extremely worrying. We should also remember that the most recent GCSE statistics actually show Pakistani and Bangladeshi pupils falling even further behind their white peers.⁴ This somewhat confused picture reflects the lack of any consensus on the appropriate role of race equality when deciding educational targets. There is no firm guidance from Government and some local education authorities (LEAs) are actually pursuing targets that, if realised, will mean even greater race inequality in the future!⁵

Success for whom?

The Green Paper, *Schools*: Building on Success*,¹ is an impressive document that seems to address multiple audiences. Once we get past the spin, however, it is difficult not to start worrying that, beneath all the talk of 'diversity' and 'standards', lies a familiar programme that will not address the major inequalities that currently scar the state educational system. The fact is that, despite the occasional soundbite, most education policy still prefers to remain silent on race equality and this silence can generate even greater inequalities in practice. The Green Paper is a classic example of this kind of negligent policy making. It is heavy on rhetoric but full of ideas which, when tried in the past and subjected to proper research-based evaluation, have been found to ignore race equality or actually exacerbate it. In the following paragraphs I consider just a few examples to illustrate the problems.

More 'setting by ability' and the use of 'express sets' to allow some pupils to take their GCSEs a year early: research in this country and in the USA has conclusively shown that grouping pupils according to teachers' views of their likely academic future tends to produce bottom groups that are overwhelmingly made up of working class and black pupils. Even when black pupils have equal or better test scores than their white peers, it has been known for teachers to place minority pupils in lower groups because they have a lower opinion of their motivation and behaviour.⁶ These actions reflect deeply ingrained

assumptions about ‘ability’ and who does/does not possess it. Teachers are in an especially important position because, like the police, their assumptions can lead, often unintentionally, to young people being denied equal treatment. The situation is made even worse by the use of organisational mechanisms, such as setting and GCSE tiering, that separate children and enforce systematic inequalities in curricular coverage and examination opportunities⁷.

More support for ‘gifted and talented’ pupils, including the establishment of a National Centre for Gifted & Talented Youth: many schemes to identify ‘gifted’ children have been shown to disadvantage minority ethnic pupils, especially black young people and their peers for whom English is an Additional Language (EAL). There is no public data on the ethnic composition of current ‘gifted and talented’ schemes in England, but experience in the USA suggests that it is highly unlikely that an equal proportion of black and bilingual pupils will benefit from the additional resources that such schemes enjoy.⁸ It is especially worrying, for example, that in the wake of the disturbances in Bradford in the summer of 2001, there has been a renewed assumption that bilingualism is a problem (a deficit) rather than a positive resource that can encourage even greater attainment.

The Bradford race review, chaired by Sir Herman Ouseley, noted a range of concerns expressed by various communities and professionals, including the view that:

“Non-English speaking homes prevent parental help being given with homework or prevent parental participation in schools.”⁹

The report offers no detailed consideration of this view and it is certain that some have taken it at face value, to denote a simple equation, as if Bangladeshi and Pakistani unemployment and educational under-achievement are a direct result of lower levels of English language use. A Labour MP, Ann Cryer, even called for changes in the immigration rules, arguing that non-English speakers could be barred from entry:

“the Bangladeshi and the Pakistani communities are Muslims and they happen to be the people who persist in the practice of bringing in husbands and wives from the subcontinent. The Sikhs and the Hindus are doing extremely well, both academically and economically, and I think that is due to the fact they don’t pursue this practice.”¹⁰

It is certainly true that Indian pupils do better, on average, than their white peers in GCSE examinations, while Pakistani and Bangladeshi pupils tend to

attain lower average results. Although some academics have argued that this reflects social class factors, especially the relatively more prosperous profile of Indian households and the widespread poverty experienced by Bangladeshis, language differences continue to be a popular explanation for many observers. Yet the evidence does not support such a link: roughly the same proportion of Indian and Pakistanis (around a third) speak to younger family members in English.¹¹ Even where community languages are used at home, the assumption that bilingual pupils cannot move between different languages does them a grave injustice.

The creation of new pathways for 14-19 year olds: the Green Paper proposes that 14-year-olds embark on “new pathways” that are “tailored to each person’s aptitudes, abilities and preferences”. Although the document claims that pupils will be able to “mix and match”, it is also clear that some pupils will be marked out for high status academic GCSEs while others will move into lower-status vocational and work-based programmes. Some form of selection like this has been present in secondary schools for decades. Research on the ‘options’ process, as it is often known, has shown that, although schools may present 13 and 14-year-olds with an apparent ‘choice’ of subjects, in reality there is a great deal of pressure on pupils to follow the courses that the schools think are ‘appropriate’. Again, research suggests that this results in a greater proportion of black, Pakistani and Bangladeshi pupils studying low status courses that severely limit their post-16 opportunities for advanced study and access to professional occupations.

These are just some of the dangers in the new proposals. Add to these the commitment to increase the number of specialist and beacon schools, with greater powers to select and reject pupils, and the Green Paper is exposed as a set of proposals that apparently have been designed in the absence of any serious consideration of race equality. Worse still, the subsequent inequalities of attainment may be presented as the ‘natural’ consequence of differences in ‘ability’ or ‘aptitude’. In this way, the Green Paper reinforces a simplistic and wholly misleading notion of ‘ability’ as some kind of simple, obvious trait that you either have or you don’t have. Decades of research showing the racist and class-biased nature of these forms of selection has been wished away in the pursuit of easy headlines and macho posturing between political parties vying to appear the toughest on ‘standards’.

Where next?

To this point I have argued that the Green Paper will do nothing to improve race equality in education - indeed, its policies might worsen the current situation. However, policies arising from the Green Paper are not the only changes facing the education system: we will also be subject to policies relating

to the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000¹² – a law, arising from the Lawrence Inquiry, that attempts to force public institutions to give real consideration to race equality.

The new Act is a landmark piece of legislation and will genuinely change the kinds of data-collection and accountability required of some public bodies. For example, schools, LEAs and universities will be required to produce detailed statistics and write dedicated race equality policies. If their data suggest that one or more minority groups are not being treated fairly, the institution will have to develop a plan to reduce the inequality and monitor its effectiveness. This is a bold move that will force many institutions to seriously consider race equality for the first time in their history. Unfortunately, it is a move that does not include some of the most powerful educational bodies; precisely the bodies that schools, LEAs and universities are subject to. The Government's consultation document speaks of "proportionality":

"Public authorities will be expected to give appropriate weight to the promotion of race equality when performing their functions. This recognises the fact that the extent to which individual public functions will lend themselves to a proactive approach will vary considerably. For example, health and education service delivery at one end of the spectrum compared to air traffic control at the other."¹³

It would seem, therefore, that education, along with health, is positioned as one of the services with the greatest need to address race equality; strange, then, that key education agencies are excused any specific duties, such as those required of schools and universities. In the main text of the document, these bodies are described as "ranging from astronomy research to the management of nuclear liabilities" who are excused specific duties "in the interests of proportionality, and the need to target resources where they are most needed".¹³ It is only in part 3 of the sixth appendix, that the reader sees the list including the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority and the Teacher Training Agency. It seems, therefore, that in the interests of proportionality the bodies responsible for the curricula of schools and university teacher education departments, not to mention the examination and testing systems, have been excused any specific duties. Schools and universities facing calls for changes in their outcomes might feel these are odd exemptions. Unfortunately,

The fact is that, despite the occasional soundbite, most education policy still prefers to remain silent on race equality and this silence can generate even greater inequalities in practice.

these proposals repeat a common pattern in race equality policy, i.e. ignoring the most powerful agencies and laying blame on those at the sharp end.

Education is one of the few public agencies with an established history of anti-racist work. There is good practice and there have been some important victories. To date, however, these advances have tended to occur despite, rather than because of, national education policy. The Green Paper offers no reason to believe that this will change in the near future. ■

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Government not achieving success

Abstract: *The author presents a critique of the Government's policy on secondary education in the wake of the Green and White Papers. There have been some changes between the two, with the overtly anti-comprehensive language dropped. The thrust has moved in some aspects, particularly on the involvement of the private sector. The Government remains intractable on the question of specialist schools, thus exacerbating the tiered system at secondary level. The different approach in Wales is applauded for its emphasis on partnership with the teaching profession.*

IT SEEMS that every New Labour Government administration must start with an education White Paper. Unlike 1997's White Paper, the latest – *Schools Achieving Success*¹ – is the product of much revision and soul-searching by the Government. The mantra is 'autonomy and diversity'. On the publication of the earlier Green Paper, *Schools*: Building on Success*², just such an approach encouraged the Prime Minister's Press Secretary, Alastair Campbell, to deride secondary schools as "bog standard". Although the then Secretary of State for Education and Employment, David Blunkett, protested, "bog standard" has provided a useful background echo for the Prime Minister in the reforms he and his Government are now promoting in the White Paper.

Yet there are differences between the Green Paper and the new White Paper. The explicit criticisms of comprehensive education have gone, although the Government's original recipe for structural reform of secondary schools remains.

Extending privatisation

The NUT's campaign through the TUC has pushed back the insistence by the Prime Minister's advisers on an extension of wide-scale privatisation. There are signs that Estelle Morris, the new Secretary of State for Education and Skills, rejected some of Number 10's wilder proposals. At first sight, gone are the proposals floated by Government in July that private companies should

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be given a majority share of school governing bodies and that departments and secondary schools could be privatised.

That is not to say that the Government's privatisation agenda has gone away. There is, for example, in paragraph 5.27 of the White Paper, the phrase, "We

will not stand in the way of any arrangements which will raise standards for pupils". The Secretary of State herself has made it known to the NUT that she could envisage that the '3 Es' model of private management of schools, piloted at King's College in Surrey, could be used in other local authorities.

The Government has moved from a two-tier system, as envisaged in the Green Paper, to what might be called 'a 3 x 3 tier system' involving 'moving towards' specialist status, specialist status itself, and advanced specialist status.

Indeed, the thrust has moved in some aspects from Government promotion of companies taking over the management of schools to providing a more benign environment for 'bottom-up' initiatives such as those promoted by Surrey County Council.

It is a shift which has become subtler and less strident. Nevertheless, there are proposals to open up the provision of new schools to competition, including LEA, voluntary and private providers. The Government, however, has given LEAs responsibility for deciding which partner, if any, should be involved in helping to turn around schools deemed to be 'failing', although the Secretary of State will have a reserve power to require a partner to be involved.

In fact, the White Paper demonstrates that the Government simply doesn't know what it wants out of privatisation. Bizarrely, paragraph 6.5 inverts logic by arguing that because a smaller number of schools are going into special measures, the opportunity should be taken "to extend further the armoury of measures for tackling failure". Such an approach is indicative of the Government's romantic attachment to privatisation, which carries with it little understanding of the dangers of setting up long-term contracts with private companies for Private Finance Initiatives and services core to teaching and children's learning. While the Prime Minister recently proposed the idea of 'not for profit schools', the White Paper fails to provide any such reassurance.

A tiered system

The change in tone and deepening confusion on privatisation is accompanied by the Government digging a deeper hole for itself by its emphasis on spreading specialist school status. The Government has moved from a two-

tier system, as envisaged in the Green Paper, to what might be called 'a 3 x 3 tier system' involving 'moving towards' specialist status, specialist status itself, and advanced specialist status. The same formula applies to the establishment of training and beacon schools. Accompanying this is a remarkable proposal, "to enable successful and popular schools to expand more easily".

As the NUT said in its response to the Green Paper, this tiered approach will advantage one set of schools over others by preferential funding and admissions. The reality will be that parents may find that diversity means increased competition to find places in schools influenced by the preferential designations outlined in the White Paper. Such approaches also demonstrate the brevity of the DfES's historical memory. In 1996, the Audit Commission published *Trading Places*,³ an analysis of the supply and allocation of school places. Its main conclusion was that the then Government's emphasis on 'choice' and 'diversity' was leading to the risk that the school planning system was becoming gridlocked. Then, the Government's policy of encouraging successful schools to expand (principally, grant-maintained schools) clashed with LEAs' continuing responsibilities for planning the supply of school places. This led to, in the words of the Audit Commission, "tensions and conflict between policies".

Five years later, the Government seeks "to enable successful and popular schools to expand more easily with statutory guidance to school organisation committees to favour this approach".

It is, in fact, a characteristic of the White Paper that uncomfortable consequences of the policies proposed in the earlier Green Paper, such as those arising from encouraging an expansion in faith schools and driving through the tiered system of secondary schools, are simply brushed aside by wishful thinking. In the case of specialist schools, the White Paper contents itself by denying that "there can be no question of a two-tier system for tomorrow", with the apparent expectation that because it says there will be no such system it will not happen. In the case of the expansion of faith schools, it seeks to allay fears by placing the word 'inclusive' in front of faith schools.

Indeed, it is remarkable that both the previous Conservative government and the current Labour government should adopt fundamental principles for the organisation of the secondary school system, which are so similar. In the case of the Conservative Government, it was 'choice and diversity'. With the new government, it is 'autonomy and diversity'. The newer set of principles apparently draw from the earlier, unsuccessful set.

The Welsh approach

In contrast, *The Learning Country*,⁴ the National Assembly's White Paper, published at the same time, abruptly dismisses the Government's agenda and concentrates on supporting schools. The National Assembly's Minister

for Education, Jane Davidson, makes it clear that the White Paper for Wales, “steers away from a basic reliance on centrally-driven, competitively inspired and community-damaging approaches” and rejects privatisation and specialist schools.

Instead, it proposes the reduction of junior school (key stage 2) class sizes by autumn 2003, drops the key stage 1 tests, encourages the development of families and consortia of schools and promotes the idea of a Welsh Baccalaureate. Revealingly, the Welsh White Paper opts for principles that are a long way from ‘autonomy and choice’. Instead, the “professional judgement of teachers, lecturers and trainers”, “partnership” and “evidence-based policies” are at the heart of the Welsh approach.

Support for teachers

When the Westminster government’s White Paper steps back from its obsession with structures, there are some positive aspects. The Government is moving towards understanding that teachers need much better support in tackling unacceptable pupil behaviour. A chapter is devoted to valuing and supporting teachers in schools which, despite its timidity, demonstrates a realisation that unless excessive workload which teachers experience is tackled, the chronic teacher shortage crisis experienced by schools will continue. In addition, the Government is beginning to emphasise the importance of schools sharing staff and building on strengths of schools working together.

There are other proposals, however, over which there are big question marks. For example, schools “will be able to determine school governing body arrangements”. “Successful schools” would also have “greater discretion over pay matters”. Value-added key stage 3 school performance tables will be introduced and, according to the Government, “It is questionable to suggest that a full-time teacher is the only option for filling a vacancy.”

In 1997, the first Labour government proclaimed that it would concentrate on standards, not structures. Since then, it has moved increasingly into the area of structures, involving itself in a whole set of piecemeal initiatives which have created both dissent and anxiety.

While remaining controversial with some teachers, the Government’s literacy and numeracy strategies have at least engendered a debate on the nature of teaching and learning and a discourse on the learning needs of teachers.

In contrast, the recent report, *Classroom Assistance – Why Teachers Must Transform Teaching*,⁵ commissioned by the NUT, highlights the issues on which the White Paper should have concentrated. The Demos research, while finding that teachers were totally committed to the success of their pupils, warned that the profession could become unsustainable. Its proposals address the needs of teachers in the classroom.

It calls for a reduction in unnecessary teacher workload as the first priority of education reform. It urges that OFSTED inspections should be reshaped to include a higher degree of self-evaluation. It urges also that teachers should have a more explicitly defined entitlement to learning opportunities and resources to fund them and that, crucially, teacher organisations, such as the NUT, should provide professional development opportunities and be able to advise on minimum standards and definitions of excellence in professional development. In short, its proposals concentrate on restoring to teachers a constructive role in helping to shape change, rather than envisaging a continuation of the Government's "never-ending barrage of externally imposed, randomly timed and badly managed initiatives".

The greatest problem with the White Paper is that it fails to tackle the root causes of the teacher shortage crisis: excessive workload, low levels of pay and constant upheaval over which teachers have little control. One step the Government could have taken in the White Paper was one that established an independent inquiry into teachers' pay and conditions similar to that agreed in Scotland. Such a step, involving a commitment by Government to shape the inquiry around the importance of restoring teachers' motivation and morale, would have been genuinely visionary.

All teachers are committed to helping children and young people learn to the best of their abilities and, indeed, there are good things in the White Paper which contribute towards that goal. Until the Government concentrates on enhancing the job of teaching and teaching morale, however, the barrage of criticisms it has been subject to will not go away. ■

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Do We Really Want More Faith Schools?

Frank Harris

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Abstract: *The Government proposes more faith schools and plans to hand over the management and control of some existing non-church schools to the faith communities who will benefit from additional resources. However, the present church secondary schools already generate a selective process in many areas. The author argues that by increasing the number of church school places, the intake of other local schools will be distorted and their viability put at risk. The law in England and Wales recognises that the religious tradition is mainly Christian, but acknowledges the presence of other main religions which the Government believes should also have state funded schools. The author asks whether we in danger of creating ghetto schools.*

ONE of the more controversial ideas canvassed by the Government in its Green Paper on education¹ is the creation of more faith schools. It points out that some 560 secondary schools are now provided by the Church of England or the Catholic Church and, for the first time, Muslim, Sikh and Greek Orthodox schools have been brought inside the state system and are being funded on the same basis as the Church of England and the Catholic schools. The Government has also increased the number of Jewish schools and has indicated that it is ready to discuss with other community- or privately-run schools the conditions on which they might enter the publicly provided sector of education.

The Government says that it is pleased that the group set up by the Church of England under Lord Dearing's chairmanship,² has recommended that the Church should increase the number of secondary schools that it supports by 100 over the next seven to eight years, particularly in areas where there are few or no Church of England schools. However, this view has to be challenged.

Effects of selective admissions policies

Dearing's group argues that a recent survey of some 80 Church of England secondary schools showed that for every 100 places there were 160 applications and that, therefore, there was a need either to expand existing schools or to provide additional church secondary schools. The existence of the present number of church schools, however, already creates a selective process in many areas where there are already enough secondary school places available and the parents do not necessarily have any church affiliations. If we offer more faith schools, are we not simply offering parents, in a different guise, more chances of selection?

There is already much anecdotal evidence of the lengths to which parents will go to get their child into a church school; doggedly attending Sunday services for weeks and months, insisting on their children's baptism or even sometimes becoming baptised themselves. Will this kind of desperate practice cease if there are more of these schools? Simply increasing the number of church school places will distort the intake of other local schools and even put their viability at risk because of the consequent falling rolls problem.

Challenges facing faith schools

If the Government proposes to hand over the management and control of other existing schools to the faith communities and to give them additional resources, one has to ask why? The Green Paper suggests part of the answer in paragraph 4.23 by including a proposal to develop a new model, which would enable an external private or voluntary sector sponsor to take responsibility for a weak or failing school.

Yet it continues to be important to keep a balance in the provision of schools and to make sure that the support from the state is adequate and fair for all schools. To give preference to church schools is likely to aggravate rather than to solve the problem. Already, Dearing's report acknowledges that there is a problem in finding sufficient committed Christians to run church schools and it is admitted in section 6.2 that

“unless the Church can act successfully to find the teachers needed for the schools it already has, and for the increased provision recommended in our report, nothing will be achieved. Without an effective programme of action, a lack of Christian teachers could set everything at naught.”

The Bishop of Blackburn, the Rt. Revd Alan Chesters, who is chairman of the Church of England Board of Education, is reported in *The Church Times*³ as criticising schools that underplay their Christian foundations. He told his diocesan synod in June 2001 that political correctness was to blame for the reluctance of some church schools to acknowledge their Christian nature.

“That is confusing to outsiders, indeed some may say, dishonest,” he said, “we have to find a better way of dealing with that.” He went on to say that most church schools were recognisably Christian, but that he was concerned about the “tiny minority that are following a nineteen seventies agenda”. He said that many of these had pupils from other faiths and thought they were doing the right thing. “What they fail to recognise is that those of other faiths want schools where God is honoured.” He emphasised that his criticism was aimed at heads and governors, rather than classroom teachers. “Where they are failing in their responsibilities, they have to be tackled,” he said.

Religious education in schools

In this context it is important to remember that every state school is required to provide religious education in accordance with an agreed syllabus drawn up by a Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE). It must also hold a daily collective act of worship for its pupils. Much of this is of a high standard, according to OFSTED, the independent inspecting authority. Indeed, there are many committed Christian teachers working in non-church schools and they exert a valuable influence on those schools. Since 1988, the law in England and Wales⁴ has recognised that the religious tradition is mainly Christian but that it is appropriate to acknowledge the other main religious traditions now present in the country. Indeed, in Bradford there has been, for some years, a successful multi-faith centre established by all the religious traditions working together and this is well used by local schools.

We do not actually need more faith schools in order to produce youngsters who are aware of the main religious and moral values that are important to our society. Yet the Government says it knows that other faith communities are also interested in extending their contribution to education and that it intends to change the funding arrangements to make this more possible. We are in danger of creating ghetto schools as a result of this major change in policy.

Admissions arrangements

Oldham has highlighted the problems that can arise when admission policies result in racial segregation. A report in *The Times Educational Supplement*⁵ in June 2001 stated that:

“the Blue Coat School and Crompton House, both of which are heavily oversubscribed, give priority to the children of practising Anglicans. The policy leaves few places for Muslims, who are almost all of Asian origin. The Blue Coat School is in central Oldham, where many Muslims live; Crompton House is in the largely white village of Shaw.”

Phil Willis, the Liberal Democrat M.P. for Harrogate and its education

spokesperson, has warned against creating too many single-faith schools and said “we don’t want another tier of safe havens for middle-class parents.” He went on to say that “the recent scenes in Oldham have demonstrated the importance of bringing understanding between different faiths and communities. Schools should play a key role in this and Government money for all state-funded schools should be conditional on access for all faiths.”³

Funding for faith schools

The financial problem for the Church is not a simple one either. Dearing has called for the creation of an appeal fund of £25 million to support his proposed expansion programme. The Government has said that it will reduce the contribution paid by the governors and promoters of voluntary-aided schools towards the capital costs of a new school from 15% to 10%. Nevertheless, as the Dearing report points out, the contribution for a new church voluntary-aided school could be in the range of £1.25 million to £1.8 million.

Existing church schools cry out for additional funds to meet their ever-increasing costs of repairs and improvements. A Church of England school where I served on the governing body in the city of York made repeated attempts over a number of years to finance the building of a badly needed sports hall with facilities for disabled users, but it was unable to raise the necessary funds. Hard stretched parishes struggle to meet these demands alongside the ever-increasing charges levied on them by the dioceses to meet the high costs of clergy salaries and pensions, which are no longer borne centrally.

Multi-faith collaboration

Where voluntary-aided church schools already exist, there is a strong case for them becoming ecumenical with a joint trust deed and joint governing body. Such a school was established 16 years ago in the City of Oxford when both the Catholics and the Church of England were having difficulty in keeping their secondary provision viable. St. Augustine’s was approved as a new school by the then Secretary of State and it has been an inclusive school, welcoming students who are not members of either faith. The experiment has now come to an end, with a decision by the Catholic archdiocese to withdraw its support for the joint venture and to establish its own school. The arguments over the past year have been long and complex but all attempts to find a compromise have sadly failed.

However, other attempts have succeeded elsewhere and in Harrogate the

... in this new millennium, can we prepare children, in a world of many faiths and many cultures, to accept people who are different from themselves?

local highly successful St. Aidan's Church of England High School has formed a joint sixth form with the neighbouring St. John Fisher Roman Catholic High School. This has brought about a sensible sharing of resources, particularly in music technology, with more than 120 pupils taking music at GCSE and A-level using a state-of-the-art studio. To support their studies, their chamber choir regularly sings for the daily service on BBC Radio 4. Students often play for services at local churches, regardless of denomination, as a service to the community.

There should be more opportunities for existing faith schools to work together and, indeed, with other local community schools. Schools cannot and should not work in isolation and the question we should be considering at this time is how, in this new millennium, can we prepare children, in a world of many faiths and many cultures, to accept people who are different from themselves so that they are able to make friendships across boundaries of colour and creed in an easy way?

The future

Will more Church of England or Catholic schools, more Jewish, Sikh and Islamic schools, achieve these ends or will they be divisive? What will happen to the majority of schools where no particular faith is taught? Will they be seen as less desirable? It is a question that must not be ignored.

No one condemns the lively, happy and high achieving communities that many of the faith schools have become; their standards and results are to be applauded. Yet is it right, in 2001, to expand their numbers and to expect the state to fund them? Surely we should be looking to see how we can enrich and develop all our ordinary state schools and ensure that they are the humane and generous places we would wish for all our young people. Do we really need more faith schools to achieve this?

I hope Estelle Morris will think again before she pursues a policy which could well be counter-productive and which we may regret in the future. ■

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Modernisation spells destruction

Abstract: *This article challenges the New Labour assumption that comprehensive education has failed and questions the claim that promoting diversity is synonymous with raising standards and achieving results. The author reviews the research into the relative performance of selective and comprehensive systems. He charts the development of specialist schools from the challenge John Patten made in 1992, with the publication of his White Paper Choice and Diversity. Selection, choice and diversity are now three of the main themes running through New Labour education policy. The growing number of specialist schools of all kinds exemplify this policy.*

SADLY, it has become fashionable, among both New Labour and Conservative politicians (and their advisers), to attack the comprehensive school as being chiefly responsible for what is seen as a culture of “under-performance” permeating the secondary sector in our education system.

The Prime Minister’s own hostile attitude towards the comprehensive principle became abundantly clear with his marked failure to distance himself from the extraordinary and insulting reference made by his official spokesperson, Alastair Campbell, to the day of “the bog-standard comprehensive” being over at the time when the Green Paper, *Schools*: Building on Success: Raising Standards, Promoting Diversity, Achieving Results*¹ was being launched on 12 February 2001.

Indeed, by claiming that the Green Paper was actually ushering in “a post-comprehensive era”, Tony Blair was giving welcome ammunition to all the enemies of the comprehensive system, provoking headlines in the right-wing press like *Comprehensives have failed*² and *Death of the Comprehensive*.³ Yet where is the evidence that the development of non-selective education over the past 35 years has been anything other than a success story for the majority of school students, or, indeed, that “promoting diversity” is synonymous with “raising standards” and “achieving results”?

Clyde Chitty

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The comprehensive success story

Bearing in mind that comprehensive schools now educate over 80 per cent of the nation's secondary-age students (and this figure takes account of the eight per cent of students educated in independent schools), it is surely worth recording the year-on-year improvement in examination performance and staying-on rates that has been achieved since the 1960s - not forgetting, of course, that such statistics are themselves narrow and unsatisfactory criteria for measuring educational success.

Both Conservative and New Labour Governments have been very keen to stress that all secondary schools should be judged by the percentage of their year 11 students who gain five or more GCSE passes at Grades A* to C. So, whatever reservations one might have about the increasing obsession with the five A* to C benchmark, it seems fair to emphasise that there has in fact been a spectacular increase in the proportion of entries achieving these "top" grades or their equivalent ever since comprehensive reorganisation first became a viable option for a large number of local education authorities. In 1962/63, the

It is surely true that a third of the age group participating in higher education is an objective that would have seemed impossibly ambitious just a generation ago.

proportion was just 16 per cent; this had already risen to 41 per cent by 1993.

Since the inception of GCSE performance tables, there has been a steady year-on-year increase in the percentage of year 11 students attaining five or more of the higher grades: 42 per cent in 1994, 43.5 in 1995, 44.5 in 1996, 45.1 in 1997, 46.3 in 1998, 47.9 in 1999 and 49.2 in 2000.⁴ In 1970, 47 per cent of students left secondary school with no qualifications whatsoever; by the year 2000, that figure had been reduced to 5.4 per cent.

As far as GCE Advanced Levels are concerned (again a narrow criterion of 'success'), the percentage of 18-year-olds passing in at least two subjects has risen over the past 20 years from 14 to 28 per cent and the pass rate has grown during the same period from under 70 to well over 80 per cent. As John Dunford, general secretary of the Secondary Heads Association, has pointed out,⁵ despite the impression created by "the ritualistic annual denunciations of a minority of academics and politicians", there is, in fact, "no evidence that the standards of Advanced Level examinations have fallen".

Numbers in all forms of higher education have increased from around eight per cent of the relevant age group in the early 1960s to just over 32 per cent today,⁶ showing that a sector largely comprising comprehensive schools has successfully met the challenge of providing colleges and universities with a

suitable number of well-qualified entrants. It is surely true that a third of the age group participating in higher education is an objective that would have seemed impossibly ambitious just a generation ago. Comprehensive schools must be doing something right!

Impact on attainment

Admittedly, there has been some dispute recently as to the progress made by so-called “academically able” students in Britain’s comprehensive schools. Some of this has centred on the validity of David Jesson’s claim that “brighter pupils do better at comprehensives” which was apparently the conclusion of research carried out in the late 1990s and then reported in *The Times* on 2 November 1999.⁷

At the same time, the DfEE’s own statistical comparison of the GCSE and GNVQ results of all grammar-school students with those of the ‘top’ 25 per cent (that is to say of ‘grammar-school ability’) in comprehensive schools appeared to indicate that the comprehensive schools had done slightly better overall.⁸ But it would have to be conceded that the evidence is not totally convincing or conclusive.

That said, the conclusions from other work have stood the test of time. From substantial research on the effects of comprehensive reorganisation in Scotland, Andrew McPherson and J. Douglas Willms concluded at the end of the 1980s that:

“since the mid-1970s, the reorganisation that was initiated in 1965 has contributed both to a rise in examination attainment and to a fall in the effect on attainment of social class. We call these two trends respectively ‘improvement’ and ‘equalisation’.”⁹

In addition, a meticulous review of the impact of comprehensive reorganisation in Britain led Howard Glennerster and William Low to conclude in 1990 that:

“the main and really major improvements in examination performance were achieved by the ‘average-ability’ students, and they were achieved mostly in the comprehensive schools . . . It is a tribute to the state school that they produced both more qualified leavers and the structural changes that politicians were demanding.”¹⁰

Selective schools

Caroline Benn and I reached a similar conclusion after carrying out our own large-scale survey of comprehensive education in 1994 for our book, *Thirty Years On*,¹¹ first published in 1996. After looking at all the work, which

compared the effectiveness of comprehensive and selective secondary school systems, we concluded that so-called 'bright' students did as well – and those labelled "average" or below did much better – in areas which had abolished selection.

This, then, is the context of "success" within which the Government's new "modernising" agenda has to be evaluated. Yet it is not a story of *unqualified* success, largely on account of the very selection and diversity within the secondary system which New Labour now seems determined to see promoted and accelerated.

It is true that of the 1424 comprehensive schools participating in the research that Caroline Benn and I carried out in the academic year 1993/94, only 14 per cent were "creamed" by one or more neighbouring grammar schools. This can be compared with the situation at the time of an earlier large - scale survey carried out by Caroline Benn and Brian Simon in 1968,¹² when the figure was over 50 per cent.

Yet we argued in our 1996 report¹¹ that there was no cause for complacency. Although New Labour still likes to claim that grammar school selection is peripheral to the main agenda of raising standards, the reality is, in fact, very different. Our research found that where grammar schools survived in an area (and there were still 164 selective schools in England at the beginning of the 1990s), the comprehensives whose intakes were affected had much less chance of being genuinely comprehensive, of achieving well in terms of the league table markers, and that students within such "creamed" schools tended to abandon full-time education earlier.

To be more precise, our figures showed that where grammar schools were still present in an area, the percentage of those students in the neighbouring comprehensives falling in the "top" 20 per cent of the attainment range was 12 compared with 24 for those comprehensives facing no competition from selective institutions. For those students moving on from 11-16 schools to some form of post-16 education and training, the percentage was 57 as against 69; for those staying on in 11-18 schools, 49 as against 60; and for those gaining five or more GCSE passes at Grades A* to C, 29 as against 48. The A-level point score averages were 10.6 and 13.4 respectively.

The DfEE, now DfES (Department for Education and Skills) has traditionally been dishonest and misleading in its presentation of the selective schools issue. It recently recorded 141,387 students as attending grammar schools in England, with only 108,305 being educated in secondary modern schools, although the traditional ratio would be one to three or four.¹³ There are grammar schools in 36 English LEAs and 15 of these have around 20 per cent of their secondary age students in selective institutions. It seems obvious that in the vast majority of these local authorities, some or all of the "other" schools officially designated as "comprehensive" will, in fact, be

secondary modern schools.

According to Margaret Tulloch, a prominent member of the national executive of the Campaign for State Education, speaking at a conference with the theme, Promoting Comprehensive Education in the 21st Century, held in London in February 2001:

“The Government is wrong to claim that selection affects only a small area and a small number of children and is therefore peripheral to the main agenda. There may be only 164 grammar schools in England, but if you add to that the number of secondary moderns notionally created, it means that nearly 20 per cent out of about three and a half thousand English secondary schools are directly affected by selection to grammar schools.”¹⁴

Yet vital though the grammar school question remains, Caroline Benn and I were especially alarmed by all the other forms of secondary selection, both “overt” and “hidden”, that were so evident in 1994. These were all the selective mechanisms associated with parental choice, open enrolment and admissions to grant-maintained schools, City Technology Colleges and schools with a religious bias. It was also in the mid-1990s that the Major Government was encouraging comprehensives to specialise in one or other of a number of specific curriculum areas. For us, these were the new initiatives constituting today’s “great problem”.¹¹

At about the same time, a similar conclusion was being reached by the National Commission on Education. In its Final Report *Learning to Succeed*,¹⁵ it talked about the Major Government’s obsession with creating “new types of secondary school” and warned, “there is a serious danger of a hierarchy of good, adequate and ‘sink’ schools emerging within the maintained system”.

Those who favour the idea of greater selection and diversity *within* the secondary system often argue that this will lead to a greater choice of school for many parents. Yet all the available evidence indicates that in a divided and layered system, it is normally *the schools that choose parents*, rather than the other way round.

As long ago as February 1992, Lord Griffiths of Fforestfach, at that time the right-wing chair of the School Examinations and Assessment Council, was arguing that:

Over the next five years nearly half of all maintained secondary schools become specialist schools while the other half have to be content with non-specialist status and no additional funding

“if you give parents real choice in the system, it is inevitable (and probably desirable) that the schools themselves will demand to choose the kind of pupils that come.”¹⁶

Selection by specialisation

As we have already seen, it was not New Labour which invented the idea of specialist schools. It was, in fact, back in July 1992 that the then Conservative Education Secretary John Patten contributed an important article to *New Statesman and Society* in which he argued that Socialists must now come to terms with the concept of “selection by specialisation”. In his view:

“Selection is not, and should not be, a great issue for the 1990s, as it was in the 1960s. The new ‘S-word’ for all Socialists to come to terms with is, rather, ‘Specialisation’. The fact is that different children excel at different things; it is foolish to ignore it, and some secondary schools may wish specifically to cater for these differences. Specialisation, underpinned by the National Curriculum, will be the answer for *some* – though not *all* – children, driven by aptitude and interest, as much as by ability.”¹⁷

Ten days later, John Patten’s 1992 White Paper, *Choice and Diversity*,¹⁸ caricatured comprehensive education as a system for those who believe that “children are all basically the same” and that “all local communities have essentially the same educational needs.” It announced the development of the Technology School Initiative (TSI) to encompass new areas of the school curriculum. The subsequent Specialist Schools Programme encouraged comprehensive schools to develop “their own distinctive identity and expertise” in one or other of four “specialist subject areas”: Technology, Modern Languages, Sports and the Arts.

When New Labour came to power in May 1997, it inherited 15 City Technology Colleges and 181 secondary schools with a clear specialist orientation, 30 catering for Modern Languages and 151 for Technology. Far from viewing these schools as a threat to the raising of standards in *all* schools, education ministers have embraced the Conservative project with extraordinary enthusiasm, so that now it is intended that there will be around 1,000 specialist schools in operation by September 2003 and 1,500 by September 2006.

According to the February 2001 Green Paper,¹ schools will be offered a choice of three new specialist options in addition to the existing specialisms of Technology, Modern Languages, Sports and the Arts: Engineering, Science and Business and Enterprise. The Government intends to lift the current restriction on the number of specialist schools in those education authorities where there is already a high proportion. Business and Enterprise schools will

be expected to develop strong curriculum – business links and also to develop teaching strengths in Business Studies, financial literacy and enterprise-related vocational programmes.

All specialist schools and colleges will receive a £100,000 capital grant plus £123 per student per year – a total of £225,000 for a school of 1,000 students. This will prove particularly divisive over the next five years as nearly half (46 per cent) of all maintained secondary schools become specialist schools, while the other half have to be content with non-specialist status and no additional funding.

Schools with a specialism are allowed to select 10 per cent of their intakes by aptitude for that specialism. Research suggests that very few specialist schools have chosen to go down that path; but a recent study carried out by Stephen Gorard of the School of Social Sciences at Cardiff University²⁰, using school intake data for the period 1988 – 2000, suggests that specialist institutions are, in fact, recruiting an increasingly privileged intake of students, including church schools, which are among the worst offenders.

It may well be, of course, that being officially recognised as “distinctive” will always have beneficial effects for a school drawn into competition with neighbouring establishments for ‘highly-motivated’ students. We do, after all, live in an age when parents cannot help but be influenced by the local and national publicity given to the annual league tables of examination results.

Future prospects

Recent policy statements by the Prime Minister and the contribution made by the new Education Secretary, Estelle Morris, to the Commons debate on the Queen’s Speech held towards the end of June 2001 make it clear that selection, choice and diversity are three of the main themes running through New Labour education policy. In this scenario, specialist schools of all kinds (and they seem to be proliferating at an alarming rate) have a crucial role to play – as does the idea that choice of school can be a matter for “private” decision by individual parents, schools or colleges.

The Government seems determined to press ahead with its so-called “modernising” agenda. Yet only by rejecting all the self-serving instincts underpinning Blair’s ugly concept of a ‘meritocratic’ society can we actually achieve an education system where all the children in a community have access to first-class education provision at all levels. ■

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Can there be an end to the 11+ ?

Abstract: *Building a learning society is the Government's main objective, but this will not be achieved by a selective system. The School Standards and Framework Act requires no further selection by ability and establishes the procedure for parental ballots to end selection. The paper outlines the attempts to end selection, which received no support from the Government. The author questions whether we are moving towards a system where schools will choose pupils, rather than parents choosing schools*

AFTER four years of a Labour government, as many children face the 11+ examination as when it took office. This situation will continue unless, as a new education bill goes through Parliament, there is a change of heart or a revolt by Labour backbenchers. Research indicates that retaining selection affects the Government's policy of raising standards and creates a more inclusive education system. If, as research seems to show, comprehensive systems are doing just as well as selective ones, surely that is an argument for ending the selective system? A school system which demotivates three quarters of 10-year-olds by telling them they have failed cannot build the learning society for which this Government rightly aims.

Legislation could, in theory, end selection on ability. The School Standards and Framework Act¹ requires that there should be no more selection on ability and includes provision for the grammar school ballot procedure to end existing selection. Ending selection in the 36 English LEAs where it still exists would require 48 parental ballots of parents - 10 area ballots, where all parents would be able to vote and 36 ballots relating to groups of grammar schools or single (stand-alone) grammar schools, where only parents whose children attend 'feeder' schools are entitled to vote. Crucially, however, before such ballots could take place, petitions would have to be signed by 20% of the parental electorate.

Paragraph 4.55 of the Green Paper, *Schools: Building on Success*,² suggests establishing learning partnerships between secondary moderns and grammars,

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ignoring the fact that children in these areas will continue to face selection – although it does acknowledge that secondary moderns are schools in ‘challenging circumstances’. However, instead of changing the challenging circumstances by ending selection, it proposes more money for these schools.

Anti-selection campaigning

Attempts have been made to bring about change. During 1999, campaigns were set up in Ripon, Kent, Trafford, Sutton, Barnet, Birmingham, and Buckinghamshire. Campaigners were not encouraged by the legislation but believed that they had to try to end selection and that if this was the only way, they would go for it. CASE set up ‘Say NO to Selection’, to campaign nationally for an end to selection and to support campaigners who wanted to set up local campaigns.

In only one place, Ripon, were sufficient signatures gathered to trigger a ballot in March 2000. Although unsuccessful, one positive outcome was that many people are now aware of the unfairness of the process. Both in Ripon and in the other campaigns, selection has been raised as an important local issue, but it is impossible to achieve an end to selection by these means.

Government policy is that parents must decide, but it gives them no reasons or support to end the system. Campaigns cannot replace official information. Even before signing a petition, parents want to know what a local comprehensive system would look like. Pro-selectionists get away with defending the status quo. The talk is of abolition, excellence, choice and ‘better the devil you know’. Children and their rights and the effect of selection do not get much of a look in. Discouraged by the regulations, teachers and LEAs do not make their views clear. Parents have to vote on a principle. It is encouraging that as many as a third of Ripon parents voted against selection, although they had no idea about what changes this might bring.

There are many other practical difficulties and absurdities:

- Campaigners need the hide of a rhinoceros to cope with vilification from the local and national press. Meanwhile, Government looks the other way. Campaigns have to focus on getting signatures when the real issue is ending selection. Recent minor changes announced last year allow a two-page A4 leaflet to be sent out via schools, providing its content is agreed with the DfES once a ballot has been triggered. This entirely misses the point that it is as soon as the campaigning starts that unfair practices emerge.
- In feeder school ballots, many local parents cannot vote or sign a petition even though, if the schools in question were comprehensive, they would be their local schools.

- Petition signatures cannot be carried over from one petition period to another. Petitions cannot be sent out through pupil post as the DfES rules that this might be interpreted that the school is taking sides.
- Amazingly, only 10 signatures are needed to trigger the requirement that the Electoral Reform Services must collect the information to assemble the list of feeder schools and establish the threshold number – work that costs a great deal of public money. However, thousands of signatures are required to trigger a ballot. Feeder school campaigns cannot start before the feeder schools have been identified, which takes a considerable amount of time. For example, it took five months for the threshold number for the Buckinghamshire campaign (18,453 signatures) to be calculated

What about ‘diversity’?

1. Admissions

The Government's passive stance has failed to ensure fairness. Recent DfES-funded research found big differences in practice across the country³ despite the introduction of the School Admissions Code of Practice. In some areas parents have to fill in forms for each of the schools. If more schools become admission authorities, more unfair admission procedures could emerge. All schools can select 10% on particular aptitudes if the admission authority believes that the school has a specialism. The School Adjudication system does not in the main allow parents or school governing bodies to complain. In the few situations where parents can complain, by the time they realise that they can, local admission policies have already excluded their children and it is too late to do anything about it.

2. Specialist schools

The specialist school programme is a pot of money for those schools that are successful in bidding for it. All pupils deserve a rich curriculum so that they are all able to ‘play to their strengths’. Has the Government accepted that it will never provide enough money for this and therefore rationed the provision? If this is meant to be an efficient means of spreading expertise, then it ought to be a far more coherent programme, instead of the hotchpotch of specialisms currently found in LEAs. Children near a school which has a specialism could be denied a local place either because the school is selecting a proportion of its intake or because the child's parents feel that the school will not suit their child. Where is the evidence that parents want this reduced parental choice? Specialist schools have proved that planning, good leadership and targeting do make a difference and more money makes this more likely. However, all schools need to improve and all children deserve to benefit.

3. Faith schools

If faith schools are to remain as part of the publicly-funded education system, then other faiths that want them cannot be denied. The Government must recognise, however, that where these schools are the only accessible state-funded school, local pupils will be excluded – hardly a policy for social inclusion.

4. City Academies and sponsor schools

This programme offers several million pounds of state funding to private sponsors to ‘own and run’ publicly-funded schools. The Government seems to have no confidence in LEAs being able to help schools improve. Many concerns arise from this policy, particularly about local accountability, democracy and another tier of publicly-funded schools acting independently over admissions – such as interviewing parents.

What is to be done?

1. Grammar schools

- The Government could champion comprehensive education and highlight its achievements, instead of using terms such as “monolithic” and “one size fits all”. It says “what matters is what works”, yet is unable to accept that comprehensive education is working.
- It is unlikely that the Government would drop the requirement for a parental ballot, but legislation should be amended so that parents can vote to end selection without the need for a petition. A minimum turnout in a ballot could ensure sufficient support for change. LEAs (or School Organisation Committees) should be required to bring forward specific proposals to end selection by test at 11. Parents should be able to vote for a clear plan for a local reorganisation of schools on comprehensive lines. Plans need to be detailed. Funds must be promised to finance the change.
- There should be local discussions, with professionals encouraged to give their views and Government supporting change. An area parental ballot of all parents in the 15 LEAs which are wholly selective or catchment area ballots within the LEA for the single or grouped particular schools would follow. Perhaps only primary parents should have the vote. Also, legislation allowing grammar school governing bodies to change to non-selective admissions could be encouraged.

2. Admissions, including City Academies and faith schools

- Government should act to ensure fairness in all school admissions. There should be a clear role for LEAs to ensure fairness, openness and co-ordination in school admissions for all state-funded schools, including faith schools, City Academies and the like. Parents should be able to complain

about all unfair practices.

- Few schools have taken up the 10% selection on aptitude option: it should be ended.
- Government should end covert selection. No schools, including faith schools, City Academies and CTCs, should interview parents or pupils before admission. A letter from the faith leader should be sufficient to assess whether the child is eligible for a school limited to children of that faith.
- Schools funded by general taxation should be open to all children. All faith schools should be required to open a significant proportion of their places to local children who are not in the faith community. If these schools believe they have something to offer it should be offered to local children. If parents do not want these places, they must have the option of non-faith school places. If the Government is to provide 'choice' then all parents must have a real choice. Community schools open to all children must not be changed into faith schools, thereby excluding some local children.

3. Specialist schools

- Government should aim for a broad, rich, properly funded curriculum for all pupils in all schools. LEAs should be able to offer specialist curriculum support to all children, through centres available to all children locally as of right, either in separate centres or in specialist centres based in individual schools.
- Improvements in management and achievement which are the features of specialist schools should be made possible for all schools.
- Instead of a top-down bidding process, all secondary schools should have money made available to them to develop their own initiatives, for example, an innovative curriculum, work in the community or work with parents.
- Rather than requiring inner-city schools to specialise, secondary schools in inner city areas should be much smaller and funded to provide a rich curriculum.

Comprehensive Secondary Education – building on success

A positive outcome of the 'bog standard' jibe has that it has triggered a debate about what has been achieved by comprehensive education. An important contribution to that debate is a new paper by eight education researchers published by the Campaign for State Education.⁴ Based on a review of research, *Comprehensive Secondary Education – Building on Success* concludes that comprehensive education has been a success not a failure. The main findings are that:

- since comprehensive education was introduced, barriers to achievement for many young people have been removed;

- attainment and staying-on rates in full-time education have risen dramatically over the past 25 years; and
- in the 15 English LEAs with roughly one in five children in grammar schools it is reasonable to regard comprehensive schooling not as a 'failed experiment' but one which has not been tried. In these areas selection results in an overall depression of achievement levels.

The writers warn of the potential for increased social selection if more schools operate as their own admission authorities. The paper ends: "In a layered system, there is the danger that it will be the schools that do the choosing rather than the parents". ■

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Specialist schools – The end of comprehensive education?

Abstract: *The successes of the comprehensive system are likely to be undermined by many of the Government's proposals, which imply an expansion of the current selective admissions arrangements. 'Upgrading' 50 per cent of secondary schools to specialist status is illogical and ignores practicalities in those towns and rural areas where there are only one or two secondary schools. Local government must ensure that school admission policies are fair, which means that individual schools should not control their own admissions policy.*

THE original idea behind comprehensive education was to end selection at the age of 11. However, no secondary school was to be identical to any other. Schools would not select their students but would develop different specialisms according to the talents and needs of their students.

'Bog-standard' comprehensives were never envisaged nor have they ever appeared. In some areas, schools not selecting their students, known as comprehensive schools, have been in competition with selective schools, either selecting on academic grounds, such as grammar schools or on social grounds, as many of the former grant maintained schools did. In rural areas or small towns where there are only two or three schools, or perhaps even one within reasonable distance, the comprehensive principle was more easily upheld. Variety on one campus is what then developed.

Mixed ability groupings

The argument over mixed ability teaching is also conflated with myths. Few

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people would want to hear a mixed ability orchestra or watch a mixed ability school cricket team but strict streaming is also counter-productive. Different groupings are used for different subject areas. Art, for instance, can be taught differently to mathematics, but setting does lend itself more easily in many subject areas at a later stage in a secondary school.

No one envisaged all students would be studying the same subjects, although some basic core curriculum in at least English and mathematics needs to be followed. Specialisms can then be developed, especially involving modern languages, the arts and the sciences.

City Technology Colleges

Specialist schools formalised that approach. They grew out of Kenneth Baker's idea of City Technology Colleges. These were very well resourced schools, publicly funded but independently run. Industry, however, saw them as divisive and the Treasury saw them as expensive. Few came into being.

The Conservative government then made an error. They allowed only voluntary-aided schools and grant maintained schools to apply for Technology College status, not LEA schools. The Local Government Association objected and started to explore a challenge in both the UK and European courts. Discrimination in funding to schools purely because of their status was considered unfair and illegal. Cyril Taylor of the CTC Trust agreed that the policy was not defensible. Gillian Shepherd reversed this policy on coming into office and LEA schools became eligible to apply for Technology College status.

The Labour government started to see the concept of specialist schools as a way of raising standards, although this was not actually based on any reliable evidence. The improved results in those schools winning specialist status were due to a variety of different factors. These included extra funding, enthusiastic and imaginative heads, the networking the CTC Trust created and the disciplined focus the bidding arrangements demanded.

Ironically, the schools themselves were not always effective in the actual specialism they had chosen. Many were content simply to win the extra cash. Britain so often makes educational decisions based not on research or facts but on an accepted belief: politicians then look around for some facts to justify that decision.

Specialist school expansion

Tony Blair, advised by Andrew Adonis, announced recently that 50 per cent of secondary schools could become specialist schools. There was no logic to this policy and it ignored practical arrangements in both rural areas and towns that only had one or two secondary schools. In April 2001, at the ATL Conference, Tony Blair suddenly announced, to the surprise of civil servants,

that all schools could become specialist schools if they met the criteria. At the same time, the concept of “Advanced Specialist Schools” emerged, which could be used to work with ‘failing schools’. They would have extra freedoms and would become involved in the training of new teachers. The specialist school policy has become typical of this country: incoherent, looking for simplistic answers around structures, with no democratic base.

The secondary curriculum

The policy does have some ideas worth exploring. The secondary curriculum is now too rigid. Good comprehensive schools have always developed specialisms, but they are based on the needs of their students. At the age of 14, many students do want some specialisation, such as in the arts or modern languages. A planned modular approach from 14 to 19 would help this to happen for most students. Vocational education must not only be for the disaffected. Engineering is a highly academic discipline and requires a high level of skills. The two keys for high standards are fair school admission arrangements and adequate funding for all schools. The curriculum then has to bring out the talents of all students.

A policy of secondary schools developing different specialisms could be a modernised approach to comprehensive education, but it has to avoid competition between schools. Any emergence of first and second class schools in reality or perception, or practical admissions arrangements that do not work, would destroy that aim. A local authority has to be the catalyst through which schools work together; the practicalities of this would be different in LEAs in urban areas compared to those in the counties or small towns.

The problem is that the Government is keen to rush into legislation. It is likely to concentrate on structures that will not work and, as a result, fail to develop a flexible system. The selection by students of a sports or business curriculum as a specialism at age 11 is ridiculous. Making that possible at 14 is interesting, but it has to be managed carefully. It means having a network of schools working together, including those in rural areas, with the help of information technology.

An approach involving local government planning with the schools would be an exciting and imaginative programme – if it could be made to happen. It would make heads and teachers an essential part of the crusade to raise standards and develop an educational system for the 21st century. It needs planning, resources and a transformation of the present subject-dominated curriculum. Employability is a key part of the European agenda. Is it in British schools? Where is our European language strategy for people living in the UK? The way forward is to maximise curriculum choice for the individual student, supported by a common basic curriculum entitlement. It means schools having to work together instead of competing for students

and with each other.

The problem with educational policy in Britain is that the present structures are constantly added to and this results in more complexity, more incoherence and more unfairness in the system. A patchwork of faith schools, foundation schools, specialist schools, comprehensive schools, grammar schools, City Academies, beacon schools, advanced specialist schools, is no way to run a modern secondary educational system. School admissions too are a complicated mess, caused by a refusal to face up to the elementary fact that parental choice or preference is dependent on the number of surplus places. Where schools are full, then the key issue is a fair admissions policy. Otherwise, most parents lose out and second-class schools emerge by natural forces.

Comprehensive education has been an unqualified success in many areas and the end of selection was driven through locally by local government, supported by all the three main parties, including the Conservatives. Where it has not been as successful is because of other factors preventing the raising of standards. There are advantages to schools developing expertise in certain areas of the curriculum but this is not a new idea. Funding must still be based on need and admissions must be fair and transparent. Co-ordinating that is a new challenge for local government, which has to have the will and powers to prevent the perception of first and second class schools emerging. The specialist school system could easily lead to that, especially if the involvement of the private sector is only with individual schools.

Standards, not structures, was the aim of the Labour Government in 1997 but the danger now is it will think structures can in themselves improve standards. However, there is evidence that a selective system can cause the lowering of standards and incoherent structures can lead to unfairness, especially over funding.

The present specialist school proposals are in danger of doing just that. Developing a much more modular curriculum, so that individual talents can be met in a planned way from 14 to 19, would enable ideas developed in some schools to be spread to others. The further education sector needs to be involved in this, including FE colleges and sixth form colleges. It means a community of schools working together with the 16-19 sector, instead of schools being inward-looking and in competition with each other.

Failing schools

Schools receive a poor OFSTED report for various reasons. Usually, the criticisms are fair, although it is always a matter of judgement whether the school should be placed in 'special measures'. Reasons can be the quality of senior management, the effectiveness of the governing body, the competence of the staff or other matters, such as sufficient school funding. Local government has been increasingly effective in turning around such schools at

a faster rate. The intervention powers gained by LEAs in the 1998 Education Act are of help but they should often be used more quickly and sometimes earlier. The DfES tends to resist this happening, especially if the school governors complain. Placing extra governors on the governing body or withdrawing personnel powers from the governors can often begin to solve the problems facing the school more rapidly.

The concept of handing the management of a school to a private company seems not only dangerously flawed but also unnecessary. The key is to enable the school to be responsible for raising standards itself as soon as possible. Some sort of twinning arrangements with a successful school can help, but the process should not take long. If no progress is made, then a more radical situation could be needed. Fresh Start was not successful because it was a gimmicky attempt to solve schools' structural problems. What is needed could be a newly constituted governing body, new staff, an injection of funds - usually to improve the building - or a serious review of the existing curriculum. A team effort involving various local government departments, the private or voluntary sector and the school is needed, with some detailed targets, planned jointly, set to focus the school on raising standards.

This approach is working already and it is fairly straightforward. Different ideas that are being introduced in one LEA can often be replicated elsewhere. Quite why City Academy schools are being seen as the new salvation for failing schools is a mystery. They are, in reality, a privatised version of Fresh Start and there is no evidence they will work. Funding them generously, especially for buildings' improvement, will lead to resentment by other schools in the area because, in reality, those schools will be losing out financially as a result.

Quite why City Academy schools are being seen as the new salvation for failing schools is a mystery.

Local government's role

Over the last few years, I have had to say constantly that LEAs do not run or manage schools. They do not appoint or dismiss staff. Local government is there to support schools, provide strategic leadership in the area, co-ordinate arrangements where necessary and intervene when there are problems, especially where standards are unsatisfactory.

Some of that role cannot be taken over by the private sector. Democratic accountability is not something that is transferable. Effective LEAs can develop policies in areas such as integrating students with special educational needs into mainstream provision, community education, a coherent post-16 system and the careful planning of new schools, coupled with housing and social services policies. The recent problems in Bradford, for instance, could

be tackled if the local authority was allowed to take a lead over inclusion policies, including the way the school system brings different communities together. The trouble with companies like Nord Anglia trying to manage individual schools is that the school becomes isolated from the other schools in the area and from local government. Inclusion becomes someone else's problem.

A second weakness in this approach is the inability of DfES officials to work closely with other partners, especially local government. They often see themselves as in a control situation and are obsessed with paperwork and inputs. All of this is diversionary. To be effective, there has to be delegation to schools but also accountability for the results. That is the way forward for a true partnership. It has to be based on respect.

Local government needs to make sure its school admission policies are fair, transparent and applied properly. Changes are needed in the law to make sure that those principles remain. That is why individual schools should not control or decide their own admission policies. If Government could understand that, standards would rise in this country and perhaps then we would simply have 'secondary schools' instead of all sorts of different names, which, in the end, disguise very little. Let us concentrate on the difficult task of raising standards in all schools. A Labour government which does that deserves to be re-elected.

Employment of staff is another issue relevant to the raising of standards. Who people work for is important. Recruitment and retention are related to conditions of service. They have to be negotiated in a democratic society. Conditions of service for school staff are important. Equality issues are part of the agenda and crucial for raising standards. This is one of the strengths of local government, especially over matters like pensions, sick pay and accountability. Underestimating these matters will not lead to solving the recruitment and retention problems facing the education service.

Comprehensive education has been a success in this country but it has always been a system that continues to develop. At their best, comprehensive schools develop their own strengths, without introducing selection. No comprehensive school is like any other, but their role is the same: to develop to the full the talents of all their students. ■

What is wrong with our educational assessment and what can be done about it?

Abstract: *Students in England and Wales are subjected to heavy testing yet our performance in international comparisons like TIMSS is modest. More pupils than ever before gain A-levels yet employers claim that students are less prepared for work than those of earlier generations. Some suggest that exams are getting easier, yet research shows that standards are being broadly maintained. The author suggests that Government initiatives have led schools to improve test and exam scores at any cost, resulting in a narrowing of the curriculum. He suggests an alternative that will ensure a more balanced curriculum.*

STUDENTS in England and Wales are subjected to more Government mandated tests than in any other country and yet our performance, in comparison with other developed countries, appears to be modest. Furthermore, it appears from the repeat administration of the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS-R) that although scores on National Curriculum tests are improving at both key stage 2 and 3, overall standards of achievement are getting no better. The proportion of the age-cohort gaining A-level passes is now greater than at any time in our past, and yet employers repeatedly claim that students are less prepared for the world of work than students from previous years.

The obvious answer to this apparent paradox is that the tests and examinations have been made easier, but a whole raft of technical studies have shown that standards are being broadly maintained. This article offers an alternative explanation: that Government initiatives have pressurised schools into improving test and examination scores at any cost, which leads to a narrowing of the curriculum, which robs tests and assessments of their power

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to say anything useful about students' achievements. In place of this system, an alternative is suggested, based on moderated teacher assessment, with external tasks for public accountability, which ensures that all students receive a broad and balanced curriculum.

The curse of quantification and MacNamara's Fallacy

For over one hundred years, policy-makers have been searching for objective indices of the quality of education. In the second decade of the twentieth century in the USA, the 'School Survey' movement sought to gather 'objective evidence' about factors influencing the educational progress of school students, but within about twenty years educational policy-makers began to look to psychology to provide a way of measuring the outputs more 'scientifically'. This desire for quantification soon dominated most aspects of public-service provision. Perhaps the best-known example of politicians' desire for simple answers to complex questions is John F Kennedy's furious reaction to the ambiguous evaluation of the impact of additional money provided for the education of socio-economically disadvantaged students: "Do you mean that you spent a billion dollars and you don't know whether they can read or not?"

The trouble with such 'objective' approaches is that while many things can be measured, there are also many important things that cannot and the danger is that things that can be measured easily come to be regarded as more important than those that cannot. This process is well summed up by Charles Handy's rendering of what has come to be known as the Macnamara Fallacy, named after the US Secretary of Defence, who argued that the ratio of Viet Cong/North Vietnamese Army losses to US/Army of the Republic of Vietnam losses was an important measure of military effectiveness: "Things you can count, you ought to count. Loss of life is one."

"The Macnamara Fallacy: The first step is to measure whatever can be easily measured. This is OK as far as it goes. The second step is to disregard that which can't easily be measured or to give it an arbitrary quantitative value. This is artificial and misleading. The third step is to presume that what can't be measured easily really isn't important. This is blindness. The fourth step is to say that what can't be easily measured really doesn't exist. This is suicide." ¹

We start out with the aim of making the important measurable and end up making only the measurable important.

Lake Wobegon

Education is no exception to these general principles. In 1987 it was discovered that all fifty states in the USA had posted state results on national

standardised tests that were above average. This was quickly dubbed the ‘Lake Wobegon effect’ after Garrison Keillor’s mythical town where all the women are strong, all the men are good looking and all the children are above average. Each state had adopted one of a handful of nationally standardised tests as its ‘benchmark’ and, because there was pressure on teachers to improve their students’ scores on these tests, teachers made sure that they taught the material that was going to be tested in the tests. Although this made a mockery of the idea that schools were free to determine their own curricula, the distortions produced were not that great. However, there was a great range in the results of schools in different areas.

While the USA’s results in mathematics, for example, were average (and comparable to the UK’s) this masked huge variations. In the more affluent areas, achievements were comparable to those in Japan and Singapore, while in the poorer areas they were comparable to Nigeria, one of the lowest-scoring countries in the TIMSS sample. Teachers in the poorer-performing (and poorer) schools were told that they had to improve their results, which, of

If you make a particular performance indicator a policy target and make the stakes high enough, then the people at the sharp end will do everything they can to improve their score on the performance indicator.

course, they did, by ensuring not just that the material to be tested was taught, but that this material was the only material that was taught. These students were getting better at the material being tested, but nothing else, as was proved when they were tested on other, slightly different, standardised tests.

This is the fundamental problem. By making the pressure on teachers and students to achieve good results on particular tests greater and greater, we can secure improvements in scores on those tests, but these improvements are secured at the expense of everything else. The tests, originally meant simply as a sample of the curriculum, come to be the whole curriculum. The reason that this is important is that we are hardly ever interested in the specific things a student has to do to pass an examination or test: after all, a test tests only what a test tests. We are generally interested in examination and test performance because these results can stand as proxies for wider achievement and potential. However, by increasing pressure to do well on the test to a ridiculous degree, we have reached a point where we cannot generalise beyond the immediate test scores. When test scores at key stage 2 improve, we cannot conclude that education in key stage 2 has improved. We cannot even

conclude that performance in English, mathematics and science has improved. All we can conclude is that the narrow range of skills tested in the key stage 2 tests has improved. This provides an example of what has become known as Goodhart's Law.

Goodhart's Law

Goodhart's Law was named after Charles Goodhart, a former chief economist at the Bank of England and it states, quite simply, that performance indicators lose their usefulness when used as objects of policy.

The example Goodhart used to illustrate this was that of the relationship between inflation and money supply. Economists had noticed that increases in the rate of inflation seemed to coincide with increases in money supply, although neither had any discernible relationship with the growth of the economy. Since no-one knew how to control inflation, controlling money supply seemed to offer a useful policy tool for controlling inflation, without any adverse effect on growth. The resultant monetarist policies produced the biggest slump in the economy since the 1930s. As Peter Kellner comments, "The very act of making money supply the main policy target changed the relationship between money supply and the rest of the economy."²

If you make a particular performance indicator a policy target and make the stakes high enough, then the people at the sharp end will do everything they can to improve their score on the performance indicator. However, because the areas in which we use performance indicators are so complex, there is always a way of improving the performance indicator without having any impact on the overall quality of whatever the performance indicator is meant to be measuring and, indeed, sometimes the quality actually gets worse, even though the performance indicator is rising.

When, therefore, schools were first measured by the proportion of students achieving five good grades at GCSE, these results improved, although in some cases, the average grades achieved by students went down. In response to this, the average grades are now also reported but schools are able to manipulate this index too, by channeling students towards easier subjects or by entering students for 'vocational GCSEs' which are deemed to be equivalent to four GCSEs. The reported scores rise but the actual level of performance may be unchanged or even declining.

This is the essence of Goodhart's Law: a variety of indicators is selected for their ability to represent the quality of the service, but when used as the sole index of quality, the manipulability of these indicators destroys the relationship between the indicator and the indicated. There is no end to this process, because the people on the ground will always know more about where the loopholes are than those devising the performance indicators. Put bluntly, the clearer you are about what you want, the more likely you are to get it – but the

less likely it is to mean anything.

The fact that our systems of timed written tests and examinations narrow the curriculum is hardly news. However, there is another effect that is less well appreciated, and that is the unreliability of the examinations. There are no up-to-date figures on the reliability of GCSE, but the available data suggest that a student receives the grade that their achievement would merit only around 65% of the time. In other words, around one-third of GCSE grades awarded are wrong. In some cases they are too high and in others they are too low; although for many students, the gains and the losses balance out, for students close to the key threshold of 5 A*-C grades, many will miss out, not because they weren't good enough, but because they were unlucky.

Tests and examinations can be made more reliable, but the only way of doing this is by making them longer. However, because our tests and examinations are generally such sterile experiences for students, it has been claimed that the burden of tests and examinations – up to ten hours for the three subjects tested in National Curriculum tests and up to around fifty hours for GCSE – is already too great. Fortunately, there is a solution.

What can be done?

Our system of tests and examinations distorts our school curriculum and produces results that are of limited reliability and of doubtful validity. In proposing alternatives, the question is not where to find them, but how radical we are prepared to be. Why for example, are students tested as individuals, when the world of work requires people who can work well in a team? Why do we test memory, when in the real world engineers and scientists never rely on memory: if they're stuck, they look things up. Why do we use timed tests when it is usually far more important to get things done right than to get things done quickly? There are, of course, those who claim that timed written tests give good indications of the ability to work under pressure, in which case, they should produce evidence of this – I have not seen any. I have seen plenty of evidence of the damage that timed written tests do and how poor they are at measuring the important outcomes of learning.

As a modest start, however, which accepts the need for formalised assessments of students' achievement at the ages of seven, 11, 14, 16 and 18, I propose that all National Curriculum tests and, if the politicians have the stomach for it, GCSEs and A-levels, are replaced with moderated teacher assessment, which is what happens in Sweden, for example. By extending the assessment over the whole key stage, we would produce unprecedented levels of reliability and validity and the rigorous procedures of moderation would not only ensure against grade drift, but would also provide a valuable focus for in-service training for teachers. This would also be likely to tackle boys' underachievement, because the current "all or nothing" test at the end of a key stage encourages boys to

believe that they can make up lost ground at the last minute.

The crucial point, however, in order to prevent teaching to the test, is to disentangle the evaluation of the school from the scores that its students achieve. Instead of publishing the results of the moderated teacher assessments, schools would be held accountable by the results of special tasks taken by the students at the end of the key stage. Crucially, there would be a large number of these tasks and not all students would undertake the same task. These tasks would cover the entire syllabus and would be allocated randomly so that there would be no way of teaching to the test or, more precisely, the only way to teach to the test would be to teach the whole curriculum to every student. Schools that taught only half the curriculum, or concentrated their resources on only the most able students, would be shown up as providing a limited education. Furthermore, the results of these tests could provide an additional check on the robustness of the moderation procedures and would provide accurate information to policy-makers about the real state of education in our schools.

Our current educational assessments are not just ineffective, they are preventing us from providing high-quality education for school students and preventing schools from producing young people with the flexible skills that will be needed in the 21st century. In place of the current vicious spiral, in which only those aspects of learning that are easily measured are regarded as important, I propose developing a system of summative assessment based on moderated teacher assessment. A separate system, relying on 'light sampling' of the performance of schools, would provide stable and robust information for the purposes of accountability and policy-formation. ■

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The Greener Grass of Home

Abstract: *The disparity between the treatment of teachers in Wales and those in England is causing concern in Wales, where teachers look at the professional development available in England with envy. Despite the funding problems in Wales and a perceived 'poor relation' stigma, the Welsh Assembly is asserting itself with growing differences in policy from the Labour Government's proposals for England. For example, the Welsh administration has no enthusiasm for specialist schools and league tables have just been abolished.*

For many teachers in Wales, the growing variations in practice, structure and funding between the principality and England are increasingly an issue and cause for complaint and concern. The common perception is that colleagues in England enjoy higher levels of funding, more opportunities for funded professional development and seem better protected through speedier progress on disruptive pupils, security of funding for sixth forms and re-examining procedures when teachers are accused of abuse.

Teachers look at the professional development available in England with envy. Professional development in the form of bursaries, visits, exchanges and individual development opportunities were only announced in Wales in June and will not start to become available until the autumn. There is no Computers for Teachers scheme and the National Assembly turned down a bid from the Union to establish programmes in Wales similar to those funded in England through the Union Learning Fund. We have to make do with the New Opportunities Fund ICT training, which was apparently supposed to be done in teachers' own time. In Wales, it seems, the emphasis is more on DIY than CPD.

The Welsh funding fog

The Welsh funding fog is thick enough to wreck ships. A Welsh Secondary Schools Association conference last year heard clear evidence that spending per pupil was less in Wales than in England. Now the Assembly denies that this is the

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case. Most secondary headteachers will be hard to convince. I can compare primary schools in England with less than half the pupils than my own school and find they get twice the funding from the Standards Fund than my school receives through GEST. Heads in north-east Wales look over the border at schools of a similar size in Cheshire and Shropshire and see higher levels of funding.

Additional funds are often not ring-fenced and, therefore, hard to trace into schools' budgets. The Assembly consults the Welsh Local Government Association on how to distribute the money and then blames authorities for not passing it straight on. The LEAs deny they have had it and, in the Assembly, the Opposition claims huge sums are being kept back to match fund Objective One bids.

However, despite the above, the statement by Assembly Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning, Jane Davidson, that comprehensive education was safe in the Assembly's hands and that the proposals contained in *Schools: Building on Success*¹ were not being considered in Wales should have resulted in a collective sigh of relief in staffrooms up and down the principality.

Comprehensive survival

If 18 years of Conservative Government was the Blitz, then comprehensive education was St Paul's Cathedral. It survived savage funding cuts, years of under-investment in school buildings, local government reorganisation and John Redwood and William Hague as Secretaries of State. For it to be demolished when we all thought peace had broken out would be unforgivable.

Despite Tory reforms, the education system in Wales has retained its coherence. There are no maintained grammar schools. Apart from the FE sector, the huge majority of students from 16-19 are educated in school sixth forms. There are only a handful of former GM (now foundation) schools, with many LEAs having none. Most pupils make the transition to secondary schools at age 11.

Nevertheless, the system also has diversity. Some LEAs contain a mix of 11-16 and 11-18 schools. There have long been voluntary-aided and voluntary-controlled schools. The education system is enriched by the Welsh language and the 'Cwricwlwm Cymreig', with a range of Welsh-medium and bilingual schools.

As the headteacher of a large secondary school, I had contemplated the prospect of the Green Paper, or a similar document, appearing in Wales with something akin to horror. Many of the proposals would be unworkable in Wales and others would impose almost intolerable burdens.

Church and faith schools

Wales is an example of how cultures and languages can be successfully integrated. Welsh and non-Welsh speakers can be educated in the same schools following the same curriculum. They can celebrate and study English and Welsh culture and this richness is further enhanced by the effective

integration of children whose mother tongue is neither English nor Welsh, However, this did not happen either overnight or by accident. Much hard work has been put in by schools and LEAs to persuade pupils and parents of the benefits of bilingualism, which is now bearing fruit in increased interest in bilingual education in Anglicised areas and a welcoming of pupils from other cultures. To introduce segregation by expanding denominational schools or allowing the establishment of other faith schools would set us back decades. Ask colleagues in Bradford for their views.

Secondary schools in Wales will begin to see reductions in pupil numbers in the next three to four years as a result of falling rolls in the primary sector. Who will fill the new schools? Increasingly bitter competition for pupils to avoid budgetary cuts and redundancies is fraught with the potential for more serious conflict if one of the competitors is sponsored by a particular faith community.

Specialist schools

Chris Woodhead described the specialist school programme as “an intellectual mess”. In Wales it could be described as a mess in practice as well. Many areas do not have the commercial base to make the requisite sponsorship feasible. Introducing specialist schools in rural north Wales, for example, would reduce parental choice further. In rural Wales, unless pupils are prepared to travel for more than an hour, they are often restricted to a choice of one or two schools. Introducing a specialism and selection by aptitude into one of them means Hobson’s choice for those children who do not have an aptitude in that area.

My own LEA already groups schools into five categories according to their size and the linguistic background of the communities they serve. Considering the geography and demography of the area, the mix of 11-16 and 11-18 schools, coupled with the linguistic variety of the local system means that introducing specialism or religious character into only two or three schools could make a mockery of parents’ ability to ‘express a preference’.

Consider the position of a parent moving into the small coastal town of Llanfairfechan from, say, the north west of England. Within a fifteen mile radius they apparently have a choice of seven secondary schools. However, following local government reorganisation in 1996, they are now in three different LEAs. Four of the schools are already oversubscribed in some years and the newcomers will be low on the admission criteria if they are out of county. One of the schools is a Welsh-medium school. Two are former GM schools with their own admission arrangements. Change the nature of just one of these schools and choice is effectively diminished, not enhanced.

Target setting

The National Assembly recently published the results of an inquiry into bureaucratic workload in Wales. A colleague likened it to a Jeffrey Archer novel

– it all sounds rather familiar but it is not very satisfying when you have finished it. One of its more surprising assertions was that individual pupil target setting was not “particularly burdensome”. New “ambitious targets” for key stage 3 in England will add to teachers’ workload with little return for the pupils. While Bangor is not an area with especially high pupil mobility, a turnover of 10% to 15% over key stage 3 makes a mockery of three-year targets.

In many areas of Wales, the approach to target setting has been much more sensible. Consortia of LEAs have formed, buying in to a common advisory service. Schools are open with their performance data and share it readily with the advisory service. This has resulted in increasingly useful, benchmarked data and a sharper focus on comparison with schools of similar intakes. Targets are set by schools, not imposed by the LEA and schools can compare their targets with models based on accurate key stage 2 figures. One wonders what the insertion of two or three specialist schools into our consortium of 23 secondaries would do to our continuing ability to compare like with like.

The employment of teachers and conditions of service

Another result of local government reorganisation has been the spreading of expertise more thinly across 22 LEAs instead of the previous eight. Worryingly, we have seen an LEA seek to reduce the status of its director of education and another one appoint a ‘head of corporate services’ with no background in education. Governing bodies are made up of well-intentioned laypersons with varying degrees of knowledge of, and expertise in, education. They depend on the LEA for guidance. The Marje Evans case highlighted the dangers of reliance on advice which is incorrect or partial.

The Green Paper proposes reforms giving individual schools freedoms over teachers’ pay and conditions, which were not even proposed in the 1988 Reform Act. While, on principle, as trade unionists we should oppose the creation of thousands of bargaining units (with the accompanying threat to our members), in Wales schools wishing to exercise such freedoms might not have access to the same expertise and quality of advice that a larger LEA in England might enjoy - although this problem is as great for the smaller unitary authorities in England as it is for all LEAs in Wales.

Primary/secondary transfer

The idea of transferring year six pupils to secondary schools two or three weeks before the summer break sounds good, but is also almost certainly unworkable in practice. For most teachers, the school year is rather like trying to shoe a galloping horse. The winding down towards the end of the summer term is now a dim and distant memory. Apart from the cross-curricular activities, which we try to fit in at my school, staff are heavily engaged in work experience visits. Although Bangor is nominally a city, it is no larger than a

medium-sized town. To cover the range of experiences and the number of placements required, pupils are sometimes placed up to 50 miles from the school. A rearranged timetable would make even the closer placements impossible to manage without a level of cover that would overburden staff when they are already drained.

Teacher recruitment

While teacher shortages in Wales are not as severe as in England, they are there and schools are increasingly resorting to a variety of coping strategies to fill the gaps. I have some reservations about pinning hopes on new routes into teaching. We employed a teacher on the graduate teacher programme this year. He is already an excellent and valued colleague, but the National Assembly gave us the impression that they were making up the programme as they went along, resulting in the ludicrous situation in which we were told we could start using the funding for his training in January, although he had been in post since September.

A different culture

Wales never bought into the competitive ethos that the Conservatives sought to introduce, and while there are grounds for concern at the funding situation and the delays in implementing initiatives, there are growing signs that the Assembly is taking steps to reinforce the collaborative culture that still exists in Wales. League tables are to be abolished – a huge step forward in itself and one for which the Assembly is to be congratulated. Foundation schools are occasional dots on the educational map. The private sector has gained only a small foothold in the form of supply agencies: even threshold assessment was undertaken by a consortia of LEAs, not a private agency. Wales's own examination board survives in the assessment market place with the support of teachers and schools: it is involved in curriculum development and is supportive of teachers. The Assembly stepped in quickly to avoid the GTC Wales levying a fee on teachers and will fund its first years of activity. It also opposes the link between examination results and salary through performance management and threshold assessment. Most importantly, the comprehensive education system is not to be dismantled in favour of specialisation.

We may look at our school budget balance sheets and cast a wistful eye over the border, but in two years time we are all likely to concede that the paper there may be green but the grass isn't. ■

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School Differences and Social Segregation: comparison between England, Wales and Scotland

Linda Croxford

Dr Linda Croxford is a senior research fellow at the Centre for Educational Sociology at the University of Edinburgh. This article is based on the findings of a research project entitled *A "Home International" Comparison of Education and Training Systems in the UK*, funded by the Economic and Social Research Council.

Abstract: *This article compares the educational systems of the UK, in particular partly selective England and fully comprehensive Scotland and Wales. The author concludes that greater diversity and specialisation between schools leads to greater social inequality and larger differences in attainment between schools.*

COMPARATIVE research on the education systems of the United Kingdom (UK) suggests that policies to create greater specialisation and diversity between schools are likely to increase social inequality and social segregation and result in larger differences in average attainment between privileged and disadvantaged schools. In contrast, the comprehensive system in Scotland, which was introduced in a more thorough and wholehearted manner than in England, has lower levels of social inequality and social segregation, smaller differences in average attainment between schools, and high levels of public support.

Diversity of school type

These findings come from a research project entitled *A 'Home-International' Comparison of 14-19 Education and Training Systems in the UK*,¹ which used nationally-representative surveys of the cohort of young people aged 16 in 1989-90 to compare the education systems in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. It found the greatest difference between the four systems was the different pattern of comprehensive versus selective schooling. Amongst pupils attending schools in the public sector in 1990/91, all pupils in Scotland and almost all pupils in Wales were educated in comprehensive schools. In England a minority (7%) were educated in selective schools, either grammar schools or secondary modern schools. In Northern Ireland there were no comprehensive schools; the system was entirely selective. (Discussion in this article will not include Northern Ireland because other data were not entirely comparable.) Other sources of difference between the systems were

the proportions of pupils attending independent schools, single-sex schools and denominational schools, all of which were higher in England than in Wales or Scotland.

Social segregation between schools

If pupils from high social class backgrounds attend different schools than pupils from low social class backgrounds, there is social segregation between schools. Our study showed that there was more social segregation between schools in England than in Scotland and Wales. To some extent this was because more pupils in England attended independent, grammar or Church of England schools, and pupils attending these types of schools tended to have higher socio-economic status (SES) than pupils in comprehensive, secondary modern and non-denominational schools. In Scotland, more pupils with relatively high SES attended comprehensive schools than was the case elsewhere.

In addition, there were differences between comprehensive schools in the average SES of pupils attending the school. These differences, which were found in all education systems, arise from differences between catchment areas, particularly in cities: schools located in 'leafy suburbs' have higher average SES than schools in areas of rented housing. Differences between schools may be intensified by parental choice of schools, for which there is greater demand in England than in Scotland.² Middle class parents compete for access to grammar schools and other selective schools, where these are available, and in other areas they compete for access to the most favoured comprehensive school. Less favoured schools are 'creamed' and are comprehensive in name only since they cannot represent the full range of social background and ability.

Sources of inequality in attainment at 16

Our study looked at the extent of social inequality in attainment at GCSE or Standard grade (which is the Scottish equivalent) in each of the three systems. Table 1 (*see next page*) summarises the effects of a number of factors; each effect is described after taking account of all the other effects in the table. (Data on ethnic background were not available).

In all UK systems, girls had higher attainment than boys. This suggests that the factors affecting gender differences in attainment are common to all education systems.

In all three systems social-class inequality had an impact on attainment. However, the effect of social class on attainment was weaker in Scotland (and to a lesser extent Wales) than in England. This suggests that although there were common factors in all systems which led to social class inequality in attainment, these factors were stronger in England than elsewhere. The greater extent of social segregation in England than Wales and Scotland is part of the reason for this.

Table 1 Sources of inequality in attainment: similarities and differences between systems

Sex

Girls had higher attainment than boys:

- *same in all UK education systems.*

Socio-economic status (SES)

Pupils had higher attainment than average if parents were in professional or non-manual occupations and father was in work:

- *effect of SES strongest in England.*

School type

Attainment higher in independent and grammar schools than comprehensive schools and lower in secondary modern schools:

- *more pupils attended independent schools in England;*
- *more attended grammar schools and secondary modern schools in England;*
- *effect of independent schools weaker in Scotland than elsewhere.*

School denomination and gender

Attainment was higher in Roman Catholic (RC) and single-sex schools:

- *effect of denomination weaker in Scotland;*
- *fewer pupils attending single-sex schools in Scotland.*

School composition

Attainment for a pupil of given SES was higher if the average SES of the school was high:

- *effect of school composition greatest in England.*

'School effect'

Average attainment, even allowing for differences in intake, was higher in some schools than in others:

- *differences between schools were greater in England than in Wales and Scotland.*
-

School differences in attainment

On average, attainment was higher in independent schools and grammar schools and lower in secondary modern schools than in comprehensive schools. Attainment was also higher in RC and single-sex schools than in non-denominational or mixed-sex schools respectively. There was no evidence of higher attainment in schools of other denominations, after taking account of other factors. These differences were broadly similar in each of the systems, but the advantages of independent schools and RC schools were weaker in Scotland than elsewhere.

The social composition of the school had an effect on the attainment of pupils attending the school. Schools in which the average SES was relatively high because the school was attended by a high proportion of pupils with professional and well-educated parents, had higher average attainment than schools with relatively lower average SES. However, the effect of school social composition was weaker in Scotland and Wales than in England. In other words, attending a school with high average SES boosted the attainment of a

pupil in England to a greater extent than in the other three systems. This effect was irrespective of whether the school was selective or not.

There was considerable variability in attainment between schools in England after taking account of all other factors. This might be termed the 'school effect'. Schools in Scotland and Wales were much closer to each other in their average attainment. A much greater proportion of the school effect in England was explained by school characteristics and social composition than was the case for Wales and Scotland. Altogether, we concluded that it was far more important to attend the 'right' school in England than elsewhere.

The success of Scottish comprehensive schools

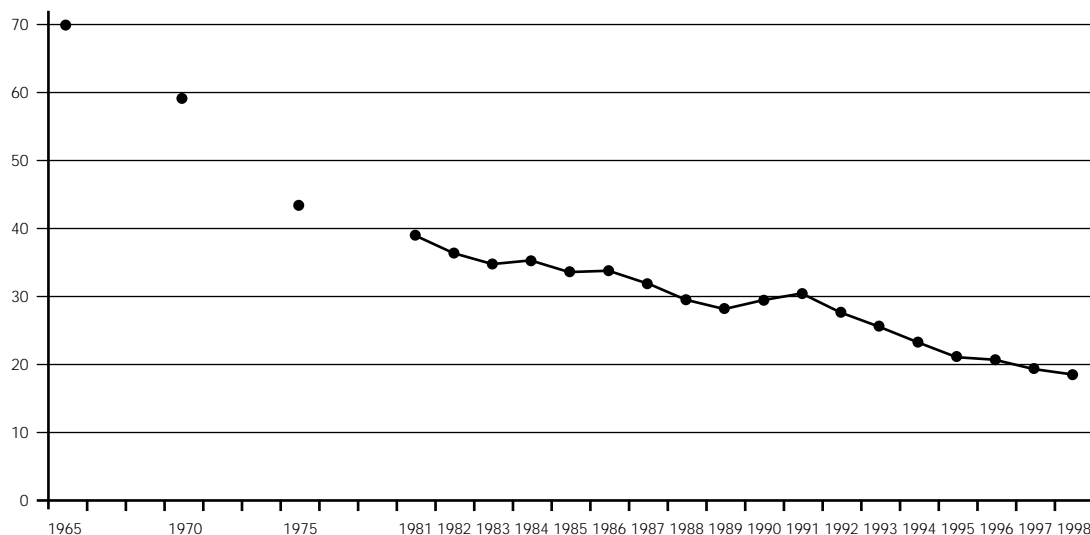
The introduction of comprehensive schooling in Scotland has been a major success story. By 1984, just 20 years after the end of selection, researchers were able to report, "comprehensive schooling is better and fairer".³ After analysing differences in attainment in schools in fully-comprehensive catchments between 1976 and 1984, they concluded that standards of attainment had risen overall, the increase was greatest among females and pupils of lower social class and that social inequalities in attainment had declined.

If we look at average levels of attainment in the Scottish Certificate of Education (SCE) from 1965 to the present we find a dramatic improvement in levels of attainment. Figure 1 (*see next page*) shows the decline in the proportion of young people who left school without achieving at least one SCE O-grade/ Standard grade award (at A-C/1-3) from 70% in 1965 to less than 20% in 1998. The decline is most rapid in the years following comprehensive reorganisation. In the period of selective schooling there had been an expectation that only the top 30% of the ability range were suitable to take SCE examinations, but once the barrier of selective schooling was removed, many more pupils were successful in the examinations than could previously have been thought possible. Similarly, there was a tripling of the proportion of school leavers achieving three or more Higher grade passes (the entry qualification for higher education).

A further measure of success is the high level of entry to higher education in Scotland. In 1998-99 the age participation index was 47% in Scotland compared to 29% in England.

The comprehensive system in Scotland: factors that contributed to its success

In Scotland comprehensive schooling has been introduced in a more whole-hearted manner than in England. By 1974, 98% of pupils in state-funded secondary schools in Scotland were in schools with comprehensive intakes. The rate of change in Scotland was rapid in comparison with the situation in England, where some local authorities opposed the reforms: just 82% of pupils

Figure 1 % of school leavers with no awards at O-grade/standard grade A-C/1-3

Source: Scottish Office/Executive (1992-99) Statistical Bulletins Edn/E2

in state-funded secondary schools were in comprehensive schools by 1980/81.

In Scotland a single model of all-through 12-18 schools was introduced which gave all schools equal status. Such schools were to provide courses for all six of the secondary school years, including courses for SCE O-grade and H-grade. This uniform model of comprehensive reorganisation contrasts with the situation in England, where six different models of comprehensive reorganisation were operated. In England a number of local authorities converted former secondary modern schools to comprehensive schools without a sixth form and former grammar schools to comprehensives with a sixth form. Inevitably, the pre-comprehensive distinctions between schools in public perceptions remained.⁴

In Scotland schools suffer less 'creaming' than schools in England. Each school has a geographically defined school catchment area and pupils living within the catchment are entitled to a place at the school. In many parts of Scotland this allows a close relationship between the school and the local community. Each comprehensive secondary school has a number of feeder primary schools and co-operative links are formed with respect to the 5-14 curriculum and transfer between primary and secondary stages.

Comprehensive schools in Scotland command very high levels of parental support. Middle class parents are happy to send their children to comprehensive school in Scotland because levels of academic success in Scottish comprehensive schools are high and levels of entry from

comprehensive schools to universities and other higher education institutions are also very high.

Since 1981, parents have been allowed to make a placing request for their child to attend a school other than their local school. If there is a place at the requested school, the placing request will be granted, but if there is competition for places the outcome is decided by the local authority according to specified criteria. However, the style of parental choice in Scotland has not had the same effect in differentiating schools as the open enrolment system in England. Whereas in England schools have been actively encouraged to compete for pupils and more prestigious schools have been allowed to introduce either overt or covert selection, in Scotland the homogeneity of schools has been maintained by the continuing strong influence of local authorities.

Conclusion

The research suggests that the more uniform system of comprehensive schooling in Scotland, that was introduced in a whole-hearted manner, has reduced social segregation and led to a high quality of education for the vast majority of pupils. In contrast, the introduction of comprehensive schooling in England was piecemeal and perpetuated a system of differentiated and socially-segregated schools. Open enrolment in England has exacerbated school differences. Middle class parents compete to gain access to the most privileged schools. Where there are differences between schools associated with selection, denomination or gender there are differences in social composition and resulting differences in average attainment. This evidence suggests that the proposed expansion of specialist schools in England will lead to greater social segregation and erode still further the comprehensive ideal. ■

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The effects of selective education in Northern Ireland

Tony Gallagher and Alan Smith

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Dr. Alan Smith is senior research fellow of the University of Ulster's School of Education and was appointed UNESCO Chair in Education for Pluralism, Human Rights and Democracy in 1999.

Abstract: *The high academic standards achieved by many grammar schools in Northern Ireland is balanced by the 'backwash' effect on primary schools and the low status accorded to secondary schools. Only limited gains have been made in enhancing educational equality. A Review Body has been established in Ulster to determine the "social, educational and economic objectives" young people should realise from their educational experience.*

AFTER the end of the Second World War, Northern Ireland followed the rest of the United Kingdom in adopting a tripartite system of grammar, technical and secondary schools for post-primary education. As elsewhere, this stabilised into a bipartite system of grammar and secondary schools, but the local parliament in Northern Ireland chose not to move away from this selective arrangement in favour of comprehensive education in the 1960s.

Due to the rising tide of political violence, the local parliament was abolished in 1972 to be replaced by direct rule from Westminster. Between 1976 and 1979 Callaghan's Labour government attempted to move Northern Ireland away from the selective arrangements, but this was halted by the election of the Conservative government. From this point the issue of selection was much discussed among educationalists, but had no place on the policy agenda. Approximately 90 per cent of young people were affected by the selective procedures, with about two-thirds of these taking the two 11+ tests which determined their post-primary destination. The other 10 per cent either went to one of the small number of designated comprehensive schools or participated in a small system of schools in the Craigavon area, where selection was delayed to age 14 years.

The issue re-emerged on the policy agenda after the election of the Blair

Labour Government in 1997. The minister with responsibility for Education, Tony Worthington, decided that any proposals for change should be based on informed discussion and debate. Towards this end, two research projects were commissioned, one on the delayed selection arrangements operating in the Craigavon area and the other on the impact of the ubiquitous 11+ arrangements. By this time the 11+ comprised two attainment tests, each containing items on English, mathematics and science.

The research on the Craigavon system was published in 1998,¹ while that on the selective system was published in 2000.² Following this, the Review Body on Post-Primary Education was established by the Minister of Education, Martin McGuinness, to consult with educational, business and community interests and bring forward recommendations for the future. An Educational Consultation Forum was established to allow the educational community to discuss issues pertinent to the review. Individuals or groups were invited to send written submissions to the Review Body and a total of over 1,000 separate submissions were received. Reports on the meetings and copies of almost all the written submissions and the research papers can be found on the Review Body's website, www.pprbsni.gov.uk.

The purpose of this article is to describe the main themes to emerge from the research into the effects of the current selective arrangements.

Selection research

The research into the 11+ arrangements looked at the dynamics of the system over the past 10 years. Over this period open enrolment and competition between schools were additional factors influencing the relationships between schools. In addition, the research looked at the impact of selection on a number of more specific domains including post-primary schools, pupil motivation and attitudes, teachers, primary schools, coaching and test preparation and public attitudes and perceptions of education.

The data collected and analysed for the study included:

- interviews with teachers and pupils in secondary and grammar schools drawn from across Northern Ireland;
- an examination of the inter-relationship between secondary and grammar schools within one area of Northern Ireland and comparison with schools in a similar area in Scotland;
- interviews, observations and pupil data on teaching and learning in primary schools;
- postal questionnaires on preparation for the Transfer Tests sent to every primary school in Northern Ireland;
- postal questionnaires to a sample of parents drawn from across Northern Ireland;

- focus group interviews with groups of parents, young people, employers and training and third level education providers;
- analysis of statistical data held by the Department of Education, the Department for Education and Employment, London, and the Scottish Executive Education Department; and
- reviews of research and policy on the organisation of schools in other European and OECD countries.

The evidence emerging from the research covered a range of themes:

Impact on primary schools

The 11+ is a 'high-stakes' test as it mediates entry to grammar school and affects future academic performance.³ Not surprisingly, therefore, the research found that the existence of the 11+ tests had a significant impact on primary schools.

The curriculum of the upper primary school was distorted by the perceived need to prepare pupils for the tests.^{4,5} Thus, for example, in English there was a focus on comprehension and a neglect of creative writing,⁶ while in science practical work was neglected in favour of the memorisation of facts.⁷

A survey of primary schools found that practically all of them provided some test preparation within school time, while almost half were aware of out-of-school coaching. This exacerbates social inequalities in the system as not all parents can afford to pay the rates of up to £15 per hour for this out-of-school coaching.⁸

Teachers reported that pupils were grouped on the basis of their expected test performance. This categorisation made many teachers feel very uncomfortable and they often found themselves in the dilemma of preparing pupils for whom the test was of little educational value, but whose parents were keen that the child be entered. Furthermore, teachers candidly reported that the needs of pupils not entered for the tests at all were often neglected in the period when test preparation was most intense.⁵

The most striking emergent finding was the fact that the existence of the tests seemed to organise so much of what happened in the last couple of years of primary education, when the test procedure was designed to meet the needs of a minority of these pupils. In addition, Gardner and Cowan⁹ identified significant technical problems with the 11+ tests.

Social differentiation

The social profile of pupils entering grammar schools differed from the profile of those entering secondary schools, with 68 per cent of the pupils entering grammar schools from non-manual backgrounds and 67 per cent of those entering secondary schools from manual backgrounds. In large part this was

explained by the fact that pupils attending primary schools with low levels of social disadvantage were almost four times more likely to obtain the highest grades on the 11+ tests.¹⁰

Impact of open enrolment

Since open enrolment, there has been a marked increase in the proportion of young people entering grammar schools as they have filled to capacity. However, the subsequent reduction in the proportion entering secondary schools has increased the pressure they face, not least because funding levels are based largely on pupil numbers. Thus, grammar schools have been relatively insulated from the negative affects of open enrolment.¹¹

Patterns of performance

A highly contested aspect of selective versus comprehensive systems concerns the impact on qualifications. In Northern Ireland grammar schools almost all 16 years olds pass five or more good GCSEs, while almost all 18-year-olds pass two or more A Levels and most enter higher education. By contrast, about a third of secondary pupils pass five or more good GCSEs and the range of post-school destinations vary quite widely.

Analysis of school level data suggested that the performance of grammar schools is mainly related to intake characteristics, as measured by 11+ transfer grades, followed by gender (more girls means higher GCSE results). By contrast, among secondary schools the main factor influencing school performance is the level of social disadvantage, as measured by the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals. Thereafter the proportion of girls and transfer grade profiles have an impact on performance.¹⁰

Analysis of individual level data suggested that the most important factor in achieving high GCSE results lies in gaining a grammar school place. Thereafter, factors linked to transfer grade, gender and social background have an impact. The 'added-value' of a grammar school place results from the combination of two elements: first, a grammar pupil will, on average, achieve a higher GCSE grade in comparison with a secondary pupil for each subject taken and second, the average grammar pupil will take more GCSEs than the average secondary pupil.¹²

This particular pattern of results is important in understanding the popularity of grammar schools. Most of the debate on the overall impact of

...the starting-point for discussion ought to be the social, educational and economic objectives young people should achieve from their educational experience.

systemic arrangements revolves around the issue of which system provides the highest aggregate level of performance. Interestingly, during the review process, advocates of selective and comprehensive arrangements both claimed this advantage for their preferred system. However, the pattern of results we found suggested that grammar schools provide the most secure guarantee of high academic results for those who go to these schools. It may be, then, that the parents of grammar pupils are less interested in the aggregate outcomes for the system as a whole than in the potential outcomes for their own children.

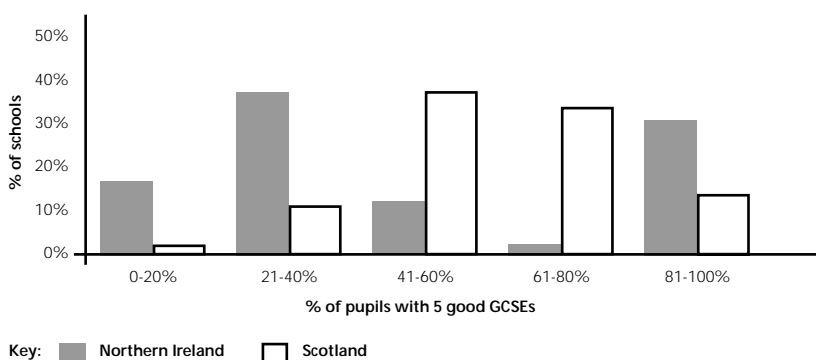
Impact on teachers

Teachers in grammar schools define their role mainly as the achievement of high academic standards. By contrast, teachers in secondary schools are required to meet a wide range of objectives simultaneously, but believe they are judged largely by society on academic criteria that cast grammar schools in a more positive light. One consequence is that grammar and secondary teachers often discuss the priorities of teaching and learning quite differently.^{5,13}

Comparative patterns

Differences were found when we compared the performance profile of a sample of comprehensive schools in England and all public schools in Scotland with all schools in Northern Ireland.¹⁴ Somewhat surprisingly, there was relatively little difference in the profiles of England and Northern Ireland, but there was a marked difference between the profiles for Scotland and Northern Ireland, with a lower level of differentiation in Scotland and a longer tail of low-achieving schools in Northern Ireland (see graph below).

Graph 1. GCSE performance patterns



Another aspect of the comparative evidence was to consider the effects of arrangements operating in other places.¹⁵ This analysis suggested that there were three main alternatives, that is, differentiated schools with common

curriculums and qualifications, differentiated schools with distinctive curriculums and comprehensive arrangements.

A strength of comprehensive systems is that they maintain opportunities and choices for a longer period in a pupil's educational career. A further strength is that the schools provide diverse pupil bodies from which some social benefits may be derived. However, the evidence available to the project suggested that they appear to limit the achievements of pupils of the highest levels of ability (although see the more recent work by David Jesson). Furthermore, if they practice rigid streaming among pupils on the basis of academic ability, then the potential social benefits arising from diversity are reduced,¹⁶ while if enrolment is based on catchment areas then the social composition will reflect the social status of residential areas and hence introduce social differentiation between schools.

A number of countries, including Germany, Austria and the Netherlands, use systems with differentiated post-primary schools that provide distinctive technical/vocational routes for pupils. There is some evidence to suggest that these systems appear to enhance the employability of pupils, mainly because of the greater confidence employers have in the skills and knowledge acquired by young people. In addition, most incorporate a higher degree of flexibility and pupil movement between all school types than is found in Northern Ireland. Parental choice plays a significant role in post-primary allocations, thereby implying that the different routes have more equal status than is the case in Northern Ireland. However, there are significant social differences between pupils following each route and different school types are accorded varying levels of status.

The most significant strength of the current selective system used in Northern Ireland lies in the high academic standards achieved by many grammar schools. As has been noted above, there are a number of significant weaknesses, including the backwash effect on primary schools, the extent and cost of out-of-school coaching, weaknesses in the links between the key stage 2 and key stage 3 curriculums and the lower status accorded to secondary schools. In addition, a selective system appears to produce a longer tail of low-achieving schools.

Conclusion

There has been a gradual shift towards more comprehensive systems across the OECD. This shift was partly motivated by a perceived need to enhance educational equality, although, in fact, only limited gains in this direction have been made. Common school systems promise flexibility and diversity and, in an ideal world, make it matter less which particular school a young person attends. On the other hand, the main advantage of differentiated systems, particularly those that involve distinctive academic and technical routes, is

that they provide clarity of mission for separate schools and appear to enhance the standing of vocational qualifications. In summarizing the comparative evidence, however, Gallagher¹⁵ concluded that while different structural arrangements provided greater or lesser constraints on schools, they did not of themselves guarantee particular outcomes.

On that basis we argued that a debate that simply revolved around school structures might unduly narrow the terms of the discussion, encourage the inaccurate view that significant problems are easily solved and lose sight of the broader purposes of education. We suggested that the starting-point for discussion ought to be the social, educational and economic objectives young people should achieve from their educational experience. The education structure that seems best placed to provide these ends could then be determined. This was the approach adopted by the Review Body, which began its process by seeking consensus on the principles which should provide the basis for judging any particular proposals for change. Its final proposals are due to be published in October 2001. ■

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Foundation schools – building on success: a view from FAVASA

Joan Binder

Joan Binder is chair of FAVASA (The Foundation and Voluntary-Aided Schools' Association), a governor of a community primary school and chair of governors of the Plume School, an 11–18 comprehensive in Essex. Until last year she was a part time teacher of geography. She is also chair of Essex School Organisation Committee.

Abstract: *The author looks at the development of foundation schools from a voluntary aided/foundation perspective. She notes the differences of responsibility between community and foundation schools in management terms, including the position of foundation schools as their own admissions authority. She also considers the culture of the foundation sector, which seeks to challenge the school, the LEA and the DfES.*

THE Foundation and Voluntary-Aided Schools' Association (FAVASA) represents foundation and voluntary-aided schools as the employer. It has equal representation of headteachers and governors from the primary and secondary phases on the national committee. It believes that this collegiality between headteachers and governors, in the same organisation, most effectively represents the working partnership that is a feature of improving schools.

Three main responsibilities differentiate foundation schools from community schools: the governing body is the employer and the owner of the premises and buildings and the school is the admissions authority. In addition, there is a noticeable culture of 'ownership' and 'independence' within foundation schools which seeks to challenge not only the school itself to improve but also challenges the assumptions and working practices of the LEA and, to some extent, the DfES. It is worth exploring what this means.

Characteristics of the foundation school culture

- A school which has a strong sense of identity, where strategic priorities are clearly articulated and communicated effectively to students, staff, parents and others in the surrounding area;

- A school which is outward looking not insular; which seeks to place itself in as wide a context as possible using the wealth of available data; which welcomes comparison with other similar schools wherever they may be; which recognises that other 'bodies' have a legitimate interest in how the school is performing and seeks to maintain a constructive dialogue with them;
- A school which is well-managed and well-led, where governors ask challenging questions and support the school to improve;
- A school which has the confidence to take the initiative in shaping its future;
- A school which has embedded self-evaluation techniques; which recognises areas for development and investigates a range of options before deciding the most appropriate way to address the concerns within its own strategic framework;
- A school which is open to new ideas and initiatives but always asks 'how do we make this work for us?' before introducing changes and is prepared to monitor closely and to adapt;
- A school where personal progress and success is important; and
- A school which is not afraid to challenge the practices of the LEA, particularly when they are counter to DfES guidance or what the school has identified as best value.¹

Foundation schools have found that not having a traditional LEA input, or 'ethos', into admissions, buildings or their relationships with parents and staff, has meant that decisions can be taken more quickly and more effectively. This has been particularly apparent in the field of dealing with incompetent staff, even of headteacher status – procedures are followed, but often a greater momentum is maintained outside the orbit of the LEA.

This is not to say that foundation schools are unwilling to co-operate; rather, they want to develop in an individual way, responding to the needs of the local community while placing the school in a context. We recognise that some of the 'characteristics' identified above are subjective and that even some foundation schools still have a legacy of a 'dependency culture' on the LEA, which makes them apprehensive about increasing self-management.

Identifying the differences between foundation and community schools

In *The Times Educational Supplement* of July 20th² there were three separate items that nicely encapsulate this divergence in attitude or 'culture' between community and foundation schools. The first was a letter from a community school which, challenging the practices of its LEA and dissatisfied with its impact on the school, sought information about changing status to a foundation school. Clearly this was a school with a strong sense of direction and identity and had the confidence to want to determine its own future. The

second was an article about a school that had voted to return to LEA control as a community school because it felt isolated and had failed to identify or address its shortcomings as a foundation school. The chair of governors was quoted as saying that the LEA would give the school greater support than they (the governors) could provide. This school clearly lacked the self-evaluating, self-determining culture of the foundation school.

The third was a letter from Graham Lane, chair of education of the Local Government Association, which missed the point about foundation status being an extension of the increasing self-management delegated to schools by the Government and asked “is there something wrong with local government being involved in education?” FAVASAs answer to this question is “no”, but there needs to be some progressive redefinition of the LEA to reduce the dependency culture, clarify and make more consistent the LEA role in the standards agenda and achieve greater consistency in resource allocation.

Key principles in achieving a redefinition of the role of the LEA

- There should be much greater consistency between LEAs and the way they interact with their schools. The principle of ‘intervention in inverse proportion to success’ has many interpretations, from a ‘core entitlement’ of one visit a year as stated on page 4 paragraph 21 of the latest edition of the *Code of Practice on Local Authority – School Relations*,³ to authorities which determine that ‘core entitlement’ will be three or five days worth of visits. Such additional visits often use up senior management time rather than add anything of value to the individual school.
- The monitoring role of the LEA is also subject to inconsistency. The *Code of Practice on Local Authority – School Relations* states that a wide range of routinely available information should be used. Many LEAs do just that but some then process that information using a methodology which schools themselves cannot replicate, to identify the local equivalent of ‘schools causing concern’. This may or may not accord with an OFSTED opinion.
- Headteachers and governors should carry the primary responsibility and accountability for school improvement and management of staff. We recognise that the LEA would have a major role in supporting and challenging failing or weak schools as identified above.
- Funding mechanisms should be fair and transparent without major variations other than to reflect factors such as educational disadvantage. Above all, the funding mechanism should deliver a much more consistent package to individual schools for the different key stages. The current discrepancies between key stage funding in adjacent LEAs is untenable in the context of a national service.
- There is a role for the local authority, as distinct from the LEA, in attending

to the needs of children before they reach the school gate, to enable them to reach their educational potential. This role should be focused towards the social and welfare needs of the child.

- The teachers' pay structure should be changed to improve retention, enable staff to progress to the threshold point more quickly and attract more good quality entrants to the profession at whatever stage in their working careers.
- There is a need to restructure the working year of schools to provide a more efficient and effective service. FAVASA supports the principle of a change to the school year, especially if accompanied by the 'fixing' of the Easter break and a rescheduling of the national assessments. It has serious concerns, however, about the practicality of many of the published suggestions for term six.

Foundation Schools – a continuing strategy for building on success

1. Funding

It is FAVASA's view that there should be greater security for schools in the matter of funding, that schools should be able to work with a five-year plan knowing how their budget was allocated and having confidence in the stability and transparency of the funding stream. Schools should be able to gauge what is likely to happen to their budget over this period, given their own particular circumstances of pupil numbers, deprivation and additional educational needs.

We have been pleased to be a part of the DfES consultation group for a future education funding strategy as outlined in the DETR Green Paper⁴ and wish to report a large measure of agreement between LGA representatives and our views on the need to take a positive look at the benefits of an activity-led approach to a new funding methodology. There is not quite the same level of agreement over the proposal to set up a 'Schools Forum' in each LEA. FAVASA's view is that this concept is a real opportunity to enable schools to work collaboratively and to take decisions about the principles that would determine, for example, the way in which SEN money would be delegated.

2. Earned Autonomy

FAVASA strongly supports the idea of increasing the self-management of schools by giving them greater freedom over the curriculum and teachers' pay and conditions. But they would have to earn this by demonstrating that they provide successfully for the educational needs of all their pupils, maintain and use the premises effectively and have good accountability procedures. We feel that foundation schools would be well placed to take advantage of this earned autonomy and, in consultation with the DfES and other bodies, we would welcome the opportunity to identify the criteria by which such schools might be judged.

FAVASA's vision of the LEA of the future

- There needs to be a much greater degree of consistency between the practices and procedures of LEAs.
- We envisage that responsibility for admissions co-ordination would remain with the LEA and that the Admissions Forum would be where a local consensus of satisfactory admission arrangements should be achieved.
- We strongly support the initiatives recently taken by some local authorities, for example Hertfordshire and Cornwall, in merging education and social services departments to create a child and family welfare service. This offers real prospects of addressing the chronic problems of communication between agencies and should mean that many disadvantaged pupils can be better prepared for schooling.
- By refocusing the role of the LEA and setting it up as 'the defender of the child', we believe that the Government could capitalise on the wealth of knowledge and expertise which exists in local authorities in relation to special educational needs.
- We would want to see some form of national funding entitlement for statemented pupils and the establishment of benchmarking criteria for the award of a statement which would apply on a national basis. We believe that the discussions in the Education Funding Strategy Group about the establishment of a Schools Forum could help to achieve this.⁵
- There is expertise in some LEAs where services have become independent consultancies, which foundation schools have found to be effective and value for money and are therefore 'buying into', sometimes out of the school's local area. This type of service provision could be enhanced with appropriate LEAs becoming centres of excellence.

FAVASA believes that foundation and voluntary-aided schools are well placed to build on success and is keen to be actively involved in discussions and consultations with other parties to achieve the vision set out in the Green Paper.⁶ ■

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Transformation not reform

Abstract: *The rate of change in education has increased dramatically over the last century yet the basic pattern of schooling remains the same. The system fails to release the creative potential of teachers, who face complex problems. The long-term problems of teacher supply and retention will not be solved unless there is a greater understanding of the profession's culture and its implications for change within the school system.*

THE school system in England and Wales needs to change. Over the past century, the pace of change has increased dramatically, yet the basic pattern of schooling remains much the same as it was 100 years ago. Above all, the education system fails to release the creative potential of the professionals within it. Too many teachers are demoralised by a system that does not harness or value all of their abilities, just as it fails to tap into the potential of too many disaffected students. In short, the system inspires too few people to teach in our schools.

The teaching profession faces a complex set of recruitment and retention problems. It is unable to recruit enough new teachers or retain enough experienced teachers to sustain itself in the long term. These serious problems could reach crisis point in the next 10 years, unless policy makers are able to understand the culture of the profession and how it is changing. The current generation of teachers, who entered the profession in the 1960s and 1970s, will retire in the next 10 years. This will place extremely serious demands on the school system irrespective of labour market conditions at the time. The challenge is to overcome both the cyclical and long-term weaknesses in the supply of high quality teachers through a detailed understanding of professional culture and its implications for change within the school system.

Low morale and teacher shortages are closely related. A system that fails to realise the potential of its professionals will neither attract nor maintain the very best talent. The danger is that teacher shortages, created by a lack of creativity in professional practice, place even greater strain on practising teachers and stifle creativity even further. The profession could be locked into

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a spiral of decline. The challenge is to identify practical policies that would release the creative energy of the teaching profession and attract more quality graduates, thus enabling teacher shortages to be avoided even in times of economic boom.

Change and the teaching profession

The need for change is clear, but the process of change is uncertain. Change can be either incremental or radical, and it can either be directed centrally or organic¹. The process of change can therefore be described in four ways:

- Reform (radical centralised change)
- Managerial (incremental centralised change)
- Transformation (radical organic change)
- Evolution (incremental organic change)

The teaching profession has been subject to reform in the last 20 years - most notably in relation to the National Curriculum, national testing, national inspection and the National Literacy and Numeracy strategies. More recently, there have been many managerial changes, namely the introduction of targets, performance indicators, performance related pay, increased inspection and audit. It is also possible to identify evolutionary change in schools and LEAs, where school improvement plans and delegated budgeting have empowered headteachers in particular to lead evolutionary change at a local level.

All forms of change are required if the school system is to adapt and change to its wider environment, but the radical change demanded by politicians and voters alike can only now be achieved if all schools develop the capacity to transform their own institutional cultures and structures. Currently, however, teachers lack the time to stand back, reflect and develop better ways of working as a professional staff team. Relentless pressure from external reforms and external accountability make it very difficult to change the institutional culture of schools.

National policies designed to enable this form of transformatory change include the beacon schools initiative, the specialist schools initiative, Education Action Zones and City Academies; but these policies have failed to address the needs of the majority of schools in the system. Only a minority of schools have been able to benefit from the extra capacity these policies provide.

Teachers' priorities for change

Earlier this year, Demos and the NUT conducted a postal survey and a series of workshops involving over 150 teachers in 10 schools across England and Wales. The focus was on identifying the profession's priorities for long-term change. We identified the following areas where the profession would prioritise change.

Teachers highlighted *excessive workload*, created by central and local government, as a key political issue to be resolved. They also identified their own *working environment* in schools as an organisational issue that needed to change. They identified the *status of the profession* as a cultural issue in Britain that affected their work adversely. Finally, they identified *investment* in schools and teachers as a key economic issue for enabling change.

Creating the capacity for radical organisational change requires a different relationship between teachers, government and wider society as well as improvements in the capacity of schools to utilise and share knowledge and resources. In order to achieve this radical organic change, all schools must develop the capacity for transformatory change that currently exists at the margins, such as City Technology Colleges or specialist secondary schools. This is now feasible because a framework of accountability has been developed which enables informed professional judgement to be exercised to a much greater extent than has occurred in the past.

However, the radical transformation of organisational form and culture must initiate an ongoing process of incremental organic change if teachers and students are to manage the pace of change in the global knowledge economy.

Centralised intervention

Teachers and students are experienced at adapting to external changes, especially those inspired by central government reforms. However, excessive centralised intervention has diminished the system's capacity to change itself and respond to wider changes that are beyond the comprehension or control of central government. The current school system in Britain is not enabling enough students or teachers to initiate change for themselves. The school system and the governance structures of the profession lack the capacity to achieve ongoing change, at a time when patterns of change are increasingly uncertain and the pace of change is intensifying.

The debate about change in education is occurring alongside debates, discussions and protests concerning crime, food production, multinational corporations, fuel prices, political apathy, racism, trades unions and the public sector, to name but a few. All of these issues are affected by major changes in the wider social and economic environment. The reason these tensions exist now is because individuals and groups feel that they are unable to adapt to such large changes in their wider environment - let alone lead, shape and control change in their own interest.

Redefining professionalism

Such is the current pace of change in the wider social and economic environment that teachers need to develop their own understanding, skills and knowledge continuously. There needs to be more opportunities for

reflection on practice, understanding latest research findings, linking initial teacher training to current practice and increased opportunities for learning from research and developments outside education. Expert teaching and expert learning are central to professionalism.

To receive qualified teacher status should no longer represent a career-long licence to practice within the profession. I believe it is a licence that needs to be constantly revalidated by continuous learning throughout each teacher's career. This changes fundamentally the nature of professionalism. The changes we have identified would mean that teaching would have to shift from a 'learned profession', to a 'learning profession'² or as one teacher put it:

"I think that teaching is a profession, and we need to re-educate ourselves all the time."

Professionalism would be defined as 'excellence in the acquisition and application of skills and knowledge', and membership of a profession would require evidence of continuous professional learning. Professional competency would be guaranteed not only by initial teacher training but also by evidence of continuous formal and informal development.

Professional development

This analysis places continuing professional development at the heart of teaching. We believe that the teacher-learner relationship can be transformed, once students recognise that their teachers are engaged in an advanced process of learning themselves. The teacher will not just be an authority in his/her chosen subject, nor simply command authority in the classroom. Teachers will be respected as a 'lead-learner' engaged in a parallel process of enquiry alongside the students.³ This is not to say that the teachers will be learning the same things as their students.

Teachers will be developing their knowledge and understanding, not just of their disciplines but also of teaching and learning. To this end, teacher unions should increasingly become advocates and providers of high quality professional development to members and non-members alike. An independent professional body should seek to assure the quality of training available to teachers, while a stakeholder model of funding should encourage contributions from central government, schools and individual teachers. Wherever possible, primary and secondary colleagues should be encouraged to attend joint development courses and undergo training across different disciplines. Management and leadership training should be delivered not only cross-phase but cross-sector, involving those outside education.

Every teacher should have an entitlement to choose the most appropriate training for his/her professional development. Moreover, all teachers should

take responsibility for their own learning, as the most effective way of revalidating their licence to practice as professionals. Teachers, teachers' unions and their professional body must take full responsibility for professional development. Once this is achieved, teacher-led transformation of the school system and transformation of the organisational culture of all schools will become a legitimate reality for the whole of the profession. ■

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2. I am grateful to Chris Yapp for his input here.
3. I am grateful to Dame Tamsyn Imison for her input here.

The Government Agenda for Secondary Educational Reform

Tamsyn Imison

Dame Tamysn Imison was headteacher of Hampstead School from 1984 – 2000. Her many publications include works on ICT, leadership and comprehensive schools. She is currently an education strategist and has recently begun a PhD course at the Institute of Education, investigating the impact of teachers as lead learners.

Abstract: *While welcoming many of the aims of Government policy, the author draws on several decades of experience as a teacher, governor and parent to celebrate the significant advance in educational standards that she has witnessed the comprehensive system achieve. Her experience at her own school, one of the first to gain specialist school status, subverted the 'specialist' label by delivering a broad and balanced curriculum enhanced by new technologies. She is concerned that the Government's policy of diversity between schools will create a new hierarchy of schools based on selection, when what is needed is diversity within schools to meet the needs of all children.*

MY PERSONAL response to the Government's second term education agenda is grounded on my experience as a school governor for over 40 years – first of a secondary modern school and then of three comprehensive schools. It is also based on my experience of teaching in comprehensive schools for nearly 30 years, including a number of years as headteacher of a true comprehensive, working with a strong team of colleagues in a school that prided itself on continually raising the attainment level and motivation for learning of all the students and staff. As a parent, I have also had experience of the drawbacks of the 11+ selective system and the benefits of the comprehensive system.

In 1998 I wrote to the Prime Minister as follows:

"I have long campaigned for state comprehensive schools which do, with strong leadership, quality teachers and good resourcing, ensure that all their children achieve their potential and value learning.

"I know that you are strongly committed to ensuring that all teachers become skilled and committed to raising the achievement levels of all their children. I fully support the measures you have put in to support this but I

hope you are alert to the serious dangers of a hierarchical system establishing itself that rejects a significant majority of children. There is more than enough rejection in the system at the moment and most parents do not get their preferred choice of school, This is also a major factor in the demoralisation of a significant number of headteachers and their staff.”

Tony Blair wrote back and said:

“I am grateful for your helpful comments which have been noted.”

Comprehensive Successes

I have no problem with this Government’s laudable ambition to raise standards, improve results, tackle disaffection and promote equality. This is just what all of us have been striving for, with success, in comprehensive schools – one of the major achievements of former Labour policy. We have been very successful. As Chitty, Edwards, Glatter, Maden, Pring, Tomlinson, West and Whitty highlight in their paper *Comprehensive Secondary Education – Building on Success*:¹

“by the usual indicators of effectiveness, standards have risen substantially.”

“Annual government statistics of attainment, examination results and participation in further and higher education are clear evidence of ‘levelling up’ over the last 25 years.”

However, I find it hard to understand why comprehensive schools remain under attack when all the evidence, as the above report illustrates, shows the vast majority are highly successful. Very few teachers are complacent. They have been skilfully managing ill-thought-out imposed changes for the last 20 years and still have had time to develop best practice which is always ahead of Government thinking.

To deliberately abandon a proven success and to embed in its place a hierarchy of selective schools ranging from grammar schools, voluntary-aided, church and specialist schools, which are in open competition with what have been derogatorily termed (and not retracted), ‘bog standard’ comprehensives and secondary moderns (which have to accept all the children actively rejected by the selective schools, often without the vital socio-economic mix of students that supports high achievement), does not appear to be the act of forward-thinking strategists.

Equality of access

If the Government creates an elite of 50% specialist secondary schools that will retain the option to select 10% of their intake, and thereby gaining significant

additional funding, then it must follow that the other 50%, which remain as non-specialist schools, will inevitably become the have-nots. This has important spin-offs for teacher recruitment, as we can already see, but far more significant is the impact this will and is already having on the life chances of the children passing through these under-funded, lower status schools. In large part these schools are already disadvantaged by being in deprived areas, often with a mobile or delicate staffing and/or student situation. To further handicap such schools seems to be totally against the principle of equity the Government wishes to adopt.

The Government is concerned that every school develops a positive and unique ethos that supports learning and maximises every child's capacity to develop. Specialisation in many places, where there is only one school, could mean that the children in that area would have to accept from the age of 11 a distorted and inflexible school curriculum instead of the broad-balanced curriculum as HMI proposed way back in 1985 in *The Curriculum from 5 to 16*.²

What is needed and wanted by the Government is diversity to meet individual needs within schools. This is something far more possible if all schools can use new technologies and develop flexibilities over groupings, both in their size and the support and management that go along with these. This is what was suggested in 1980 by the HMI in their publication *A View of the Curriculum*:³

“The curriculum has to satisfy two seemingly contrary requirements. On the one hand it has to reflect the broad aims of education which holds good for all children whatever their capacities and whatever schools they attend. On the other hand it has to allow for differences in the abilities and other characteristics of children, even of the same age. Within the broadly defined common curriculum, individual curricular programmes have to be built up year by year as children progress through school.”

Subverting specialist school status

Our school was one of the first to gain specialist school status. We applied for and desperately needed the money to convert an out-of-date old private boys' school shell into a modern curriculum delivery facility. We subverted the specialist intention by using it to deliver a broad and balanced curriculum enhanced by new technologies. Our major investment was in a community learning centre based upon the school library. We had in our mind the wonderful public library in Croydon.

We are monitored on our mathematics, science and technology results but our results across the whole curriculum are excellent because we valued and invested in all areas, not just a narrow spectrum. We prided ourselves on

developing all students' potential, not just the few who might, on a very narrow range of tests, appear to be more talented than the others. We never considered selecting 10% of our intake, despite having significantly more in the bottom band – 35% compared with 11% in the top band according to narrow reading scores and SATs /CATs scores.

Despite this, our expectations are very high and we still expect our students to achieve far beyond their predicted grades. In our experience, all young people have a vast array of talents and potential; high achievers in one area are very often high achievers across the whole curriculum and beyond. What we have found is that by having a true socio-economic mix all children benefit. Sometimes they may not realise this until much later, as some of our alumni have told us years after they have left school. Equity does not mean 'dumbing down' and it does not mean low expectations. It should never mean crude selection.

Systemic inequity

Selection is the grossest form of segregation, based on flawed judgements where only a few children are believed to have the capacity to achieve. In our tiny LEA with only nine secondary schools there are many inequities. There are 23 more forms of entry for girls than boys, which means that in the four mixed LEA schools the percentage intake of girls ranges from 44% (our school) to 20%.

There are two church schools for girls and two voluntary-aided schools, one for boys and one for girls. One church school admits a significant number of 'musically gifted' pupils as well as holding parental interviews and insisting on written applications. The two voluntary-aided schools also take significant numbers of 'musically gifted', particularly favouring players for their

Specialisation could mean that children would have to accept, from the age of 11, an inflexible curriculum...

orchestras. One of these schools also has an admissions test and can select the top of the top band for their intake. The other VA school which selects for music is a Languages College and can select an additional 10% of pupils as gifted linguists. The LEA girls' school is a Technology School and a beacon school and also has the right to select students. The LEA also loses 30% of children into the private sector. Such a system makes inequity systemic.

Selection and specialisation are devices for labelling young people from the age of 11. Selection and labelling predicts failure for the vast majority – you only have to talk to any of the vast majority of people who failed the eleven-

plus: anyone over 45 in this country who did not get into a grammar school. Since comprehensives were established, the best have been labelling young people up. They have been raising their self-esteem, telling them they *can* do not can't do.

We must have a *can do* society if we are to be successful as a nation. Rejection will reap a devastating toll. Sadly, even though the vast majority of schools in this country are comprehensive, public figures have consistently vilified these schools and denigrated their young people's real achievements. I remember when I first became a headteacher, a student came up to me and said "Well we are not as good as ... down the road", referring to a private selective school. No one at my school would say that now. They are truly proud of their school but this is the result of our talking up the school and rejecting the barrage of destructive, unfounded criticism.

Of course there are some schools, of all sorts, that have 'poor' results. However, I can think of no sector outside education with 100% success rates. In many cases, so-called 'poor' schools are those that are working with the truly poor and deprived, who often come from families with far lower life expectancies, appalling housing conditions and very poor employment options. This Government should be as it promised to be, tough on the causes of poor attainment and not blame those desperately trying to combat the worst of our society's ills in many under-funded and poorly maintained secondary modern schools.

High expectations

In our mixed comprehensive school we have been determined to eliminate barriers to life-long learning and set ourselves the challenge of transforming a 22% staying-on rate post-16 into a 100% staying rate, where we had turned no one off learning. We were concerned that all students and staff felt positive about their learning. We now have nearly 90% of our students staying on post-16 and although only 50% gain five A*-Cs by 16, at 17 this number rises to nearly 90% - not bad for a 'bog standard' comprehensive!

Of course we have been greatly assisted in our success by still retaining a fairly broad socio-economic mix but this may not be sustained if the creeping overt and covert selection continues. Our students' and teachers' success has been in part due to our expectation for all young people and colleagues to achieve well beyond their predicted levels of attainment and our ambitious 'DIM' goals (Demanding, Imaginative and Moveable) rather than insubstantial targets set because they would be easy to attain!

Another reason for our success has been the enthusiasm of colleagues in our school to learn themselves. For example, we established with the Institute of Education an in-house masters programme. This changed the climate of the school to one where teachers expect to reflect, evaluate and improve their

practice and to try new ways of capturing students' interest. Talking up learning and saying "do as I do" has been highly successful. It does not require specialism or selection to support a climate of learning. What it does require is the strong determination to ensure everyone can enjoy learning and achieve against the odds.

Good teaching, good talk about learning, sharing learning with students - all of these are factors in our success with a true comprehensive intake. This leads on to all of us enjoying being life-long learners and to many people wanting to join us. How long can this continue as the processes of competition and selection creep inexorably forward?

Today most people will have at least two career changes and 50% of people are in part-time or freelance careers. If this is the case, then the present and future needs of all members of society in such a rapidly changing world must be to be life-long learners who can turn their hands to anything. We no longer need or could know everything but we need to know how to find out and use changing information. We need to be broadly-based but able to use new technologies with ease.

Specialist schools were a device of the previous Conservative government who pretended to fund technologies while in fact only providing a tiny proportion of what was required. Bidding, in moderation, can be a useful exercise and we are now part of a bidding culture as the present government uses this to ensure money is targeted to good effect. However, this masks the fact that the majority of schools and children are denied vital resourcing for essential modernisation of the curriculum and of teaching patterns and structures.

I cannot believe that this Labour government can be contemplating continuing with such inequitable funding patterns, which deprive the disadvantaged in such vast numbers. Having recently visited Taiwan and China, I was very interested to see that these governments are moving away from specialist provision and providing a broad-based curriculum which provides technological training for all.

Challenges for Government

The real opportunity for the government in its second term is to support the internal transformations of the teaching profession and our schools. We do need to transform learning experiences and use new technologies to extend outside our own learning centres, to introduce on-line mentoring and other support to create opportunities for one-to-one, pair and small-group work as well as some far larger groups. Teachers need to develop as orchestrators as well as deliverers.

True change is achieved, as I know from experience, when the hearts and minds of those who work in a place are won over, because they strongly

believe in and support the changes. I saw this in my own school where colleagues planned, trained for and implemented a horizontal support system which ensured that children could have the opportunities and support to develop into active, challenging participators whose views counted and who had a range of experiences that developed their life skills. I saw this in the departmental teams when they embraced change, developed into lead learners as well as strong team players. I am sure that the National Literacy and Numeracy strategies have been successful because the profession wanted them.

One other thing I have also learnt over the years is to trust my professional colleagues. They do have the right ideas from years of intuitive practice and from sharing good practice both in and out of the school. It never hurts leaders to give credit to those who are the workers. Taking the power to the centre and taking the decisions and the credit away from those who implement school improvement is foolish. A strong leader is one who truly acknowledges, values and praises their colleagues. Such leaders still get the credit but they also raise the status of others and empower everyone. That seems to me to be the essence of good leadership. Let us hope the Government realises this before it is too late. They can then transform our class-ridden and hierarchical society into something everyone can feel proud of and own. ■

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A system of comprehensive schools or education for all?

Abstract: *The author parades an impressive group of writers and politicians in his support of grammar schools. He accepts that we have an academic elite in this country and one that is drawn disproportionately from the few remaining grammar schools. How many pupils from poor backgrounds, he asks, have been denied the academic opportunities their talents deserve because most major cities have lost their grammar schools?*

“On the education of the people of this country, the future of this country depends”

Benjamin Disraeli, House of Commons, 15 June 1874

WOULD first like to thank the NUT for their hospitality in inviting me to contribute to these pages. Speaking of hospitality reminds me of Archbishop Coggan, who said: “The art of hospitality is the art of making someone feel at home when you wish they were at home”. I hope that will not be your reaction when you finish this article!

Strands in the Debate

First, some fundamentals:

“There are differences in intelligence amongst children, as well as amongst adults. There are distinctions of mind and these are imposed by nature. I am afraid that that is a fact which we cannot get over. Children will be different in bent and in intellectual capacity. There is a purpose in education and that is to draw out and develop the best in every child. Because children differ in their intellectual make up, it seems to me that different provisions must be made...”¹

Thus:

“... equality of educational provision is not identity of educational provision

John Marks

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and it is important that there should be the greatest possible diversity of type amongst secondary schools.”²

But there are problems and unintended consequences in making such provision:

“During the late 1960s, many local education authorities in England and Wales retained selective academic secondary schools, but supplemented or replaced I.Q. and attainment tests by teacher assessment of learning potentiality; in every case the percentage of children from lower socio-economic status groups entering the selective schools fell.”³

Also:

“In the late 1960s, the state grammar schools and quasi-state direct-grant schools were intact and, together, easily outclassed the independent sector in terms of academic output. The proportion of public school educated undergraduates at Oxford was, for instance, on a steady downward path after the Second World War. In 1946, 65 per cent of male art students were from independent schools. By 1967, the proportion had fallen to 58 per cent. The pattern was even clearer with women, the share falling from 57 per cent of arts undergraduates in 1946, to 39 per cent in 1967. Yet, the next decade saw both these meritocratic pillars of the state school system collapse.”⁴

As time went on, there was increasing support for such fears:

“... that comprehensive education does not stretch and challenge children enough or provide them with the essential skills needed for survival in the modern world.”⁵

Other questions arose:

“Has the system sufficiently helped those it was designed to benefit – those who, in the old days, failed the 11+?... Why are working class children still not doing as well as their middle class peers? I am doubtful how far we should take socio-economic backgrounds as a determinant excuse.”⁶

Moreover:

“Selection should be reintroduced in secondary education. The main reason for advocating this is that we already have selection, according to income: those who can afford the fees pay for selective private education; those who

cannot go to non-selective state schools. This is manifestly unfair and a clear barrier to equality of opportunity.”⁷

“Grammar schools are the outstanding success of public education in this country. They act as beacons shining out so that all can see what can be achieved within the state system. ... Grammar schools are the surest way for talented children to get out of the ghettos that scar all too many of our inner-cities. Grammar schools have always played this role and continue to do so. Here, I declare an interest. I am the product of a grammar school and I know what it did for me.”⁸

“One of the big failures in British education, since the Second World War, is that one core ambition of the ‘watershed’ 1944 Education Act – to have a proper system of technical schools – was never delivered on. If local education campaigners need an issue, this is one to seize on: for the academically minded, a good academic education; for the most practical minded, a good technical education. This would be genuinely fair to all.”⁹

Finally, concerning the fundamentals of academic education:

“... one is dealing with children in whom one has to inculcate certain habits of diligence, precision, poise (even physical poise) ... the ability to concentrate upon specific subjects, which cannot be acquired without the mechanical repetition of disciplined and methodical acts. ... It is also true that it will always be an effort to learn physical self-discipline and self-control; the pupil has, in effect, to undergo a psycho-physical training. ...”¹⁰

This survey of the scene may be controversial, but the credentials of the contributors are impeccable, particularly in this company!

They are, in order:

- **Ellen Wilkinson**, Labour Minister of Education, 1946;
- **R H Tawney**, Professor of Economic History, London School of Economics, 1912 to 1950s;
- **Geoffrey Partington**, Australian Institute for Public Policy;
- **Andrew Adonis**, responsibility for education in Tony Blair’s Policy Unit at 10 Downing Street;
- **Stephen Pollard**, former Fabian Society Director of Research;
- **Neil Fletcher**, former leader of the Inner London Education Authority, 1987;
- **John Willman**, consumer industries editor on The Financial Times, 1992;
- **Frank Field**, Labour M.P.;
- **The Independent**, September 1999;

and last but not least:

■ **Antonio Gramsci**, Italian socialist, political theorist, and activist, 1891-1937.

Statistics

I do not have space here to cite a lot of statistics on attainment, but they are on the record already.¹¹ Nonetheless, some things are clear:

1. The unadjusted examination results for selective schools – grammar and secondary modern schools taken together – are superior to those for comprehensive schools, both in England, with a mixed system and in Northern Ireland, with an almost wholly selective system.
2. There are no studies that, after making adjustments for differences between pupils, have directly compared the results for selective and comprehensive schools and demonstrated that those for comprehensive schools are better.
3. There is direct evidence from our research and that of the DES in the 1980s, that after adjustments for differences between pupils, selective schools perform better than comprehensive schools. This conclusion is supported by indirect evidence, such as trends in national examination results and international comparisons.
4. There are indications, both from this country and abroad, that the existence of technical schools, alongside grammar and secondary modern schools, will enhance the performance of a selective system. It is not true, as is often claimed, that pupils in secondary modern schools are ‘written off’ and have no significant achievements to their names – on average, they do better than a third of all comprehensive schools in GCSE English and mathematics.
5. There is a great inconsistency at the heart of the arguments used to justify comprehensive reorganisation. In the early days of the policy, we were told that comprehensive schools were needed because selective schools held back many pupils, especially those from the lower social classes. More recently, massive efforts, albeit unsuccessful, have gone into trying to show that the poorer average results obtained by comprehensive schools can be explained by the lower social class of their pupils. This inconsistency seems to indicate an unfortunate but increasingly probable conclusion: the comprehensive revolution may have handicapped the education of the very people it was mainly meant to help.

A Personal Anecdote

I want to end on a personal note. My father was a lorry driver, keen that his sons should have the good education that he had missed; to my knowledge, he only wrote one letter in his life. My brother and I both went to a state grammar school and then to Cambridge, to read physics.

Thirty two years later, my son went to the same state school, now a

comprehensive. In the lower sixth, his chemistry teaching was good, but his physics and mathematics teaching were lacking, so I taught him physics and maths at home, to Cambridge scholarship standard. He got in, subsequently did well there and has done since.

The point of this story is not that the 'Marks family' did well, but that the grammar school gave my brother and me the schooling we needed. My father, like most parents then or today, could never have done it – whereas, 30 years on, I was lucky enough to be able to teach my son the way my grammar school had taught me.

How many other pupils, from poor backgrounds like mine, have been denied the academic opportunities their talents deserved because most of our major cities lost their grammar schools?

A Modest Proposal

At the moment, we still have an academic elite in this country, but one that is drawn disproportionately from the few remaining grammar schools and from the independent schools. It is very far from being an open elite.

I would like to end with a modest proposal. Let the Government double the number of grammar schools by establishing, perhaps, 40 grammar schools in Inner London and 40 more in Outer London, plus a dozen or so in each of six major conurbations – Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool, Newcastle, Sheffield and Leeds (not to mention Glasgow and Edinburgh, or Cardiff and Swansea). This is a modest proposal, because it would still leave us about 100 grammar schools short of the number we had in the 1960s.

That would be a true 'Excellence in Cities' programme – a step towards the recreation of an open elite and towards greater educational opportunities for all our pupils – for the many *and* for the few. ■

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International student assessment and its implications for schools

Ulf Fredriksson

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Abstract: *This article examines the PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) project, which will give comparisons of education in Britain with that in other countries. The PISA project has as its aim the collection of data on students' knowledge, skills and competencies in reading, mathematics and science for the OECD countries. It includes both curriculum-focused and cross-curricular elements so that broadly defined content areas, not narrowly defined subject matter knowledge, are assessed. PISA seeks to establish how well young people are prepared to meet the challenges of the future and whether they have the capacity to continue learning throughout life. It also seeks to establish whether some kinds of teaching and organisation are more effective than others.*

LAST spring, a number of British students, together with students from 31 other countries, took tests within what is referred to as the PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) survey. In December this year, the results from this huge international survey will be published and British education will be compared with the education of other countries.

Background

During recent years, there has been a growing interest in international comparisons between school systems. OECD (the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) has played a crucial role in providing such information. Since 1992, OECD has published the report, *Education at a Glance*. OECD indicators containing basic statistics on education in the OECD countries and some other countries. The latest edition of *Education at a Glance* was published in June 2001¹ and contained information on financial and human resources invested in education, access to education, participation, progress and other statistical indicators.

As a result of the growing interest in international comparisons, the latest editions of *Education at a Glance* have also contained information about student achievement. The basis for this has been the results from different IEA (International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievements) studies, such as *Reading Literacy* and TIMSS (originally, *The Third International Mathematics and Science Study* but now usually referred to as *Trends in Mathematics and Science Achievement Around the World*).

OECD has also started to organise its own studies. In the IALS (*International Adult Literacy Study*) studies²⁻⁴ reading competence in the adult population was examined. Some years ago, OECD took the initiative in starting the PISA project. This is a huge project to produce indicators on student achievement on a regular basis. OECD has contracted a consortium consisting of the Australian Council for Educational Research, The Netherlands National Institute for Educational Measurement (Cito), Westat Inc, and the Service de Pédagogie Expérimentale, Université de Liège (SPE) to organise the study.

The fundamental aim of the project is to collect data on students' knowledge, skills and competencies in reading, mathematics and science for the OECD countries. The data collection should include both curriculum-focused and cross-curricular elements so that broadly defined content areas, not narrowly defined subject matter knowledge, are assessed. According to a brochure presenting the PISA project,⁵ crucial questions for the project are:

- How well are young adults prepared to meet the challenges of the future?
- Are they able to analyse, reason and communicate their ideas effectively?
- Do they have the capacity to continue learning throughout life?
- Are some kinds of teaching and school organisation more effective than others?

In the first cycle of the Data Strategy, reading will be the major domain. The target population is students aged 15, the highest age at which enrolment in OECD countries is essentially universal. The data collection occurred in the year 2000 and data has been provided to the OECD Secretariat. The publication of results will occur in December 2001.

The data collected will be organised and presented as outcome indicators that will provide:

- basic descriptive statistics of students' achievement;
- information on the relationships between achievement and selected student level contextual variables;
- insights into school effectiveness; and
- information on trends over time.

The plan is to repeat the whole cycle in 2003 with mathematics as a major domain and in 2006 with science as a major domain.

Earlier international studies

Comparative research in the field of student achievement is not a new area. The leading agent in this field has been IEA. The organisation was created in the late 1950s and is an international association of research institutions, universities and research units at ministries of education. One of the main objectives of the organisation has been to promote educational research using a comparative framework drawing on the world as an 'educational laboratory'. Over a period of more than 30 years, IEA has organised a large number of major international comparative studies. Several studies have been organised on mathematics, science and reading.

The first mathematics study was organised in 1964, the second in 1980 – 1982 and the third in 1994 – 95. Studies in science, were organised 1970 – 1971, 1983 – 1986 and in 1994 – 1995. The study in 1994 – 95 dealt with both mathematics and science and is referred to as TIMSS.⁶⁻⁸ The TIMSS study was repeated in 1999, in what is called TIMSS-R (TIMSS repeat), to make it possible to make comparisons over time and to allow new countries to participate in the study.⁹⁻¹⁰ The latest edition of *Education at a Glance*¹ contained a comparison of the TIMSS results from 1995 and the TIMSS-R results from 1999.

Reading studies were organised in 1970 – 1971 and in 1990 – 1991. The IEA-literacy study in 1991 tested reading comprehension among students aged 9 and 14.¹¹ IEA is now in the process of organising a new reading study, PIRLS (Progress in International Reading Literacy Study).¹²

IEA has also covered several other subjects; literature (1970 - 1971), English as a foreign language (1971), French as a foreign language (1971), civic education (1971) and writing (1985). In recent years IEA has shown a growing interest in computers in education. Studies in this field were carried out in 1989 and 1992. A new study on computers in education, called SITES (The Second Technology in Education Study) has been organised. Civic education has been examined in the project CES (Civic Education Study). There is also a project on early childhood education, called PPP (Pre-Primary Project).

What is new about PISA

What is new about the PISA project, compared with earlier international student assessments, is its size and scope. Earlier projects have generally been a one-occasion event, but PISA is an ambitious programme organising international student assessment over a period of at least six to seven years. PISA is also the first international study of students' achievements, which has been commissioned directly by OECD and the first large international study of this type that is not organised by IEA.

Another new aspect in the PISA project is the way in which different domains have been defined. Unlike other projects PISA has not focused on comparing and analysing national curricula to define its domain. PISA has instead aimed to define each domain not merely in terms of mastery of the school curriculum, but in terms of what have been considered as important knowledge and skills needed in adult life. According to the description of the PISA project, the assessment of cross-curricular competencies is an integral part of PISA and emphasis is placed on the mastery of processes, the understanding of concepts and the ability to function in various situations within each domain.¹³ Or, as the same ideas are expressed in another PISA text:

“...the PISA assessments will go beyond mastery of a defined body of knowledge of the type included in many school subjects”⁵

A central concept in the PISA project is literacy, which is used in a broader meaning than being able to read. The PISA project talks about three types of literacy; reading literacy, mathematical literacy and scientific literacy. Reading literacy is defined as:

“The capacity to understand, use and reflect on written texts, in order to achieve one’s goals, to develop one’s knowledge and potential, and to participate in society”

Mathematical literacy is defined as:

“The capacity to identify, to understand, and to engage in mathematics and make well-founded judgements about the role that mathematics plays, as needed for an individual’s current and future private life, occupational life, social life with peers and relatives, and life as a constructive, concerned and reflective citizen”

And the definition of scientific literacy:

“The capacity to use scientific knowledge, to identify questions and to draw evidence-based conclusions in order to understand and help make decisions about the natural world and the changes made to it through human activity”.¹⁴

What will be the implications of PISA for school assessment?

What the implications of the PISA study will be in the future is difficult to say and depend to a large extent on how the first PISA report will be received. The

PISA study may have no implications at all for school assessment in the future, but it could also become a permanent feature in school assessment in addition to national systems for assessment.

Experiences from some countries show that results of international tests can have a great impact on national educational policies. Swedish students scored poorly on the IEA tests in mathematics in the early 1980s. This led to a discussion in that country on the quality of education and to several concrete actions in order to improve achievement in mathematics. The bad results were referred to so often that better results in later studies never had the same impact on public opinion. Denmark had a similar experience in the early 1990s when Danish students did not score well on the IEA reading tests. Danish school authorities have invested time and resources in improving

reading instruction in Danish schools at the same time as a general impression has been created that Danes do not read well. Obviously, international comparative studies could have an impact on a country's self-image and they contribute to producing perceptions that can be difficult to change later. It could

Instead of accepting the national curricula as relevant educational goals, PISA is defining its own goals. Is this good or bad?

perhaps be assumed that small countries like Sweden and Denmark are more sensitive than many other countries in this respect. On the other hand, it can also be observed that in the USA, which has participated in almost all international studies in mathematics and science, every study has triggered off a discussion about a crisis in education.

In the long run it is likely that PISA, as well as other international studies, will add a new dimension to school assessment. It will be easier to compare and to be compared with other countries. When students' achievements and the quality of education are discussed an international comparative element will always be present. This may have an impact on how public opinion will regard the quality of education and will influence how politicians will set educational priorities.

The specific methodology used to construct the tests within the PISA project could have a further implication. When the PISA project says that what is tested is not the mastery of the school curriculum, but what the PISA experts have considered as important knowledge and skills needed in adult life, this is a polite way of saying that many national curricula are irrelevant. Instead of accepting the national curricula as relevant educational goals, PISA is defining its own goals. Is this good or bad? The answer depends on how we regard the national curricula in the OECD countries and what we think about the philosophy behind the PISA project.

If many educationalists regard national curricula as not relevant and the

PISA approach, with its emphasis on a broad literacy concept and the acquiring of new knowledge and skills through life-long learning as a better alternative, we may see some developments in the area of both curricula and assessment in the years to come. If it is the other way around, it is questionable if the PISA study will survive through all its three cycles. ■

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Schools : Building on Success –*

A personal response

Christine Whatford

Christine Whatford is director of education of the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham. She was previously a teacher for 14 years and headteacher for six years.

Abstract: *This paper looks at the issue of selection from a local authority perspective. The author begins with the Green Paper, which she describes as a cleverly finessed party manifesto. Yet it still allowed a wide range of people to be broadly supportive of its ideas. The author looks in detail at four areas: specialist schools, the role of the LEA, the central position of teachers and greater delegation. She concludes by wondering whether the present government is replacing the traditional route to compulsion by legislation with the use of financial sticks and carrots. Those who follow the supported view get extra resources. Those who do not are ineligible for extra funds.*

WAS originally asked to write this article on the implications of the Green Paper, *Schools* : Building on Success*¹ by the end of July. Two weeks before the deadline, I rationalised the fact that I hadn't put pen to paper, by thinking how much better informed the article would be for waiting until the Green Paper became a White Paper the following week. Of course, the following week saw the postponement of the White Paper until September and therefore I had no option but to return to the Green Paper as the basis of my text, although not entirely, because it seems reasonable to look, not just at the Green Paper, but at the various reactions, announcements and events that have taken place since its publication, that might give us some clues as to what we may finally expect in the legislation.

Schools* : Building on Success

Let us begin with the Green Paper. It was not just a Green Paper but a cleverly finessed party manifesto, including the large sum of money paid for the asterisk on the cover. The theme of the Green Paper was the transformation

(spawning the adjective “transformational”, so beloved of Michael Barber) of secondary education. This was to be achieved through more diversity, more faith schools, more specialist schools, more beacon schools, more City Academies, more delegation to schools and private or voluntary sector take-over of failing schools.

These would be accompanied by reform of the 14 to 19 curriculum into academic and vocational pathways (how many versions of that have I heard during 35 years in education?); early entry to GCSE, numeracy and literacy strategies at key stage 3 and, of course, targets, more targets at key stages 2 and 3 and GCSE. (Let no one dare ask the question as to how realistic it is to go on relentlessly year-on-year, forever demanding percentage improvements across the board, particularly as we get nearer and nearer to 100%).

Having said all of that, my initial overall response to the Green Paper was that it was written in such a way that it allowed a wide range of readers to feel broadly supportive of what it said. No one could disagree with the overall aim of continuing to focus on raising standards. It is not surprising or problematic that, given that the Government in its first term of office concentrated on the primary sector, the focus should shift to secondary in its second term of office. There was not enough written about exactly how the shopping list of measures listed above would be implemented in practice, to really get one's teeth into in terms of discussing the pros and cons. As ever, the devil will be in the detail.

Specialist schools

I have picked out four specific aspects of the Green Paper to comment on. Firstly, specialist schools. The Green Paper recommended increasing the number of specialist schools to 1,000 by 2003 and 1,500 by 2006, which would be more than doubling the current total. Alistair Campbell, on the day of the launch, made his infamous remark about “bog standard comprehensives”. Virtually everybody made the obvious point ‘what about the other 50% who are not specialist schools?’ and Tony Blair quickly made a follow up speech saying that there was no reason why all the schools should not be specialist schools, provided they met the criteria.

The faith that the Green Paper places in specialist schools was based on the rationale “we want to encourage all secondary schools to develop a distinctive mission and ethos”. That is a basic premise with which I wholeheartedly concur. As an ex-secondary head who was required to turn around a failing school, I strongly believe that being clear and up-front about what the school stands for and believes in and having all the stakeholders (pupils, parents, staff, governors, local community) fully signed up to that mission and ethos is key to having a successful school. Indeed, it is equally applicable to a successful LEA or a successful private sector business. However, I do not believe that you have to have a specific subject specialism or even a religious

commitment as the basis of that mission or ethos. To do so may offer the ethos 'ready made', so to speak, but it is equally possible to develop it from within each school community.

In any case, we need to look closely at the evidence to judge whether it is actually the special mission and ethos of specialist schools that have delivered better academic results. Research published by Stephen Gorard and Chris Taylor of Cardiff University² after the Green Paper was published suggests:

- a) The definition of 'specialist school' has changed so much over time and the prior or continuing status of each school (voluntary-aided, grant maintained, selective, modern, community) alters the impact of the specialisation. It is difficult, therefore, to assess in a simplistic way the likely drawbacks and advantages of increasing the proportion of specialist schools.
- b) If schools are specialist, selective or control their own admissions, the socio-economic segregation of school intakes tends to increase and, where two of those three characteristics exist, this tendency is far stronger.
- c) It would involve a considerable increase in per capita resources across the board to achieve for all (or even half) the secondary schools, the physical facilities, higher salaries, more favourable staffing ratios etc, enjoyed by some of the specialist schools.

Evidence-based policy making would suggest, therefore, that simply increasing the number of specialist or faith schools would not, by itself, be sufficient to raise standards and could be counter-productive in terms of equity if it leads to a polarisation between the advantaged and the disadvantaged.

The role of the LEA

The second issue I have picked out, for obvious reasons, is the role of the LEA in raising standards and how this might be affected by the proposals in the Green Paper. The LEA has a duty to improve standards, as written on the face of the 1998 School Standards and Framework Act and spelt out in the Code of Practice on LEA-School Relations. However, this hardly gets a mention in the chapter on secondary schools in the Green Paper.

It is universally accepted now that this is a core part of an LEA's business, particularly in relation to preventing and/or dealing with failure. Much is made in the Green Paper of the contribution to improving failing schools to be made by more City Academies, faith schools etc and there are new proposals which will allow complete privatisation of failing schools. Presumably, the expectation is that the private sector will succeed where others have failed.

I have no problem with the mantra, 'what matters is what works' but let us not throw out the baby with the bath water. The Green Paper acknowledges that 80% of failing schools have been successfully turned around and 80% of

the remainder have been closed. It needs to be acknowledged that this has been done as a result of a great deal of hard graft by those schools working very closely with their LEAs and, in the case of Church schools, their diocese, in a joint endeavour. That is rightly the job of LEAs, which should be the main stay of preventing and remedying failure in schools in our communities.

That does not mean that no one else will ever be involved, but the balance in the Green Paper is not right in giving the impression that the solution to failure primarily lies outside LEAs and with the private or voluntary sector. There should have been some recognition of the success that LEAs and schools have had in bringing about improvements and turning around failure and the new proposals should be put forward in a context of assisting this still further, rather than replacing it.

Teachers

There is a welcome recognition in the Green Paper of the centrality of teachers.

“The teaching profession remains at the heart of all our proposals.”

It also includes a list of measures that Government has taken to try to improve teacher recruitment, which is never easy in a time of economic growth. These include, for some teachers, training salaries, golden hellos, exemption from tuition fees, returners’ courses and retention bonuses. It was therefore a great disappointment to the London LEAs, whose Directors I represent as Chair of the All London Chief Education Officers group, that none of the extra money made available for recruitment and retention of teachers in the budget was given to local authorities to use strategically but rather had to be delegated to schools based on a formula that was roll-related rather than needs-driven.

The problem of recruitment and retention in London is bigger than any individual school or LEA can deal with and, therefore, we are arguing strongly for a strategic pan-London approach. Apart from anything else, without this we will all simply be poaching from each other when what we need to do is maximise the supply of teachers available across the capital. In addition, if we don’t have teachers in classrooms, all the other excellent national strategies and initiatives, such as Excellence in Cities, will be undermined. The standards agenda itself will be at risk.

Increased delegation

The fourth point I query is the relentless drive for further delegation, which appears, yet again, in this Green Paper. Once again, I ask the question “where is the evidence base for the policy of pushing this still further?” We have already reached the point where we have been forced to delegate money, which schools don’t want us to, in order to achieve our target percentages on delegation.

Even those of us negotiating Public Service Agreements, where part of the deal is that we can ask for extra freedoms and flexibilities in return for stretching our targets, have been told that we are not allowed to ask for any variation in delegation percentages. Of course the majority of money should be delegated to schools, but if LEAs are to play an increased role in providing the strategic framework and direction and making 'joined up' government a reality locally, which delivers for schools, we need the resources to do it.

However, the big issue for me is, how will the generality of the Green Paper be translated into specific proposals in the White Paper? The key issue will be to what extent the shopping list of new ideas will remain for voluntary take-up by schools and LEAs or whether and to what extent there will be compulsion built in. Encouraging schools to be specialist is one thing, compelling them to be is another – and quite another would be privatised specialist schools outside the LEA. And, of course, there is compulsion and compulsion.

The overt way to compulsion is through primary legislation, but it may simply be through the use of financial sticks and carrots, i.e. either making offers of extra resources that schools and LEAs find it very difficult to refuse or making schools and LEAs ineligible for resources if they don't follow a particular path. Similarly with faith schools: I was a member of the Dearing Committee and if I made any contribution at all, it was to the very clear line that the report took that no faith school should be set up against the wishes of the LEA. I wonder whether that tone will be reflected in the coming Education Bill. We will have to wait and see. ■

References

1. DfEE, Schools*: *Building on Success: Raising Standards, Promoting Diversity, Achieving Results*, HMSO, 2001.
2. Gorard S. and Taylor C., *Specialist Schools in England: Track Record and Future Prospect*, Cardiff University School of Social Sciences Occasional Paper 44, 2001.

The Work of the Sutton Trust

Abstract: *The Sutton Trust is a young educational charity. Its aim is to provide opportunities for able non-privileged students whose life chances are hampered by our education system. The Trust has already made a difference, by piloting interesting projects, giving the ideas a chance to develop, evaluating them carefully and encouraging others, often the Government, to take them up. In this article the author explains the work of the Trust.*

HOPE this article might encourage you to help the Sutton Trust in our work. It might make you think of a student in year 12 who could benefit from a free week's summer school at one of four leading universities, or you might feel that you would benefit from a week's in-service course, specifically for secondary school teachers, at Oxford University. Let me outline what we do and perhaps you will then let us know of new projects that we might be interested in supporting.

Summer schools

It all began in July 1997. That was the week when we sponsored the first summer school for 64 students at Oxford University. The students had good GCSEs, were drawn from comprehensive schools that had sent few, if any, students to Oxford and came mainly from homes where neither parent had gone to university. Travel, board and lodgings and all but pocket money expenses were paid for by the Trust. Oxford University supplied the lecturers, the administrators and mentors from among the existing student body.

The week included seminars and lectures in students' chosen subjects by some of the staff who would teach them if they became first year students. Workshops, tutorials and social events were organised to replicate university life as much as possible. We aimed to debunk the myth that top universities are snobby.

It really worked. Here they were, those 64 students, living through an experience which was dispelling the myth that Oxford was the home of 'posh'

Peter Lampl

Peter Lampl is Chair of the Sutton Trust. Further information, including guidance on grant application, can be obtained from the Sutton Trust web site (www.suttontrust.com) or by telephone (020 8788 3223).

institutions not to be touched with a punt pole. As I joined in the activities and dined with the students, I knew and could see in their faces that I was doing some good. One year later, one quarter of them – 16 who would probably have never aspired to Oxford – were offered places. Fourteen accepted the offers and some of these are finding out about their final results as I write.

The following year we funded an expansion of the summer schools to three other universities – Bristol, Cambridge and Nottingham – and we now fund 650 places per year for students at the four universities.

Monitoring

Every year we ask the National Foundation for Educational Research to monitor the summer schools. The latest evaluation of some 800 students shows that at least a third are accepted by the university where they go to summer school and most of the others go on to other leading universities. Students find the experience life-transforming. Their teachers report that they come back the next term highly motivated to do better in their studies because they can see a clear but challenging goal ahead. However, the benefits are not just confined to the students who attend those summer schools. We have found that there are increased applications from the schools from which the students come: relationships are formed between schools and universities which last for years.

The really important part of the recent NFER evaluation is that it shows that students who have no educational inheritance, (i.e. neither of their parents went to university) and who attend a summer school, have the same chance to go to a leading university as a student with equivalent academic qualifications from a home where at least one parent is a university graduate. In other words, it has the effect of compensating for social disadvantage.

Government and other summer schools

The Government has been so impressed by the success of the summer schools that it has adopted the model across the country for year 11 students, linked to the Excellence in Cities initiative. This year there were Government-sponsored summer schools for 6000 students at 60 universities.

We have seen what we started as being a pilot taken up by others. A recent survey by Universities UK has found that summer schools are now widespread and are becoming part of most universities' mainstream activities. This was not the case four years ago when we adopted the idea from good practice at leading American universities.

Last summer, with the Government as the major funder, we sponsored summer schools in six more universities (Bath, Derby, Imperial College London, Lancaster, Liverpool John Moores and Surrey) for 350 students, directly targeted at students in colleges of further education. Priority was again given to students from non-privileged backgrounds.

Teacher in-service training

Students' lack of aspiration is known to be one reason why they do not apply to university, particularly to the leading universities whose alumni fill most of the top positions in society. However, teachers too have a vital role to play in raising aspirations. Therefore, as well as summer schools for students, we have for the past four years been funding an in-service training week at Oxford for up to 125 teachers from the state sector. Priority is given to teachers from schools with limited experience of submitting candidates to leading higher education institutions. The week gives teachers a chance to recharge their batteries, to get exposure to recent academic research in their specialist subjects and to discuss issues around the admissions process with those involved at the university. Another opportunity to confront and debunk some myths!

Other obstacles

The system of determining student places on predicted results does not make sense. The Trust supports recommendations to move examinations to earlier in the school year, to give space in the summer for an admissions process in which all AS and A2 results would be known. It would dramatically change the balance of power in favour of the student.

I also think the complete reliance of university entry on AS and A-level results is unfair. We have researched the feasibility of complementing A-levels with a parallel test measuring potential as well as achievement, borrowing a further idea from the United States – the Scholastic Assessment Test (another SAT!). Initial results show that such a test would help the admissions process and we are encouraged by the reaction of some universities who are keen to help to pilot it further.

Early years

At this point, many of you, particularly in primary schools, may be saying: "Too late. Children's life chances are determined much earlier". The Trust agrees it is important to start early but we don't think that this precludes effective action at a later stage in the education process.

The activities of the Trust do extend downwards. For example, we support a number of organisations in London, Birmingham, Hampshire, Oxfordshire and South Wales which run parenting courses. Our interest in early years has coincided with renewed interest in this age group from the Government, emphasising the fundamental role played by parents.

Primary school projects

The Trust is also very interested in projects for able primary school children. We have supported the National Primary Trust in developing a national network of Advanced Maths Centres. We fund masterclasses to help bright

youngsters to fulfil their potential - for example, Longhill School in Brighton and Hove offers classes in ICT, technology and science. The Belvedere, an independent school in Liverpool, hosts extra classes for local state primary school pupils, offering high level challenges and curriculum enrichment. A similar idea is behind our latest appointment, a curriculum enrichment officer based at my old school, Pate's Grammar in Cheltenham, whose job is to work with able children in primary schools in the poorer areas of the town, to persuade them to apply to Pate's and to help them get in.

Educational apartheid

Having spent most of my working life abroad, I am horrified by the apartheid in our educational system. There is a huge disparity in resources between the independent system, which invests in small classes and a great deal of the state system, which suffers from lack of staffing and over-large classes. The two sectors develop separately to a very great extent.

The gap will never really be fully bridged until many more resources are put into the state sector and some of our leading independent schools open their doors to children whose parents cannot afford to pay the fees.

I did not set out to become a philanthropist. I became one out of a sense of outrage at the truly astonishing advantages that wealth can buy in the British education system. These are without comparison in any other advanced country and the result is that talented students at thousands of state schools and colleges across the country are not advancing as far as they should.

Independent/state schools partnerships

The excellence of our best independent schools should be encouraged and emulated. I am not anti-independent school and do not believe they should be abolished. I do believe, however, that they should be encouraged to share their facilities and their expertise with the wider community. I also believe that independent schools can learn a great deal from initiatives in state primary and secondary schools. That is why I am a firm believer in partnerships between state and independent schools. In the first year we helped the Government to fund 50 partnership projects involving 15,000 students. This has now become an established Government programme and, to date, more than 50,000 students have benefited from these partnership schemes.

These go a little way to bridging the gap. The gap will never really be fully

bridged, though, until many more resources are put into the state sector and some of our leading independent schools open their doors to children whose parents cannot afford to pay the fees. To demonstrate this last point, the Trust is funding, with the Girls' Day School Trust, 'open access' at The Belvedere Girls' School in Liverpool. All the places at this independent school are now open to all girls in the city on merit, irrespective of their parents' ability to pay the fees. Open access is working well and we would like to see others, particularly central government, following it up.

Our mission

The aim of providing educational opportunities for children and young people from non-privileged backgrounds is a broad and challenging one. The Sutton Trust has, in a short time, been proud to be involved in a number of exciting projects, but there remains a huge amount still to do. If you have interesting project ideas in which we might be interested, please contact us. I look forward to hearing from you. ■

Book reviews

PROMOTING COMPREHENSIVE EDUCATION IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

Clyde Chitty and Brian Simon (Eds)

Trentham Books 2001 £13.95 ISBN 185856 2538

Tony Benn rightly endorses this book as “essential reading for all those who care about the future of our schools”.

The book is a collection of papers based on talks given at the conference ‘Promoting Comprehensive Education in the 21st Century’, held in February 2001. Contributors to the book range from academics to practitioners.

Clyde Chitty proposes that New Labour has taken the Conservative Party’s policy of ‘selection by specialisations’ and under the guise of modernising the comprehensive principle is “effectively destroying it”.

He argues that there is now more actual selection in the education system than existed in the immediate post-war period. In the case of specialist schools, he believes that there is no such thing as parity of esteem. Since specialisms can never be equal, Chitty argues that selection by ‘aptitude’ has become a convenient code-word for ‘academic ability’.

Geoff Whitty logically outlines how New Labour’s belief in a meritocratic model of society is being realised by its ‘modernisation’ of the education system. He asks what New Labour actually stands for in terms of its commitment to comprehensive schools.

As a model of good practice, Whitty gives the example of the New Community School initiative in Scotland, which draws on the experience of the Full Service Schools development in the USA. This might be a better model of comprehensive education, incorporating school-based services and community involvement in schools.

The concept of the community school is developed further by Geoff Carr, who describes a school becoming the centre point for a wide range of services, including social services, housing, support groups, youth services and health advisory services.

Mike Davies describes the impact of testing on students in schools and states that defining young people by levels and numbers will narrow their life opportunities and impose a glass ceiling on their human development. This can be alleviated by reducing external examinations and the subject-dominated curriculum. This move away from the ‘strait-jacketed’ curriculum

is seen as one of the main challenges to comprehensive education.

Richard Hatcher clearly outlines the relationship between privatisation, schooling and New Labour and asks the critical question of what renewed forms of democracy will be needed at national, local and school levels to “protect public need against private profit”.

One of the most interesting observations in the book, how New Labour is finding it difficult to take the teaching profession with it as it propels its education agenda forward, is pursued by Ken Jones. The Government’s “hostility to difference” is, he says, dealt with both practically and ideologically by Michael Barber, the previous Head of the Standards and Effectiveness Unit. He concludes that trying to maintain strict control on the teaching profession when imposing change will always cause resentment and will be the Achilles’ heel of any “planner’s dream”.

This book is an inspiration and will stimulate debate about the future of comprehensive education.

HELEN HILL

THE SENCO AS TEACHER AND MANAGER: A GUIDE FOR PRACTITIONERS AND TRAINERS

Frances Jones, Kevin Jones and Christine Szwed

David Fulton 2001 £15.00 ISBN 1 85356 713 8

This is another useful addition to the David Fulton series of practical, interactive handbooks. It will be of great value to SENCOs, as well as to advisory staff and special educational needs trainers. It is written as a training manual, to be used by individuals or within schools’ staff training programmes. Activities linked to each chapter are provided at the back of the book and can be photocopied or downloaded from www.fultonpublishers.co.uk

Reflecting the dual role of the SENCO, the book is split into two sections. Part 1 focuses on ‘Managing Learning’ and Part 2 on ‘Managing People’. The authors argue that a SENCO is more than just an equivalent to a subject leader and also works closely with a range of services outside schools, as well as parents, which requires an awareness of legal matters. Within school, the SENCO has a cross-departmental role, as well as making representations to school governors and influencing whole school policies.

Part 1 deals with ‘The role of the SENCO’; ‘Planning for Special Needs’; ‘Teaching and Learning’; and ‘Supporting Progress in Literacy’. Surprisingly, there is no mention of numeracy. Established teaching methods are probed and opportunities for new approaches are explored. There is a useful list of learning styles to consider alongside the variety of teaching styles needed to

accommodate them.

Part 2 deals with teaching strategies within the 'inclusion' agenda, including 'Managing Pupil Behaviour'; the communication skills of 'Giving and Receiving Information'; 'Influencing Others'; 'Making Presentation' and finishes with 'Monitoring and Evaluation'. The importance of feedback to staff and pupils is well explored.

The appendices include two examples of IEPs: a useful group IEP and a sample of a detailed IEP for a Year 2 Pupil, which, unfortunately, does not include space for the outcome that Chapter 1 acknowledges is needed to prepare the next IEP.

IAN T RIX

RETHINKING MULTICULTURALISM

Cultural Diversity and Political Theory

Bhikhu Parekh

Macmillan, 2000 hardcover £45.00 ISBN 0-333-60881-X

Paperback £15.99 ISBN 0-333-60882-8

Bhikhu Parekh has a formidable and justified reputation as a leading thinker on cultural diversity. He played a central role in the controversial Runnymede report, *The Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain* and his subsequent comments show the depth and subtlety of his thinking. Here, he examines the history of developing theories of pluralism and diversity and discusses how a genuinely multi-cultural society requires new ways of approaching notions of rights and justice, including the link between the individual, groups and the state.

Although beautifully written, it is not an easy read, but is well worth the effort. The strongest section is that on different theories of the state. Parekh explores the importance of culture and cultures as the milieu in which we all develop and the extent to which any society must resolve tensions between the customs and traditions of majority and minority groups. "Equality involves not just the rejection of irrelevant differences ... but also full recognition of legitimate and relevant ones." Shared identity does not imply uniformity. A fear of difference too easily becomes the seed-bed of intolerance and racism.

The second half of the book moves from the general to the specific, discussing examples of inter-cultural tensions, such as that created by the publication of *The Satanic Verses*. This part is less even in quality. Parekh argues coherently on specific issues, stepping thoughtfully through controversial territory, but I would have welcomed more on the how of such a debate - for example, the interface between persuasion, consensus and the use of the law.

He believes in the force of rational debate, but rightly highlights the lack of arenas for such issues to be debated, with many institutions, such as churches and voluntary groups, in decline.

One important lesson for all teachers is that equality does not mean that everyone must be treated the same. This can become a “cloak for discrimination or privilege”. Parekh argues powerfully for differential treatment for disadvantaged groups where necessary. The challenge becomes one not of tolerating difference but of realising that diversity has the potential both to alter our view of what belonging to a culture means and to enrich us all, both as individuals and as a society.

TONY EAUDE

AN EXCLUSIVE EDUCATION – RACE, CLASS AND EXCLUSION IN BRITISH SCHOOLS

Chris Searle

Lawrence and Wishart 2001 £14.99 ISBN 0-85315-932-7

This is just the book for the beginning of the school year! Chris Searle argues very strongly for inclusive education, maintaining that the major objective for schools is to strive for full, inclusive motivation of all pupils and that exclusion is not an educational option, especially as a large proportion of those excluded are working class or black. Apparently, for the year 1998/99, 10,404 children were permanently excluded from British schools.

Searle bases his book on the assumption that a child's life is precious and should, therefore, not be treated as a commodity; “to be part of the human waste of the education market, the detritus of league tables and of the frantic inter-school competition for results”.

Searle gives anecdotes from his own teaching experiences in Sheffield and London. He describes attacks made on him for instigating a no-permanent-exclusion policy at his school. He also describes how he and his staff dealt with truancy and low motivation. There are descriptions of case studies of students who were excluded, many wrongfully, and the effects it had on them and their families. Interspersed throughout the book are some lovely and quite moving poems by the students he taught.

Searle observes that the market system, which has developed over the years in our schools, has grown into a culture of repression, which has hastened the increase in expulsions, which have then had to be justified by righteous indignation regarding declining standards of behaviour. He refers to the ‘exclusive curriculum’, which goes some way in explaining why many pupils are turned off by a narrow and often irrelevant curriculum.

Searle concludes on an upbeat note, by advocating some alternative strategies for dealing with disenchanted pupils - in particular, using an inclusive and culturally relevant curriculum, with strong community links, to gain a sense of empowerment and commitment to and for each school. This book pulls no punches: Searle is honest and hard-hitting. Read it!

SUE DANIEL

REFORMING SCHOOLS

Kimberley Kinsler and Mae Gamble

Continuum 2001 Hardback £55.00 Paperback £19.99 ISBN 08264 4817 8

There are vast differences between the public education system in the USA and ours in Britain – so the publication in the UK of a book specifically related to the US scene needs some justification. There are, of course, common problems, such as:

“...changes in immigration and migration patterns, our concepts of human rights, the nature of the family, and in the amount and types of necessarily transmittable information have changed significantly... and put pressures on the institution of schooling to adapt”.

Kinsler and Gamble describe schools being asked to operate a family network that no longer corresponds to lives in the community and to bring to a higher academic proficiency young people who would have dropped out of schooling otherwise. US schools are also required to link with social and other services, to engage in education on sex, drugs and abuse and to respect home language and culture, while at the same time produce pupils who are competent in the English language.

Reforming Schools tackles all this in detail, but focuses very specifically on the American experience. Those concerned with the politics of education will find much interesting observation and many good ideas which could be developed in the UK. As any aspiring head will know, however, the highly centralised system in this country limits the scope for the kind of initiatives possible in some states of the USA.

KEITH EBBUTT
