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# Preface

**T**his issue of *Education Journal Review* has a focus split between two papers on primary education, one that looks at the impact of gender generally and a paper that explores the history of secondary education from the passage of the Education Act 1944 to the election of a Labour government in 1945 that introduced the selective tripartite system.

Gemma Doyle of Staffordshire University explores the issue of gender in the classroom, and poses the question of whether gender has an impact on pupils' achievement. She concludes that it does and *recommends ways of improving teaching practice to improve learning and development opportunities for children and young people, with the aim of bridging the gender achievement gap.*

*Wendy Scott first visited Reggio Emilia a generation ago, and has been following the development of its pre-schools in the Northern Italian town, which were becoming recognised worldwide as inspiring examples of effective practice in early years education, ever since.*

*What were the origins of the selective tripartite system of secondary education that Britain adopted after the Second World War? While debate had been going on for decades, and the Education Act of 1944 made it possible, it was not inevitable. For a brief period after the Act became law, local authorities were free to decide what they wanted and some, like Surrey County Council whose proposals we look at in detail, wanted to go comprehensive until the Labour government of Clement Attlee forced the universal adoption of selection.*

Finally, we include another two reports on education from parliamentary select committees. This brings our coverage of all reports up to the end of 2022.

**Demitri Coryton**  
Editor

Jemma  
Doyle

Mrs Gemma  
Doyle was a third  
year student at  
Staffordshire  
University and is  
now a primary  
school teacher.

# An Investigation into gender in the classroom: does gender have an impact on pupils' educational achievement?

By Gemma Doyle  
Staffordshire University

**Abstract:** *Academic gender differences are arguably of the most researched topics in the educational system, due to the increasing gender achievement gap in education over the past decade. This case study sought to investigate the impact of gender within the classroom, more specifically, the impact that gender has on pupils' educational achievement; a topic chosen due to a professional interest in a previous module "Contemporary Issues in Education", in which I explored the impact of taken-for-granted assumptions of gender stereotyping in the classroom. In order for me to answer the research question, the following sub-questions were identified:*

- 1) How do male and female pupils compare in the measured parts of achievement?*
- 2) How does the gender of the teacher impact on childrens' learning?*
- 3) Which gender appears to adopt a better behaviour for learning?*
- 4) Do different genders appear to prefer certain learning styles/techniques?*

*Informing my research through an interpretivist paradigm, the objectives of this study were to use a literature review as a form of research to gain a comprehensive understanding of the topic through previous studies (Aveyard, 2010), to gather*



*qualitative data by the means of an online survey regarding teachers' views of pupils' academic performance and engagement within the classroom, and to gain access to quantitative statistical documents, containing 2019 GCSE performance data of male and female pupils. The combined use of these tools provided a mixed methods approach to the data collection, leading to confirmation of the findings from various sources (Bell and Waters, 2018).*

*Part one of the study provides a literature review, which explores the "gender gap" in education by drawing upon a range of perspectives and lenses, in an attempt to identify the possible reasoning behind the "issue".*

*Part two discusses the methodology in full; the original intentions of the project, the changes that had to be made due to COVID-19 related restrictions, the research design, the tools/methods used to collect data, how I gained access to the participants, the research procedure (method of analysis) and the ethical considerations made.*

*Part three provides a thematic analysis of the findings, identifying and discussing the following key themes in relation to the literature review: "Feminised Industry", "Gender Stereotyping and Conscious/Unconscious Bias", "Preferred Learning Styles", "Attitude to Learning" and "Gender Gap".*

*Part four is the concluding section which gives an overview of the findings, whilst reflecting on the research question and sub questions, confirming that the gender of the pupil does have an impact on their educational achievement.*

*Recommendations for improving teaching practice are then made (not only for myself as an aspiring teacher, but as a contribution to the field of education), to improve learning and development opportunities for children and young people, with the aim of bridging the gender achievement gap. Lastly, an evaluation of the research approach is provided.*

**Key words:** gender, learning, bias, styles, achievement.

**T**he “gender gap” or the “gender problem” in education refers to the contemporary issue of boys’ academic “underachievement” in most school subjects, and the fact that women are more likely to pursue higher education than men (Adams, McIntyre and Weale, 2019), as confirmed in the Equality, Diversity and Student Characteristics Data report, where the number of female undergraduate entrants in England stood at 58% for the academic year of 2019-2020. There are several explanations for the gender gap/problem in education, which the literature review will explore in detail; some are physiological, the natural-born gender differences in the brain, some are sociological, with the views of feminism and post-colonialism, and others are educational, with educators being in favour of “hardworking girls” (Smith, 2018).

#### **Academic Assessments:**

Since the introduction of GCSEs as a means of assessment in the 1980s, alongside sophisticated international comparative tests such as PISA from 2000, the academic performance of girls has been notably higher than that of boys, especially in reading and literacy assessments, across all countries and economies (OECD, 2016). However, the attainment level of both girls and boys has also risen steadily over the past 30 years (Smith, 2018).

It is usually agreed that such assessments are an important aspect of the education process, as educators need to understand whether or not their pupils are learning and developing, however there is often debate about how beneficial summative assessments actually are for both the pupils and teachers, with regards to the amount of pressure they are under to perform and meet targets (Tes, 2019). It is argued that a “one size fits all” approach to assessment with a formal examination process unfairly favours pupils from higher socio-economic backgrounds, as those considered to be disadvantaged may not have received the same/required level of experience or support to pass the assessment (Ibid, 2019). The positivist, “one size fits all” approach is flawed as it

assumes that all pupils learn and develop in the same way (Mead, 2022), which neglects the less academic (such as some male pupils) causing them to fail to reach the national benchmark standard (Weale, 2016).

### **Neuroscience Findings and Gender Differences in the Brain**

Longitudinal studies have established that childrens' learning is largely influenced by the gender differences in the brain, with regards to both the size and the sequence of development in the areas of the brain that control language, motor-coordination, and spatial memory (Bonomo, 2010). The parietal lobe, which is associated with mathematics and reasoning, is generally larger in the male brain than in the female brain, indicating that boys tend to perform better in this area than girls (Gabriel and Schmitz, 2007), whereas the left side of the brain, which is responsible for the acquisition of language, verbal and written skills, develops and matures six years earlier in girls than boys, signifying that girls perform better in these areas (Hamlon, Thatcher and Cline, 1999).

Additionally, neuroscience findings have proven that boys' and girls' sensory perceptions differ, as girls have a more superior hearing in higher frequencies than boys, which is beneficial for speech discrimination (Corso, 1963), and under certain conditions, a more sensitive sense of smell (Sax, 2006). It has also been established that the male and female eye is drawn to different colours; the male eye is drawn to cooler shades such as grey, black and blue whereas the female eye is drawn to warmer shades such as yellow, orange and red (Sax, 2006). Furthermore, female infants have been found to respond better to faces whereas male infants respond better to moving objects (Killgore, Oki, and Yurgelun-Todd, 2001), which provides an explanation as to why girls tend to draw more pictures of people and faces, and boys tend to draw more object-based pictures (Sax, 2006).

Educators need to be aware of such gender differences with regards to childrens' brain development and sensory perceptions, to allow them to teach fairly and effectively in a stimulating learning environment that

promotes gender equality and equal access to educational opportunities to all pupils, by providing gender-based or differentiated teaching strategies when necessary (Bonomo, 2010).

### **Children Who Do Not Identify**

With regards to the children and young people who do not identify within the binary of being male or female, there is a lack of robust evidence on the educational experiences of LGBTQ+ pupils, as the curriculum and teachers assume that school-goers do not have a minority sexual orientation or gender identity (Government Equalities Office, 2018).

A NEISER report from the 2016-2017 academic year, with over 108,000 LGBTQ+ participants, showed that only 3% of the respondents discussed their sexual orientation and/or gender identity within school, and highlighted the persistence of homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying (Government Equalities Office, 2018). An additional report, based on the prevalence of homophobic bullying in both primary and high school settings, found that 70% of primary school teachers reported to have heard the use of homophobic language, with primary-aged pupils being victimised for not conforming to their peers' perceptions of gender roles (Watts, 2021).

Homophobic bullying, a form of identity-based bullying, has been identified as one of the key reasons as to why children and young people disengage from their learning, which can in-turn negatively impact their academic performance and future career prospects (Tippett, Houlston and Smith, 2010). However, the 2017 *Stonewall School Report* has confirmed that pupils who were taught positively about LGBTQ+ issues felt more included and welcome, and showed higher levels of attainment and wellbeing, suggesting that educators have the ability to improve the previously mentioned statistics (Watts, 2021).

## **The History of the “Feminised” Industry of Primary School Teaching**

Since the introduction of state elementary education in the 1870s, the teaching of primary school children has been regarded as “women’s work” and “a suitable and appropriate job for women” (Coffey and Delamont, 2000). As one of the few professions open to women in the mid-to-late nineteenth century, elementary teaching was believed to be a natural extension of women’s domestic duties as they were considered to have purer morals, a gentler, more affectionate, and refined approach to children, a talent for governing undesirable dispositions, managing difficult/embarrassing situations and teaching conversation (Barnard, 1857). During this time there was clear hierarchy in educational settings with regards to cultural definitions of masculinity (Drudy, 2008); the men managed whilst the women taught, and the few male teachers were those who had received their education in private schools and then went-on to teach in those very schools (Skelton, 2001). Although a low-paid profession, teaching opened-up new opportunities for women; it gave them independence, the opportunity to earn a wage outside the home and the training/knowledge required to raise intelligent and well-informed citizens, all of which paved the way for women’s access into higher education (Scott, 1979).

To eradicate the post-colonial and gender-stereotypical views of primary teaching as a feminised profession, feminist educators in the 1980s claimed that more male teachers needed to be brought into the industry, to break down sexual barriers and for better career prospects for women (Browne and France, 1986). Although policymakers have since called for a targeted recruitment of male teachers (Carrington et al., 2007), 75% of today’s school workforce is still populated by female staff, a national statistic that has been consistent over time (GOV.UK, 2021).

Policymakers have disputed that the “feminisation” of the primary school sector is one of the reasons behind the current “gender gap” or “gender problem” in education,

although there is no evidence to suggest that this factor is actually detrimental to the educational development of boys (Skelton, 2002). As previously noted, the gender differences in childrens' brain development and their sensory perceptions would suggest that the explanation lies closer to nature rather than nurture.

### **Forms of Masculinity:**

Although dated now, the term "multiple masculinities" was developed in the 1980s to provide a constructivist and feminist understanding of men and the different forms of masculinities, with regards to their power relations and hierarchal positioning in the system of gender (Carrington et al. 1985). The four forms of masculinities, as referred to by Connell (1987), are hegemonic (men who felt it was normal and necessary to dominate and have power over others), complicit (men who learnt to accept and participate in the system of hegemonic masculinity, to avoid subordination), subordinated (men who did not practice gender-consistent ideologies within the hegemonic system, such as openly gay men) and marginalised (men who could never aspire to hegemonic, such as "men with colour" or with disabilities).

Hegemonic masculinities, as a system, is built into institutions and is therefore reinforced and reproduced as a societal norm, which maintains the male position in the gender order (Connell, 1987); a system that is still significant today, as it is the more dominant forms of masculinity that are usually displayed in the classroom, with regards to boys' attitudes towards learning, and with many using sexualised and violent behaviours within the school setting to define their male identities within their peer group (Skelton, 1997).

### **Do Boys Need Male Teachers as Role Models to Achieve Better?**

It is argued that more male staff are needed in the education sector to work with boys on targeting the "gender gap", not because male teachers can do this better than female teachers, but because it is believed that "men have a

responsibility to challenge the existing gender order” (Mills, 2010). This could be achieved by providing boys with male teachers as role models, who display more compliant forms of masculinities, rather than the more dominant forms which are usually displayed by boys in the classroom, and to explore with them the relationship between hegemonic masculinities and violence (Ibid).

With the numbers of male teachers being incredibly low in 2008, the Training and Development Agency carried out a national study, involving the primary school experiences of over 1,000 men; it was found that almost half of the participants admitted that their male primary school teachers had the most impact on them during their time within school, a further 35% said that having a male teacher challenged them to work harder and 22% said that a male presence boosted their confidence in ability (Garner, 2008).

Furthermore, Erik Erikson’s (1963) eight-stage theory of psychosocial development can be applied to give a theoretical understanding of the importance of having positive male (and female) teachers as role models in children and young peoples’ lives. Eccles (1999) explains that children and young people learn about the world by becoming more involved with the people outside of their families, such as their school peers, teachers and those from their out-of-school programmes; they will make performance comparisons to them and match themselves against others’ expectations to develop their self-esteem and their own sense of individuality. During the stages of mid-childhood and early-adolescence, children and young people transition through many biological, psychological and cognitive changes as they begin to approach puberty and establish their own sense of identity (Erikson, 1963). The theory suggests that whilst transitioning from the childhood stage of “Industry Versus Inferiority” (where children conform to the reasonable expectations set by their teachers or parents) to early adolescence, children and young people will begin to push boundaries, take risks and explore alternate identities and new social groups (boys may trial different forms of

masculinities that they may have witnessed), as they enter the “Identity Versus Role-Confusion” stage of life (Erikson, 1963), an especially confusing and stressful stage for the sexual minority youth (Wagaman, 2016). During this stage, children and young people can lose confidence or become distracted from their studies, amongst other prospects, which could in-turn impact their educational achievement and possible future outcomes. Therefore, positive male and female role models are required in schools to support and guide children and young people during their transition, by providing sufficient opportunities for them to exercise agency, make independent decisions and master new skills whilst also supporting and encouraging their educational achievement and development.

### **Labels, Stereotypes and Self-Fulfilling Prophecies**

An Educational Longitudinal Study built on theories of intersectionality, found that gender stereotypes regarding the maths abilities of high school pupils shaped teachers’ assessments of the pupils with whom they interact with most frequently, resulting in the presence of conditional bias; teachers’ perceptions of ability favoured white males over minority students of both genders and held the belief that mathematics was “just easier” for white males than it was for white females (Riegle-Crumb and Humphries, 2012).

Conscious and unconscious assumptions, labels and gender-stereotypes such as “troublesome boys”, “hardworking girls”, “reading is for girls” or “mathematics is for boys” made by parents, carers and educators can dramatically impact and limit a child or young person’s future (Smith, 2018). Should the child or young person be under the belief that the adults around them hold certain expectations for them or treat them differently by offering them opportunities based on their gender, then they will attempt to live up to those expectations due to the notion of a “self-fulfilling prophecy”, which will in-turn shape their attitude towards learning, alongside their relationships, self-perception, and ultimately, their future job prospects



(Institute of Physics, 2018).

## **Part Two: Methodology**

Research Question:

To reiterate, the present case study sought to investigate the impact of gender within the classroom, more specifically, the impact that gender has on pupils' educational achievement. In order to answer the research question, the following sub-questions were identified:

- 1) How do male and female pupils compare in the measured parts of achievement?
- 2) How does the gender of the teacher impact on childrens' learning?
- 3) Which gender appears to adopt a better behaviour for learning?
- 4) Do different genders appear to prefer certain learning styles/techniques?

## **Original Intentions**

I originally intended to carry out much of the research for this study whilst undertaking a work-experience placement within a primary or high school setting, with the stance of an "insider researcher"; where one would be able to interview and observe within their own social field (Ganga and Scott, 2006). However, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, I was unable to secure such a placement, as 61% of establishments across the nation had to postpone opportunities for face-to-face student placements, following government guidance, to reduce the risk of infection and to keep their staff and learners safe (Weale, 2020). Consequently, the proposed research tools and methods had to be reconsidered, to tailor to the research context, such adjustments will be discussed in detail in the research tools/methods section.

## **Research Design**

Following the exploration of the various paradigms within educational research, it has been concluded that I have taken an interpretivist approach to complete this case study, as the

majority of the research is informed through an interpretivist paradigm, based on people's subjective experiences in the external world. Interpretivists access data through the reality of social constructions, such as consciousness, language and shared meanings (Aliyu et al, 2014), to provide a full, well-informed description of a topic, with all of its variables, based on their interpretations of what they have seen, heard or experienced (Kumatongo and Muzata, 2021).

### **Research Tools/Methods**

Interpretivists employ methods of data collection that allow them to generate qualitative data, however, quantitative tools can still be applied, to gather in-depth information and provide rigour to the understanding of the topic (Kumatongo and Muzata, 2021). My chosen method of data collection for the study was mixed methods, which combined the use of both qualitative and quantitative research tools to provide more holistic and dependable results, adding to the overall triangulation of the findings and therefore increasing its credibility and validity (Bell and Waters, 2018).

The first data collection tool used for the study was a qualitative online survey, which I created through the use of Qualtrics, an easy-to-use web-based research suite. The survey was short, with a set of seven multiple-choice questions as to not impede on the teacher participants' valuable free time, ending with an optional text box for the participants to leave a comment or make a suggestion to the study. This tool was chosen as online surveys are considered to be time effective, with software such as Qualtrics offering tools to assist with the analysis of the responses without the researcher being required to input further details (Buckler and Walliman, 2016). I also believed that this tool would provide a comprehensive understanding of teachers' views of pupil engagement within the classroom, in order to provide answers for sub-questions two, three and four; to decipher whether they believed their gender impacted male and female learners differently, to learn of their perceptions of whether male or female pupils tend to have a better

behaviour towards learning, and to determine whether there is a preferred learning style or technique when working with different gendered pupils.

To distribute the survey, I printed, laminated, and hand-delivered a letter to two local academies (one primary and one secondary), which invited the teacher participants to the survey through the use of a QR code. By providing a personal approach, I was afforded the opportunity to formally introduce myself and also request for the letter to be displayed in the staff room, in order to draw the participants in at a time where they would usually have some spare time and an internet device to hand. I also shared the link to the survey on various social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn.

The second data collection tool utilised was the documentary analysis of statistical documents, containing the GCSE results from the academic year of 2019 and the overall performance data of girls and boys at the end of key stage four, in 2019. The systematic procedure of documentary analysis requires the interpretation and examination of documents in order to gain understanding, elicit meaning and develop empirical knowledge about a topic (Bowden, 2017). This tool was chosen in order to provide answers to sub-question number one; to compare the performance data of male and female pupils.

As previously discussed, I originally intended to carry out two structured classroom observations; one in a class led by a female teacher and one in a class led by a male teacher, in order to analyse the influences that the different gendered teachers have on their pupils. As I was not able to secure a work-experience placement in a school setting, this tool could not be utilised.

### **Sample/Participants**

Purposeful sampling was used to gain the participants for this study, a method widely used in qualitative research, involving the selection of individuals/groups of individuals who hold experience or knowledge within the chosen phenomenon of

interest (Cresswell and Plano Clarke, 2011).

The online survey had a total of 31 responses, all of which were former or current schoolteachers, unknown to the researcher, from a variety of primary and high school/academy settings in England. The samples taken for the documentary analysis were from a variety of 880 secondary schools across England, from publicly available statistics (therefore making it unnecessary to anonymise the data shown in).

### **Piloting**

A pilot survey was conducted in order to evaluate the suitability of the process; to test how long it would take the participants to complete it and to check that the instructions and questions were clear. The data collected was not included in the final analysis.

### **Ethics**

Whilst recruiting potential participants and negotiating access to the field, researchers need to carefully assess the potential methodological and ethical dilemmas to their participants (Moore, 2012). The data collection tools chosen for this study were selected as they do not pose such risks; the online survey was anonymous, it entailed minimal intrusion, focussed on minimally sensitive topics, did not disrupt others, and did not involve those who would be considered to be vulnerable in the context of research. According to Ganga and Scott (2006), should I have used a more social research strategy, such as the classroom observations (as planned), then I would have been afforded a degree of social proximity, which would have increased the awareness of the social divisions existing between myself and the participants, therefore highlighting a possible power imbalance. Additionally, adopting the use of classroom observations could potentially have incurred the “researcher effect”, where the participants perform by talking more, less or differently to how they normally would, because they were aware that their actions were being observed (Edwards and

Westgate, 1987).

Prior to beginning the process of data collection, I can confirm that ethical approval was sought and obtained from Staffordshire University's Research Ethics Committee; details of the ethical considerations relating to this study can be seen in the submitted proportionate review form. Although not a requirement, as the submission of a completed questionnaire indicates the participants' consent to participate; informed consent was also obtained from the participants prior to them entering the research study, as I integrated into the survey a participant information sheet and consent form, both of which needed to be acknowledged with the use of a "tick-box" before the participant could proceed.

### **Part Three: Findings and Analysis**

The data collected from the online survey was charted using the built-in tools offered by Qualtrics, as shown in. Using Braun and Clarke's (2006) process as a guide to thematic analysis, the said charts together with the participants' comments in response to question nine, were then read repeatedly to allow myself to become "immersed" in the entire data set, in order to generate potential meanings, patterns and codes. In the second phase, I organised the data into what Tuckett (2005) refers to as "meaningful groups", by manually coding the interesting, identifying features of the data set, to which I then collated and analysed in search of themes in phase three, using thematic maps as visual aids. During the fourth phase, I reviewed and refined the themes, selecting those that were valid, had sufficient supporting data and "worked" in relation to the data set as the ones to be used in the overall analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Once satisfied, I then moved on to phase five, where I provided "punchy" names for each of the themes, to give the reader an immediate idea of what that theme was about (Ibid, 2006), in preparation for phase six, where I provided a report and a detailed analysis, identifying how each theme was determined, in relation to the literature review, research question and sub-questions. This process was then repeated,

in order to analyse the statistical documents, as seen in.

The process of thematic analysis, once applied to both the online survey and the statistical documents, highlighted key concepts evident in the data. The themes have been labelled as “Feminised Industry”, “Gender Stereotyping and Conscious/Unconscious Bias”, “Preferred Learning Styles”, “Attitude to Learning” and “Gender Gap”.

### **Theme One: Feminised Industry**

Straight away, this theme was identified by the number of male and female participants who took part in the online survey. As seen in response to question one, 90% of the participants were female, 7% were male and 3% were “other” (to be ethically considerate, there was an option for the participant to self-describe their gender, but they chose not to use the text box). Also, 74% of the participants agreed with the idea that teaching is a “feminised industry”, these findings do support the literature as provided in the literature review, surrounding the “feminisation” of teaching (Skelton, 2002).

Within the notion of teaching being a “feminised industry”, one of the participant’s comments in question nine suggested that “a greater male presence in primary would encourage equal respect for male and female teachers at secondary school – and better male student engagement with female teachers”. This comment also implied that the (female) participant had witnessed a lack of respect from male pupils, towards female teachers within secondary school settings, which is recognised by feminist/constructivist educators as the system of hegemonic masculinities (Connell, 1987). As discussed in the literature review, male pupils are displaying the more dominant forms of masculinity as it is perceived to be the “gender stereotypical” societal norm; this aspect within the initial theme leads onto the next theme of Gender Stereotyping and Conscious/Unconscious Bias.

### **Theme Two: Gender Stereotyping and Conscious-Unconscious Bias**

When considering the participants’ responses to the online

survey, it became apparent that male and female pupils are treated differently based on their gender, which is extremely biased, whether it is done consciously or unconsciously.

Question three asked whether the participants agreed that male pupils receive more negative attention for unwanted behaviour than female pupils do (for example, if a male pupil were to be rude to a teacher in class, he would probably be penalised against more than a female pupil would, for doing the same thing), to which a high percentage of the participants (58%) agreed, 13% disagreed and 29% neither agreed nor disagreed [Appendix 15]. On the other hand, question four asked whether the participants agreed that female pupils receive more praise for their schoolwork than male pupils do; 52% of the participants disagreed, 39% agreed and 9% neither agreed nor disagreed.

### **Theme Three: Preferred Learning Styles**

The findings confirmed that all pupils, regardless of gender, have preferred learning styles, which is something that educators need to be aware of to enable them to teach fairly and effectively.

Question two in the survey asked whether the participants believed that their gender and/or teaching style had different impacts on male and female pupils, to which a large proportion agreed (71%). Additionally, question six asked whether the participants agreed that male pupils require more active participation within the classroom, to keep them engaged and 61% agreed.

One of the participant's comments was "age and subject are real influences in this survey from my experience. I did similar research into male education and found that subject and age alongside number of siblings played a big part in this. Context and praise play a huge role in aiding male pupils' progress in their education." This suggests that male pupils require more praise and encouragement to keep them engaged in the subjects that they perhaps do not usually enjoy and perform well in, such as English. If educators provide a large amount of praise and encouragement to all of

their pupils (so to not be perceived as biased) for their work, participation and engagement within the classroom, this could challenge male pupils' negative attitude to learning (which leads on to the next theme) and in-turn, their academic performance.

#### **Theme Four: Boys' Attitude to Learning**

Question five of the online survey asked whether the participants believed male or female pupils had more of a negative attitude towards learning, to which 45% selected male, 48% selected both male and female, and the remaining 7% did not select an answer. This is also exemplified in one of the participant's comments; "in my experience, female students are much more attentive and engaged. Males, especially in English, are not interested in what was a result studying as it is still stigmatised as a feminine subject".

Boys' negative attitude to learning may be because male pupils struggle with and therefore dislike certain subjects, such as English, or because their peers view certain subjects as "boring" or "for girls", and so they conform to these behaviours in order to "fit in" with their peer/social group, which therefore reinforces such views. Perhaps if educators provided more opportunities for active participation within the classroom, as this was previously discussed as being a preferred learning style for male pupils, alongside providing higher levels of praise and encouragement, they will become more engaged, enjoy their lessons and therefore develop a more positive attitude towards learning.

#### **Theme Five: Gender Gap**

The contemporary issue of the "gender gap" or "gender problem" in education is very much apparent across the findings; "female students are much more attentive and engaged. Males, especially in English, are not interested" and "having the equivalent of a low ability GCSE class with nine girls and seven boys, their prelim results were eight girls passed, seven boys and one girl gained no award. It's a small



group, however it does mirror the national statistic about boys”.

The documentary analysis of the GCSE results from 2019 confirmed that the number of female pupils to receive all grade nines in all subjects taken were twice the number of boys, as seen in. It was also evident when comparing the overall performance of girls and boys at the end of key stage four for that year, as the percentage of pupils to have achieved Attainment 8 and also a grade 5 or above in both their English and Maths GCSEs was higher for girls than boys in all of the schools compared, with an exception to one school, where the number of boys included in the measure was considerably higher than the number of girls.

#### **Part Four: Conclusions and Recommendations**

As an aspiring primary school teacher, this case study contributed to my personal and professional knowledge and understanding of the gender differences within the classroom. With regards to the research question, the findings have reinforced the conclusions that arose from the literature, confirming that the gender of the pupil does impact their educational achievement. The “gender gap” in education, as a contemporary “issue”, is well known across the education sector; the findings in this study have recognised that girls usually do fare better in their academic performance than boys, however, referring to that factor as a gender “problem” or “issue”, as most policymakers do, impacts educators’ stereotypical perceptions of both male and female pupils, which could be escalating the “problem”, by unfairly labelling and othering pupils, which is an issue in itself, as established in the literature review.

Such labels and assumptions of pupils can put pressure on children and young people to perform/conform to those expectations, which can create the notion of a “self-fulfilling prophecy” (Institute of Physics, 2018); if a child or young person believes that they are academically inferior to their peers, then those are potentially the expectations that they will live up to, which in-turn, could set them up to fail by

entering them into a cycle of underachievement. If a child or young person does not succeed in school, then they may not obtain the required grades or institutionalised capital needed for the next stage in their life, as most school-leavers progress to further and higher education, which can then limit their future job prospects and career, ultimately enhancing the reproduction of social inequity (Bourdieu, 1986).

I will now use the findings to provide answers to the research sub-questions, followed by recommendations to improve future practice and an evaluation of the effectiveness of the approach.

### **How do male and female pupils compare in the measured parts of achievement?**

Statistics have shown that the academic performance of most male pupils is lower, especially in reading and literacy subjects, than that of their female counterparts', with the cause likely to be because of the gender differences in their cognitive development.

From a feminist viewpoint, school assessments such as GCSEs, take on a positivist "one-size-fits-all" approach (Burman, 2007), leaving male pupils at an unfair disadvantage, as the left side of the brain, which is responsible for language acquisition, verbal and written skills, develops and matures six years earlier in girls than boys (Hamlon, Thatcher and Cline, 1999), suggesting that male pupils may not have fully acquired the cognitive skills needed for summative assessments. Boys' and girls' brains develop at different paces and in such, they begin to understand and learn certain academic concepts at different ages and stages, therefore it seems unfair to label boys as "underachieving" when actually it is more likely that they are where they should be, in terms of their age and gender.

### **How does the gender of the teacher impact on children's learning?**

Although most schools, especially primary, are heavily equipped by a female workforce, the findings have shown

that male pupils would possibly respond better to male teachers, because they hold more respect for them, due to aspects of post-colonialism and what is recognised by Carrington et al, (1985) as the system of hegemonic masculinities. A lot of male pupils, especially in secondary school, display the more dominant forms of masculinity, such as hegemonic, because it is perceived to be as the societal norm; this can include a lack of respect for the opposite gender, including female teachers, and can consequently cause male pupils to be less attentive in the classroom, which in-turn impacts upon their learning and development.

### **Which gender appears to adopt a better behaviour for learning?**

The findings have shown that female pupils tend to show more of a positive attitude towards learning, most likely because they are equipped with the cognitive skills required to do so. Girls tend to enjoy reading, whereas boys do not, which could be because they struggle to do so and therefore disengage from it, as they are “not interested” and regard it to be a “feminine subject”, as indicated in one of the participant’s comments.

### **Do different genders appear to prefer certain learning styles/techniques?**

The findings have shown that male pupils prefer more active, hands-on approaches to participation within the classroom, rather than techniques which require a lot of reading and writing. Such techniques can involve the combination of both auditory and visual learning processes, to actively involve the learner by positioning them for a more enhanced and in-depth learning experience (Smith, 2015).

### **Recommendations for Future Practice:**

This study recommends that all teachers should be educated/reminded of the gender differences with regards to children and young peoples’ cognitive development, as this is seemingly not taken into account when pupils’ academic

progression, or lack of, is recorded in schools and fed-back to parents/carers in instances such as parents' evenings.

Policymakers should consider tailoring assessments to suit the needs of each gender, rather than using traditional, summative "end-of-year" assessments; perhaps coursework for female pupils, as they usually excel in this area and multiple-choice exams for male pupils, to suit their risk-taking nature and because they tend to struggle with written work (Ramos and Lambating, 1996). They should also introduce a new incentive in order to attract more male staff into the teaching industry, as children and young people equally need male and female teachers as positive role models, to encourage them to do well academically and to challenge the existing gender order and taken-for granted, stereotypical assumptions.

In order to challenge boys' negative attitude towards learning, teachers should incorporate more opportunities for active participation, alongside higher levels of praise and encouragement within the classroom (to all pupils, so no not be perceived as biased), in an attempt to engage male pupils more, so that when they leave the classroom, they have a positive experience to reflect on, which should have more of an impact on their learning and developmental journey. They should also be able to teach effectively, with strategies that meet all of the learning styles (visual, kinaesthetic, auditory and read/write), in order to meet their pupils' learning needs and preferences.

### **Evaluation of the Approach:**

Although I initially intended to use three methods of data collection as discussed in the proportionate review form, only two were utilised due to COVID-19 related restrictions. Evaluation of the effectiveness of the used approaches confirmed that the produced findings and data were sufficient enough to produce a thorough analysis. Should I have utilised a third data collection tool as planned, then I may have gathered an overwhelming amount of data in-requirement of analysis, in which the allocated word count

may not have been sufficient.

Additional research could further develop the findings of this study, in order to provide more precise answers to sub-question four; either a questionnaire, interview or a focus group could be used to ask pupils, as participants, of their educational experiences and preferences with regards to learning styles and techniques.

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# The pre-schools of Reggio Emilia: their foundations, their philosophy and their practice

By Wendy Scott OBE  
President of TACTYC

**Abstract:** *I first visited Reggio Emilia a generation ago, with two colleagues who were experts in early years education. At that time, the pre-schools in the Northern Italian town were becoming recognised worldwide as inspiring examples of effective practice in early years education, but it was still possible to have individual and very personal contact with the people who worked within the system, as well as with parents and children, and to observe sessions within a setting very closely. Since then, the approach has become very well known, not least through its inspiring exhibition of children's work, which has been presented around the world (Malaguzzi et al 1995). The city of Reggio Emilia has now built an International Centre, dedicated to the exposition of its work with young children and their families, which attracts large numbers of visitors from around the world.*

*<https://www.reggiochildren.it/en/loris-malaguzzi-international-centre/>*

*This centre is named after Loris Malaguzzi (1920-1994), who had a formative influence on the development of the approach, which is strongly supported by the Comune di Reggio Emilia, the local Municipality.*

**Key words:** Reggio Emilia, Italy, early years, pre-school.

**T**he origins of this focus on early education can be traced back to the difficult years following the second world war, when the people of Reggio Emilia sold a tank, six horses and three dilapidated trucks in order to raise money to construct a school for their children, who had suffered so much through the war. As local members of the UDI, the *Unione Donne Italiane*, (a women’s group which was formed in October 1945 to promote the empowerment of Italian women at the end of World War 2), said, “We built the walls of this school together, men and women, because we wanted life to be new and different for our children.”

Loris Malaguzzi was a young local teacher and psychologist at the time. He heard of the initiative, and was impressed with what he found. He is reported to have said: “Word had it that at Villa Cella (a village outside the city) the people had got together to put up a school for the young children; they had pulled out the bricks from the bombed-out houses and had used them to build the walls of the school.

“I rode on my bicycle to Villa Cella. The news was true, and the truth was there, for all to see on this sunny spring day . . . that these people, without a penny to their names, with no technical offices, building permits, site directors, inspectors from the Ministry of Education, could actually build a school with their own strength, brick by brick, was a paradox. I was excited by the way it all overturned logic and prejudices, the old rules governing pedagogy, culture, how it forced everything back to the beginning. It opened up completely new horizons of thought.

“I sensed that it was a formidable lesson of humanity and culture that would generate other extraordinary events. All we needed to do was to follow the same path. I had the honour of experiencing the rest of the story, with its difficulty, its petty stubbornness, and its enthusiasm. And it remained an uninterrupted lesson given by men and women whose ideas were still intact, who had understood long before I had that history can be changed, and is changed by taking possession of it, starting with the destiny of the children.”

*Malaguzzi, quoted in Barrazoni, (2000)*

As he said, Malaguzzi was very impressed, and inspired by the way the project overturned the traditional approach to teaching and the established culture in schools. He saw that it took thinking about education back to original values, and appreciated that this opened up completely new horizons. He understood the value of the emergence of this initiative from the community, and was inspired by the courage of the parents. Having decided to support them, he took on the role of a school psychologist in Reggio Emilia after he had finished his studies in 1963. The Municipality, which had been governed by a Socialist and Communist cabinet since the end of the war, had set up its own network of educational services and took the project over. As Renzo Bonazzi, the Mayor from 1962-1976 said, "In the early 1960s we felt the necessity of accompanying economic recovery with services guaranteeing a better quality of life."

As he valued organisation and practice as well as theory, Malaguzzi was able to have a strong and effective influence on the approach to provision for children from birth to six in Reggio Emilia. His enlightened thinking and practical insights provided both inspiration and strong support for the developing provision for young children in the city.

This coalition of specialist knowledge, respect for children, and political as well as parental support for an enlightened way of collaborative working that came together as Italy emerged from the horrors of the second World War, combined to enable the development of an inspiring approach to early education and care in Reggio Emilia, which is now recognised and admired around the world.

### **The philosophy**

Malaguzzi's concept of the Hundred Languages of Children highlights his awareness of the many ways in which young children can express and explore their thinking:

### **The one hundred languages of children**

The child is made of one hundred.



The child has a hundred languages, a hundred hands, a hundred thoughts, a hundred ways of thinking, of playing, of speaking.

A hundred, always a hundred ways of listening, of marvelling, of loving.

a hundred joys for singing and understanding,

a hundred worlds to discover,

a hundred worlds to invent,

a hundred worlds to dream.

The child has a hundred languages (and a hundred hundred hundred more) but they steal ninety-nine.

The school and the culture separate the head from the body.

They tell the child: to think without hands, to do without head, to listen and not to speak, to understand without joy, to love and to marvel only at Easter and Christmas.

They tell the child: to discover the world already there, and of the hundred they steal ninety-nine.

They tell the child: that work and play, reality and fantasy, science and imagination, sky and earth, reason and dream, are things that do not belong together.

And thus they tell the child that the hundred is not there.

The child says: No way. The hundred is there.

*Loris Malaguzzi (translation from the Italian)*

### **The perception of children in Reggio Emilia**

Influenced by Malaguzzi's thinking, young children in Reggio Emilia are seen as strong and intelligent individuals, with rights. Rather than being viewed as having needs to be met, every child's point of view is respected and each child is encouraged to follow his or her own educational path, often in collaboration with others. Staff understand that the children's innate sense of curiosity, along with their inherent

potential, will foster their motivation to learn. The adults involved in each Centre encourage this curiosity, while learning themselves through their observations of children's interests within a richly resourced environment. Thus, learning is driven by the children who take an active role in co-constructing their own knowledge within a beautiful environment that invites exploration. Children have control over the direction of the curriculum, which encourages individual thinking and problem-solving, along with self-expression, communication and team work. Projects can expand over time and space: there is a sense of uncovering the curriculum, rather than a drive to reach expected standards. Instead of testing children, staff engage in extended dialogue with them, and ensure that detailed records are kept of their work.

There are now at least 35 pre-schools in Reggio Emilia. Each is designed around a piazza, a central meeting place, which is light and accessible. Individual lockers are provided, where children can post messages to each other, or store work in progress. The kitchen is also central, with easy access for children to see and participate in what the cook is doing. Each nursery has a specialist atelier, or art workshop, which is very well stocked with a stimulating variety of resources. This is led by an atelierista, an art specialist, who works with children of all ages who can visit the space and are free to explore the materials in collaboration with others. The staff team includes a highly trained pedagoga, who oversees plans within his or her particular nursery, and also liaises with colleagues working in other pre-schools.

Staff understand that the children's innate sense of curiosity will drive their motivation to learn. The adults involved in each Centre encourage this curiosity, while learning themselves through their observations of children's interests within a richly resourced environment. Thus, learning is driven by the children who take an active role in co-constructing their own knowledge within a context that invites exploration. Children have control over the direction of the curriculum, which encourages individual thinking and

problem-solving, along with self-expression, communication, and team work. Projects can expand over time and space: there is a sense of uncovering the curriculum, rather than a drive to reach expected standards. Instead of testing children, staff engage in extended dialogue with them, and ensure that detailed records are kept of their work.

When asked how the children, accustomed as they are to having freedom in following up their interests and having their ideas taken seriously, would cope with the restricted opportunities available when they entered their formal primary school at six, staff in the pre-schools say confidently that their children would be fine, as they have “an extra pocket.” The Loris Malaguzzi International Centre is in the process of establishing a primary school as well as the pre-school on campus: it will be very interesting to see how the curriculum is approached there, once it is ready to welcome visitors.

Links with parents are very close – many nurseries include a “Nido,” a cosy pre-school nest for children up to three, who experience many opportunities for choice, including when they feel the need to take a nap in their personal sleeping basket, which they can get into and out of independently, and thus make use of when they are ready to sleep.

### **Reggio practice - the three teachers**

Relationships are at the very heart of the Reggio Emilia philosophy. It is reflected in the environment that surrounds, stimulates and supports each child with three active educators. The first teacher, the parent, is a partner and guide in the education of their child. Families have an active role in their children’s learning, and are encouraged to share their ideas and observations. They are also kept closely informed and involved in what happens in the pre-school.

The second teachers work in the classrooms. They often collaborate, and take on the role of researchers, engaging with the children in meaningful work and conversation. As the pedagogista Carla Rinaldi said,

“If we believe that children possess their own theories, interpretations and questions, and that they are co-protagonists in their knowledge-building processes, then the most important verb in educational practice is no longer to talk, to explain, or to transmit, but to listen.”

*Rinaldi (1998)*

The environment plays a vital role in the process of making learning meaningful. This idea is so central, that Malaguzzi defined the environment as the third teacher (Gandini 2011).

This third teacher is generously and flexibly resourced, and offers stimulating opportunities for children and teachers to learn together. The classroom environment helps to shape children’s sense of themselves as powerful agents in their own lives, and also in the lives of others. The imaginatively equipped spaces foster creativity through opportunities for hands-on experience of expressive art in many media. Teachers observe children’s choices respectfully, and pay attention to the meaning behind what they decide to represent as well as what they say, and thus develop a deep awareness and understanding of each individual child’s interests and progress. The children’s relationships with their parents, their teachers, and the environment stimulate their curiosity and their drive to find out more.

Malaguzzi emphasised that it was not so much that we should think that the child develops himself by himself but rather to take the view that children develop themselves through interacting with others (Rankin 2004). This emphasis on building and sustaining relationships is central to the Reggio Emilia philosophy. In common with Vygotsky, Malaguzzi believed that social learning precedes cognitive development (Gandini 2011). He insisted that the classroom environment can help shape a child’s identity as a powerful player in his or her own life and the lives of others, and that a rich environment has a central role in the process of making learning meaningful. To foster such an environment, teachers

must go beyond what is evident at the surface level, and develop a deep understanding of what children are thinking and questioning, and what they are curious about.

Children are enabled to construct their own knowledge through a carefully planned curriculum that engages and builds on what each child already knows. Teachers recognise that knowledge comes through experience, and cannot simply be passed on to children verbally. The emergent curriculum is thus based on the interests of the children. Learning is individualised, as it is offered as guided experience rather than direct instruction. Significantly, teaching develops as a two-way relationship, in which the teacher's understanding of the child is just as important as the child's understanding of the teacher.

Teaching: central themes

Three of the central themes of the work in Reggio are: teaching and learning through relationships; the concept of the hundred expressive languages of children; and the value of integrating documentation into the teaching processes of observing, reflecting, and communicating. Teaching is understood to involve giving meaning and value to children's chosen experiences, and to act as a researcher in collaboration with colleagues and in relationship with parents, who are closely involved in the work of the school rather than consumers.

The teachers in Reggio Emilia work together and are supported by experienced pedagogical coordinators, the *pedagogista*. They all start from the basic principle that children have great potential, coupled with the desire to explore, construct, and learn. The city beyond the pre-schools is seen as a learning space: staff take advantage of the wider environment there, and develop new challenges and possibilities for the children based on their shared observations. They appreciate that they can learn a great deal about the complexity of children's theories through close observation and extended conversations with them. In turn, we in the UK can learn a great deal from their inspiring example, which resonates with our heritage of enlightened

and principled learner-centred work in the early years.

Documentation, which may be expressed through various art forms, has an important part in this, as it shows how teachers and children can construct learning together through strategies that link children's interests with teachers' intentions. The catalogue of the international exhibition of children's work illustrates in impressive detail how this is achieved through the representations of children's thinking in a wide variety of media (Malaguzzi et al, 1996).

Malaguzzi is reported to have said very clearly that nothing in the school should happen without joy. He inspired a progressive movement in early childhood education, and established and led a national organisation for the study and support of early childhood education with university researchers in Italy and educators around the world. Teachers in many countries are discouraged by the increasing politically controlled demand to use standards and testing to determine what children should be taught. Given the diversity of the children starting school, a pre-determined prescription for teaching, evaluation and assessment in the early years is seen as problematic in Reggio Emilia. There, teaching is understood to be a two-way relationship in which the teacher's understanding of the child is just as important as the child's understanding of the teacher. This is even more relevant now, following the constraints imposed by COVID. There, each child is recognised and celebrated as unique, with their own particular experience. Teachers are required to use their professional judgment, rather than rules, to guide their practice. To teach well, educators must ensure that creativity and innovation are always encouraged. Although good teaching requires organisation and routines, it is never inflexible. As they say, "It dances with surprise. It pursues wonder. It finds joy at every turn."

Documentation has an important part in this, as it shows how teachers and children can construct learning together through strategies that link teachers' intentions with children's interests. The catalogue of the international exhibition of children's work illustrates in impressive detail

how this is achieved through the representations of children's thinking in a wide variety of media (Malaguzzi et al, 1996).

An emergent curriculum is not a free-for-all. Teachers must actively identify and follow up the interests of the children, an approach which demands a high degree of trust in creative teaching, responsive to children who are actively seeking knowledge. This perspective rejects predetermined outcomes: a standardised curriculum tends to eliminate any possibility of spontaneous inquiry, which takes away potential opportunities for learning from teachers as well as students in what Gandini calls a "cookie-cutter" approach to education. Nevertheless, teachers in Reggio Emilia are well aware of what is important for children to learn in terms of literacy and numeracy development; they highlight and build on what the children do and say, offering them relevant opportunities to explore further and learn more in a context that engages each child. In many cultures, literacy is seen as the main pathway to success and may then become a disheartening issue that undermines children's pleasure in learning. Teachers in Reggio agree as much about the importance of literacy as they do about the importance of play, but they believe that learning and play can and should go together.

### **What can we learn from Reggio Emilia?**

Lella Gandini, a pedagoga who has worked for many years in the USA, considers that it is better to consider the dynamic approach to early education in Reggio Emilia as offering inspiration, rather than seeing it as a model. She says: "An essential element for positive learning and teaching [in the approach in Reggio Emilia] is to view children and teachers as having strong potential, ready to enter into relationships, ready to be listened to, and eager to learn. If children are valued in this way, teaching cannot be done effectively only through imparting information, but has to become an experience in which teachers and learners construct learning together. Teachers in Reggio offer meaning to the experience of children in their schools, based on their observations and careful documentation of the children's choices. As well as

being seen as researchers working in collaboration with children and colleagues, they establish close communication with parents, valuing them as participants in the life of the school rather than consumers.” *Gandini, 2012*

Further information about the approach to early education in Reggio Emilia can be found through the Sightlines Initiative, led by Robin Duckett, who has been involved with Reggio Emilia for many years. He set up the Sightlines Initiative to remodel vision and practice in UK early childhood education. Reggio Children has made the organisation their representative in the UK, and it arranges study visits to Reggio as well as offering professional development to early years settings in the UK. Learning through “enquiry, expression, imagination and curiosity”

As Robin says: “We must work hard, with feet on the ground and heads in the clouds, to inspire individuals and institutions to grow and change in the interests of children”

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# The introduction of secondary education for all from the passage of the Education Act 1944 to the establishment of the Labour government in 1945 and the development of its policy for secondary education

**By Demitri Coryton**

Editor of *Education Journal Review*

**Abstract:** *The Education Act of 1944 was a major landmark piece of legislation. It was carefully crafted by the Conservative President of the Board of Education R A Butler, and his Labour junior minister James Chuter Ede to gain maximum support in Parliament and outside it. The Act did not mandate any particular type of secondary reorganisation, although the White Paper that proceeded it did indicate a preference for the selective tripartite system that was eventually adopted by the Labour government elected in 1945.*

*The Act required each local education authority (LEA) to submit a development plan outlining how the authority planned to introduce secondary education for all. As the Act did not specify which type of scheme was to be adopted, LEAs were free to choose their own scheme. Many took the steer from the Norwood report of 1942, the White Paper and the Ministry of Education's Pamphlet No.1, *The Nation's Schools, Their Plan and Purpose*, all of which favoured the tripartite selective system, which was the preferred option of senior officials at the Ministry of Education (as the Board of*

*Education had been renamed by the 1944 Act.) But some did not, preferring a non-selective option. Most of these LEAs opted for multilateral schools, with only a small number choosing the American model of large comprehensive schools. However, in the end local choice was not to be. While opinion in the Labour Party was divided, Ministers went for the selective system.*

*This paper looks at the development of thinking on selective education before the Second World War, examines the development plan proposals of one LEA, Surrey, in some detail and then considers the surveys of almost all LEAs conducted by the Fabian Society and published in two reports produced in 1947 and 1952.*

**Key words:** Multilateral School, Grammar School, Technical School, Modern School, Central School, Upper Elementary School; Butler, Chuter Ede, selection.

**I**t is a common misconception that it was the Education Act of 1944 that introduced the selective tripartite system of secondary education in England. Even the House of Commons Library has fallen for this mistake. [1] While the 1944 Act made the tripartite system possible, it did not specify this or any other form of secondary education. It required local authorities to draw up schemes of secondary education for all and to submit them to the new Ministry of Education for approval, but it allowed local authorities to decide what system of secondary education would be suitable for each local area.

This resulted in an explosion of creativity as county and county borough councils took to their new role with alacrity. They were hemmed in by war-time scarcity and a lack of firm data about secondary education for all, but that did not stop many from adopting plans for creative new systems. What put a stop to this, and led to the adoption of the tripartite system across England and Wales, or in reality in the vast majority of areas a bipartite system of secondary modern and secondary grammar schools, for few secondary technical

schools were ever created, was the post-war Labour government. It was not the Education Act of 1944 that created the selective system, but the Labour government of 1945.

This paper draws on the plans of one major local authority, Surrey, which contained within its then borders (which were larger than the present administrative county) a wide range of different communities from rural to county town and urban areas that are now part of London. This is augmented by a national survey of England and Wales conducted by the Fabian Society, which published two reports on the systems that local authorities had chosen before the Labour government forced all of them to adopt the tripartite (or, in reality, the bipartite) system.

### **Different views of selection**

The issue of selection of children into different types of school had been debated during the 1920s and 1930s. The popular Dalton Plan, for example, “allowed for individualisation of learning in classes with widely differing interests and abilities”. [2] In January 1925 a conference of the Association of Assistant Masters, a secondary teachers association that many years later became part of the present NEU, unanimously called for multilateral schools, which were an early type of comprehensive school which contained different types of provision within the same school. [3]

Yet this ran counter to Board of Education thinking and at a time when intelligence testing was developing, ideas of stratification within schools, or between them, increasingly gained ground. [4] This emphasis on increased stratification was taking place within elementary schools. In the 1920s a few urban local education authorities (LEAs) began to divide elementary education into two halves at the age of 11. Some went for selective central schools for the brighter child from 11 to the school leaving age of 14, while others thought that all children should progress to upper elementary schools after 11.

The Hadow Report of 1926, *The Education of the*

*Adolescent*, one of three reports that Sir William Hadow produced as chairman of the Board of Education's Consultative Committee, concerned itself with what it called post-primary education. [5] This was not secondary education, which the committee was explicitly prevented from considering by its terms of reference. His report recommended the creation of non-selective senior schools within the elementary school system, for children from 11 to 14 who did not go to secondary school (which the vast majority did not). The debate over selection in the 1930s was over implementing the Hadow Report and whether non-selective senior elementary schools or selective central schools were the way forward. [6]

The issue of secondary education was quite separate. It was available almost entirely only to middle class children whose parents could afford the modest fees that the pre-war grammar schools charged. There were a few scholarship places available free for the bright working class child, but the cost of actually going to a grammar school, rather than out to work, still deterred some who were qualified. Most grammar schools, like most independent schools, were not particularly selective as they provided the only education available for most middle class children. In most cases, if you could afford the modest fees, your child was in.

Just as the Hadow Report of 1926 had advocated non-selective senior elementary schools, so the idea of a single type of secondary school gathered pace, especially among teachers. At this time the most common type of comprehensive school was the multilateral, a common school for all that would be organised into multiple departments of different types.

The Board of Education's Consultative Committee looked at secondary education in the Spens report of 1938. [7] This and the Norwood report of 1942 [8] developed the idea of the tripartite system. At about the age of ten children would take a test (the 11+, similar to the pre-war Scholarship) which would decide whether they went to a secondary grammar school for an academic education, a secondary

technical school for the technically minded or a secondary modern school for the rest. (These had buildings that were usually anything but modern.) There would be a re-assessment at the age of 13 to allow late developers to transfer to grammar schools and, in theory, those who had got into a grammar school but were not up to it to transfer the other way to secondary technical or modern schools. Transfers to grammar school at 13 hardly ever happened. Transfers the other way never did.

Thus by the time of the Education Act 1944 there had been some 30 years of discussion about selection, mainly at upper elementary level, but by the late 1930s and especially the 1940s, at secondary level as well. Yet there was virtually no discussion of selection in the lengthy two-year gestation of the 1944 Act. The Act was the work of the Conservative President of the Board of Education, R A Butler, known universally by his initials as RAB, and his Parliamentary Under Secretary, Labour's James Chuter Ede. Ede played a more significant role than his junior position might at first indicate. He had been a teacher in Epsom, Surrey, and a member of the NUT, before going into politics. He became active in local government, becoming chairman of the Education Committee of the Surrey County Council, even though he was Labour and Surrey was one of the strongest Conservative counties in England. (It was also a county with a strong tradition of liberal education policies.)

The reason why the type of secondary education was not a controversial part of the consultations that led up to the 1944 Act was partly that the Act did not specify what sort of organisation local education authorities (LEAs) had to adopt. That was to be left up to the LEAs. The most contentious issue in the 1944 Act was the role of the churches in education. This was hugely controversial and took up an inordinate amount of time in the couple of years leading up to the Act becoming law. The wartime Coalition set out its plans in the Board of Education's White Paper, *Educational Reconstruction*. It outlined the plans for what became the Education Act 1944 as being the provision of free secondary education for all, the

integration of the voluntary (church) schools more fully into the national system and the streamlining of local administration with the abolition of the Part III authorities introduced by Arthur Balfour's Education Act of 1902. The White Paper hinted at a preferred tripartite system of secondary education, although it recognised the weakness of the advantage that grammar schools had. The White Paper said: "Such, then, will be the three main types of secondary school to be known as grammar, modern and technical schools." But it immediately went on to say, in predictions that never materialised: "It would be wrong to suppose that they will necessarily remain separate and apart. Different types may be combined in one building" - in effect, multilateral schools - "or on one site as considerations of convenience and efficiency may suggest. In any case the free interchange of pupils from one type of education to another must be facilitated." [9] This section, and any mention of the type of school that should be adopted, was removed from the wording of the Act, which did not prescribe which sort of provision LEAs should make.

It was not really much of an issue at this time. For example, there is not a single mention of selection, comprehensive education or multilateral schools in Ede's war-time diaries [10] and there was no mention of the type of secondary education to be adopted in the Conservative Party's education policy report of 1942. [11]

### **What the Education Act 1944 required**

Under Section 11 of the Education Act 1944 every LEA was required to prepare as soon as possible after 1 April 1945 a development plan, which was to be submitted to the Minister for Education by 1 April 1946. (The Education Act 1944 applied to England and Wales. There was a separate Act, the Education (Scotland) Act 1945, that applied to Scotland. The Scottish Act was similar to that covering England and Wales, but this paper covers only the English and Welsh act.) The development plan was to contain the proposals of the LEA for the future organisation of primary and secondary education

within its area. This included provision for nursery schools, special schools and boarding schools, but excluded further education which was covered by Section 42 of the Act which allowed the Minister to require LEAs to prepare further education schemes.

The development plans were to cover both county and voluntary schools and schools not maintained by the LEA where that was relevant to the scheme. The governors, managers (as primary school governors were then called) and church authorities had to be consulted. Divisional Executives, which under the Act had replaced the Part III Authorities, also had to be consulted. Under Section 8 primary and secondary education had to be provided in separate schools. As the Hadow reforms of 1926 had not been implemented everywhere, and many children were still educated in all-age elementary schools, this gave most LEAs a real problem, especially as building materials to build new schools or repair ones that had been bombed during the war were in short supply. Section 11 of the Act therefore allowed unreorganised all-age elementary schools, catering for children from the beginning to the end of compulsory schooling, to continue “for a limited period where necessary”. That limited period lasted 20 years, with the last elementary schools reorganised in the 1960s. The development plans also had to show what new buildings and alterations to buildings would be required for every school and what special transport arrangements would be necessary. At no point does the Act specify what type of secondary provision a local authority should make in its development plan.

The development plans were then submitted to the Minister of Education who considered them in detail. Senior councillors would meet with the Education Minister and his senior officials to explain why their plan proposed what it did. The plans were detailed and so were the discussions with the Ministry. Once the Education Minister was satisfied with the plan it was incorporated into a Local Education Order which was to be made by the Minister and which could then only be changed by the Minister or by Parliament. As a report from



the Education Committee to the full meeting of Surrey County Council on 24 April 1945 explained: "The effect of this will be that each authority will have before it a detailed programme of development for its areas which it is obliged by statutory authority to fulfil." [12]

### **Surrey County Council**

Surrey is a good LEA to take as an example. It was a large county with most types of community to be found within it. In the west of the county it was rural, with small towns and villages. In the east it was heavily built-up and urban in an area that was transferred to London in 1965. In the middle were county towns like Guildford and Woking. A strong Conservative county, it had at that time a lot of independent councillors. One of its aldermen was James Chuter Ede, who had remained an active member of the council throughout his time as the junior minister at the Board of Education. It is reasonable to assume that, as a former chairman of the Surrey education committee, he would have had considerable influence on policy which would have reflected his and Butler's views on how the 1944 Act should be implemented.

What stands out from a study of the papers of the Surrey education committee in 1945 is just how widespread the impact of the 1944 Act was, and the enthusiasm and imagination with which local government rose to the challenge. Like all other LEAs, secondary reorganisation was only one of a large number of other issues that the education committee had to grapple with. The county was still carrying through the reorganisation of elementary education that had followed the Hadow Report of 1926. The administrative structure of education had to be reorganised following the abolition of Part III authorities that the 1944 Act had brought about. There were unending discussions with the churches whose role had been such a contentious part of the 1944 Act. Changes to approved schools, remand homes, libraries, the Child Guidance Service, free medical provision for children (this was still three years before the NHS was formed), evacuated school children, further education and higher

education all had to be considered, and plans made for the raising of the school leaving age to 15. At the same time there was a chronic shortage of building materials at a time when a number of schools (and, indeed, the County Hall itself) that had been bombed in the war had to be repaired or rebuilt and new places created for the raising of the school leaving age.

The reorganisation that followed the Act was complicated by the patchwork of provision that already existed. Some parts of Surrey had been reorganised after the Hadow report of 1926, with the creation of central schools for children aged 11 to 14, but other parts of the county had not. Anglican and Catholic church schools also complicated the picture, as the diocesan authorities and individual governors and managers all had to be consulted.

When it came to secondary education, Surrey was one of those authorities that had not been convinced by the proposals of the Norwood report for a selective tripartite system. As the County's Chief Education Officer, R Beloe, made clear in a memorandum presented to the Education Committee, which endorsed it, and then to the full council in 1945 [13]: "The Norwood Report has its critics." [14] Beloe was clearly one of them. As he explained, among its shortcomings was the view that the brightest pupils would go only to one type of school, the grammar school. "It also lumps together into a school, euphemistically called 'Modern', all sorts and kinds of children who do not get into the grammar or technical school. Many who desire to see equality of opportunity given to each child to develop his talents (which surely is the essential if each child's ability and aptitude are to be studied) fear that the Modern School will be treated as was the Central or Senior School and that there will still be more than one system of education provided by local education authorities for senior pupils." [15]

Beloe's memorandum went on: "A further error, into which the writer believes the Norwood Committee have fallen, is to believe that the normal age for selecting a type of school for a child should be 11." [16] Beloe proved to be far-sighted. Seventy years later research from the OECD found

that at 10 or 11, tests like the 11+ do not test academic ability but only social background. [17] Intelligence tests only test academic ability at a later age, and the later the tests are administered the more accurate the results. [18]

Beloe outlined the advantages and disadvantages of the tripartite and multilateral options, including the type of multilateral that in the USA was called a comprehensive. Like many others in England at that time, Beloe feared that comprehensives would have to be very large, quoting the London County Council whose plan was for comprehensives of up to 2,000 pupils each. The London County Council estimated that a comprehensive school of 500 pupils would have a sixth form of under 20. [19] While schools with 2,000 pupils were common in the USA, few in Britain wanted to see schools that large in the UK. Beloe did not believe that comprehensive schools did have to be that large, but at a time when very few people stayed on in school until they were 18 the fear of the necessity to have very large comprehensives limited their attractiveness in the minds of many people.

Beloe preferred the multilateral approach, accepting that the different types of education outlined in the Norwood report (and others) should be available to all children in the county but whether it was grammar, technical or commercial courses, "these courses should not necessarily constitute the only courses in one school." [20] While the Norwood committee had identified three types of school (grammar, technical and modern) Beloe identified at least 12 (academic, engineering, art, building, agricultural, secretarial, horticultural, dressmaking, distributive trades, homemaking and nursing). [21] Beloe envisaged these not as separate schools, but as courses available in different sides of a multilateral school. Not all multilaterals would include all sides. Some schools would be grouped together so that between them they could cover courses in all areas.

Beloe proved far sighted. He recognised that Surrey could not possibly provide enough grammar schools for all those qualified for an academic education. As his memo noted: "The grammar schools themselves provide enough

places for about 15 per cent of the children qualified by age to enter.” [22] There were far more than 15% of children in Surrey capable of an academic education. A later estimate put the figure at 40%. He also recognised that 10 (the age at which most children sat the 11+) was far too young to accurately measure a child’s academic ability. His memo stated: “It is submitted that an attempt to choose a school, even for the majority, at the age of 11 is open to grave possibilities of error and prejudicial to the best choice being made.” He therefore recommended that all secondary schools should follow the same curriculum from entry to age 13, with selection onto different courses made at that later age. [23]

Beloe was also concerned that the tripartite system would lead to a hierarchy of schools, with the grammar schools seen as the most prestigious with the best teachers, facilities and buildings. As his memo stated: “Hitherto grammar schools have received preferential treatment in staffing, in equipment and in amenities” including the pay of teachers, and if grammar schools were to remain this was bound to continue. He did not think that there should be supremacy of any type of school. [24]

All the multilateral schools would follow the same courses for children from age 11 to 13, with 13 the age at which a choice would be made as to which side of the multilateral each child should follow. Provision for these children would be in what Beloe called the lower school of each multilateral school. The senior school would be for children above 13 years-old and would be where courses from a number of Beloe’s 12 different sides of a multilateral school would be provided. If a particular school did not have the specialism that the child needed then the child could transfer to another Senior School which did.

The Education Committee, and later the County Council, adopted Beloe’s ideas for multilateral comprehensives for Surrey’s future secondary education. It is worth noting that these decisions were not being made by a radical socialist inner-city LEA, but by a very Conservative county council whose members were largely wealthy upper

middle class people who could afford the time to devote to county government. This was decades before local authorities could pay councillors for their time. The County Education Officer had been a pupil and later a teacher at Eton. These people were not revolutionaries. They were largely paternalistic Tories who wanted to do the best for the children of Surrey in a pragmatic and non-ideological way.

### **The Labour government elected in 1945**

If the organisation of comprehensive education was largely a practical issue for Conservatives, it was sharper and more divisive in the Labour Party. Many saw the new grammar schools as more egalitarian, while some on the left favoured the multilaterals and a few even supported the American style comprehensives. Some argued that multilaterals and comprehensives would be more expensive, at a time of great postwar austerity, as they would require more new buildings while a selective system could more easily be fitted into the existing school building stock. There was also the problem of school size with multilaterals and even more with the American style comprehensives. When London County Council announced its plans for multilaterals they included schools of between 1,250 and 2,000 pupils. The average for most authorities that went down this route was 500 to 600 pupils. [25]

While there were differences of view within Labour about how secondary education should be organised, this was still a relatively minor issue. It was hardly raised during the passage of the Education Bill through Parliament. Butler and Ede went to great lengths to ensure that the Bill appealed to moderate opinion in both the Conservative and Labour parties, and that both party leaders supported the Bill. The Times noted that in a two-day debate on the White Paper that had preceded the Bill “not a single voice was raised in favour of holding up or whittling down any of the proposals for educational advance.” [26]

Despite the best efforts and parliamentary skill of RAB and Chuter Ede, the Education Bill did explode in controversy,

but over an issue that ministers had not seen coming. In March 1944 the government was defeated by one vote – 117 to 116 – when the Conservative MP for Islington East and feminist Mrs Thelma Cazalet-Keir moved an amendment that would have put on the face of the Bill a requirement for equal pay for women teachers. There had long been support for this within Labour, but Attlee was outraged, as was Churchill, and insisted that the matter be made a vote of confidence in the government. The matter was put to the vote again the following day when the amendment was defeated. Attlee complained of “a culmination of a course of irresponsible conduct pursued by certain Members of the House.” [27] The row did Cazalet-Keir no long-term harm. She replaced James Chuter Ede as Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Education in the caretaker National government that followed Labour’s withdrawal from the war time coalition, until losing her seat in the 1945 election.

While the type of secondary education was not much of an issue for the parliamentary party, it was more of an issue for some activists. At the Labour Party conference of 1944, held in December at the Westminster Central Hall in London, the education debate was on the Education Act passed earlier that year. The motion debated criticised the Act for not raising the school leaving age to 16, rather than 15, and for some of the financial provisions which the mover of the motion felt would act against poorer children. There was no mention of the organisation of secondary education. [28]

Labour’s 1945 conference was held only five months later, in Blackpool. The education debate was again on the Education Act. In a six-part motion, clause (c) called for “newly-built secondary schools to be of the multi-lateral type wherever possible.” This, of course, did not preclude exiting grammar schools from continuing alongside the multilateral schools, making them little different from secondary moderns. During the debate nobody spoke on clause (c). [29]

By the time of the 1946 Labour conference, held in Bournemouth, Attlee had won his crushing victory in the 1945 election and Labour was in power. The education debate

started with the Minister of Education, Ellen Wilkinson MP, outlining what the Labour government was doing to implement the 1944 Act. There had been criticism of a pamphlet called *The Nation's Schools, Their Plan and Purpose*, issued by the Ministry of Education as its Pamphlet No.1. This set out the arrangements for the tripartite system of secondary grammar, technical and modern schools, and reflected the orthodox thinking of officials at the Ministry of Education. This caused an outcry from Labour activists who forced Ellen Wilkinson, who had actually written much of it although she pretended to the conference that it was nothing to do with her, telling them that it had been produced "before I became Minister" [30], to withdraw the document. However, its contents were remarkably similar to *The New Secondary Education*, Ministry of Education Pamphlet No.9, which the Ministry published in 1947. The pamphlet was written by Ellen Wilkinson before she died, and was published by her successor, George Tomlinson MP, who acknowledged her role in writing it.

The National Association of Labour Teachers favoured multilaterals, but in her speech to conference Wilkinson attacked them for being mistaken about what Labour policy was. She said: "I know the point that the Labour teachers had in mind, and that, too, is based on a misconception. When we talk about three types of Secondary Schools they think that they are going to be, first, second and third class secondary schools. I do want to assure this audience that whatever may have been in the mind of the framer of the 1944 Bill, that is not in my mind as an administrator of the Act." It may not have been in Wilkinson's mind, but as we now know, that is exactly what happened. Those Labour activists that opposed the tripartite system, criticising it as, in the words of J W Raisin of the East Lewisham District Labour Party, being the "separating of the sheep from the goats" that had been a feature of the pre-1944 Act system were proved right. [31] W E Cove MP, of the National Association of Labour Teachers, moved a motion attacking the pamphlet *The Nation's Schools* as being the model that many local education authorities had

followed and called upon Wilkinson to withdraw it and to “reshape educational policy in accordance with socialist principals.” Despite opposition from Wilkinson and an attempt by the conference chairman to persuade Cove to withdraw his motion, he insisted on a vote. The Teachers’ Association motion was carried. [32]

The 1948 Labour party conference was held in Scarborough. Mrs Edna Harrison of the Derbyshire North East District Labour Party moved a motion that: “This conference affirms the principle of the common Secondary School for all, up to the age of 16”. But she was followed by a composite motion moved by Mr T P Riley of Walsall which, in its many parts, did not mention selection or the common school at all. Mrs Harrison had her supporters, but we will never know how many they were as when it came to a vote the chairman suggested that the motions that had been proposed should be remitted to the National Executive for further consideration. And so they were, so there was no vote that might have embarrassed the party leadership. [33]

Despite opposition from the National Association of Labour Teachers and some constituency activists, Attlee, Ellen Wilkinson and the Parliamentary Labour Party had made up their mind and adopted and enforced the tripartite selective system. The orthodoxy of Ministry of Education officials had triumphed, and the Ministry even published a letter advising all LEAs that the secondary moderns were meant for working class children. Those LEAs, Conservative and Labour, that wanted to go comprehensive (mainly with multilateral schools) were stopped from doing so and forced to adopt selection. The negative consequences of this still impacts the education of children in about 20% of England where selective schools remain.

### **The Fabian Society surveys of local authority plans**

In accordance with the 1944 Act, LEAs began filing their development plans with the new Ministry of Education. Joan Thompson of the Fabian Society kept tabs on them. By 1947 she had a sample of 53 LEAs and reported a considerable



**Table 1. Types of secondary schools in the development plans, 1947 report**

Type of school	Schools	Pupils
Grammar	17.0%	12.0%
Technical	7.0%	6.0%
Modern	50.0%	41.0%
Grammar-technical	2.0%	1.5%
Technical-modern	11.0%	10.0%
Grammar-modern	1.0%	1.0%
Multilateral	10.0%	26.5%

**Source:** *Secondary Education for All*, Joan Thompson, the Fabian Society, April 1947.

variety of plans. [34] As well as the three types of school outlined in the tripartite system, councils also went for combinations whether multilateral or bilateral. The bilateralschools had either grammar and technical streams, grammar and modern or technical and modern streams. Among these various alternatives 10% of schools were multilaterals accounting for 26.5% of pupils. Grammar schools accounted for 17% of schools and 12% of pupils. Secondary moderns were the largest category, with 50% of schools and 41% of pupils. [35]

On the basis of Joan Thompson's survey of 53 LEAs, comprehensive/multilateral schools would have provided for over a quarter of pupils, although the second updated report of 1952 halved this number.

The Fabian Society published this second report in

January 1952 [36], a few weeks after Labour lost the general election of 1951. This surveyed the development plans of 111 of the 146 LEAs then in existence in England and Wales. Of these, 45 were county councils (including London) and 66 came from county boroughs. While this represented 75% of LEAs, they accounted for 2,400,000 school places out of 2,500,000 total school places available. (These figures –assumed the raising of the school leaving age to 16, which would not happen for another two decades, but this distortion would have affected all LEAs equally.)

While the plans outlined the ambitions of the LEAs, the reality was different. Post-war shortages meant that it was impossible to carry out the plans quickly. Thompson estimated that it would take 80 years to have delivered the plans. Change was therefore a lot slower than many had originally hoped.

In the 1952 report the Fabian Society stated that there had been 14 comprehensive or multilateral schools in existence in 1946, catering for 11,000 pupils, and 31 bilateral schools with 13,000 pupils. The report went on the claim that “apart from these the structure of secondary education remains much the same as the post-primary education before 1944 ... The pre-1944 secondary schools have been renamed Secondary Grammar Schools, and entry to them is still regulated by a test taken between the ages of 10 and 12 ... The provision for children who are not successful in this test differs in the different areas. Seventeen percent stay on in all-age schools, mostly in the country districts, and in voluntary schools where there has been difficulty about raising the capital for the new school building. Otherwise the children mostly go to Modern Secondary schools previously known as Senior Schools. A few LEAs have an alternative in the form of the secondary schools which used to be called Central Schools ... These schools are mostly in the large towns, as are the 300 Junior Technical Schools, now known as Secondary Technical Schools, entry to which is still mostly at the age of 13. In towns which have these commercial and technical schools the most able children are skimmed off three times leaving the

rest of the children in the modern schools.” The report noted the many ways in which grammar schools were better resourced than modern schools. “The grammar schools usually have a great many advantages such as well-equipped libraries, laboratories and gymnasia, spacious premises and playing fields which often do not exist in the older Modern schools”. The report went on: “Many LEAs are themselves responsible for discrimination between the different kinds of secondary schools by means of grants for school equipment and educational materials, which are usually, without sufficient reason, greater for the Grammar schools than for the Modern schools.” [37] Before the 1944 Act the Senior and Central Schools referred to were upper elementary schools giving advanced primary education, not secondary schools.

An analysis of the 111 development plans showed a difference between the counties and the county boroughs, which partly reflected the rural nature of many counties. “More County Boroughs than Counties are going to use Grammar, Technical and Modern schools exclusively, possibly because this tripartite division fits their existing schools for children of over 11 most easily. In the more sparsely populated Counties where reorganisation of education for those over 11 had not taken place, the field is clearer for a new organisation of secondary education. Also the provision of separate schools in the most thinly populated districts would mean that these schools would have to be very small.” A breakdown of the different types of school is given in table 2 below. [38]

Note that by 1952 the term ‘comprehensive’ had replaced the term ‘multilateral’ used in 1947. Also note that the report was based on the development plans that had to be submitted by 1946, and did not reflect the situation that existed in 1952. The Fabian Society had obtained more development plans by 1951, with which to update its 1947 report. It did not claim that the data referred to 1952.

## **Conclusion**

The two years spent consulting on the Education Act 1944

coincided with the turning of the tide of war. As victory and an eventual end to the war became increasingly likely, so enthusiasm for planning for a peace that would bring a better life for people increased. There was growing debate about reconstruction, as building the post war world was called.

The skill of R A Butler and James Chuter Ede in piloting the Education Bill through Parliament without any serious opposition smoothed the passage of the Bill, so that when it became the Education Act of 1944 there was tremendous enthusiasm for it. The Act covered a lot of ground, but did not specify what form secondary education should take. In reality it was the culmination of half a century of debate about the

**Table 2. Types of secondary schools in the development plans, 1952 report**

Type of school	Schools	Pupils
Grammar	15.0%	13.0%
Technical	7.0%	7.5%
Modern	58.0%	51.0%
Grammar-technical	2.5%	2.5%
Technical-modern	8.5%	8.5%
Grammar-modern	2.0%	2.0%
Comprehensive	5.5%	12.5%

**Source:** *Secondary Education Survey*, Joan Thompson, the Fabian Society, January 1952.

future of education, and about selection. The call for development plans was taken up enthusiastically by LEAs. Then after the war the enthusiasm ran into the buffers of reality. There were shortages everywhere. Rationing was actually tougher after the war than during it. There was intense competition for building material, and the country faced huge economic problems. In 1950 the country was back at war, in Korea, and rearmament became the main priority. The result was that actual reform was a lot slower than everyone wanted.

The debate over selection was fought out mainly in the Labour Party. The selective tripartite system had been supported by the Spens and Norwood reports and became the orthodoxy of Ministry of Education senior officials. Butler favoured allowing those LEAs who wanted to go comprehensive to do so. [39] But by 1945 he was out of office.

Labour ministers in the new government favoured selection and the tripartite system, and that is what they imposed across the whole of England and Wales. (The situation in Scotland was different. Outside the four main cities the largely rural areas lent themselves more to comprehensives, which sat well with the more egalitarian Scottish society. Most of Scotland soon went comprehensive. The situation was different again in Northern Ireland, where educational organisation was complicated by the religious/political divide. It remained selective, although most grammar schools took in the majority of pupils in their area. In effect, it was the lowest achieving pupils who were selected out into what in Great Britain were called secondary moderns, although that was not a term used in Northern Ireland.)

As the Fabian Society's 1952 report showed, a lot of LEAs, including many Labour ones, supported selection. The reasons for this included the practical one that the existing school buildings lent themselves more to the tripartite system than comprehensives, which would have required more new building, and a fear of what was thought to be the

necessity for very large schools to get a decent sized sixth form from a comprehensive school. There was also the pull of tradition. Grammar schools had performed well for the few who went to them, and many Labour (and Conservative) boroughs were reluctant to sweep them away for the untried comprehensives. The result was that secondary education for all was achieved by adapting the pre-war system of Senior Elementary Schools and Central Schools, which had been about senior primary education and not secondary education. In many areas these became the secondary moderns. They had not been designed as secondary schools and lacked the amenities of the grammar schools which had.

Perhaps the slow rate of reform should not be a surprise. The Hadow reforms of 1926, which were a lot simpler than the reforms of the 1944 Act, had still not been implemented twenty years later in many areas, including in wealthy Conservative counties. Yet some of those involved in the debate from 1944 to 1946 proved far sighted. Whether it was Conservative Surrey or Labour London County Councils, or the National Association of Labour Teachers, their fears proved justified but the opportunity was lost by the determination of Clement Attlee and Ellen Wilkinson to impose the tripartite system. Comprehensive education in England and Wales was delayed by about thirty years.

The report that the Chief Education Officer of Surrey County Council, Mr R Beloe, put before his Education Committee in 1945, was a remarkable document. It was prescient about the problems of the selective system Surrey was eventually forced to adopt, and imaginative about how a multilateral system could be adapted for the benefit of all children in Surrey. Some 20 years later Surrey adopted a different comprehensive system more suited to the time. As a report from Surrey's chief inspector in the early 1970s, Mrs Joan Dean, showed, the comprehensive reforms of secondary schools and the Plowden reforms of primary schools resulted in a higher standard of education across the whole system, from screening of 7 year-olds, through increased GCE O and A level results to Oxbridge entry. These improvements followed

exactly the roll out of the reforms, from west to east, across the county.

There were many other LEAs, both Conservative and Labour, who had similarly far-sighted officers who wrote their own version of the Beloe report and councillors who supported them. Yet reform proceeded at a snail's pace until the election of a Labour government committed to comprehensive reform in 1964. Yet it was under Margaret Thatcher, who was Education Secretary from 1970 to 1974, that England finally had a majority of its secondary education in comprehensive schools. This most Conservative of politicians remains to this day the Education Secretary who closed more grammar schools and opened more comprehensives than any other. [40]

### **Foot notes**

[1] Shadi Danechi, (3 January 2020,) *Grammar School Statistics*, House of Commons Library Briefing Paper No. 1398. This, and other House of Commons research briefings, claims that the tripartite system was introduced by the Education Act 1944. While the Act did make tripartite reorganisations possible, it did not mandate them or any other type of secondary reorganisation.

[2] Brian Simon (1974), *The Politics of Educational Reform 1920-1940*, Lawrence and Wishart, London, part of the Studies in the History of Education series, page 239. For more detail of the plan see also A J Lynch (1924), *Individual Work and the Dalton Plan*, and C W Kimmins and Belle Rennie (1932), *The Triumph of the Dalton Plan*.

[3] Simon, page 141.

[4] Coryton, Demitri (2023), 'The Development of selective and comprehensive education in England', in *Education Journal* No. 511, 25 January 2023.

[5] *The Education of the Adolescent* (1926), report of the Board of Education Consultative Committee under the chairmanship of Sir William Hadow, published by His Majesty's Stationery Office.

[6] See, for example, 'Selective Central or Senior Schools', in *The Year Book of Education 1933*, edited by Lord Eustace Percy MP, former President of the Board of Education, published by Evans Brothers, London, page 190.

[7] *Report of the Board of Education Consultative Committee on Secondary Education with Special Reference to Grammar Schools and Technical High Schools* (1938) under the chairmanship of Will Spens, (the Spens report) published by His Majesty's Stationery Office.

[8] *Curriculum and Examinations in Secondary Schools* (1942). Report of the Committee of the Secondary Schools Examination Council under the chairmanship of Sir Cyril Norwood (the Norwood report), published by His Majesty's Stationery Office.

[9] *Educational Reconstruction* (1943), Board of Education White Paper, Cmd. 6458, page 10.

[10] Chuter Ede, James (1987), *Labour and the Wartime Coalition. From the Diary of James Chuter Ede, 1941 - 1945*, edited by Kevin Jefferys, published by The Historian's Press.

[11] *Looking Ahead. Educational Aims, Being the First Interim Report of the Conservative Sub-Committee on Education* (1942), published by the Central Committee on Post-War Reconstruction set up by the Conservative and Unionist Party Organisation, September 1942.

[12] *Surrey. Reports to be presented to the County Council, 24 April 1945, (The Yellow Book, April 1945)* published by Surrey County Council) (1945), report of the Surrey Education



Committee, paragraph C 1, page 187. (The *Yellow Books* were the agenda and committee reports presented at each meeting of the full county council, so called because the front cover was yellow.)

[13] *Surrey. Reports to be Presented to the County Council, 30th October 1945. Surrey County Council Yellow Book (1945). Report of the Education Committee, Appendix 2, "Development Plan: Organisation of Secondary Education in the 'Reorganised' parts of the county."* Memorandum from the Chief Education Officer, R Beloe, 19 September 1945, from page 655. (The reference to unreorganised areas referred to the reorganisation that followed the Hadow report of 1926.)

[14] *Ibid.*, paragraph F, page 661.

[15] *Ibid.*, paragraph F, page 662.

[16] *Ibid.*, paragraph F, page 662.

[17] *Programme for International Student Assessment Results 2018 (2019), Volume 1, Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, Paris.*

[18] Schleicher, Professor Andreas (2022), Director of Education and Skills, OECD, "Selective education is not the way forward", in *Education Journal* No. 507, 30 November 2022.

[19] Thompson, Joan (1952), *Secondary Education Survey. An Analysis of LEA Development Plans for Secondary Education*, The Fabian Society Research Series pamphlet No. 148, published by Fabian Publications Ltd with Victor Gollancz Ltd., page 16.

[20] *Surrey County Council Yellow Book (1945). Reports to be Presented to the County Council, 30th October 1945. Report of the Education Committee, Appendix 2,*

“Development Plan: Organisation of Secondary Education in the ‘Reorganised’ parts of the county.” Paragraph 10 (b), page 222, 18 January 1945.

[21] Ibid., paragraph G (2), page 665.

[22] Ibid., paragraph B (1), page 656.

[23] Ibid., paragraph F (3), page 664.

[24] Ibid., paragraph F (1), page 662.

[25] Joan Thompson (1947), *Secondary Education for All. An Analysis of Local Education Authorities’ Development Plans*, the Fabian Society Research Series pamphlet No. 118, published by Fabian Publications Ltd with Victor Gollancz Ltd.

[26] Quoted in Kenneth Harris (1982), *Attlee*, George Weidenfeld and Nicholson Ltd., London, page 227.

[27] Ibid., page 227.

[28] *Report of the Forty-third Annual Conference of The Labour Party, London, 1944* (1944). The report on the education debate started on page 182.

[29] *Report of the Forty-fourth Annual Conference of The Labour Party, Blackpool, 1945* (1945). The report on the education debate started on page 126.

[30] *Report of the Forty-fifth Annual Conference of The Labour Party, Bournemouth, 1946* (1946), page 189. The report on the education debate started on page 189.

[31] Ibid., page 191.

[32] Ibid., page 195.

[33] *Report of the Forty-seventh Annual Conference of the Labour Party, Scarborough, 1948*, (1948), the Labour Party. The report on the education debate starts on page 153.

[34] Joan Thompson (1947), *Secondary Education for All. An Analysis of Local Education Authorities' Development Plans*, the Fabian Society Research Series pamphlet No. 118, published by Fabian Publications Ltd with Victor Gollancz Ltd.

[35] *Ibid.*, page 8.

[36] *Ibid.*

[37] *Ibid.*, pages 5 and 6.

[38] *Ibid.* The quotes and the table are on page 8.

[39] Conversation between R A Butler and the author, then chairman of the Conservative National Advisory Committee on Education, 1980. There is also a news reel interview with Butler, probably from British Pathé, from the late 1940s saying the same thing. This was confirmed by a conversation between the author and Butler's widow, Lady Molly Butler, then a vice president of the Conservative Education Association, over tea at the Carlton Club a few years later.

[40] As the *Conservative Campaign Guide 1974*, published by Conservative Central Office for the February 1974 general election, stated, Margaret Thatcher approved 91% of the 3,600 comprehensive reorganisation proposals put before her, refusing only 325. The *Campaign Guide* could have added that these 325 schemes were poor ones that HMI recommended should be refused.

Helen Poet  
et al

# Evaluation of Year 1 of the Tuition Partners Programme: Impact evaluation for primary schools

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**Abstract:** *The National Tutoring Programme (NTP) Tuition Partners (TP) programme was designed to provide additional support to schools and teachers to supplement classroom teaching through subsidised high-quality tutoring for pupils from an approved list of tutoring organisations, the Tuition Partners. This evaluation covers the TP programme as delivered in its first year by the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF), from November 2020 to August 2021. Tuition Partners was one arm of the NTP.*

**Key words:** NTP, COVID-19, attainment, EEF.

**T**he National Tutoring Programme (NTP) Tuition Partners (TP) programme was designed to provide additional support to schools and teachers to supplement classroom teaching through subsidised high-quality tutoring for pupils from an approved list of tutoring organisations, the Tuition Partners.

The NTP aimed to support teachers and schools in providing a sustained response to the COVID-19 pandemic and to provide a longer term contribution to closing the attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers. The NTP was part of a wider government response to the pandemic, funded by the Department for Education and

originally developed by the EEF, Nesta, Impetus, The Sutton Trust, and Teach First, and with the support of the KPMG Foundation.

The EEF appointed 33 approved 'Tuition Partners' that schools could select from to deliver tuition. Schools could access 15 hours of tutoring per selected pupil (with a minimum of 12 hours being considered a completed block of tuition). Tuition was provided online and/or face-to-face; and was 1:1, or in small groups (1:2 or 1:3); and available in English, maths, science, humanities and modern foreign languages.

Tuition was expected to be delivered in schools (before, during and after school), in addition to usual teaching; and, in certain circumstances, at home. The programme was targeted at disadvantaged pupils attending state-maintained schools in England, including those eligible for Pupil Premium funding (PPeligible), Free School Meals (FSM), or those identified by schools as having an equivalent need for support.

Participating schools had discretion to identify which of their pupils they felt would most benefit from additional tuition support. Pupils in Years 1–11 were eligible (5–16 years old). The programme aimed to reach 215,000 to 265,000 pupils, across 6000 state-maintained schools in England, and it was expected that approximately 20,000 tutors would be recruited by Tuition Partners.

The TP programme was set up and delivered during the COVID-19 pandemic, requiring continued responsiveness to the challenges faced by schools including restricted attendance, remote teaching, and ongoing widespread staff and pupil absences. During the school closures to most pupils from January – March 2021, the EEF approved TPs to deliver online tuition at home, however many schools chose to wait to commence tutoring until schools reopened fully, and therefore started tutoring later than planned.

This evaluation report covers the analysis on the impact of the TP programme on the maths and English attainment outcomes for primary school pupils (Years 1–6)

using standardised classroom assessments. Separate reports relate to analysis on Year 11 pupils and an implementation and process evaluation (IPE). The evaluation findings for the TP programme are brought together in a summary and interpretation report that is available here.

This evaluation uses a quasi-experimental design (QED), involving a group of intervention schools that participated in the TP programme, and a group of comparison schools that did not receive the programme. The evaluation relies on a propensity score matching and re-weighting approach to ensure that the intervention and comparison schools are similar to each other in important, observable regards. As pupils who would have received TP in comparison schools were difficult to identify, the evaluation focused on pupils eligible for Pupil Premium and on all pupils, as these groups can be identified in both TP and comparison schools. For English, the analysis is based on 167 primary schools with 7074 pupils eligible for Pupil Premium and for maths, 127 primary schools with 5241 pupils eligible for Pupil Premium.

An additional instrumental variable (IV) analysis, based on the sample of TP schools only, looked at the impact of TP in schools that signed up to the TP programme earlier (and that delivered more tutoring) compared to schools that signed up later.

### **Summary of findings**

On average, pupils eligible for Pupil Premium in schools that received TP made similar progress in English and maths compared to pupils eligible for Pupil Premium in comparison schools (no evidence of an effect in English or in maths). This result has a low security rating. A particular challenge is that, on average, only approximately 20% of pupils eligible for Pupil Premium were selected for tutoring, meaning a large proportion of pupils eligible for Pupil Premium were included in the analysis who did not receive tutoring.

Therefore, this estimated impact of TP is diluted and it is hard to detect any effect that may (or may not) be present. Similar analysis on all pupils found that pupils in schools that

received TP made, on average, similar progress in English compared to all pupils in comparison schools (no evidence of an effect), and an additional one month's progress in maths compared to pupils in comparison schools. However, there is uncertainty around these estimates, with the positive maths result being consistent with a null (0 months) or slightly larger positive effect (2 months) and the English result being consistent with small positive (1 month) or small negative effect (-1 months). Furthermore, this analysis was subject to even further dilution: on average, only 12% (for maths) and 14% (for English) of pupils in the analysed schools were selected for tutoring. Given this context, it is unlikely that any of these differences were due to TP. In the sample of TP schools, completing a 12-hour block of tutoring (compared to zero hours) was related to higher English scores amongst pupils eligible for Pupil Premium that received more tutoring due to the early sign-up of the school. An equivalent analysis for maths was not able to proceed.

A different analysis within TP schools showed that pupils who received more hours of tutoring were associated with higher English scores on average than pupils who received fewer hours of tutoring. However, this was not the case for maths, where receiving more hours of tutoring was not associated with higher maths scores. These results are associations and are not necessarily causal estimates of impact; there may be other explanations for the results.

### **EEF security rating**

These findings have a low security rating. This study was well powered but, by necessity, did not have a randomised trial design; given the urgency of the requirement for catch-up support in schools it was not considered ethical to randomise. There was high attrition, with a proportion of schools not conducting, submitting, or having access to English and maths assessment data for all pupils – but after weighting TP and comparison schools were well balanced on observable characteristics. It was also harder for the evaluation to detect whether there was an impact of the programme because

almost four-fifths of the pupils included in the analysis did not receive tutoring, and those pupils who received tutoring received fewer hours on average than expected.

### **Additional findings**

When looking at how outcomes varied for pupils who received TP by model of tutoring, this indicated that, for English, scheduling TP sessions to all take place within school hours is associated with better scores than sessions delivered in a combination of both during and outside schooling hours, and also that sessions attended with at least one other pupil were associated with better scores. For maths, group size and timing of delivery were not associated with scores.

However, delivery of tutoring sessions concentrated over a short timeframe was positively correlated with higher maths scores. At a tutor level, tutors who received on-going tutor training were associated with higher scores in maths. The results also suggested that primary school pupils responded better to tutors with undergraduate qualifications in maths, and with PGCE/QTS in English, rather than other postgraduate qualifications. These results are associations and are not necessarily causal.

The evaluation also contended with the challenges of the pandemic, meaning not all planned analyses could go ahead. The Year 6 analysis using all pupils in the year group was not possible due to the cancellation of the Key Stage 2 statutory tests for summer 2021. The evaluation also aimed to measure impact by identifying the characteristics of pupils who participated in TP, so that a matched sample of pupils in comparison schools with similar 'observable' characteristics could be created. By doing this, the outcomes across both groups of 'predicted' participants could be compared.

However, it was not possible to accurately predict which pupils participated in TP using available data and this impact analysis did not go ahead. The IPE findings showed that schools used a wide definition of disadvantage when selecting which pupils to receive tutoring, which was not narrowly confined to Pupil Premium eligibility. Schools also



included 'any pupils whose attainment had suffered' as being disadvantaged, as well as selecting pupils who they perceived as more likely to benefit from and engage with the tutoring. These characteristics cannot be observed or isolated within the available datasets.

This study had several related limitations: the inability to randomise and control for unobservable characteristics regarding school and pupil selection into tutoring; the difficulty of identifying the pupil-level counterfactual (pupils that would have participated in TP in comparison schools); the quality and completeness of the participation data (including information on dosage); and the dilution of any impact in pre-identified groups of pupils (specifically pupils eligible for Pupil Premium who did not all receive TP). It should be noted that the high dilution is driven by the extent to which pupils eligible for Pupil Premium were selected to participate in TP (or not), as well as by the total number of pupils who participated in TP in the school. With such high dilution, it was unlikely that the analyses focusing on pupils eligible for Pupil Premium and on all pupils would be able to detect an effect.

Due to a combination of these factors, the main estimates are for groups of pupils that do not directly align with the group of pupils that participated in TP. Although the intervention group (TP schools) and comparison group were well balanced in terms of observable school-level characteristics, the design was not fully equipped to deal with the way schools actually selected pupils to participate in. In addition, pupils selected for tutoring received, on average, fewer hours of tutoring by the time of the end-point assessment than had been anticipated (at a pupil-level average, for PP-eligible pupils, 8.8 hours in English and 8.9 hours in maths compared to the expected minimum of 12 hours). This was in part due to delivery shifting to later in the academic year because of restricted attendance at schools in the spring term 2021. The number of hours received was lower than the minimum 12 hours expected, and may mean it was harder to detect an effect of the programme.

The evaluators recommend that in future years of the

TP programme, efforts are made to evaluate different types of tutoring with a pupil-randomised design, for example by varying the number of hours of tuition or how many sessions of tutoring per week are delivered to explore the optimum dosage and pattern of delivery.



# Select Committee Reports

**W**e continue our series of reviews of all parliamentary select committee reports on education, which we started in volume 25 beginning with January 2018. In this issue we review all reports published from August to December 2022.

*Not Just Another Brick in the Wall: Why prisoners need an education to climb the ladder of opportunity: Government response to the Committee's First Report, House of Commons Education Select Committee, First Special Report of Session 2022/23, HC 645. Wednesday 27 September 2022.*

*Developing Workforce Skills for a Strong Economy, 30th report from the Committee of Public Accounts, Session 2022-23, HC 685, published by authority of the House of Commons on Wednesday 14 December 2022.*

# Prisoner education

*Not Just Another Brick in the Wall: Why prisoners need an education to climb the ladder of opportunity: Government response to the Committee's First Report, the Education Select Committee's Second Special Report of Session 2022–23. HC 645. Published on 27 September 2022 by the Stationery Office Limited.*

**In its report on prison education, the Education Select Committee had recommended that the job description and key performance measures used when assessing Governors must be amended to require Governors to ensure that providing adequate prison education and a culture of learning was part of their core responsibilities, and something on which they must be held to account for as part of their performance.**

The Government accepted the recommendation and it added that it was already strengthening the performance measures for governors as set out in the Prisons Strategy White Paper. The Department for Education pointed out that new Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for education had been agreed, including progress in English and maths, attendance at education and numbers of prisoners attaining vocational qualifications.

The Government said that to ensure that governors were well equipped to deliver a high standard of education in prisons, it had been reviewing current job descriptions, training, and assessment requirements to ensure that they appropriately reflected the area of work. The DfE stressed that more detailed performance data (covering attendance, levels of prisoner attainment and quality of teaching) was also used to hold providers and establishments to account. It added that data was shared with HMP (Her Majesty's Prisons) Data Working Group to help identify establishments which were facing challenges and performance concerns were picked up by Prison Group Directors (PGDs) as part of regular

performance conversations with governors.

The Government accepted the Committee's recommendation that prison officers should also receive training to ensure that they understood the importance of education in supporting prisoners to find employment and reducing reoffending. The DfE pointed out that in the Prisons Strategy White Paper, it had committed to comprehensively enhancing the professional skills offered to staff, and together with the education reform programme, the plan would be to introduce a range of staff

Training, including the new prison officer apprenticeship programme, which contained relevant content on the importance of education, skills and work for prisoner rehabilitation within the training package. The DfE added that it had also been exploring other opportunities to provide prison officers with CPD, related to education, skills, and work.

The Committee had stressed that every prison must make education an operational priority, and it had recommended that every prison must have a Deputy Governor of Learning, as part of the Senior Management team, who would be directly responsible for education audits and the educational outcomes of prisoners, and the job description must include qualifications and/or experience in prison education. The Government had accepted the recommendation and it pointed out that it was in the process of recruiting for the new senior role of Head of Education, Skills and Work who would have responsibility for overseeing prison and provider delivery of education, skills, and work. The DfE pointed out that it would initially be recruiting to 17 sites by December 2022, and a roll out across the estate would be expected to be completed by January 2024. It added that the role at governor grade, would require a teaching qualification or demonstrable relevant experience.

### **Negative view**

The Committee warned that as many prisoners had a negative view of education, incentives would therefore have a part to

play in encouraging prisoners to engage, or re-engage, with education. It recommended that the Ministry of Justice should ensure that pay for education was equal to the pay for prison work, to ensure that prisoners did not lose out by choosing education, but to qualify for the equal pay, prisoners must be able to demonstrate progress within their studies.

While the Government had accepted the principle that governors should set pay rates that would encourage engagement with education and it expected that new KPIs for prison education would encourage governors to review pay rates, governors already had the necessary freedom to set local pay rates to reflect their prisoner population needs, type of prison and regime priorities, and the jobs / educational / vocational training that were available. The DfE added that it would not propose to set additional rules on pay which governors must follow.

The Committee had also recommended that the Government should examine the potential of using Release on Temporary Licence (ROTL) as an incentive to encourage prisoners to engage with education, but to qualify for the equal pay, prisoners must be able to demonstrate progress within their studies. The Committee had also recommended that the Government should examine the potential of using Release on Temporary License (ROTL) as an incentive to encourage prisoners to engage with education.

The Government had accepted the recommendation in principle and it added that it intended to consult practitioners on the implications of any change to the current approach.

The Committee argued that as a high proportion of prisoners had learning needs, it had been concerning that prisons had only had to screen for additional learning needs since 2019, which meant that the majority of the prison population may never have gone through a screening process. The Committee had pointed out that Government figures currently relied heavily on prisoners self-identifying, and many may be unaware of their learning difficulties or too embarrassed to ask for support. It therefore recommended

that the Ministry of Justice must re-design CURIOUS to better capture complete data on the levels of prisoners with learning difficulties across the prison estate, and its use must be extended to private prisons, to enable the Government to properly identify and target funding and support to those that needed it most across the prison estate. The Committee added that assessment and resources for people with ESOL needs should also be considered.

The Government said that it was expanding the use of CURIOUS and developing an approach which would capture data across the full range of learning difficulties and disabilities and additional learning needs across the prison estate, including in private prisons. The DfE pointed out that the system would capture the assessment of prisoners identified as English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) learners or those who were bi-lingual, to better understand of the level of need amongst the population, and better monitoring and evaluation of outcomes for the groups.

The Committee said that there was a strong case for every prisoner to receive an assessment for learning needs from an educational psychologist, or at the very least a more intensive form of screening, and it had recommended that the Ministry of Justice should prepare a cost appraisal for implementing such an approach.

The Government had accepted that recommendation. It added that while systems to screen for learning needs were in place, it would review and explore improvements. It pointed out that a review of LDD assessment and screening tools had been commissioned by HMPPS and it had been examining the findings and reviewing the necessary actions. The DfE added that it had begun engagement with the market about assessment and screening, and feedback would be used to design the future service and set the standard of LDD assessment it expected.

### **Greater integrated learning**

The Committee had recommended greater integrated working between different providers in custody between



education, health and offender management, and it called on the Government to amend legislation to enable data on prisoners to be shared so that prisons could access prisoners' previous records of educational attainment from the National Pupil Database, and also to enable previous diagnosis on learning needs to be shared.

The Government had accepted the recommendation in the context of sharing information across HMPPS, but it argued that new or amended legislation would not be necessary to allow data from the DfE national pupil database to be shared with prisons. The DfE pointed out that the Prisons Strategy White Paper had committed to invest in the digital and data platform to develop personal learning plans for prisoners, which would record career goals and the progress prisoners were expected to make towards them throughout their sentences focusing on numeracy, literacy and qualifications that would improve their job prospects.

The DfE said that the digital personal learning plans, which had been launched in four pilot sites, would create a data-informed path through education and employment services in prisons to make sure that prisoners were making the best use of their time in custody, including details of a prisoner's goals (personal, employment, education); activity history (education and work within prison); attendance at classes; assessments; additional learning needs; and course history. It added that as of May 2022, the plans contained information on additional learning needs.

The DfE said that the further roll out of digital learning plans had been planned to align with recruitment of support managers for prisoners with additional learning needs. It argued that new, or amended, legislation would not be necessary to allow data from the DfE national pupil database to be shared with prisons, and prisons were already able to access an individual's personal learning record (PLR) via the Learning Records Service (LRS).

The Committee recommended that in response to the Report, the Government must provide greater clarity on the funding available to fund specialist support staff, how many

would be appointed, where they would be distributed across the prison estate, with a minimum of one SENCO per prison, and the timescale for their introduction across the prison estate. Having accepted the recommendation in principle, the Government said that it was currently recruiting new support managers for prisoners with additional learning needs such as learning disabilities and conditions such as autism, acquired brain injury or ADHD funded from the £550m allocated for reducing reoffending in the recent spending review. The DfE added that the managers would be responsible for promoting a “whole prison approach” to supporting prisoners with additional learning needs.

It pointed out that it had been working towards recruiting 61 in the first year of the rollout and a further 61 in the second year, which would result in one support manager in every prison by 2024. The government accept the Committee’s recommendation that the Ministry of Justice should re-establish a National Careers Service across the prison estate. It pointed out that careers advice was currently commissioned through the Prison

Education Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS), commissioned rehabilitative services, and Department for Work and Pensions work coaches provided advice inside prisons. The DfE said that it was currently engaging with the market to explore the best long-term arrangements for future Careers Information, Advice and Guidance Service, and it would use feedback from the market to design an approach, which may not take the precise form of the National Careers Service, but it would seek to provide information, advice and guidance in line with best practice.

The Committee pointed out that prisoners were often transferred with short notice across the prison estate, and the loss or delay in the transfer of their educational records could have serious repercussions on their ability to continue their studies, and it could in some cases cause prisoners to become disheartened and to give up on their learning. The Committee recommended that the Ministry of Justice should introduce a digital education passport, which contained a

record of a prisoner's learning, and any identified educational needs, that followed prisoners through their sentence and across the prison estate, and which could be shown to potential employers. The Government said that it was already developing Personal Learning Plans in line with the recommendation, and the new digital system would record initial assessments and a learning plan would to be followed throughout the sentence.

### **Prison Education Framework**

The Committee cited its concerns about whether the Prison Education Framework contracts were able to deliver the improvement in prison education that was desperately needed. It called on the Government to carry out a wholesale review of the current prison education framework by the end of 2022, with a view to improving the current contract structure, before contracts were considered for extension in 2023. The Committee added that the review should examine how the contracts could be improved to encourage partnership working, how to ensure that Governors had the autonomy to choose their education providers and to work with the further education sector, and how to develop a focus on engaging with local employers, including SMEs.

The Government had accepted the need for a review of the prison education framework, but it argued that it would not be feasible to complete it within the timescales provided. It pointed out that it was reviewing the contract management system and structure for the Prison Education Framework to ensure that consistent support, advice and challenge was being provided to governors and education providers. The DfE added that it had also started discussions with current providers and those on the Framework about the terms of any extension.

The Committee also recommended that all prison Governors should be given the appropriate training by the Ministry of Justice to acquire the skills to manage the contracts with their education providers more effectively. The Government said that it wanted governors to be more

involved in performance discussions with education providers and the current approach was to ensure that they had the support of specialist trained and accredited staff to manage the prison education contracts and provide advice and guidance.

The Committee argued that the Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) had been meant to allow Governors to contract bespoke training, including with voluntary organisations, for their prisons, but the current length of contracts had been making it difficult for smaller organisations to bid, and the length of DPS contracts should be extended beyond the current two years. The Government had rejected the recommendation. It pointed out that the maximum length of DPS contracts had been reviewed in 2019, and it had been determined at that point that any extension beyond two years would, on balance, be inappropriate as it would limit Governor flexibility. The DfE pointed out that the aim behind the DPS had been to widen education provision and enable more bespoke short-term projects to be funded, for example enabling a governor to commission a specific course to meet employer need.

### **Civil society**

The Committee argued that it was key that civil society should be allowed to engage with prisons, and to ensure that prisons fulfilled that aim, a criteria must be added to the evaluation framework of Ofsted inspections to ensure that they examined how prisons engaged with civil society. While the Government rejected the recommendation, it agreed with the principle that Ofsted should make a specific comment about the education provider in inspection reports. However, the DfE had insisted that overall responsibility for the quality and effectiveness of education, skills and work activity must sit with the governor.

The Committee had recommended that Ofsted should be given the legal tools to allow it to take regulatory action against individual prisons, including, where necessary, changes to the prison leadership. While the Government had

rejected that recommendation, it had agreed that education provision and education inspection findings should be taken seriously and have an increased focus within the prison regime. It fully agreed that Ofsted inspections should have impact and that prisons should demonstrate how they were responding to concerns raised at inspection.

The Committee had recommended that the Government should set out, by the end of the year, a date for when all prisons would be able to support broadband. The Government had rejected the recommendation, and it pointed out that in the Prisons Strategy White Paper, it had set out the ambition for the next decade and beyond to meet its aims on skills and employment by making the estate digitally enabled for prisoners.

The Committee had recommended that the Ministry of Justice should undertake an audit across the whole prison estate on the quality of physical infrastructure necessary to provide a high level of education, such as libraries, classrooms and workshops. The Government had accepted the recommendation in principle, and it pointed out that a programme of survey work was currently underway to assess the condition of the fabric and critical assets of prison buildings, including education and workshop facilities, within the next 12 to 18 months.

The Committee recommended that by the end of the year, the Ministry of Justice must set out a strict budget for prisons for the next 10 years, to set out a long-term strategy for prison education, and a minimum expected spend on prison education. Having rejected the recommendation, the Government argued that the Prisons Strategy White Paper had set out a 10-year vision to deliver a transformed Prisoner Education Service with a focus on giving prisoners the skills and opportunities to secure a job on release. The DfE added that with the investment agreed at the Spending Review, the Government would be injecting £550m over the next three years to support prison leavers' transition back into society and reduce reoffending, in including additional budget to support investment in a digital and data platform to develop

personal learning plans for prisoners; better support for literacy and numeracy and building stronger links with employers.

The Committee argued that as reoffending was lower in prisoners who participated in higher education, the Government should remove the “six-year rule” so that prisoners on long sentences could apply for higher education courses earlier in their sentence. The Government had rejected the recommendation, as it believed that loan support was available only for prisoners who were within six years of their release date, to strike a balance between supporting prisoners reasonably close to their release date and ensuring that the taxpayer had a reasonable expectation that the prisoner benefiting from the loan would be able to repay it.

But the DfE pointed out that it supported the principle of prisoners having access to the high-quality training they needed to progress and build a brighter future. It cited apprenticeships and skills bootcamps which it believed would ensure that prisoners would have the skills and experience they would need to move onto secure employment in the longer-term.

### **The New Futures Network**

The Committee had noted that while the New Futures Network had been established by the Ministry of Justice to build partnerships with employers and prisons, there was no published data as to what success it was having. Therefore, the Committee recommended that the Ministry of Justice should publish annual data showing the number of employment opportunities it had found for former prisoners. The Committee added that the data must show the size of the companies the Network was engaging with to ensure that it was engaging with employers of all sizes, including small and medium sized employers.

Having accepted the recommendation in principle, the Government pointed out that NFN was part of HMPPS, which already published data on employment outcomes for prison leavers, and the network worked with over 400 employers,

many of which were SMEs. The DfE argued that auditing the size of individual employers would be administratively challenging for NFN and the employers, and it added that NFN was only one source of employment opportunities in prisons. The DfE added that other sources included the DWP (Department for Work and Pensions) Prison Work Coach, Education Providers, CFO3 providers, Employment Advisory Boards, and others.

The Committee had recommended that, in any future review of the Apprenticeship Levy, the Government must change the rules to allow businesses to direct it towards prisoner rehabilitation schemes. The Government had argued that the Government had rejected the recommendation because the apprenticeships levy had been created to support the uptake and delivery of high-quality apprenticeships including allowing levy-paying employers to use their funds to support apprenticeships for those in custody. The DfE said that levy payers could already employ prisoners as apprentices upon their release and they could use their levy funds to support such apprenticeships. It pointed out that later in the year, the Government planned to change the law to enable serving prisoners to start apprenticeships and the Government would continue to explore what more could be done to incentivise and reduce barriers to employers taking on prisoner and prison leavers.

The Committee had recommended that the Ministry of Justice must carry out a longitudinal study of prisoner destination data, to compare the prisoner outcomes of those who had received prison education with those who had not, and share the information with education providers, which would allow them to refine their education offer to best support the vocations and careers that former prisoners were pursuing. The Government had accepted the recommendation in principle, and it pointed out that it was currently developing personal learning plans for prisoners and developing measures of progress. The DfE added that it was very keen to capture outcome data and use it to inform curriculum choices to make sure that the right skills and

training were being delivered to get prisoners into work.

The Government pointed out that it was also considering its monitoring and evaluation strategy for planned initiatives such as the Employability Innovation Fund and it added that it would explore the potential for longitudinal research as part of that, alongside other potential evaluation methods. It added that data on the impact of interventions and the effect on the proven reoffending rate (against a matched comparator group which had not received the intervention) would also be possible via the Justice Data Lab, which had been used recently by the Prisoners' Education Trust to evidence the impact of their study grants.



## Developing workforce skills

*Developing Workforce Skills for a Strong Economy*, 30th report from the Committee of Public Accounts, Session 2022-23, HC 685, published by authority of the House of Commons on Wednesday 14 December 2022.

**A** report from the Public Accounts Committee has concluded that the Department for Education’s (DfE) £4 billion a year spend on activities designed to develop workforce skills in England, is failing to deliver the skills essential to economic growth and prosperity. The Committee pointed out that the number of adults participating in government-funded further education and skills training had dropped dramatically, from 3.2 million in 2010/11 to 1.6 million in 2020/21, and the drop had been particularly marked in poorer areas.

The Committee argued that the DfE’s response had been no match the scale of the problem and it failed to address key factors involved in the national skills shortage, including Brexit and the target in law to reach net zero by 2050. The report pointed out that while employers should be leading on identifying skills requirements and designing qualifications and training, they were less on workforce training, and the DfE’s skills index had showed that the impact of further education on productivity had declined 46% over the last decade.

The Committee Chairman, Dame Meg Hillier MP said that despite £4 billion a year of taxpayers’ money had been spent on skills programmes, participation had “fallen off a cliff”, especially among older workers and in poorer areas. She argued that the Government would not make inroads on levelling-up if it did not get ahead of the situation. Ms Hillier added that as the UK workforce numbers were falling, the Government needed to “get serious on skills” because the future of the economy depended on it.

The Committee said that was “extremely concerned” about the dramatic fall in participation in further education and skills training among disadvantaged groups. The report pointed out that the total number of participants in government-funded further education (FE) and skills training in the 20% most disadvantaged areas of England had fallen by 39% between 2015/16 and 2020/21, which was down by 280,100 participants. It added that the largest decline in such areas had occurred among people aged 50 and over, where the numbers participating had dropped by more than half.

The Committee noted that the Department for Education had asserted that participation had fallen most at lower levels of study and in classroom-based training, which tended to be more common in disadvantaged areas and among disadvantaged learners. The DfE had also suggested that large employers, which sometimes delivered skills training in partnership with FE colleges and other training providers, were less likely to be located in disadvantaged areas. The DfE had argued that making the apprenticeships system work better for small employers was fundamental to increasing participation among young people and disadvantaged groups.

The Committee recommended that within six months, the DfE should develop an evidence-based plan setting out how it would support disadvantaged groups specifically to participate in FE and skills training.

The Committee had concluded that the DfE had not made clear what level of performance would constitute success for its skills programmes, and ultimately it relied on measuring learners’ subsequent earnings as a proxy for the value of government-funded skills training and the extent to which that training met the needs of the labour market. The Committee noted that the FE Skills Index was the DfE’s key indicator of the impact of the FE system on productivity, focusing on adult learners and apprentices who had successfully completed their training. PAC added that the DfE calculated the Index by measuring changes in the number of learners and achievement rates and shifts in the mix of

learning towards more or less economically valuable training, based on earnings.

The report pointed out that overall, the Index had fallen by 46% between 2012/13 and 2020/21, and although the annual change in 2020/21 had been an increase of 7%, the DfE had not set a target for the level it would like the Index to reach in future years. The Committee recommended that the DfE should set out, as part of its Treasury Minute response, what level of improvement in the FE Skills Index it was aiming to achieve and by when, so that Parliament had metrics with which to monitor its performance.

The Committee said that the multiplicity of government skills programmes made it difficult for employers and individuals, to navigate to the training that would best meet their needs. It added that as well as DfE's range of interventions to support skills development, DWP and DLUHC also offer skills programmes, some of which covered the same types of learning, such as numeracy training, which was available through DfE's Essential skills numeracy programme, some standalone technical qualifications, and the Multiply initiative which was funded from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

The PAC warned that employers and individuals sometimes found it difficult to understand how all the different skills programmes fitted together, and therefore which programmes were most relevant to them. The Committee pointed out that the DfE had stated that the bulk of government funding supported only a small number of programmes, such as apprenticeships and the adult education budget.

The Committee stressed the need for the Government to strike a balance between keeping the system simple and intelligible and delivering training that met people's needs. PAC pointed out that the DfE had conceded that the complexity of the system could sometimes put employers off from engaging with what government had to offer, and it recommended that the DfE should work with other departments as necessary, to take action to review the

number of skills programmes and eliminate overlap between them.

The Committee noted that employers were spending less than they used to on workforce training, which risked leaving the economy without the skills it needed. It also pointed out that the DfE's employer skills surveys had indicated that employers' spending on workforce training per employee had fallen in real terms from £1,710 in 2011 to £1,530 in 2019. PAC cited the 2021 employer skills survey which had found that 52% of the total workforce had received some training during the year, which was the lowest proportion since the first survey in 2011.

The committee stressed that the BEIS was particularly concerned about small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), which often lacked the resources to invest in workforce training. It pointed out that several of the organisations that had submitted written evidence had raised concerns about the inflexibility of the apprenticeship levy and had suggested that employers should be able to use their levy contributions to fund a wider range of skills activities.

The Committee therefore recommended that the DfE, working with other government departments, should review how it to encourage employers to invest in skills development, including through the apprenticeship levy, and, in light of its findings, take action to improve the effectiveness of the incentives. The Committee called on the DfE to write to it within six months with an update on what it had done.

The PAC said that it was concerned that continuing financial pressures and workforce challenges were hampering colleges' ability to play a full part in the skills system. It argued that colleges played an important role in reaching disadvantaged groups and giving people opportunities they would not otherwise have to develop their skills.

The Committee said that in January 2021, it had reported that there had been evidence of the college sector's financial fragility and that the situation had been affecting students. PAC had found that financial pressures had caused some colleges to narrow their curriculum and reduce the

length of courses, while some had significantly reduced enrichment activities, such as careers advice and employability activities.

The Committee said that it had also been concerned about colleges' ability to recruit and retain teaching staff. It pointed out that while the DfE had recognised that pay in the college sector would often not compete with pay in relevant industries, but the DfE had highlighted that the 2021 Spending Review had increased funding for skills by £2.8 billion. The Committee noted that the DfE was considering how to give colleges greater funding certainty, and it was working with the sector on initiatives such as supporting people who wanted to teach part-time and work in industry part-time. The PAC recommended that within six months, the DfE should provide PAC with an update on how it was helping colleges deal with the challenges relating to workforce shortages and funding arrangements.

The Committee said that although the DfE had high expectations for its new Unit for Future Skills, the Unit did not yet have all the skilled staff it needed to meet the expectations. The report pointed out that in February 2022, the DfE had announced the creation of a Unit for Future Skills, which was a division within the DfE but it was intended to work across government, examining the interaction between the jobs and skills markets. PAC added that the DfE also planned that the Unit would engage with businesses and training providers to establish what additional analysis they would find helpful.

The Committee noted that the Unit currently had 18 staff, which was below complement as it had struggled to recruit the highly skilled analysts it needed. PAC pointed out that the DfE recognised that it needed to be data- and evidence-driven in what it did, and that the key to ensuring that the Unit achieved the necessary profile would be to produce outputs that stakeholders would find easy to use and helpful.

The PAC recommended that the DfE should write to the Committee, alongside its Treasury Minute response, with

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an update on: the staffing position of the Unit for Future Skills, and how any shortfall in resourcing was affecting the delivery of its programme of work; and how it planned to assess and monitor the impact of the Unit's work.



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