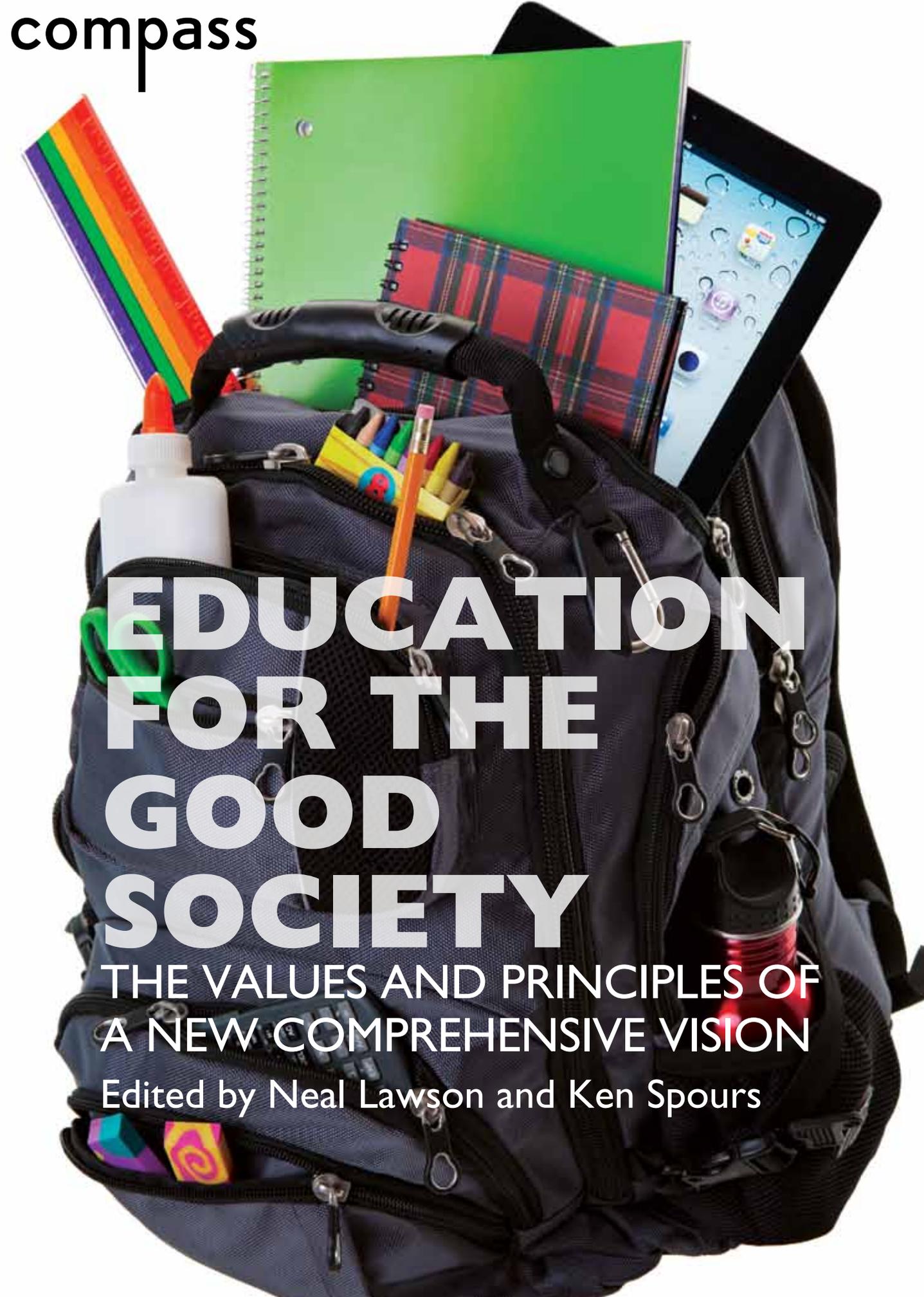compass

EDUCATION FOR THE GOOD SOCIETY

THE VALUES AND PRINCIPLES OF A NEW COMPREHENSIVE VISION

Edited by Neal Lawson and Ken Spours

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October 2011

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Acknowledgements:

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Foreword

Since last year's election, education has taken centre stage as one of the most heated debates in British politics. But while radical reforms are changing the landscape of state funded education, there is a distinct feeling of drift and fragmentation on the left.

In Government New Labour transformed crumbling, leaky buildings into shining, well-equipped centres of learning in some of the most disadvantaged areas of the country. For some groups of children, opportunities were opened up and lives transformed.

But too often education equipped children for the workforce, not for life, and teachers complained that their skills and judgment were sidelined by central diktat. Schools were pitted against one another in a quasi-market where only academic results seemed to count and Bobby Kennedy's words echoed around the education system: "it measures everything, in short, except that which makes life worthwhile".

In the face of fundamental change sweeping across the education system there is an urgent need for an alternative vision based on collaboration, not competition. This is as much a journey of rediscovery as it is redirection. As Jon Cruddas points out, education in its broadest sense – as the basis of a fulfilled life – was a rich part of the working-class socialist tradition; it's time to reclaim it.

Taken together the essays in this book set out a vision of an education system that lies at the heart of a good society. It is a vision where children get not just an academic but a social education and where school becomes a place for social enlightenment, not social advantage. At its centre is a commitment to lifelong learning and communities that are empowered to drive improvements, where schools are democratised and children's well being and academic attainment are not alternative but synonymous. It is a vision of a system where children are equipped for life, not just the workforce and where what is counted is wider than narrow academic results. But equally, and importantly, it is a vision where academic attainment really matters and where being equal doesn't just mean being the same.

The book strays into important but uncomfortable territory by taking on questions that have gone unasked and assumptions taken for granted for far too long. Does choice always conflict with the common good, or are the two fundamentally tied together? Was raising the school participation age an important protection for the poorest, or was it a missed opportunity to reshape the education system to meet the needs of a more diverse range of young people? And does achieving equality have to mean central control, or is there a way to empower communities and respect teachers' expertise without entrenching disadvantage?

In Britain we have never had a truly comprehensive education system and this poses a significant challenge. As Neal Lawson and Ken Spours point out at the outset, education has never achieved the same golden status in the public mind as the NHS; it has never had its '1948 moment'.

But while the scale of the challenge is daunting, it is clear that there has been never been a more important time to rise to it. The essays in this book are not without controversy and, I hope, will spark the sort of heated debate through which a good education system and, ultimately, a good society are born.

Lisa Nandy MP

Introduction

Education for the Good Society is part of the Good Society project of Compass: Direction for the Democratic Left. In contrast to Cameron's privatising, anti-state Big Society, the concept of the Good Society is rooted in equality, democracy, sustainability and well-being, providing a vision and path of transformation capable of drawing support across different groups in an increasingly fragmented society.

However, envisaging education as a force for progressive change is a difficult mission because, since its formation in the late nineteenth century, mass state education has served to reinforce prevailing economic and social relations. But, at the same time, it has contained within it visions of a better world, not only for individuals but also for communities and wider society. Education for all was born out of a wide social and ideological struggle and this continues to be the case today.

The starting argument of this ebook is that the present condition of English education results from a hegemonic defeat of 30 years ago. Despite some rises in achievement, more teachers and the improved school buildings of the last decade, education suffers from an impoverished vision, particularly in the popular psyche. Both Conservative and New Labour governments, albeit in different ways, reduced education to the search for family and personal advantage, performativity and bureaucracy.

If there was ever a time for a fundamental reappraisal it is now. In some ways New Labour's 2010 general election defeat was the ultimate ignominy. Despite the opportunities offered to it in 1997, the unwillingness and inability of New Labour in government to transform public understanding of education and other public services means that the quantitative gains of those years are easily reversed. The Coalition Government has been setting about this at lightning speed as it imposes a traditional curriculum and extends school autonomy.

Education for the Good Society is a vehicle for this reappraisal because it is starting from vision of a different kind of society to inspire our approach to educational reform. At the same time, as Chapter 1 argues, it remains grounded because of a recognition that the Good Society will emerge from the conditions we create now, building on the best we have and an education experience as part of a 'life well led'. In this sense, Education for the Good Society can claim to be a 'serious utopianism'.

The chapters that follow articulate in their different ways a unifying thread – the idea of a more expansive and comprehensive vision of education as togetherness, building on and rearticulating cherished traditions. In Chapter 2, 'Historical perspectives', Jane Martin and Gary McCulloch suggest that building Education for the Good Society requires a long political memory (not just from the 1960s onwards), which acknowledges the contribution of past ideals of liberal education, freedom, universalism and 'educability' to today's struggles. A longer historical perspective can help with the renewal of the comprehensive vision, as part of a long-term process of change.

In Chapter 3, 'Education and fairness', Rebecca Hickman uses international research to argue for the principle of the 'spirit level' – that fairness should be a deliberate educational act because it will allow all children to prosper and as a result everyone will gain. Becky Francis in Chapter 4 also addresses issues of fairness when looking at education and gender. She reminds us that the education system still reproduces dominant social relations and has a long way to go to reflect the agenda of equality and respect required for the Good Society. Echoing themes from Chapter 2, however, she asserts that research shows that a less differentiated school environment helps the progress of both girls and boys. A similar theme is taken up in Chapter 5, 'Well-being and education', where Charles Seaford, Sorcha Mahony and Laura Stoll suggest that a profound concern with well-being in education helps improve educational achievement for all learners. Similarly in Chapter 6, 'Education for sustainability', Teresa Belton argues for a much more connective and holistic approach to education for all, which has as one of its central concerns closing the gap between ourselves and the Earth.

Elsewhere we have argued that democracy draws together the fundamental pillars of the Good Society – equality, well-being and sustainability. In Chapter 7, 'Schools for democracy',

Michael Fielding takes the traditional concept of 'fellowship' to a new level. His concept of 'democratic fellowship' is used to recognise an interdependency between teachers and students as the basis for greater democracy in our educational institutions, a pre-condition for wider democracy in the educational system as a whole.

Chapters 8, 9 and 10 explore other dimensions of expansiveness. In Chapter 8, 'What kind of society values adult learning?', Tom Sperlinger finds that the road to the Good Society will be littered with imperfections and thus there is a constant need to learn and relearn. Following on from this Tom Schuller in Chapter 9 argues for the wider benefits of lifelong learning and suggests there should be a 'longer and different' approach to learning throughout the life-course – arguably the hallmark of the Good Society in action. Ewart Keep takes the analysis into the realms of the economy and labour market in Chapter 10. He recalls that New Labour was over-ambitious about what education and skills could achieve on their own and under-ambitious about the need to forge the Good Society in the wider economy. He persuasively argues that education, as a transformative force, cannot do this in isolation from a wider social and economic strategy.

The final two chapters aim to act as a bridge between this volume, which is primarily concerned with vision, and the education ebooks to come, which will increasingly focus on debates, strategy and structure. In 'Re-taking the high ground: steps towards a persuasive progressive position on schooling', Martin Yarnit suggests that the Left's failure has been, in large part, its inability to learn from successful political campaigning. He argues for a new cultural revolution to transform popular commonsense, based on an underlying optimism that all learners can succeed given the right conditions. In Chapter 12 Ken Spours suggests that Education of the Good Society and the renewal of the comprehensive ideal will require a new type of educational politics based on a values-led approach.

This ebook will be the first of several Compass publications to contribute to an agenda for progressive education reform. The Compass Education Group was formed in 2010 and has over 200 participants. It has developed an Education for the Good Society Statement, a micro-site and holds regular meetings, seminars and conferences. The next step will be a series of seminars during 2011/12 to build on this volume, and to focus on its omissions – the education sectors from primary through to higher education, how institutions are organised, how the curriculum and qualifications system can be transformed, and the practicalities of a genuine approach to lifelong learning.

Neal Lawson and Ken Spours
(September 2011)

For further information about the Compass Education Group and education for the Good Society please contact Ken Spours (k.spours@ioe.ac.uk).

1. EDUCATION FOR THE GOOD SOCIETY:
The values and principles of a new comprehensive vision

Neal Lawson and Ken Spours

Why this debate and why now?

The Left has suffered a huge defeat. No not the defeat and the election of the Conservative-led Coalition Government in 2010 but the intellectual and hegemonic defeat of over 30 years ago. That defeat transformed education into a battleground for the soul of our young people and their teachers and parents. What sort of people do we as a society want to create? What is our vision of humanity? In the face of such immense questions and the onslaughts of the Right, the Left crumbled. New Labour did some good things about school investment and standards, but its purpose was almost entirely neo-liberal – to better create a workforce fit for free market fundamentalism. This enlightened neo-liberal approach was better than its crude Thatcherite alternative, but has allowed Gove and Cameron to slip into its jet stream and continue the same lineage of reforms based on break-up, individualisation and commercialisation. While these reforms need to be fought and resisted there is a deeper struggle to be engaged in. The Right won because they dared to dream of a different world – and they made their dream a reality. The Left will only set the terms of debate again once we have a vision of the world we want to create and understand the role of education in pre-figuring, making and sustaining that world. This is the Good Society project.[1]

Arguably the greatest problem arising from that hegemonic defeat has been the narrowing of a vision of education and a disconnection between much of professional and popular opinion. This is despite the fact that we now know more about how people learn and increasingly appreciate the relationship between wider factors in the economy and society and the experience of education. It is interesting to compare people's attitudes towards health and education. The National Health Service remains sacred to the public despite repeated assaults from the Right, because of the compelling vision of free health care, regardless of waiting lists, rationing and persistent inequalities. Education in England, on the other hand, never had its 1948 moment, nor did ever really experience a golden age that captured the public imagination. The comprehensive school movement remained underdeveloped, despite islands of inspiration in Leicestershire, Oxford or the Inner London Education Authority, and the idea of an inclusive and comprehensive curriculum and qualifications system did not emerge until the 1990s.[2] Instead, education became increasingly associated with the search for social advantage and divisions deepened, even though the education system expanded and became better resourced. At the centre of this 'modernisation' was a restrictive vision of education and a loss of optimism, a process that began in the mid-1970s and continued under Thatcherism, New Labour and now the Coalition.

The concept of education for the Good Society is an attempt to address the crisis of educational vision. This is not the first attempt – many others have tried before. However, looking across Left interventions it is possible to see negativity, where a positive vision of education has become subordinate to a fear of the adversary. As the Right advanced its agenda, so the Left's vision of education also appeared to narrow, often retreating into a set of apprehensions about unequal outcomes as a result of the very successes of neo-liberalism. Furthermore, New Labour did not help. It adopted much of the tone of neo-liberal thinking and conducted an extremely complex educational policy in a top-down and politicised way.[3] As the 2010 general election approached, it was the Right that came to talk in more positive terms about change, taking command of key terms concerning rigour, knowledge, freedom and innovation. Michael Gove, Secretary of State for Education, has taken this ideological offensive to a new level.[4]

1 This article has been developed out of an initial statement 'Education for the Good Society' (February 2011), which has provided a reference point for the Compass Education Group and its Good Society project.

2 The vision of a comprehensive system is now being revisited. See for example, Michael Fielding's editorial in the spring 2011 edition of *Forum*, 'A comprehensive curriculum: reaffirmation and renewal', Forum, 53(1), pp.3–9.

3 For recent critiques of politicised policy-making in education see, for example, David Raffe and Ken Spours, *Policy-Making and Policy Learning in 14–19 Education*, Bedford Way Papers, 2007, and Richard Pring et al., *Education for All*, Routledge, 2009.

4 Michael Gove, 'What is education for?', speech to the RSA, 30 June 2009.

The Education for the Good Society Project can be seen as a response to the narrowing of the vision of education and to the Left's partial response, by connecting the meaning of education with the kind of society we want to build for the future.[5] It has to be morally courageous, yet thoroughly grounded. Moreover, a progressive vision is not about constant innovation or permanent revolution, something that is increasingly associated with the radical right. Education for the Good Society may be about a recognition of old truths and beliefs about what should be treasured – for example the joy of learning; inspiring teachers and how education can transform lives – to be applied to the age in which we live and to the future we seek to create.[6]

Expansive and restrictive education: the neo-liberal turn and its effects

It is worth pausing in order to reflect on the promise of education. In its most ambitious form, education is a most remarkable endeavour. The idea of devoting years of our lives to learning and reflection, which some would say requires a lifetime, is what helps mark us as human. Education fosters the skills and knowledge to participate in the world and can provide ways of seeing beyond our current condition. Such a vision of education, for all and not just a few, did not simply happen. It had to be fought for and we are struggling for it still. What we are fighting for is the idea of an *expansive education* that develops the talents of all individuals throughout the life-course, helps us understand how we live together, contributes to a vibrant economy and promotes the ability and desire to participate in wider society.

Over the last 30 years an expansive and human vision of education has been over-shadowed by the 'neo-liberal turn'.[7] Forces of the Right in successive governments, including New Labour, have promoted a marketised view of education in which the main aim has been to gain the best results to secure social advantage; this is education as the means by which we learn to compete. A view of education that reduces a noble venture to a commodity has permeated the popular psyche. The interests of competing schools, colleges and profit-making companies in an education market are the institutions to create possessive, calculating and

competing individuals. Education has also become the object of electoral politics, as governments have stirred up a climate of permanent revolution in order to seek political advantage. In a world of markets and political manipulation, the voice of the teacher has been marginalised and expert educational research belittled, and there is little genuine regard for the learner. An artificial quasi-market, with its narrow culture of targets, a burgeoning of bureaucracy and a regime of over-testing, has acted as a surrogate for the real thing. It has produced a system that essentially serves an elite and fosters wider discontent. Nothing is allowed to settle and, like the market, everything that is solid melts into air.

Yet there have been quantitative gains. Post-16 participation rose rapidly under the Conservative governments of the 1980s, although this was fuelled by economic recession and the collapse of the youth labour market. Later in the decade, the GCSE common examination developed, a surprising outcome from Thatcherism, although much of the early 1990s was spent trying to reverse some of developments through, for example, the division of GCSEs into A–C grades and below. New Labour subsequently provided the education system with more teachers, assistants and better buildings, one of the major achievements of 13 years in office. As a result of New Labour's interventions, it is generally accepted that students (and their teachers) are working harder than ever to promote educational attainment and, as a result, more young people are staying on beyond 16 and in higher education. However, the prime motive of New Labour's policies was economic efficiency and it was part of a now flawed political economy. This was based on not only a deregulated financial sector, rising house prices and increased personal debt, but also supply-side measures to educate and train people for jobs that did not exist.

However, quantitative gains cannot conceal a sense of concern about the restrictive mindset of neo-liberal education, which has reduced the most impressive of human achievements to an individualised, commodified, utilitarian act with little meaningful sense of a better future. It also has proved to be a regime of winners and losers. The losers, usually from low-income groups, are often filtered out of general education and offered instead a future in vocational education, although increasingly without a prospect of a job or a

5 'Education for the Good Society' is part of the wider deliberations of Compass: New Direction for the Democratic Left in building an alliance for democratic and social change. See Jonathan Rutherford and Hetan Shah (eds), *The Good Society*, 2006, www.compassonline.org.uk/publications/item.asp?d=182.

6 A debate about 'radical conservation' can be found in the recent Compass and Soundings publication edited by Maurice Glasman, Jonathan Rutherford, Marc Steers and Stuart White, *The Labour Tradition and the Politics of Paradox*, www.lwbooks.co.uk/journals/soundings/Labour_tradition_and_the_politics_of_paradox.pdf.

7 The concept of the 'neo-liberal turn' refers here to the dominance of ideas and practices in wider economic and public life over the last 30 years, which have emphasised privatisation, competition and performativity.

proper apprenticeship. Even the so-called winners, the ones with the top results, cannot claim to have had a rounded education in the narrow A-level regime. Moreover, these quantitative gains, which have held the neo-liberal project together over the past three decades, now look in doubt. Severe reductions in public expenditure and a Conservative-led Government bent on a more elitist and static view of education could see an actual reversal of attainment and educational participation. Everyone outside the top 25 per cent could suffer setbacks, not least those deprived of an education maintenance allowance (EMA).

The Good Society – challenging the neo-liberal settlement

What we have described here has been the experience of England. However, you do not have to travel to Finland or Sweden to see a different approach to education: you merely have to visit Cardiff or Edinburgh. Scotland has had its own distinctive system of education for decades and, since parliamentary devolution, Wales is developing its path along more social democratic lines.[8] Within England, too, there is an undercurrent of alternatives and progressive ideas – policies from teachers' unions, civil society organisations, research and campaigns like Whole Education.[9] At grassroots level, each and every day, teachers and others involved in schools, colleges and work-based training struggle to make education the enlightening and life-changing process it ought to be. A vision of education, which is both very new and very old, is stirring beneath the surface of politics, with the potential to break the neo-liberal mould.

Building on progressive policies of our most immediate neighbours and innovative professional, research and policy developments, the Good Society is a route map out of this condition that has come to dominate our lives over the past three decades. We have to rediscover hope and the possibility of a different future that emerges from the globalised world in which we live. There is no shining city on the hill, an opposite and existing world to inspire us. But there is injustice that, combined with the crisis of neo-liberalism, gives us the potential for something different and better. Inequality

has widened nationally and internationally; the economic system is highly unstable and our very existence is threatened by climate change. But collective responses have been undermined by the sense of disconnect between peoples and governments and the lack of a popular alternative. The old is dying and the new is yet to be born.

In this complex context, the Good Society has to be a qualitative extension of our very best experiences. It will involve treasuring some of things we have lost because of uncontrolled capitalism, particularly the solidity of public institutions that can embody collaboration and reciprocity.[10] Public libraries, for example, are not just for the middle classes; they are hubs for the wider community. What we founded in the public realm will have to be defended even in the most difficult times. But the Good Society also has to envisage relations beyond our current condition, built around a profound sense of equality, democracy and sustainability, with a focus on community, time, care and well-being. At its heart it is a project centred on the human condition.

These features imply, in the first instance, a different form of capitalism in which the market is controlled and socialised. In the longer term, the full realisation of the Good Society suggests its complete transformation, but the word that conjures up the Good Society more than any other is freedom. It is a word we have allowed the Right to capture and we need to take it back. Not just the freedom to earn and own but real freedom; the freedom to shape our lives, which we can only do in a meaningful sense collectively and if we have sufficient resources and are, therefore, much more equal. Freedom in this deeper sense starts with the individual, but recognises that we only have meaning in relation to others. Given this starting point, education is about the most important thing we can ever learn, teaching us to live together and to collaborate to build a better future.

The Good Society will be signalled by a greater willingness to build social relationships, strengthen the sense of community to combat the 'social recession', exercise a different lifestyle in support of sustainability, and tackle inequality. These ambitious aims can only be pursued when ordinary citizens take greater control over their lives and communities. They cannot be

8 See Ann Hodgson, Ken Spours and Martyn Waring (eds), *Post-Compulsory Education across the United Kingdom: Policy, Organization and Governance*, IoE Bedford Way Papers, 2011, for an analysis of commonalities and differences in education and training systems across the UK.

9 A number of campaigns for progressive education have emerged in recent years, such as Whole Education (www.wholeeducation.org/), which acts as an umbrella for a range of related initiatives.

10 An interesting set of articles on mutualism and reciprocity (e.g. by Anthony Painter) can be found in Jonathan Rutherford and Alan Lockey (eds), *Labour's Future*, Soundings and Open Left, www.lwbooks.co.uk/ebooks/laboursfuture.html.

imposed successfully from above. Democracy is the means by which the four pillars – equality, sustainability, democracy and human well-being – are bound together. But it will be a far more participative and deeper democracy than we currently experience. It will also bring a greater accent on the local and civil society, a toleration of differences and a greater belief in persuasion and argument rather than force. Such a vision of the Good Society has the potential to be popular and to span political, social and cultural boundaries. The Good Society is fashioned by a politics that gives primacy to means over ends and the recognition that social institutions are the places in which progressive values live, breath and thrive; that is why education is critical to building such a society.

The Good Society – a vision for education

We need a 'serious utopianism', both visionary and practical, to create a new common sense about education. Education must become both means and ends. The meaning and practice of the Good Society will be realised by developing confident, empowered and aware citizens, through a process that is profoundly democratic, egalitarian and considerate of others. Education thus forms an integral part of the Good Society and its realisation. Becoming educated is about developing awareness and higher levels of knowledge and skill, and learning to live together, all of which will be needed in building a different type of society from the one we have presently.

Education, understood in this broadest sense, will need to be guided by clear and explicit principles that fulfil our current needs and contribute to a possible future.

Fairness and equality
There are several reasons why this principle should be the first for consideration. The neo-liberal vision of education for personal advantage has unfairness built into it. One person's gain is another's loss, producing a system of the 'haves' and the 'have nots'. Within these divisive arrangements operates an 'inverse law of care'; those who have the most tend to get the most. Interacting with social and economic unfairness

is also race and gender discrimination, adding additional dimensions of difference. If education is about a wider sense of togetherness, in which greater equality benefits all, then disadvantage has to be tackled head-on and resources allocated according to need to ensure that everyone can participate fully and realise their potential. Moreover, the battle for fairness and togetherness provides a renewed rationale for the common school and an education linked to community and place. Conservatives argue that schools based on communities will accentuate difference. To counter this, the linking of the common school to wider issues of fairness means having to confront social and economic inequalities in localities that drive divisions.

Personal development and the freedom to exercise democratic control
Following arguments about fairness, education has to be universal in order that everyone is able to develop their full potential. Yet the aim of education is more than individual fulfilment – it is about developing the collective capacity of people to be able to govern themselves, to transform wider civil society, the economy and government. Education is, therefore, a fundamental democratic issue. It can only truly promote the values of democracy when education itself is more democratically organised. This suggests a democratising agenda that includes greater local accountability, a stronger voice for professionals organised in communities of practice, the development of inter-dependent relations between educators and their students, and devolving responsibility to the local level so that communities have powers to actually change their localities. This means moving from 'freedom from' and institutional autonomy to 'freedom to', whereby social partners working together exercise more democratic control.[11]

State education and self-organisation
The Left has traditionally argued that only the state can guarantee equity. The problem is that the state has also delivered privatisation (the aim of the Coalition Government) and bureaucratisation (the record of New Labour).[12] A democratic vision of education for the Good Society asks what is meant by 'state education'. The scale and quality of freedom envisaged requires reform of

11 Lawrence Pratchett suggests that strategies for localism have to distinguish between 'freedom from' higher authority and 'freedom to' bring about change that involves possessing the power to collectively reshape localities. See L. Pratchett, 'Local autonomy, local democracy and the new localism', *Political Studies*, 52(2), 2004, pp.358–75.

12 Janet Newman offers an excellent account of New Labour's 'adaptive managerialism' in *Modernising Governance: New Labour, Policy and Society*, Sage/OUP, 2001.

the formal education system and greater capacity for the self-organisation of education by the community, civil society organisations and individuals. It points us towards more emancipatory concepts of organisation associated with the early days of the labour and socialist movements and an understanding of why the concept of free schools might possess a grain of truth, despite the all too evident flaws. Education for transformation cannot be rooted solely within the state as it is currently constructed.

Institutions that promote learning and living together

The values of mutualism, reciprocity and a sense of place require educational institutions that embody these values. The Right advocates institutions of segregation and selfishness – each for themselves – despite its more rational case for independence and freedom. The vision of the Good Society, on the other hand, suggests the remaking of the moral argument for the common school, and democratic participation and accountability in communities and localities to meet the needs of all learners and to promote a sense of inter-dependence.

Lifelong learning

An expanded concept of education, formal and informal, has to be nurtured over the life-course and is not simply confined to schooling for children and young people. The idea of lifelong learning is compelling because it improves economic, social and individual well-being. The education of adults is, therefore, a key indicator of a successful education system for the Good Society.[13]

A curriculum and qualifications

Learning, curriculum and the process of becoming qualified are of vital importance. Learning should be about openness and discovery. Young people and adults learn more effectively when they are motivated, understand why they are learning and can use knowledge to make sense of the world. A curriculum for the Good Society will thus place value on all types of knowledge and skill. The skill of the craftsperson, doing a good job for its own sake,[14] deserves as much recognition as the quest for knowledge and greater awareness. The curriculum will have to encourage confrontation with

the great challenges of the age – poverty, oppression and the climate crisis – so that education plays its role in helping society address its deepest problems.

Learning for the Good Society will also mean educators finding ways to help all learners engage with what has been termed 'powerful knowledge', so this does not become the preserve of the few.[15] In the future, educators will have to focus far less on selection and far more on developing the highest standards and nurturing personal development – the music test principle in practice.

Education, the economy and innovation in the workplace

Workplaces are prime sites of learning and have enormous educational potential. However, evidence suggests that existing workplaces – often exploitative, oppressive and undemocratic – provide restrictive learning opportunities and can fail to harness creativity. Education for the Good Society needs to have a vision of the workplace that promotes democratic participation and more collective control as an integral part of learning,[16] moving them from a restrictive to more expansive learning environments.[17]

The first stage of the education for the Good Society project is to establish the principles and point of education. Then and only then will we discuss and debate the shape of the education system. Form must follow function. An e-book will shortly be published by Compass dealing with these big themes and issues. After they have been debated, refined and developed we will begin the second stage to discuss how. This is where it will get hard and we will need help, ideas, experience and critical engagement from all who want a Good Society and know education has a central role in delivering and being that Good Society. So we finish by addressing some of the difficult questions we know we must face.

Facing difficult questions in order to create a new common sense

Education for the Good Society will involve a battle of ideas and practices. A humanitarian and transformative vision of education will be strongly opposed by those seeking to

13 The most comprehensive recent researched case for lifelong learning is Tom Schuller and David Watson's *Learning Through Life: Inquiry into the Future for Lifelong Learning*, NIACE, 2009.

14 See, for example, Richard Sennett's *The Craftsman*, Allen Lane, 2008.

15 See an upcoming piece by Michael Young for an argument from the Left about the importance of subjects in the school curriculum: 'The return to subjects: a sociological perspective on the UK Coalition Government's approach to the 14–19 curriculum', *The Curriculum*, forthcoming.

16 This is an aim of UnionLearn and its approach to workplace skill development through union bargaining (see www.unionlearn.org.uk/).

17 See Allson Fuller and Lorna Unwin, *Towards Expansive Apprenticeships*, ESRC Teaching and Learning Research Programme, www.tlrp.org/pub/documents/apprenticeshipcommentaryFINAL.pdf.

preserve division and privilege and to narrow the purposes and functions of education. This contest is much more explicit under the Conservative-led Coalition than it was under New Labour and, in many ways, the challenge should be welcomed. But it is much more than a struggle for policy; it involves the longer-term transformation of popular common sense. Here the task is enormous because neo-liberal ideas have become deeply embedded in cultures and institutions, and the Left has not really learned important lessons from wider successful political campaigning (see Chapter 11, 'Retaking the high ground', by Martin Yarnit). Nevertheless, neo-liberal ideas and policies are also vulnerable, not least because of the looming economic crisis of education and because they cannot adequately speak to the world in which we live and to which we aspire.

Precisely because this is a battle of ideas, practices and structures, the journey of education towards the Good Society will involve confronting demanding issues. The greatest difficulty may arise from the very strength of this new and expansive vision – its utopianism – and the sense of distance from where we find ourselves presently. The Good Society concept has to be seen as a general moral guide and compass that helps us steer through the rapids of difficult deliberation in order to make mature and balanced decisions. These are just a few of the challenges now faced by the Labour Party and the wider progressive movement:

■ How can individual choice and freedom be combined with the common good? People like choice, but choice-based systems tend to lead to division. The challenge may be to create strong frameworks (organisational and curricular) within which effective and more equitable choices can be made. Indeed, how do we humanise and the system to permit and encourage participation but at the same time stay true to universalist principles?

■ What needs to be taught and learned in order to create the basis for wider change? This is a long-standing debate, which has resurfaced again under the Coalition. Can traditional or difficult subjects, referred to as 'powerful knowledge', be the basis of a curriculum for all, or should low achievers (often students from working-class backgrounds) experience a more practical and motivational curriculum? The challenge is to combine both, but this is easier said than done.

■ How do we resolve the tension between the everyday need to learn to earn alongside the priority of education being the means by which we learn to co-operate rather than compete? How do we protect and extend a social form of education and its institutions within a society that itself its being steadily commercialised and individualised?

■ How should policy be made? Both New Labour and now the Coalition have treated education as a political object – what Ewart Keep referred to as the 'playing with the biggest train set in the world'.[18] Should we be proposing that education decision-making be made less political by devolving powers to commissions that include a wide range of social partners and aim to provide a sense of continuity and solidity? And linked to this, how can respect for achievements of the past be part of the mission to create a new type of education and society? See Chapter 12 for an elaboration of this argument.

To succeed in this contested world, transformative strategies for education will have to work in tandem with wider change in the economy and society so that new ideas can be seen to work in practice, becoming embedded in new structures and cultures and thus become part of a new common sense. These are just some of the challenges to which we commit ourselves as we continue to strive to build the Good Society with and through education.

18 Ewart Keep, 'State control of the English VET system: playing with the biggest trainset in the world', *Journal of Vocational Education and Training*, 58(1), 2006, pp.47–64.

2. Historical perspectives

Jane Martin and Gary McCulloch

Ideas about education for the good society have been expressed and debated for thousands of years. It is vital that current discussions about how to develop these ideas for the future recognise their historical significance, and that they should seek to build on the legacies of the past in a constructive but critical way. In this short chapter, we aim first to discuss some general issues about historical perspectives on education and then to develop some specific historical examples of the ways in which education can seek to promote the good society.

New perspectives on education history

Historical perspectives should remind us that we should not idealise the past. The work of Brian Simon a generation and more ago documented the social inequalities and differences that have been endemic in our modern system of schooling since the nineteenth century, rather than simply the last three decades. These inequalities were initially framed mainly in terms of social class, and these remain well entrenched today. Simon observed that in the English context, the national system of schooling had been established in order to reinforce existing social and economic relations, but had itself become a site of conflict.[1] He did not expect education systems with such a historical background 'to act directly and immediately to transform that society – say in a socialist direction'.[2] Such initiatives as comprehensive education should not be judged or evaluated by their success or otherwise in achieving such a change. Rather, according to Simon, it was the long-term outcomes over decades and even centuries that were of greater importance, and in this sense he was confident that education could change society.

The research that has followed over the past 40 years has extended this analysis further to reveal other types of inequality based for example on gender, ethnicity, locality, urbanity and disability. It has highlighted the educational struggles of working class girls and women and

the historical aspirations of women for access to higher education.[3] It has also increasingly drawn attention to the inequalities surrounding education for ethnic minorities[4] and other disadvantaged groups in society such as disabled people.[5] No prescription for change can be meaningful that fails to understand and take into account the historical features of the issues involved, because it will mistake the problems of the current period as the causes rather than the symptoms of deeper and highly resilient characteristics of our education and society.

At the same time, historical perspectives should also remind us that ideals of education for the good society have been embedded in theory and practice in this country throughout the past two centuries. We have a rich heritage of examples for us to draw on and to build on from our own history, which reach across the political and social spectrum. These should be a vital resource for us in visualising potential change and developing route maps for the future.

In the nineteenth century, for example, educators advanced ideals of 'liberal education', which were intended to promote humane values and civic awareness. Drawing on the ideas of the ancient Greek philosophers Plato and Aristotle, these sought to emphasise the moral and social relationships of education and expressed profound ambitions for education and its implications for the good society. Thomas and Matthew Arnold, Cardinal Newman, John Stuart Mill and T.H. Huxley were among the best known of these educators, and their key works remain relevant to today's debate. They need to be understood in their historical context, in relation to the inequalities and divisions of nineteenth century society, which encouraged the emergence of a group of privileged and powerful 'public schools' while delaying the development of a national system of compulsory schooling. Nevertheless, the ideals of these educators are fundamental to education for the Good Society; indeed, education for the Good Society cannot be adequately understood without reference to them.

In the twentieth century, too, progressive ideals of education for the good society were widely expressed in a changing social and political context by educators including R.H. Tawney, A.S. Neill, Fred Clarke and Bridget Plowden, among many others. Again there were many compromises

1 See for example B. Simon, 'Can education change society?', in B. Simon, *Does Education Matter?*, Lawrence & Wishart, 1985, pp.13–31; and chapter 4 in G. McCulloch, *The Struggle for the History of Education*, Routledge, 2011.

2 Simon, 'Can education change society?', p.28.

3 See for example J. Purvis, *Hard Lessons: The Lives and Education of Working-class Women in Nineteenth-century England*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989; and C. Dyhouse, *Students: A Gendered History*, Routledge, 2006.

4 I. Grosvenor, *Assimilating Identities: Racism and Educational Policy in Post 1945 Britain*, Lawrence & Wishart, 1997.

and contradictions around their ideas, which have to be taken into account. Tawney's vision of 'secondary education for all', for example, had to contend with entrenched prejudices about the lack of ability of the mass of the population. A.S. Neill's ideas about freedom were rehearsed mainly for the benefit of fee-paying parents outside the state system of schooling. Yet the ideas themselves were indispensable for further growth of educational idealism in the twentieth century.

History and education policy

The loss of historical perspective in recent education policies has meant both a forgetting of the deeper problems of schooling and a foreclosing of vision. As Raffe and Spours have pointed out, there has been a failure of policy learning, which has led to a failure to inform policy development by drawing lessons from available evidence and experience.[6] For example, taking the Education Reform Act 1988 as Year Zero, as many do, signally fails to illuminate the enduring patterns and preoccupations of provision in England. An effective and strong alternative to the policies of the past 30 years must give priority to fostering a greater awareness of our own history. History has the potential to contribute fundamentally to the making of education for the Good Society, through its documentation and analysis of the political and policy context, the 'voices' of educational workers and some of the major 'actors' in the system. Teachers as an occupational grouping have played a vital role in uncovering problems and remedies besides acting as resources for social movements of various kinds including the early labour movement. To illustrate these points, we will step into the spirit and nature of the Left's radical tradition in education as a way of envisaging and realising possibilities and providing an alternative view of the world of mass education. There is a historical amnesia about left educational politics, and left radicalism is in danger of forgetting its recent past.

The Left's radical tradition in education

Our starting point is a quote from William Morris writer, designer, artist and socialist. Writing in

the 1880s, Morris said: 'I do not want art for a few any more than education for a few or freedom for a few.'[7] These words decorated student banners heading the anti-fees demonstration that marched from London's Bloomsbury district on 9 December 2010. We quote them because they traverse and connect past with present. Whereas today's protestors quoted Morris to highlight their desire to defend access to education, in Morris's lifetime the struggle was to secure access to education for working people.

In *Assessing Radical Education*, Nigel Wright says 'the history of education may be viewed as the history of policies which failed to achieve their aims'.[8] He also identifies the 1890s, 1920s and 1960s as favourable decades for left educational radicals because their views were listened to. We offer some brief pieces from these periods because they are of interest to those who wish to 'rediscover' previous examples of attempts at education reform and using them. To avoid repeating the struggles of the past we need an understanding of the ways in which those patterns (such as a central–local balance of power, equality and elitism, hierarchy and differentiation) permeate the workings of policy in the current context. Collective policy memory is a starting point from which to address legacies and make continuities, enabling a cross-generational solidarity to produce a reading of the past, from the present, for the future in the tradition of critical writing on social reform, and the quest for the common good.

'The Socialist movement is teaching, and the most important people in the world from the Socialist's point of view are those who teach.'[9] These stirring words come from *New Worlds for Old*, the last of H.G. Wells' quartet of books on the socialist future, first published in 1908. They give expression to the political tradition represented by Fabian gradualism converted to the enthusiasms of the Independent Labour Party, calling on fellow citizens to act as change agents. Others drew on the arguments of Idealist philosophers such as T.H. Green, whose ideas formed a dominant idiom at the beginning of the twentieth century, where the emphasis was on a whole philosophy of education, of its purposes, directed towards active citizenship and reform. This was a call to action viewed as a means to the end of attaining perfect justice and creating

5 F. Armstrong, 'Disability, education and social change in England', *History of Education*, 36(2–3), 2007, pp.551–68.

6 D. Raffe and K. Spours (eds), *Policy-making and Policy-Learning in 14–19 Education*, Institute of Education, 2007.

7 See www.marxists.org/archive/morris/works/1882/hopes/hopes.htm.

8 N. Wright, *Assessing Radical Education*, Open University Press, 1989, p.182.

9 H.G. Wells, *New Worlds for Old*, George Allen and Unwin, 1909, p.265.

the ideal state. Green provided an intellectual schema at the level of general moral values, which sought to provide a meeting ground between middle class reformers and what they considered the 'better part' of the working class. Since the secondary schools charged fees and were largely beyond the reach of the ordinary child, teachers working in elementary schools held the gaze as state officials who might promote the morality of the common good through universal education. In this context, teaching and learning provided a sounding board for teachers' civic engagement, acting within education, teacher associations and communities.

Brian Simon argued that local authorities have been a progressive force in education. The period from the 1870 Education Act to the first decade of the twentieth century brought universal basic education. Popular educational politics depended on locally elected single-purpose elementary education authorities called 'school boards', valued for the width of their franchise. The democracy of the boards was prized in comparison with the proprietary rights of clergy over the voluntary schools and working-class radicals tried to extend opportunities within the elementary system, advancing it in a common direction. In the 1890s, Labour leaders like Keir Hardie demanded a comprehensive 'broad highway' that all could travel; others demanded that the system be organised based on age divisions rather than those of social class. There was a tendency to see state schools as 'the people's own'. The policies favoured were local control and 'common schools' rather than the workable 'ladder of opportunity' that the 1902 Education Act put into operation.

The common school

There are similarities between the predicament facing activists in the National Labour Education League (set up in 1901) and current hopes of renewing social democratic ideas in education. Espousing the common school as part of the socialist vision of a better society, agitators raised questions of control: who decides the forms and contents of schooling; what does democracy mean in this sphere? The League organised around two key demands: the formation of a

secular (not spiritual or religious) state education system that would be free and compulsory for all, and the provision of state-funded maintenance grants, school medical inspection and feeding of schoolchildren.[10] All were funded through the restoration of the educational endowments provided by 'do-gooders' including religious bodies to establish schools and colleges. The Endowed Schools Commissioners, charged with reviewing their operation from 1864 to 1868, triggered several key changes at the expense of the working classes. These included empowering such schools to charge fees and making admission to the schools dependent on winning a scholarship through 'merit', which usually meant proficiency in Latin or Greek, subjects to which the ordinary child was unlikely to be exposed. This involved the adaptation of ancient foundations, old statutes and trust deeds, which had begun as endowments for the education of poor and indigent scholars. In practice, this led to the abolition of the *free* education willed by benefactors in the past, and the removal of restrictions on curricula. The commissioners also confiscated funds from charities providing food and cash for poor families, which they regarded as outmoded, and handed them over to the endowed secondary schools.[11]

Offering a clear perspective on the scope of education, the League believed a school had to do three things: train for a working life, for an inner life and for a communal life as a citizen. Campaigning for improvements in working-class education, they believed that everyone (regardless of class, ethnicity or gender) should have access to a common curriculum that combined physical education, manual and mental labour and learning to use one's hands in manual crafts. They fought for maintenance grants and welfare provision to secure meaningful access to high quality education delivered to a maximum class size of 30 pupils. The restoration of the misappropriated educational endowments was an important root of the popular politics of education in this period and crucial to the realisation of the League's education programme. Activists campaigned for popular control over them, reinterpreting the content of culture by giving status to 'modern' subjects (living languages, mathematics and science) in opposition to the liberal–romantic tradition in the hands of England's elite.[12]

10 J. Martin, *Making Socialists: Mary Bridges Adams and the Fight for Knowledge and Power*, Manchester University Press, 2010.

11 C. Benn, 'Common education and the radical tradition', in A. Rattansi and D. Reeder (eds), *Rethinking Radical Education: Essays in Honour of Brian Simon*, Lawrence & Wishart, 1992, pp.142–65; and Martin, Making Socialists, p.106.

Outflanking all opposition, Fabian Sidney Webb's vision of a 'ladder of opportunity' and the making of a meritocracy that it encapsulated do much to explain tensions in the current provision, with its roots in the hierarchy of values of Victorian administrators, founded in their turn on the Aristotelian–Platonic philosophy they studied in public schools: 'The world is going your way at present, Webb, but it is not the right way in the end,' William Morris told Sidney in 1895.[13]

There are different versions of the prescription for the Good Society and prescriptions for realising it. Morris and others felt that it was not wealth that civilisation had created but riches. Shocked by the social consequences of industrialisation, Morris's dreams were of a socialist utopia that would provide for all its citizens a free and full life, with pleasurable and useful work, a decent standard of living, and leisure for art and recreation. For Morris, education was a completely dominating central concern needed to prepare people both for satisfying work and proper use of leisure. In common with Tawney after him, Morris insisted on equality of condition rather than equality of opportunity.

Tawney was politician and educational reformer Shena D. Simon's great political mentor. In common with Morris, Tawney and her son, Brian, Shena Simon was committed to a belief in human educability, an insistence on the right of all human beings to develop their intelligence and responsibility. While Tawney advocated 'secondary schooling for all' in the 1920s, he assumed there would be different types of schools. Shena Simon began arguing for a common secondary schooling in the 1930s, optimistic that the common school could create social cohesion and provide the space in which a democratic community could be attained. Against the grain of ideas of class power and class disadvantage that dominated the left radical agenda, she was also overtly feminist, promoting equal opportunities for women and girls.[14]

By the 1960s, the weight of support for comprehensive schools grew out of the experience of teachers, children and parents at the hands of a divided education system, which not only failed huge numbers of young people, but also rested on spurious educational thinking (to do with

IQ testing) that was perceived as riddled with failure. However, particular attention was paid to the structural framework of schooling that left unanswered the question of what should be the guiding principle of comprehensive education. Equality of opportunity was conceptualised as grammar school education for all or the search for new common principles and a distinctive comprehensive learning programme. We should recall Bernard Barker's advocacy that the 'comprehensive experience' 'has to be rescued from its own meritocratic assumptions about children and teaching before it can be saved from politicians, falling rolls or shrinking finances'.[15] Similarly, we should be in no doubt as to the nature and severity of the harm that will be done to the education of current and future generations by the model of higher education of the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, which may signal the return to a more unequal distribution of cultural capital.

Back to the future

Tawney founded his conception of the Good Society on the principles of freedom, equality and solidarity. Eighty years ago, he observed,

> 'The boys and girls of well-to-do parents…
> continue their education as a matter of course,
> not because they are exceptional, but because they
> are normal and the question of the 'profit' they
> succeed in deriving from it is left, quite rightly, to
> be answered later. Working-class children have
> the same needs to be met and the same powers to
> be developed.'[16]

Crucially, boys and girls are both much more successful at school than in the 1920s and 1930s when only one in five elementary school leavers received any kind of further education after 14 years. If we move fast forward to judge the comprehensive experience by the narrow criterion of academic success, we find one in five students gains at least one GCE A-level pass in 1983, compared with one in seven who obtained this qualification during the 1960s.[17] However, when considering the life chances of all those who pass through the educational system, we should not lose sight of the fact that young people from

12 M. Vlaeminke, *The English Higher Grade Schools: A Lost Opportunity*, Woburn Press, 2000.

13 R. Page Arnot, *William Morris: The Man and the Myth*, Lawrence & Wishart, 1964, p.108.

14 J. Martin and J. Goodman, *Women and Education, 1800–1980*, Palgrave, 2004.

15 B. Barker, *Rescuing the Comprehensive Experience*, Open University Press, 1986, p.xvi.

16 R.H. Tawney, *Equality*, Unwin Books, 1931, p.143.

17 C. Chitty (ed.), 'The way forward', in C Chitty (ed.), *Redefining the Comprehensive Experience*, Bedford Way Papers, 1987, p.87.

the poorest homes (as measured by eligibility for free meals) still have fewer qualifications at GCSE and A-level.[18]

With this in mind, we need a demolition of a simple idea of history as progress. There is constant movement. Clarification of the historical context and the prevailing ideologies that underpin education policy making continue to be framed as a necessary part of any response to the call for a 'serious utopianism'. We need to understand the diverse ideological origins of the Left oppositional tradition in state education and ideologies of social action derived from these sources. If we exclude them, we are not providing a comprehensive picture. Only then can we begin to examine competing conceptions of citizenship, in the sense of 'crusading activist', 'entrepreneur' and 'volunteer', and to tease out conditions that facilitate or hinder translation of the Good Society into political practice.

18 J. Shepherd, 'Poor students fail to make the grade at A-level', *Guardian*, 20 April 2010.

3. Education and fairness

Rebecca Hickman

Cui bono – who benefits?

It is familiar territory to consider the principle of fairness in relation to public service delivery and outcomes. The concept of fairness is sufficiently vague to make it an appealing touchstone for politicians of all hues. It is conveniently susceptible to being invoked to lend credibility to an ideologically driven political agenda and less often used to direct and shape the content of that agenda. As Roy Hattersley once commented, 'We all believe in fairness and define it according to taste.'

So we need to define terms; craft a meaningful definition of fairness, capable of a degree of objective application. To this end, in the sphere of education policy, the cui bono principle provides us with a useful tool. Who stands to benefit? Who do the structures, operation and repercussions of a particular education system reward, and who finds their starting position of relative disadvantage unchanged or worsened? Fairness would demand that everyone benefits, that outcomes improve across the board, while inequality and socially determined attainment reduce. In that case, our vision of fairness might be summed up as *educational systems and provision that redistribute opportunities, power and resources across lifetimes and generations.* Conversely, unfairness would be educational systems and provision that reproduce and entrench existing patterns of (dis)advantage and social inequality, thereby creating a kind of social closure. Crucially, this definition of fairness clearly speaks of ends as well as means, destinations as well as journeys.

The application of such a definition requires attention to a number of questions. First, where is the locus of responsibility: to what extent does it rest with the state, and should the achievement of fairness ever depend on, say, the degree of active participation by parents? Second, must fairness be universal: morally and practically, can it be achieved for one child if it has been denied another? Third, what is the relationship of fairness to democratic accountability at local and national levels? Fourth, in what respects is fairness unavoidably eroded by a faithful attachment to market mores, and what level of empirical evidence must we demand of market or any other solutions?

Markets and schooling

Research suggests that the expansion in education provision of the past 60 years has helped the 'haves' to entrench their privileged position at the expense of the 'have nots' and that the relationship between family income and educational attainment in the UK has actually strengthened over time. In other words, having notionally 'equal' access to educational opportunity is not the same thing as having equal prospects of benefiting from educational provision. To achieve the latter, proactive interventions are required on behalf of those who bring fewer resources and lesser know-how to the table.

In education, the Conservatives have traditionally focused more on the enabling structures for equivalent learning inputs than on the actual and measurable outputs of the system. In other words, they stand accused by Labour (and, once, the Liberal Democrats) of neglecting the wider circumstances and factors that mediate educational destinies – factors such as individual capabilities, household income, family practices and social capital. The Conservatives might nonetheless argue that the system they create is fair – providing theoretical equal opportunities to progress to children from all backgrounds.

But the current Coalition Government's unseemly dash towards all-out marketisation betrays an idolatry of means that is not consistent with a commitment to just outcomes. Cui bono? Who stands to benefit from academies, free schools, diminished local education authorities and the proliferation of admissions authorities? Certainly central government. For all the rhetoric of localism, the secretary of state is taking back to himself considerable direct powers over schools, exercised through funding agreements with academies and free schools, not to mention direct responsibility for areas such as teacher training and curriculum and exams.

Governing bodies may have an enhanced role, but their statutory responsibilities extend primarily to Whitehall, not to parents or the wider community. There is no requirement for schools to consult parents before converting to academy status and while maintained schools are required to have at least three parent governors, academies must have only one. In fact, academies only have to have three governors in total, hardly a model of accountability to the local community when, at the same time, the ability of local authorities to plan for and support fairness and quality across the board has been fatally undermined. Academies also use selection by aptitude more than community and voluntary-controlled schools,[1] so as academies spread, so will selection; and by definition parents' ability to choose will be constrained.

So if parents do not stand to benefit from choice and voice, will children benefit from improved quality of provision and attainment levels? The evidence suggests not. A 2005 meta study by the Danish Technological Institute for the European Commission considered three international surveys of students' skills, PISA, TIMSS and PIRLS, and found that:

> 'More differentiated school systems are associated with higher variance in student performance.… Students' socio-economic background matters more for their performance in more differentiated school systems than in less differentiated school systems. Or in other words: Less differentiated, more comprehensive school systems are more efficient in adjusting for students' socio-economic background and thus in providing equal learning opportunities for students.'[2]

Markets have a multiplier effect – they do not redress the different resources and capabilities that people bring to the table, they amplify them. This is partly because markets rest on deregulation and choice, and when choice is supreme an equal ability to understand and navigate the system is a precondition of fair outcomes. But social capital is not and will never be evenly spread. So the increasingly cluttered landscape of multiple school types and complex admissions processes will continue to work to the benefit of those parents with the understanding and wherewithal to engage most successfully with the system. In other words, as a result of the superior social capital of the better-off, an educational market simply becomes a mechanism for them to bequeath their advantages to the next generation.

Furthermore, market logic requires that schools are differentiated hierarchically not laterally, in order to provide incentives. Or to put it more starkly, for educational markets to operate effectively their own internal laws deem it *desirable* that some schools – and hence some children's learning opportunities – are worse than others. As a result, our school system becomes unavoidably characterised by competition and struggle. Winners and losers are created as parents and children are forced to engage with the system as consumers pursuing relative advantage, rather than as citizens with a crucial wider role to play as co-producers of education in a collective project.

Under the Conservatives' market model, vital services provided centrally by education authorities for all local schools and particularly valued by those serving disadvantaged catchments, such as educational welfare and ethnic minority achievement, become unviable as budgets are dispersed. At the same time, evidence is emerging that local authority budgets are being top-sliced to pay for the costs of the academy scheme – resources being taken away from the majority to benefit the minority. We might call such a system educational Darwinism. If it is fair, it is the type of fairness propounded by those who believe that it is right and inevitable that only the strong and able will succeed.

The USA and Sweden have experimented with school models akin to the academies and free schools now being championed by the Coalition Government. Not only is there evidence of falling standards in both countries, recent studies have also pointed to greater racial and socio-economic segregation between schools, as well as greater differentiation in attainment between children from different backgrounds.

In 2010, Swedish education minister Bertil Ostberg warned the UK against adopting his country's free schools model:

> 'We have actually seen a fall in the quality of Swedish schools since the free schools were introduced. The free schools are generally

1 In 2008, 15 per cent of academies and community technology colleges were estimated to use partial selection by aptitude in subject, compared with less than 1 per cent of community and voluntary-controlled secondary schools. See Anne West, Eleanor Barham and Audrey Hind, *Secondary School Admissions in England: Policy and Practice*, Education Research Group, London School of Economics, 2009, p.18, www.risetrust.org.uk/Secondary.pdf.

2 Jens Henrik Haahr, *Explaining Student Performance: Evidence from the International PISA, TIMSS and PIRLS Surveys*, Danish Technological Institute, 2005, p.150, www.ec.europa.eu/education/pdf/doc282_en.pdf.

attended by children of better-educated and wealthy families, making things even more difficult for children attending ordinary schools in poor areas.'[3]

In 2009, Stanford University published the first national assessment of charter schools and found that '37 per cent deliver learning results that are significantly worse than their students would have realised had they remained in traditional public schools', while nearly half were no different.[4] In 2010, the University of California published the report *Choice Without Equity*, which found that charter schools 'continue to stratify students by race, class, and possibly language', and that they 'are more racially isolated than traditional public schools in virtually every state and large metropolitan area in the nation'.[5]

An alternative agenda

Of course, markets in education have not only been the obsession of the right. New Labour assiduously took up and ran with the agenda. If the debate is now to move on, the progressive left must do more than provide the broad brush-strokes of an ideological alternative. It must be clear and specific about the reforms and innovations required to make fairness in education a realisable goal. What would be the central planks of such an agenda? Here are six suggested dimensions:

1. School admissions are a collective project overseen by empowered local admissions forums, in which the rights and interests of all children are prioritised above a right to choice exercised by some parents and subverted by increasing selection, through a locally determined combination of ballots and banded intakes.
2. School status is standardised, including the abolition of remaining grammar schools, halting the academies and free school programmes, and outlawing special admissions policies for faith schools.
3. Funding is allocated to schools on an equitable and transparent per capita basis, using a formula that takes account of social need.

4. Local education authorities have clear and properly resourced functions where this is in the interests of efficiency and local democracy and accountability – for instance, school admissions, new schools and mergers, special educational needs and curriculum support.
5. Schools have the freedom to develop their own identity and ethos, through easing the stifling demands of the national curriculum and recognising and trusting teachers' professionalism and expertise.
6. Education is treated as much more than a protracted process of university entrance, children as more than latent units of economic production. We should seek to create a school experience in which the full spectrum of children's talents are released, the individuality of children's interests and preferences is properly valued, and personhood in its fullest sense is fostered.

By comparing what exists and what we must work towards, we see that fairness requires choices between values and goals that are not always in harmony. Where there is conflict between, say, individual choice and the common good, competition and collective responsibility, efficiency and democracy, one must be chosen to lead, the other to follow. Politics is at its most dismal when it pretends that no such choices exist. It is at its most courageous when the ethical case is made for constructing our public spaces and institutions in ways that mean we are all better off by paying particular attention to the trajectory of those who start from a position of relative disadvantage.

In conclusion, fairness is about championing an educational ethic that goes beyond self-actualisation and that assumes and fosters concern for the other. This is not only about a moral–philosophical observation that my self-realisation and authenticity depend on yours, but also engages the emerging evidence that when some are allowed to fail and social divisions widen, outcomes suffer for everyone.[6]

At the end of the day, fairness sings its own name. If we are trying too hard to explain how and where it exists, it probably does not. For we know it when we see it – when all our children prosper.

3 Gary Anderson, 'Flagship Tory free schools scheme condemned by Swedish education minister Bertil Ostberg', *Sunday Mirror*, 30 May 2010, www.mirror. co.uk/news/politics/2010/05/30/ flagship-tory-free-schools-doomed-115875-22296075/.

4 CREDO, *Multiple Choice: Charter School Performance in 16 States*, Centre for Research on Education Outcomes, Stanford University, 2009, p.1, http://credo.stanford. edu/reports/MULTIPLE_CHOICE_ CREDO.pdf.

5 Erica Frankenberg, Genevieve Siegel-Hawley and Jia Wang, *Choice Without Equity: Charter School Segregation and the Need for Civil Rights Standards*, Civil Rights Project, University of California Los Angeles, 2010, p.4, http://civilrightsproject.ucla. edu/research/k-12-education/ integration-and-diversity/choice-without-equity-2009-report/ frankenberg-choices-without-equity-2010.pdf.

6 See Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett, *The Spirit Level: Why Equality is Better for Everyone*, Penguin Books, updated 2010.

4. Education and gender

Becky Francis

Gender equality is a fundamental aspect of the Good Society. Yet as with other aspects of social distinction wherein inequalities currently abound, such as social class and 'race', our current education system exacerbates gender inequality, rather than reducing it.

Second-wave feminism mounted a devastating critique of the education system, identifying the multiple ways in which it perpetuated gender distinction and inequality. These included the curriculum, which reflected masculinist agendas and preoccupations, and which appeared to conceive a male recipient; institutional and classroom organisational and disciplinary practices in which boys and girls were treated as distinct groups; teacher perceptions and prejudices, including the classic construction of boys as 'naturally brilliant but lazy' and girls as diligent plodders; channelling of girls and boys down different career routes; peer expectations and pressure; and a culture of sexual and homophobic harassment applied to teach girls their place and police 'different' expressions of gender and sexuality.

As we shall see, things have changed relatively little in schools in the intervening decades. Outside schooling, more women enter higher education and engage paid work than in the 1970s and 1980s, and middle-class women have certainly taken up diverse career routes (albeit gender distinctions remain concerning occupational sector and remuneration). Nevertheless, women remain overwhelmingly responsible for childcare and domestic work. And patterns of gendered marketing and consumption have meant that gender distinction is culturally more entrenched than ever.[1] However, crucially, public perception has changed. There is a tendency to believe that equality has been achieved. Indeed, if anything, it is perceived that boys are educationally disadvantaged, having been 'overtaken' by girls. The overwhelming preoccupation with attainment and the consequent moral panic around boys' 'underachievement' have rather put feminist work in education on the back foot. It is, therefore, worthwhile to spend some time unpicking the context for this moral panic, before I go on to justify my claim that the status quo remains with the education system continuing to perpetuate inequality.

Gender and achievement

As discussed elsewhere in this collection, and in the Compass statement 'Education for the Good Society', neo-liberalism has positioned the role of education as supplying human capital in a competitive global market place. To this end, neoliberal faith in markets as drivers of quality has underpinned the development educational quasi markets; and the exclusively instrumental view of education has been manifested in contemporary policy obsessions with 'standards' as indicated by education credentials, and competition at all levels (between pupils, schools, areas and nations) in an increasingly segregated system. Perceptions of policy success and the success of individual schools within the market rely on the driving up of educational achievement, with a resulting focus on underachieving pupils. 'Teaching to the test' is rampant and a widely acknowledged problem, and forms of 'educational triage'[2] have become the norm, with resources focused on young people on 'grade borderlines'. In this environment, underachievement becomes a liability, while simultaneously (and ironically) unavoidable – in any competition there must always be losers as well as winners.[3]

One unanticipated outcome of the publication of school league tables in England – the key mechanism supposedly informing parent consumers in the education 'market' – was the moral panic about boys' underachievement. The league tables published exam results for each school, and for the first time included a gender breakdown. Media commentators were surprised to see that boys were not outperforming girls to the extent that had apparently been supposed (we surmise from the shocked response): girls were catching up with boys in the traditionally masculine subjects of maths and science, whereas boys had made no similar gains in the traditionally feminine fields of English and languages. Hence it appeared that girls were outperforming boys

1 Angela McRobbie, *The Aftermath of Feminism: Gender, Culture and Social Change*, Sage, 2008; Jane Kenway and Elizabeth Bullen, *Consuming Children*, Open University Press, 2001; and Becky Francis, 'Gender, toys and learning', *Oxford Review of Education*, 36(3), 2010, p.325.

2 David Gillborn and Deborah Youdell, *Rationing Education: Policy, Practice, Reform and Equity*, Routledge, 2000.

3 This marketised, competitive context has resulted in an acute awareness (and often increased anxiety) concerning pupils' relative educational 'achievement', among policy-makers, practitioners, parents and young people themselves. See also Diane Reay and Helen Lucey, 'The limits of choice: children and inner-city schooling', *Sociology*, 37, 2003, p.121, for an analysis of the education system's production of 'success' and 'failure'.

overall and, since that time, girls have gone on to close the gap with boys at maths and science (although boys still outperform girls at higher level maths), while boys as a group continue to lag behind at language and literacy.

This has precipitated a now long-standing stream of media comment bewailing boys' 'underachievement'. Such has been the obsession among media and policy-makers that feminists branded the preoccupation with boys' educational attainment a moral panic, identifying how, in searching for explanations, commentators frequently constructed boys as victims of a feminised schooling system, feminist educators, or the crisis in masculinity. Feminist researchers conversely mobilised evidence to demonstrate several key points; for example, that educational attainment is informed by other factors such as ethnicity and social class (the latter being the strongest predictor of achievement in the UK), so that some groups of boys continue to outperform other groups of girls; and that an obsession with overall pan-subject statistics masks wide variations in achievement in different subject areas. They also observed that there had been no national outcry and panic in the preceding period when boys were seen to be outperforming girls!

Nevertheless, the concern with boys has been sustained, and demands and ensuing strategies to 'raise boys' achievement' have generated education policies, materials, diktats to schools, snake oil consultancy and research funding. Moreover, the phenomenon has been mirrored in a number of other countries, most notably Australia (and more recently others, including the United States). Much research has demonstrated how the focus on boys and direction of materials and resources towards them has been detrimental to girls' education, and sometimes to that of boys too.[4] There tends to be an assumption in commentary on 'boys' underachievement' that all girls are now achieving and, hence, they are not a concern as their needs are being met. However, not only does research show that certain groups of girls – including white and minority ethnic working-class girls – continue to underperform in comparison with other particular groups of girls and boys, but also evidence shows that girls continue to face a host of issues in their schooling.

Schools continue to perpetuate gender inequality

Anyone who spends time in the classroom is aware that pupil behaviour is affected by gender. Girls and boys tend to sit and play separately,[5] unless organised differently by the teacher. Moreover, as groups, girls and boys also tend to behave in quite different ways. Bronwyn Davies has analysed how, from pre-school ages onwards, children understand that gender forms a key pillar of social identity, and engage in what she brands 'gender category maintenance work' to produce these behavioural differences.[6]

It is important to sound a note of caution in discussing such gender differences. There tends to be an assumption that biological sex differences programme boys and girls to behave in different ways – from this perspective, distinctions in classroom behaviour among groups of girls and boys are taken to be simply 'natural' expressions of sex differences. But, in fact, evidence of biological differences that might lead to behavioural differences is extremely slight. On the other hand, a large body of child-developmental and sociological evidence shows how children (and adults) actively *construct* their gender identities. Gender research has presented an increasingly nuanced conception of gender, illustrating the illusory nature of gender boundaries, the diversity within gender groups, and the highly complex relationship between biological 'sex' and socially constructed 'gender' (with research demonstrating the often socially constructed elements of 'sex' allocation, and the blurriness of boundaries here). Indeed, given the illumination of gender diversity in research such as my own,[7] it becomes a challenge for feminist researchers to simultaneously analyse the continued resonance and impact of 'sex' categories for patterns of inequality. Yet as I observed above, real inequalities remain. Indeed, they are especially evident in the education system, which often continues to organise pupils into 'male' and 'female' categories, and to arrange classrooms and activities accordingly. And the perpetuation of gender distinction through schooling has a significant impact on future life chances and experiences – not just in occupational segregation and remuneration outcomes and so on (important though these are), but also for value

4 Christine Skelton and Barbara Read, 'Male and female teachers' evaluative responses to gender and the learning environments of primary age pupils', *International Studies in Sociology of Education*, 16(2), 2006, p.105; and Emma Charlton, Martin Mills, Wayne Martino and Lori Beckett, 'Sacrificial girls: a case study of the impact of streaming and setting on gender reform', *British Educational Research Journal*, 33(4), 2007, p.459.

5 Of course, there are exceptions to this trend, including proper friendships formed among a minority of girls and boys, and some heterosexual romantic relationships between pupils.

6 B. Davies, *Frogs and Snails and Feminist Tales: Preschool Children and Gender*, Allen & Unwin, 1989.

7 See for example Becky Francis, 'Teaching manfully? Exploring gendered subjectivities and power via analysis of men teachers' gender performance', *Gender and Education*, 20(2), 2008, p.109; and Becky Francis, 'Re/theorising gender: female masculinity and male femininity in the classroom?, *Gender and Education*, 22(6), 2010, p.477.

systems and gendered behaviour, manifesting in the continuing (hierarchised) differentiation of gender roles and behaviours.

So to present girls and boys as distinct, uniform groups that behave differently from one another clearly misrepresents by oversimplification. Nevertheless, it is certainly the case that children's (and adults') performance of gender results in different behavioural trends. In schools, such gendered trends can be seen, for example, in the following areas:

- boys' physical and verbal domination of the school space
- constructions of (hetero) sexuality
- patterns of bullying and/or sexual harassment
- curriculum subject preference.

Boys' physical and verbal domination of the classroom

Boys' physical and verbal domination of the classroom and playground space has been well documented, and remains as evident now as when it was first identified by feminist researchers in the 1970s. Boys tend quite simply to take up more space than do girls: they sprawl and move about the class more, and engage in frequent physical contact (often aggressive, albeit 'play fighting'). Maintenance of a construction of masculinity via what Skelton calls a 'hardness hierarchy' involves constant confrontation and challenges between boys.[8] As well as being intimidating, these sorts of practices disrupt the classroom, impeding the learning of boys and girls alike.

Moreover, classroom observation continues to show that boys gain far more of the teachers' attention than girls in the same classes, leading feminists to argue that boys secure more teaching time than girls, and that girls are marginalised, underestimated and ignored both by boys and by teachers. However, recent research has highlighted the complexity in this area: not only has it been shown that occasionally girls 'out-voice' boys in classrooms, but also teachers may respond to pupils' behaviour and discipline them differently depending on their social class and ethnicity, as well as gender. And some studies have suggested that much teacher interaction with boys is actually disciplinary rather than focused on learning.[9]

Constructions of heterosexuality and patterns of bullying and sexual harassment

Gendered aesthetics, and productions of sexualised femininity for an assumed male gaze, are also maintained in school through differentiated school uniform and students' creative re-workings of their uniforms. Research has shown how active constructions of heterosexuality remain ubiquitous in schools, and strongly gendered (boys as actively sexual, girls as passive), with gendered expectations concerning sexuality also promoted by schools through discipline and policies regarding uniform and the like. Homophobic abuse remains routine in classrooms and playgrounds. Girls and less powerful boys are often silenced through ridicule or by misogynist, and/or homophobic abuse.[10] Hence patterns of bullying and sexual harassment are also gendered, and work to maintain gender conformity in schools.

Gender-distinct subject choices

The move to a national curriculum in the late 1980s undoubtedly had a strong effect in mediating gendered inequalities resulting from gender-distinct subject choices. Girls' curriculum preferences have been found to be somewhat less gendered than was the case when second-wave feminist researchers began documenting the topic in the late 1970s. However, subjects pupils dislike have been shown to remain strongly gender-associated and once an element of subject choice is introduced at school – notably in vocational qualifications – gendered patterns remain. An investigation of work experience placements showed that such school 'support' programmes actually exacerbate, rather than mediate, gendered trends.[11] Likewise, although at A-level and undergraduate level there have been some notable changes (for example, more women entering medicine), subject choice again remains strongly gender-differentiated, with women predominating in arts, humanities, some social sciences and professions allied to medicine, and men predominating in the 'hard' sciences, ICT, business and engineering.

Other impacts of constructions of gender difference on achievement

Beyond these examples, constructions of gender difference have themselves been shown to

8 Christine Skelton, *Schooling the Boys*, Open University Press, 2001.

9 See e.g. Michael Younger, Molly Warrington and J. Williams, 'The gender gap: reality or rhetoric?', *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 20(3), pp.325–41, 1999.

10 Such harassment and abuse has been shown to be extensive, and even to extend to female teachers. See Martin Mills, *Challenging Violence in Schools: An Issue of Masculinities*, Open University Press, 2001; and Caroline Herbert, *Talking of Silence: The Sexual Harassment of School Girls*, Falmer, 1989.

11 See Becky Francis, Jane Osgood, Jacinta Delgety and Louise Archer, *Gender Equality in Work Experience Placements for Young People*, Equal Opportunities Commission, 2005.

impact on achievement, in a variety of ways. It is dominant constructions of femininity that render high achievement potentially problematic for girls (as such constructions render 'braininess' and competitiveness problematic), but also a raft of research has suggested that high status constructions of 'laddish' masculinity in schools interpolate boys in behaviours detrimental to their achievement.[12] Certainly being loud, disruptive and rebellious is an expression of a high-status form of masculinity in school. What is evident is that such behaviour interferes with the learning of both the boys concerned, and that of their fellow classmates.

It is not just the behaviour of pupils that perpetuates gender distinction and inequality. I have already noted the ways in which the school's organisational and disciplinary systems heighten gender distinction, and traditional assumptions reflected within the curriculum and educational materials do the same. But also, research has shown how the perceptions and expectations of teachers of their pupils, and their day-to-day interaction, often remain highly stereotypical.[13] Indeed, the focus on 'the needs of boys' in recent years has magnified such gendered assumptions and generated a rejuvenation of gendered classroom practices. It has driven application of 'boy friendly' strategies that have often resulted in a range of inequalities. For example, it was found in one Australian secondary school that girls were being allocated to a set below their level so that they could be replaced in higher sets by lower-achieving boys – this was seen to achieve 'gender equitable' streams, and to address classroom management problems in low sets. This practice was branded by Charlton et al as 'sacrificial girls'.[14] In England, practices that disappeared in the 1980s, such as lining boys and girls up in separate lines, have made a comeback. Concepts of 'gendered learning styles' are rife and applied to teaching practice in spite of a lack of evidence, and in mixed-sex classes such strategies – which usually reduce to the crudest of gender stereotypes – are inevitably applied to meet the perceived needs of boys.[15] As Gemma Moss, Chris Skelton and I illustrated in 'Gender and education – mythbusters', published by the Department for Children, Schools and Families, many of these 'boy friendly' strategies are actually detrimental to boys' learning, and encourage the stereotypical productions of gender that contribute to underachievement.[16]

Implications

The practices outlined here amount to a hidden curriculum that teaches girls (and boys) 'their place' in the classroom and the world outside. The overwhelming message to girls remains that they are of less value than boys. Boys' domination of attention, space and verbal interaction is quickly seen as unremarkable – and simply extends the norm in other aspects of societal interaction. Meanwhile, boys experience a competitive masculinity hierarchy in which those who fall at the bottom, and/or fail to conform, risk routine ridicule and punishment. Yet such distinctions and inequalities are largely unchallenged – indeed are often routinely supported and exacerbated – by the schooling system. These inequalities, and the gender-distinct post-16 educational and occupational routes they promote, result in inequalities in work and family life beyond schooling.

Existing assumptions and resulting strategies to support boys' achievement that are based on stereotypical assumptions about gender difference risk *exacerbating* exisiting inequalities, in patterns of achievement and educational experience. The DCSF's recent research for its 'Gender Agenda' supported my conclusion with Chris Skelton: 'It is in schools where gender constructions are less accentuated that boys tend to do better – and strategies that work to reduce constructions of gender difference that are most effective in facilitating boys' achievement.'[17] But there is little evidence yet of changing attitudes in schools. A significant injection of resources would be needed to address the highly challenging and embedded area of gendered behaviours and expectations in schools. A radical effort will be required if we are serious about addressing these issues; a necessary step in educating for the Good Society.

12 For a review of the literature, see Becky Francis and Christine Skelton, *Reassessing Gender and Achievement*, Routledge, 2005.

13 Ibid.

14 Emma Charlton, Martin Mills, Wayne Martino and Lori Beckett, 'Sacrificial girls: a case study of the impact of streaming and setting on gender reform', *British Educational Research Journal*, 33(4), 2007, p.459.

15 Christine Skelton and Barbara Read, 'Male and female teachers' evaluative responses to gender and the learning environments of primary age pupils', *International Studies in Sociology of Education*, 16(2), 2006, p.105.

16 G. Moss, B. Francis and C. Skelton, 'Gender and education – mythbusters: addressing gender and achievement: myths and realities', Dept for Children, Schools and Families, 2009, https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationDetail/Page1/DCSF-00599-2009.

17 Christine Skelton, Becky Francis and Yordanka Valkanova, *Breaking Down the Stereotypes: Gender and Achievement in Schools*, Equal Opportunities Commission, 2007.

5. Well-being and education

Charles Seaford, Laura Stoll and Sorcha Mahony

Last November, the Prime Minister announced that the nation's well-being was the ultimate test of policy. Afterwards, a number of officials pondered with us whether this would lead to a real change in the emphasis of policy, or whether it was just another ministerial speech. In this article, we ask what the implications would be for educational practice, policy and accountability if policy really were to become well-being focused.

Delivery not aspiration

At first sight the implications for education policy and practice are less radical than they are for economic policy. The present and future well-being of pupils is better established as an objective for education than are comparable objectives for the economy, and GDP growth dominates economic policy in a way that is not the case for education policy (despite the best efforts of Lord Browne). The Education and Inspections Act 2006 places an explicit duty on schools to promote well-being,[1] understood in line with the Children Act 2004. The Every Child Matters initiative emphasised physical, mental, emotional, social and economic well-being, as well as protection, enjoyment and achievement. According to the DfE, concern for the well-being of children in the UK is 'reflected in Government policy, which is placing increasing emphasis not just on educational achievement, but also on the wider well-being of the child, both in and out of school'.[2] Of course, many teachers have always seen their role as helping their pupils to flourish, and this sentiment lies at the heart of serious attempts to use well-being and its measurement to guide policy.

But of course aspiration and reality are wide apart. A UNICEF study showed that the UK scored 21st out of 21 developed countries for children's well-being.[3] In particular, it showed that the UK scored 17th for educational well-being, a domain covering objective measures of educational achievement and participation. A study by the Child Poverty Action Group and researchers at the University of York also found that young people in the UK scored low for well-being: they ranked 24th out of 29 European countries for overall well-being, and 22nd out of 27 countries for educational well-being – also understood and measured objectively for attainment and participation.[4] The OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment has shown that educational attainment rankings of UK pupils in the core areas of reading, maths and science have been falling for the last decade.[5] At the same time, activities outside the core curriculum such as music and sport, which help develop the skills needed for flourishing as a child an adult, are all too often marginalised. And the UNICEF study showed that young people's educational well-being, understood and measured subjectively, is also a cause for concern: the UK ranked 15th out of 21 OECD countries on measures of young people's feelings about, and experiences of, school.

This cannot be attributed only to the education system of course. Many other factors, from family life to access to green spaces, influence whether a child flourishes and will grow into an adult who flourishes.

In short, what matters is not the aspiration but the delivery, and not simply delivery in the education system but delivery across a range of policy areas that impact on children. If making well-being the ultimate test of policy ends up making a difference, it will be because it has stimulated new political pressures. These in turn will have led to policies and accountability structures that deliver aspirations more effectively and universally than they do now. The trade-offs will be different, and the objective of 'flourishing children' will do better than it does now in the competition of priorities. We might even be able to turn the aspiration that every child should flourish into a right.[6]

What it means to flourish

This all depends on a shared understanding of what it means to flourish, and what

1 See www.education.gov.uk/b0065507/gttl/health-safety-welfare/wellbeing.

2 See http://education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationDetail/Page1/DCSF-WBL-01-08.

3 UNICEF, *Child Poverty in Perspective: An Overview of Child Well-being in Rich Countries*, Innocenti Report Card 7, UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, 2007.

4 CPAG, Child Wellbeing and Child Poverty: Where the UK Stands in the European Table, Child Poverty Action Group, 2009.

5 See www.oecd.org/pages/0,3417,en_32252351_32235731_1_1_1_1_1,00.html.

6 The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child already goes some way towards this. Article 27 recognises 'the right of every child to a standard of living adequate for the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development'. In addition, Article 29 states that 'the education of the child shall be directed to… the development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential'.
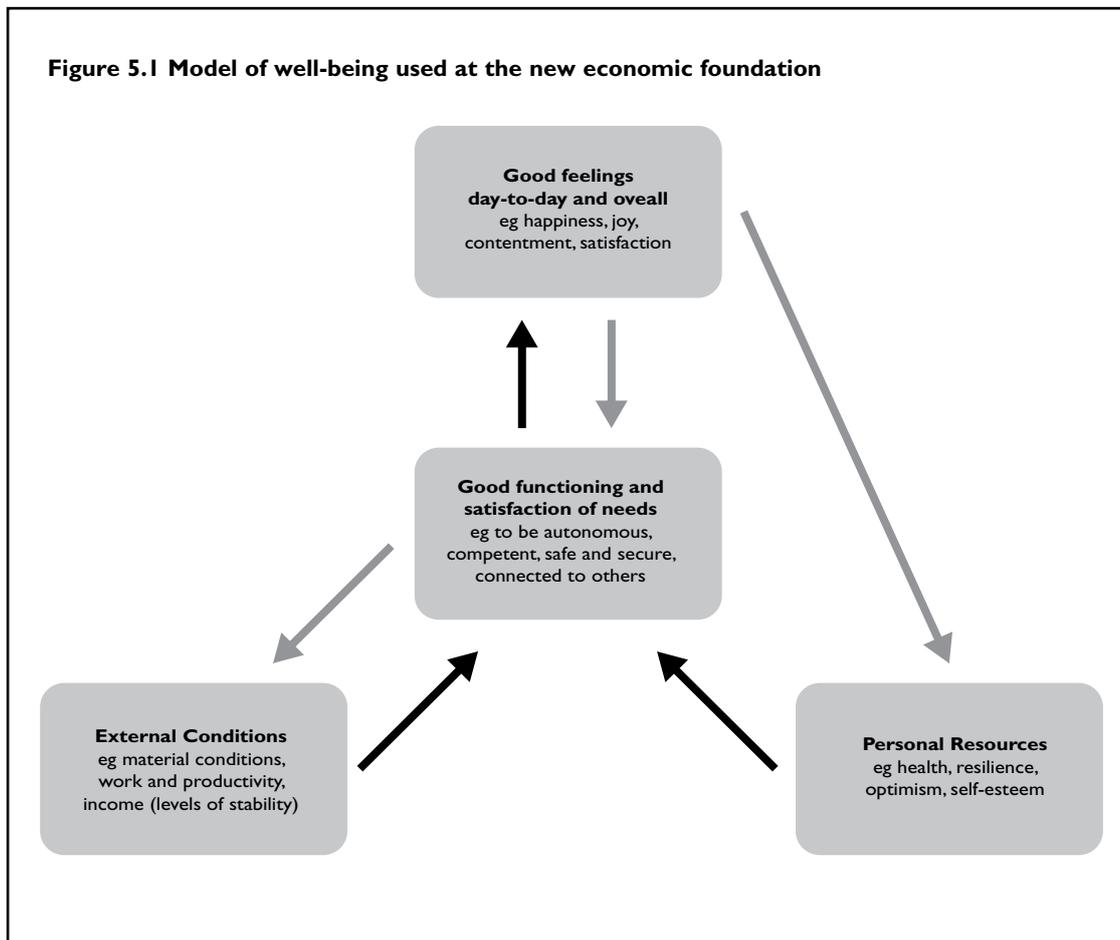
makes flourishing possible and likely. This understanding then needs to inform both policy and the metrics through which everyone from teachers to ministers are held to account by the public. The following is a starting point, and is the model of well-being that we use at the new economics foundation (**nef**) (Figure 4.1).[7] This is based in part on Deci and Ryan's self-determination theory,[8] which draws attention to the basic psychological needs of autonomy, a sense of competence and relatedness.

While this model was developed for adults,[9] children's well-being can be conceptualised in the same way, although we may find there are additional feedback loops, and that some components, particularly personal resources, need more emphasis as they support the development trajectory of children from 'well-becoming' to 'well-being'. By focusing on the component parts of this model we can start to ask the right kinds of questions about what this may mean for the practice of education.

The evidence

Well-being and achievement are not alternatives. There is plenty of evidence that flourishing is good for learning. For example, research has demonstrated that greater autonomy leads to greater conceptual learning[10] and that choice, acknowledgment of feelings and opportunities for self-direction enhance intrinsic motivation, in so far as they lead to greater autonomy. Field studies have shown that teachers who encouraged their pupils to be autonomous catalysed intrinsic motivation, curiosity and the desire for challenges.[11] And more generally, it has been shown that those who flourish, whether this is manifest in greater autonomy, a sense of competence or better social relations, are better able to improve their external circumstances, including their educational achievement.[12] Experiencing positive emotions has been shown to actively broaden people's ability to adopt new patterns of thinking, beneficial to situations requiring problem-solving. This is of

Figure 5.1 Model of well-being used at the new economic foundation

Good feelings
day-to-day and oveall
eg happiness, joy, contentment, satisfaction

Good functioning and satisfaction of needs
eg to be autonomous, competent, safe and secure, connected to others

External Conditions
eg material conditions, work and productivity, income (levels of stability)

Personal Resources
eg health, resilience, optimism, self-esteem

7 This was adapted from the model developed by **nef** as part of the report commissioned by the Foresight Project on Mental Capital and Well-being, Government Office for Science, 2008.

8 Richard Ryan and Edward Deci, 'Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development and well-being', *American Psychologist,* 2000, pp.68–78.

9 Although much of the evidence for self-determination theory actually came from fieldwork in educational settings.

10 Wendy Grolnick and Richard Ryan, 'Autonomy in children's learning: an experimental and individual difference investigation', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 1987, p.890.

11 For example see Edward Deci, John Nezlek and L Sheinman, 'Characteristics of the rewarder and intrinsic motivation of the rewardee', Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 1981, p.1; Cheryl Flink, Ann Boggiano and Marty Barrett, 'Controlling teaching strategies: undermining children's self-determination and performance', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 1990, p.916; and Grolnick and Ryan, 'Autonomy in children's learning'.

12 Grolnick and Ryan, 'Autonomy in children's learning'.

obvious importance in educational settings.[13] None of this will be news to teachers.

Analysis of the British Cohort Study (which tracks a group of children born in 1970) has shown that emotional well-being in childhood and young adulthood is one of the most important factors predicting whether an individual will be socially mobile and experience good mental health. The evidence suggests that emotional and personality attributes like self-esteem and feelings of control are equally, if not more, important than cognitive abilities (literacy and numeracy skills) in predicting labour market earnings in adulthood.[14]

Of course, what matters most is how individual teachers teach in individual classrooms. However, it is worth mentioning one or two initiatives that may also play a role. The Learning to Lead programme, which has been developed and piloted in a number of schools in Somerset, creates self-elected school community councils, where pupils operate in self-managing teams to undertake projects with outcomes that demonstrably improve aspects of school life. Learning to Lead is now being piloted nationally and will be robustly evaluated to examine the extent of its impact on well-being outcomes.[15] More generally, it has been argued that co-producing education, so that the promotion of pupil well-being is a joint responsibility of pupils themselves, parents and school, not only improves people's autonomy and sense of control, but also connects them to their local community.[16]

In September 2007, three local authorities (South Tyneside, Manchester and Hertfordshire) piloted the UK Resilience Programme with Year 7 pupils in 22 of their schools. Improving the emotional resilience of young people equips them to better deal with their emotions and has the potential to develop a more positive approach to the way they live their life. Research has also indicated that the implementation of the programme may improve educational attainment, reduce teenage pregnancy, prevent school exclusion, fend off teenage depression, improve teachers overall skills and promote educational inclusion.[17] The participants are encouraged to identify and challenge negative beliefs and to use effective coping mechanisms when faced with adversity. Participants also learn techniques for positive social behaviour,

assertiveness, negotiation, decision-making, and relaxation. The final evaluation report found a significant short-run improvement in pupils' depression symptom scores, school attendance rates and academic accomplishments in English.[18]

It is also worth remembering that teacher well-being is vital. In any occupation, experiencing positive emotions at work is correlated with higher job satisfaction, engagement with work and job performance.[19] Not surprisingly, recent research has found that levels of teacher well-being within schools are linked to measures of pupil performance.[20] The evidence suggests that an atmosphere within teams that is both supportive and appropriately challenging, and which allows staff to exercise their personal interests, strengths and skills, is one most likely to lead to staff's well-being – and thus children's well-being.

Measure what matters

However, the reality is that we prioritise what we measure, and that despite the efforts of individual teachers and heads, the impact of individual programmes and the fine words from the DfE we continue to measure quite narrowly defined standards of academic achievement. It is not, of course, that academic achievement does not matter. It is rather that other things matter as well, such as well-being, and that the current focus leads, as is well known, to a particularly narrow interpretation of achievement, notably 'teaching to the test'. Measuring well-being is to measure something that both matters in itself, and can contribute to deeper forms of achievement.

Measuring well-being means using subjective measures

The best way of monitoring good feelings and good functioning, as set out in our dynamic model, is by asking people for their own assessment. There are always measurement issues in any survey, but survey design, including children's survey design, is now a sophisticated science. The result is that schools can ensure that they place children and young people at the centre of the evaluation process rather than relying on the indirect measurement through parents, teachers and other adults' perceptions of

13 Barbara Fredrickson, 'The role of positive emotions in positive psychology: the broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions', *American Psychologist*, 2001, p.218.

14 Julia Margo and Sonia Sodha, *Get Happy: Children and Young People's Emotional Wellbeing*, NCH, 2007.

15 See www.learningtolead.org.uk.

16 Lucie Stephens, Josh Ryan-Collins and David Boyle, *Co-production: A Manifesto for Growing the Core Economy*, **nef**, 2008.

17 For example see Jane Gillham, Karen Reivich, Derek Freres, Tara Chaplin, Andrew Shatté, B. Samuels, Andrea Elkon, Samantha Litzinger, Marisa Lascher, P. Gallop and Martin Seligman, 'School-based prevention of depressive symptoms: a randomized controlled study of the effectiveness and specificity of the Penn Resiliency Program', *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 2007, p.9.

18 Amy Challen, Philip Noden, Anne West and Stephen Machin, *UK Resilience Programme Evaluation: Final Report, 2011*, www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/DFE-RB097.pdf.

19 Nic Marks, 'Happiness is a serious business', in *Reflections on Employee Engagement*, Chartered Institute of Personnel Development, 2006.

20 Rob Briner and Chris Dewberry, *Staff Wellbeing is Key to School Success*, Worklife Support, 2007, available at www.worklifesupport.com.

children's experiences.

But does this mean a new form of league table reporting, perhaps, on 'contextual well-being added'? Not necessarily. It may be better if the parents, teachers and children at a school decide for themselves, after advice, on the metrics they will use to measure progress, with the role of the DfE merely to ensure that these metrics are robust and that good processes are adopted. It is true that schools will have to be held accountable if more attention is to be paid to well-being, but that does not necessarily mean league tables or centralised control. The accountability can itself be local. Indeed, given the value of co-production and the importance of flourishing staff, rigid centralised mechanisms may well be counter-productive.

Having said this, we do believe that measuring the well-being of children across the country – and establishing statistical relationships and, in due course, causal pathways between levels of well-being in different places and the objective conditions that apply in those places, including schooling – will play a crucial part in making children's well-being a higher priority than it is now. There will be lessons for government policy-makers and individual schools from the results of this analysis.

And this may happen. The Office for National Statistics has started to measure adult subjective well-being and work is now under way to develop effective measures of children's well-being. In due course, annual figures could be published on the proportion of children who are flourishing along with an analysis of what is driving movements in these figures in different places. The task now is to ensure that these figures and this analysis are published, and that teachers, educationalists and policy-makers can learn from the results so as to improve children's well-being.

6. Education for sustainability

Teresa Belton

Closing the gap between ourselves and the Earth

There is no doubt that the rich and the relatively affluent of the world are living unsustainably. The burning of fossil fuels to create energy with which to manufacture consumer goods, power electrical equipment of all kinds, and transport us and our commodities by land, sea and air is in the process of generating changes to global climate systems, which are likely, in time, to make human and other life impossible in some parts of the world and difficult in many others. Excessive or unwise use of other natural resources, such as water and land, also poses a growing threat to human well-being.

But capitalism and the dogma of perpetual economic growth stoke a motivation to create financial gain at every turn. Coupled with the widespread human desire for acquisition, comfort and convenience, this means that we in the UK are living well beyond the means of the Earth to support us. It means, too, that the poor and disenfranchised of the world continue to be exploited in order to maximise profit, at the cost of social cohesion. The urgent need for environmental (as well as intertwined social and economic) sustainability demands that we must find ways of learning to live differently. Education, in the widest possible sense of the word, is surely our best hope and means of achieving this. It has the potential to make a difference on several fronts.

The globalisation of trade has made the infrastructure and interconnections of everyday life increasingly complex. Every country works to maximise its exports, and rising affluence has witnessed ever-increasing material expectations. We no longer produce very much in the UK of what we buy here, and very few indeed of our everyday needs for food, clothes, furniture, means of transport and so on are supplied within our own localities. Take fruit and vegetables, and even apples, a basic foodstuff which once grew abundantly in England, are now imported from Chile, New Zealand, the US and other faraway places. In addition, we have come to expect to eat any type of produce all the year round, regardless of growing season, and have developed a taste for exotic fruits.

The result of these disarticulated patterns of production and consumption is that many people are no longer aware, as our ancestors were, of the dynamic, interactive essence of the natural environment. If a factory near where we live leaks effluent into a river the pollution of the water is regarded as a shame for wildlife, but the significance does not go much further: it does not mean that we could go hungry for lack of fish to eat. If a vegetable crop fails because of unfavourable weather conditions we shrug our shoulders and buy something else instead, possibly from the freezer cabinet of the supermarket. Our highly complex and sophisticated way of life means that many have lost awareness of and feeling for the natural environment's sensitivity to change because we are no longer in intimate contact with it, nor immediately dependent on it. The damage caused by our habits tends to be geographically distant from us, develops over time, or may be obscured by technology, and therefore goes largely unnoticed.

Specialisation and the bigger picture

At root, much of the activity whose effects now threaten the natural world on which we depend stems from individual choices and decisions. These may be enacted in either personal or occupational life. Education therefore has a crucial responsibility to enable people to appreciate the actual, if hidden, consequences of their everyday behaviours and expectations. It needs to balance a focus on product with a focus on process, both in general and in particular, and to complement a respect for knowledge with the encouragement of a questioning stance. It comes as a surprise to most people, for example, just how many common products contain oil. Dependence on this commodity is doubly problematic: its supply is becoming politically, financially and environmentally less

and less secure, and its use, whether in the form of fuels or plastics, poses a very real danger to the natural environment. It is the responsibility of education to equip citizens with a degree awareness of the physical realities of the world in which we live, and with critical faculties and independent thinking skills.

The blame for our continuing to degrade the environment with chemical pollution, deforestation, extraction and so on has been said to lie at the door of the over-specialisation of education. This view sidesteps both the role of economic systems and matters of human psychology in the despoliation of the Earth. It could be argued that educational curricula are fundamentally shaped by the needs of the political economy, or that patterns of production simply meet the demand of the majority of humans for comfort and status. But whether or not there is an implicit political agenda inherent in prevalent approaches to education, the pigeon-holing of learning into discreet subjects the world over, at all levels from primary to tertiary education, means that the way that things connect and interact in the real world is largely neglected. Hence, for example, mainstream economists do not take into account in their calculations of annual agricultural profits the long-term damage done to soil or water quality or to biodiversity by the massive use of agro-chemicals. Indeed, such effects may be hard to quantify in conventional terms; but ultimately we ignore them at our peril. This is not to say, however, that specialists are not important. The complexity of natural and human systems and effects demands a very high level of expertise to penetrate and understand them, and well-honed skills of enquiry, analysis and interpretation. We need to continue to train individuals in specialised areas, but delving deep into subjects without also looking around at what is going on elsewhere produces dangerous tunnel vision.

An important aspect of education for sustainability, then, is the contextualisation of knowledge, the consideration of the bigger picture. The exercise of joined-up thinking – a practice at which politicians are often found to fail – should become an aim of the educational process. Education for sustainability needs both to be ecological in itself and to include the specific study of ecology.

Educating the whole person

The idea of the 'educated' person as a well-rounded individual with an appreciation of human history and culture and a grounding in science, who is equipped to take an active and responsible role in the world, is but a distant, dream-like memory. Contemporary educational discourse, at least at policy level, if not owned by teachers themselves, is all about testing, 'driving up standards' and increasing employability, about academic attainment and vocational learning. It serves the agenda of economic growth, 'wealth creation' and the maximising of individual incomes. Yet it is this economic engine that is propelling environmental devastation. Education for sustainability, then, must involve the education of the human heart, mind and spirit, not merely the training of the potential employee, earner and spender. In order to sustain human life, and at a level of existence that makes life a pleasure, we need to learn to consume a great deal less of material goods and energy, and to focus a great deal more on the non-material riches that life well lived has to offer.

In fostering these different objectives, education would wield enormous power to challenge the value system that puts profit for its own sake first, regards the human spirit as an optional extra, and in the end effectively threatens environmental viability. There is currently an emphasis in secondary and tertiary education on 'transferrable skills', clearly useful skills like delegating responsibility, presenting material, organising events, and using particular computer software. However, if we are going to take sustainability seriously we need to learn and to teach other skills too – not just horticulture and all kinds of practical making and mending skills but personal skills such as imagination and creativity, reflectiveness, self-restraint, co-operation and problem-solving. Music-making, appreciation of literature and other enriching activities that require virtually no material consumption are other thoroughly useful skills for living both sustainably and enjoyably.

Experiential learning

The best and most enduring kind of learning is that which engages the learner affectively as

well as cognitively. Real understanding is most likely to be absorbed from active involvement, from doing, questioning or reflecting and thus discovering, rather than from acquiescing as passive recipient in an intended process of information transfer. Playing on a swing in the park will convey far more effectively than being instructed in the classroom, if less consciously, the fact that a body needs the input of energy to remain in motion. Attempting to grow a plant on the windowsill or in the school garden will be greatly more productive in nurturing a sense of exactly how much water and shelter are needed for successful cultivation than any textbook or teacher. Experiential learning trumps abstract learning in most contexts. It creates the fertile soil in which intellectual concepts can grow.

Given the crucial and urgent importance of developing sustainable ways of living, every effort should be made to find practical means of bringing home the relevant issues at different stages of education. Hands-off learning, de-contextualised parcels of information taken on trust from a screen, book or teacher, which do not exist in real time or space can, of course, be usefully employed to support practical exercises that have relevance to issues pertaining to sustainability, but are not sufficient in themselves to build a proper understanding.

New ways of living and local environment

One way in which to increase awareness of the conditions obtaining in the natural and built environment of a particular area and of how these change over time would be to incorporate local studies into the curriculum so that all pupils learn about the history of their own area and effectively conduct longitudinal research into it throughout the course of their schooling, considering different aspects of the locality during their school career. Not only would this develop in them a sense of identity and place, but it would also sensitise them to the significance of changes to other environments.

Beyond the classroom and the lecture theatre, part of the educative role of educational institutions can be exercised through leading by practical, explicitly explained example.

Schools, colleges and universities should embody sustainability as a priority in their material policies and practices, and create high expectations of learners' compliance with certain principles of sustainability. Measures could include, for example, the maximum use of local, minimally packaged and fairly traded food, the provision of drinking water fountains and the banning of bottled water, strict rules for procurement and waste disposal that fully incorporate the precept of 'reduce, re-use, recycle', and active minimisation of the use of car journeys and air travel by students and staff. The growing of food on site and the involvement of students and the local community in this fundamental survival activity would be of great benefit wherever feasible. The aim should be social cohesion through maximum communal self-sufficiency.

Building a relationship with the natural world

If children are to grow up with a desire to protect the natural world, as well as an understanding of the importance of doing so, they must, at the very least, have some familiarity with that world. But to develop the motivation to live in such a way as not to damage it they need more than acquaintance: they need to love it, and to respect its power, both as a provider and as a potential destroyer.

There is only one way an affection for and true knowledge of places, plants and creatures can be engendered, and that is being among them, being part of the natural environment; it cannot be inculcated by books, teachers in classrooms or anything a screen can provide. Abundant research evidence demonstrates this. Early childhood contact with nature really matters; it leaves a lasting mark. There is simply no substitute for going out into the woods, onto the beach, into the fields and hills, feeling the wind, the rain and the sun, seeing the sights, smelling the smells, hearing the sounds of birds, animals, insects, trees and plants. Not only does interaction with nature foster a personal relationship with the natural environment, but it benefits well-being and cognitive functioning too. Lack of such experience constitutes real deprivation, far greater than the lack of money to buy the latest fashion

in trainers or mobile phones. The Forest School programme, which provides young children with opportunities to experience both structured and freer activities in woodland settings, has been increasingly adopted by UK schools and nurseries. Such initiatives should be a mandatory element of the curriculum for every child.

A holistic perspective on nature, education and society

It is high time we took on board in the way we live individually and collectively, and the way we construe education – which is personal induction into and development for both the possibilities and the constraints that life offers – that human beings and the natural world are inextricably bound up together in a two-way relationship. For environmental sustainability and human equitability to be possible, the natural world must be regarded as a common good shared between all peoples – and other species – wherever they may be. The local environment contributes to local communality and its particular culture, and bestows a sense of individual identity and belonging. As well as the fundamental supply source for basic needs for food, water, clothing and shelter, the natural world is the supreme source of personal inspiration, challenge and repose. Education that truly promotes environmental sustainability will embrace all these matters, matters that lie at the heart of the values of a Good Society.

7. Schools for democracy

Michael Fielding

Compass's articulation of what it means by 'Education for the Good Society' includes an insistence that we pay attention to personal development and the ability to exercise democratic control. 'Education is, therefore, a fundamental democratic issue.' In part this entails 'greater local accountability, a stronger voice for professionals organised in communities of practice and the development of inter-dependent relations between educators and their students' (see Chapter 1). It is this last injunction – the development of inter-dependent relations between educators and their students – I wish to explore and extend here. Unless we take this more seriously and interpret it more radically the future of local accountability and professional communities of practice will be compromised. Indeed, unless schools themselves become more fully democratic institutions, unless democracy shapes the way we live and learn together, we will fail to achieve our wider democratic aspirations and continue to perpetuate the presumption of privilege and the smiling face of unguent condescension that so disgracefully disfigure our current political arrangements.

Beyond student voice to democratic community

First off, it is important to remind ourselves of the nature of the interdependence we are advocating here and the practical difference it makes to what goes on in schools and other sites of formal education. One way in to this is to reflect on the latest phase of student voice work that has flourished in the last 20 years or so. In its most recent manifestations it has included a remarkable flowering of activity, for example:

- *peer support* – activities that suggest young people benefit socially and academically from listening to each other's voices whether individually (e.g. buddying, coaching,

mentoring and peer teaching) or more collectively (e.g. through prefects, student leaders and class and schools councils)
- *student–teacher learning partnerships* – in which students are given responsibility for working alongside teachers and other adults in a developmental capacity (e.g. through student-led learning walks, students as co-researchers and lead researchers, Students as Learning Partners, student ambassadors and student lead learners)
- *student evaluation of staff or school* – activities in which students express their views on a range of matters, sometimes after collecting and interpreting data, either on individual members of staff, school teams or departments, the school as a learning community, or the wider community to which the students belong (e.g. students as observers, governors, informants in teacher consultation about effective teaching and learning, and key informants in the processes of external inspection and accountability; students on staff appointment panels; student focus groups and surveys; junior leadership teams; and student action teams identifying key community issues to be addressed).

Listening to the voices of young people, including very young children, is now something that is not merely espoused, but actively advocated by government departments and their satellite organisations. There has also been very substantial grass-roots interest in student voice from staff in schools and from young people themselves.

In many respects this might seem surprising, since these kinds of developments appear to outstrip their equivalent explorations in the more adventurous decades of the 1960s and 1970s. However, if we reflect on the slide from public service to private profit, from engaged citizen to querulous consumer, another reading of the rise and rise of student voice begins to emerge. In what I call the 'high performance' neo-liberal market perspective young people are seen as consumers or customers who are required to constantly re-invent themselves in an unending pursuit of material and instrumental gain. At a collective level, high performance schools see their main task as maximising their position in competitive league tables by producing better

measured outcomes for students, with young people themselves as key informants and/or collaborators in this process.

In contrast, a person-centred, democratic approach to education presumes quite different intentions and processes, which include a more generously conceived account of process and outcomes. It is also an approach which submits everything that goes on in the school to the most important educational question of all: How do we become good persons who lead good lives together? Student voice is important here, not so much through representative structures (though it will have these and operate them well), but rather through a whole range of daily opportunities in which young people can listen and be listened to, make decisions and take a shared responsibility for both the here-and-now of daily encounter and for the creation of a better future.

At a communal level, the main concern is how best to co-create, with adults and other young people, a good society, a democratic fellowship and a better world. My reaffirmation of democratic fellowship is deliberate. It is central to a number of key socialist writers to whom we are now, rightly, returning (e.g. William Morris, G.D.H. Cole, R.H. Tawney and John Macmurray), to communitarian anarchism (e.g. Peter Kropotkin) and to participatory traditions of democracy. Fellowship is a very old, foundationally important notion, and if it is appropriately linked to the values of democracy it energises and names the crucial synergy between justice and care. It insists on the essential link between the political and the personal, between how we go about making decisions and forming judgements about the common good while attending and celebrating the lived diversity of those actual persons whose aspirations and fulfillment is both the point of politics and the means of its realisation.

Patterns of partnership

The impressive range of student voice activity alluded to earlier has much within it that deserves substantial support, providing it is guided by emancipatory values and motivations that make clear the nature of the power relations and the orientation of the dispositions and inten-

tions involved. Building on the work of activist writers like Roger Hart[1] and Harry Shier,[2] I have developed a typology – 'Patterns of partnership: how adults listen to and learn with students in schools' – that is mindful of these considerations, rooted in the complexities and specificities of school-based contexts and explicitly insistent on participatory democracy as a legitimate and increasingly urgent aspiration. Within both the state or publicly funded and the private sectors of education, participatory traditions have always been in the minority. Yet, it seems to me that pioneers like Alex Bloom in Stepney, London,[3] and researchers like Lawrence Kohlberg, who pioneered the Just Community School movement in the USA in the 1970s, are correct in their insistence that 'the educational aim of full individual human development can be reached only through an education for full participation in society or in a human community'[4] and that it is the duty of schools themselves to strive towards their own development as fully democratic institutions within the participatory tradition. Why? Because representative democracy privileges those who are already politically mature. In Kohlberg's view, unless young people experience participatory engagement in a rich way at school, when they leave they are likely to avoid opportunities for participation and public responsibility, not seek them. For him, and for me:

> The most basic way in which the high school can promote experiences of civic participation is to govern itself through a process of participatory democracy… The only way school can help graduating students become persons who can make society a just community is to let them try experimentally to make the school themselves.[5]

There is one other matter that seems to me important in all this and it concerns the inadequacies of developing an account of collaborative ways of working, of patterns of partnership, which frames its concerns purely as power relations and wider contexts of social justice. Issues of power, rights and justice are of foundational importance, but they are not enough. Justice is never enough: it is a necessary but not a sufficient condition of human flourishing. Justice, and indeed any form of politics, is for the sake of something else, for the sake of creative

1 Roger Hart, *Children's Participation: From Tokenism to Citizenship*, UNICEF, International Child Development Centre, 1992.

2 Harry Shier, 'Pathways to participation: openings, opportunities and Obligations', *Children and Society*, 2001, 15(2), pp.107–17.

3 See Michael Fielding, 'Alex Bloom: pioneer of radical state education', Forum, 2005, 47(2–3), pp.119–34; and Michael Fielding and Peter Moss, *Radical Education and the Common School: A Democratic Alternative*, Routledge, 2011.

4 Lawrence Kohlberg, 'High school democracy and educating for a just society', in R. Mosher (ed.), *Moral Education: A First Generation of Research and Development*, Praeger, 1980, p.34.

5 Ibid., p.35.

and joyful relations between persons. Thus, in addition to undergirding a collaborative typology with overt reference to power there is also a need to include explicit reference to relationships, dispositions and orientations to each other as persons. Hence my revival of the notion of democratic fellowship.

The six-fold typology presented in Table 7.1 is thus not just about power relations, important as these are. It is also about our encounters as persons within two very different orienting contexts – what I have called 'the instrumental dimension' typified by high performance schooling through market accountability and the 'fellowship dimension' typified by person-centred education for democratic fellowship.

With the possible exception of Pattern 6, all of the patterns of partnership can be approached from either an instrumental or a fellowship standpoint, or indeed from any other standpoint.[6] For example, on the one hand, a joint project involving different groups or classes providing mutual critique can be approached atomistically with prime emphasis being placed on individual skills acquisition, team work as a saleable CV

commodity, and a competitive ethos re-enforcing the virtues of extrinsic motivation and the cut and thrust of the marketplace. On the other hand, it can be approached in a spirit of critical friendship, with prime emphasis being placed on individual learning within the context of overt reciprocity, collegial work within a communal nexus, and emulative striving within the context of an inclusive, emergent common good. The crucial point to make here is that it matters which one chooses, whether deliberately or by default: it matters for our desire and capacity to flourish as persons; it shapes and limits our learning, and it enables or prohibits the kind of democratic society we aspire to.

Schools for democracy

Each generation has a duty to re-imagine and remake democracy and to do so not only with regard to contemporary challenges, but also in the light of its multiple histories. Which genealogy we chose is crucial, for in the fabric of the tradition to which we give our allegiance is woven

6 See Michael Fielding, 'Patterns of partnership: student voice, intergenerational learning and democratic fellowship', in Nicole Mocker and Judyth Sachs (eds), *Rethinking Educational Practice Through Reflexive Research: Essays in Honour of Susan Groundwater-Smith*, Springer, 2011, forthcoming, for detailed practical examples.

Table 7.1 Patterns of partnership – how adults listen to and learn with students in school

Instrumental dimension	Patterns of partnership	Fellowship dimension
High performance schooling *through* market accountability	6. Intergenerational learning as lived democracy: • shared commitment to and responsibility for the common good	Person-centred education *for* democratic fellowship
	5. Students as joint authors: • students and staff decide a joint course of action together	
	4. Students as knowledge creators: • students take lead roles with active staff support	
	3. Students as co-enquirers: • staff take a lead role with high-profile, active student support	
	2. Students as active respondents: • staff invite student dialogue and discussion to deepen learning and professional decisions	
	1. Students as data source: • staff use information about student progress and well-being	

the unity of process and possibility. We have for too long marginalised participatory traditions of democracy and the radical educational pioneers whose prefigurative practice lived what many of us still only aspire to. Now is as a good a time as any to take stock: there is an urgency to our task, heightened by the literal and metaphorical near-bankruptcy of the economic and political system under which we live.

If 'Patterns of partnership' suggests a variety of ways in which we can develop more democratic ways of working together in schools, my ten-point 'Schools for democracy' suggests a wider institutional framework within which they can contribute to radical democratic practice.[7]

1 Education in and for radical democracy
There should be:

■ a proclaimed, not just an intended, democratic vitality, albeit one that bears in mind the demands of context and circumstance.

2 Radical structures and spaces
There should be:

■ permanent and proper provisionality
■ residual unease with hierarchy
■ transparent structures that encourage ways of working that transcend boundaries and invite new combinations and possibilities
■ emphasis on the spatiality of democracy, on interpersonal and architectural spaces that encourage a multiplicity of different forms of formal and informal engagement with a multiplicity of persons
■ pre-eminence of the general meeting within which the whole community reflects on its shared life, achievements and aspirations. Here young people and adults make meaning of their work together, returning tenaciously and regularly to the imperatives of purpose, not merely to the mechanics of accomplishment.

3 Radical roles
There should be:

■ 'role defiance and role jumbling' (Roberto Unger) among staff but also between staff and students. See 'Patterns of partnership' above.

4 Radical relationships
This involves:

■ 're-seeing' each other as persons rather than as role occupants
■ nurturing a new understanding, sense of possibility, and felt respect between adults and young people
■ having a greater sense of shared delight, care and responsibility.

5 Personal and communal narrative
There should be:

■ multiple spaces and opportunities for young people and adults, to make meaning of their work, personally and as a community
■ necessary connection with radical traditions of education.

6 Radical curriculum, critical pedagogy and enabling assessment
Formal and informal curriculum must:

■ equip young people and adults with the desire and capacity to seriously interrogate what is given and co-construct a knowledge that assists in leading good and joyful lives together
■ start with the cultures, concerns and hopes of the communities that the school serves
■ include integrated approaches to knowledge with students and staff working in small communities of enquiry.
Critical pedagogy is:
■ a reciprocity of engagement and involvement not only with the immediate community, but with other communities and ways of being, at a local, regional, national and international level.

Enabling assessment involves:

■ forms of assessment at national and local levels that have the flexibility to respond to the particularities of context
■ high levels of peer and teacher involvement through assessment-for-learning approaches and additional community and family involvement through public, portfolio-based presentations.

7 See Fielding and Moss, *Radical Education and the Common School*, Chapter 2, for a more detailed account.

7 Insistent affirmation of possibility
There should be:

- a generosity of presumption that requires us to keep options open, to counter the confinement of customary or casual expectation
- no ability grouping, emulation rather than competition, and intrinsic motivation and communal recognition rather than the paraphernalia of marks and prizes.

8 Engaging the local
This involves:

- education as a lifelong process and the school a site of community renewal and responsibility in which young and old explore what it means to live good lives together
- school and community seen as reciprocal resources for broadly and more narrowly conceived notions of learning.

9 Accountability as shared responsibility
We should:

- understand and enact democratic accountability better as a form of 'shared responsibility' – morally and politically situated, not merely technically and procedurally 'delivered'
- develop new forms of accountability better suited to a more engaged understanding of democratic living.

10 Regional, national and global solidarities
This involves:

- regional, national and global solidarities made real through reciprocal ideological, material and interpersonal support through values-driven networks and alliances, which draw on and contribute to the dynamic of radical social movements.

No doubt there are emphases, omissions and points of contestation that readers would wish to raise. The key point, however, is that together we develop a framework for democratic schooling that is theoretically robust, practically achievable, and humanly inspiring. Without a framework of this kind we will be in danger of slipping back into the insidious, sometimes unwitting, betrayals of quietism, condescending statism or neo-liberal incorporation that have at different times robbed the comprehensive school movement of its emancipatory potential. Writing 15 years ago Wilfred Carr and Anthony Hartnett observed that:

> 'despite its portrayal as an institution of democratic education all the evidence suggests that the comprehensive school has reinforced rather than challenged those non-democratic aspects of the English education tradition –exclusiveness, separation, segregation – that have always frustrated democratic educational advance.'[8]

'Although many readers would quarrel with such an interpretation, the challenge it poses needs to be taken as seriously as ever. So, too, does the even deeper challenge R.H. Tawney posed towards the end of the 1945 Labour Government, when according to Hywel Williams, he insisted.'

> 'The failure to abolish public schools would undermine everything the Labour movement had achieved in other areas. It was the one reform that mattered – the profound one from which all other changes in the way the English treated each other and looked at the world would flow.'[9]

'Although the contemporary political case remains disgracefully unargued, the moral, civic and democratic case remains as strong as ever.'

'Some changes have to start now – else there is no beginning for us'

If we believe in deep democracy we must put democratic schools – schools as democratic institutions in which adults and young people live and learn democracy together – at the centre of Education for the Good Society. While we may not immediately be in a position to emulate pioneers like Alex Bloom there is much we can take from current advances in student voice and increasingly inclusive approaches to leadership in schools. If harnessed to the patterns of partnership and democratic frameworks for which I have been arguing, they have the potential to contribute to a new phase of democratic

8 Wilfred Carr and Anthony Hartnett, *Education and the Struggle for Democracy: The Politics of Educational Ideas,* Open University Press, 1996, p.194.

9 Hywel Williams, 'Schools that teach children to lie', *New Statesman,* 9 October 2000.

advance. If we nurture developments of this kind within a wider strategy of what has variously been called 'real utopias' (Erik Olin Wright), 'democratic experimentalism' (Roberto Unger) or 'prefigurative practice' (Carl Boggs), we may yet create a Good Society worthy not just of the name, but of the radical democratic traditions to which it belongs. In the resonant words of Shelia Rowbotham, 'Some changes have to start now, else there is no beginning for us.'[10]

10 Sheila Rowbotham, 'The women's movement and organizing for socialism,' in Sheila Rowbotham, Lynne Segal and Hilary Wainwright, *Beyond the Fragments: Feminism and the Making of Socialism*, Merlin Press, 1979, p.140.

8. What kind of society values adult education?

Tom Sperlinger

> There is, perhaps, no branch of our vast educational system which should attract… the aid and encouragement of the state [more] than adult education.
>
> Winston Churchill[1]

> Goodness appears to be both rare and hard to picture.
>
> Iris Murdoch[2]

What kind of societies do (and do not) value adult education?

My purpose in this chapter is to think about the role of adult education in the Good Society and also about how it might help us define our notions of the 'good' in this context.[3] There has been some debate recently about the difference between Compass's idea of the Good Society and the Conservative idea of the Big Society.[4] One way in which to reflect on differences between them might be by understanding the supporting or opposing terms in each case. For example, the opposite of the 'big' society is presumably the 'small' society, one that is relatively self-enclosed or exclusive. A rhetorical sense of inclusion has, in fact, been one of the Big Society's more attractive elements. Yet this big–small dichotomy is of limited use, since the Big Society is often about supporting relatively small-scale, local and self-organised projects; the reported influence of Schumacher's *Small is Beautiful* on it underlines that 'small' is just as operative a word in this conception of how society works.[5] In fact, the opposing term to the Big Society seems to be not the 'small society' but the 'big state', as is underlined by one of David Cameron's most effective lines of recent years: 'There is such a thing as society, it's just not the same as the state.'[6] The Big Society is as much, if not more, of an attempt to re-conceptualise the role and size of the state as of society. It is also thus a vision of society in which the state has a predefined (and limited) role.

The Good Society, in contrast, can presumably be opposed by a notion of the 'bad' or dysfunctional society and one might imagine a spectrum of *less* good societies, with a sense of progression towards the 'good' as either a set of concrete possibilities or utopian aspirations. One might argue that the Good Society is itself inherently pragmatic, since it could also be compared to the *perfect* society. In contrast, 'good' implies a permanent relationship to 'bad' or less good; a sense of continual action to achieve whatever 'goodness' is possible. It is also crucial here that the Good Society does not, within the term itself, specify a relationship to the state – and thus neither places the state *outside* such a society nor defines in advance its role *within* it.

In turning to the question in my title, I want to think similarly about opposing terms, to imagine the kind of society that would not value adult education. Here too it is worth noting that one such society might be a perfect society or one that had achieved a level of perfection in the education of its children. Adult education would not be needed if education as a child could completely prepare a person for life. There would need to be a relatively unforgiving form of equality in this provision, with each citizen offered a 'perfect' form of education as a child and little or no opportunity for a second chance if they failed to use it. This model would also imply that education is designed to prepare one for experience (rather than respond to it) or that one of the qualities that might be learnt as a child would be to be a 'lifelong learner' on one's own. The other notable aspect of this imagined society is that it would presumably be relatively or entirely static. If the society succeeded in preparing children for life, this implies that there would not be radical changes in the nature of the society in their lifetime or in its composition (since outsiders would require education at a later stage).

This is not the only sort of society one can imagine that would not value adult education. Another example might be a society in which individuals did not live long, making the idea of adult education almost redundant. Other examples would include societies with particular conceptions of a working life or of each citizen's relationship to the body of knowledge the society holds. For example, a society with a relatively limited range of employments or professions –

1 Winston Churchill, quoted in NIACE, *The Future for Lifelong Learning: A National Strategy*, National Institute of Adult Continuing Education, 2009, p.2.

2 Iris Murdoch, *Existentialists and Mystics*, Chatto & Windus, 1950, p.342.

3 For this chapter I assume that 'lifelong learning' refers to a broader way in which learning is conceptualised across the life course; my focus is specifically on the provision of education for adults.

4 See for example Joe Cox, 'On the "big society" vs the "good society" – a case in point', Compass Online, 28 February 2011, www.compassonline.org.uk/news/item.asp?n=12260.

5 See Toby Helm, 'Small is beautiful: the father of David Cameron's big society', Observer, 27 March 2011, www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2011/mar/27/small-beautiful-david-cameron-big-society.

6 Quoted by A.C. Grayling in David Utting, *Contemporary Social Evils*, Policy Press, 2009, p.122.

of tasks for its citizens to perform – might not require the sort of 're-skilling' adult education often performs. Similarly, a society that held fast to a particular set of truths (religious, scientific, political or other) might see little need for its citizens to pursue other lines of enquiry or might actively seek to suppress them.

These examples suggest that the sort of society that *does* value adult education is likely to be an imperfect one – and one that acknowledges its imperfections; a society that acknowledges that total equality in childhood is impossible, as much through accidents of circumstance as material differences; a society that realises the possibilities and threats posed by change; a society that is not static but is changed and challenged by newcomers and new developments; and one with a relatively high life expectancy. This reminds us that a 'good' society is one that is constantly in a dialectic relationship to 'less good' aspects of itself and to the necessity of change. It might even follow from this that adult education is more likely to be valued within a society that has experienced profound change – such as a war or other devastation, or the collapse of the dominant economic model, with consequences for the worldview, quality of life and future prospects of its inhabitants (and for the hierarchies between different people, which adult education itself can do so much to disrupt).[7] Such a society might need adult education to equip its citizens to survive, existentially and practically, in new circumstances and so that they could help the younger population to adapt as well.

Where are we now?

Our society places some value on adult education, but we value it (at best) in an ambivalent way. New Labour's record was contradictory, with notable investment in adult and further education after 1997 but patchy results. Further education faced devastating cuts before the change of government in 2010 and adult education as a coherent entity within universities has all but disappeared. The creation of the Campaigning Alliance for Lifelong Learning (CALL), in the last years of New Labour, was just one symptom of the unease felt by professionals and students in both sectors.[8]

Nor is the situation improving under the Coalition. For example, the new funding arrangements for universities post-2012 are designed for a model in which the vast majority of undergraduate entrants are school leavers. This has profound implications for the scope and range of any efforts to widen participation, as opposed to simply increasing it, since it excludes those who leave school at an earlier stage.

Even when the New Labour governments made some attempt to support adult learning, they seemed rather vague about what they were trying to do. For example, in 2009 the Labour Government launched a £20 million 'transformation' fund for 'informal adult learning'. Sion Simon, the further education minister, explained how it was designed to work in a BBC interview:

> Sion Simon: [It's] kind of an innovation fund, to back people who've got new ideas about innovative ways of doing informal adult learning, i.e. the kind of learning that people do for pleasure, for fun, rather than for qualifications or for work.
>
> Interviewer: We're talking about perhaps learning a foreign language [because] you want to have a second home, in the days when people still bought such things… rather than doing learning that is for skills?
>
> Sion Simon: Yeah the focus of government policy over the last few years and indeed now in these straitened times has been very much on skills, on qualifications, on giving people – particularly the lower skilled – the skills and qualifications they need to get back into work. But we also have a commitment, and that's what this white paper is about, to the kind of learning that people do for pleasure… and what we're trying to do is find new and exciting ways of helping people to do that more.
>
> Interviewer: When you say 'new and exciting', you immediately think this all has to be done on the cheap somehow. And you've got to get people in there to staff it as well. It sounds a rather curiously unfocused plan…
>
> Sion Simon: I'm not talking about the Government setting up courses for people. What this is really about is, er, helping people to do more of things that they already do. So, for instance, there's a huge amount of learning that goes on that is self-organised and with the advent of the world wide web, which itself is fundamen-

7 This is not to ignore the fact that, within such a society, there might still be particular and acute constraints on how such education could be organised or funded.

8 See www.callcampaign.org.uk/.

tally self-organised and individual, but people find they want to put a group on, but they've got nowhere to do it; or they've got a reading group that doesn't cost any money but it just needs somewhere to meet and there are 20 people that want to come and they don't quite fit in anybody's front room.[9]

It was admirable that the Government (in 'straitened times') found a sum of money like this for informal learning and that a minister was willing to defend a vision of education broader than 'qualifications for work' (while acknowledging that such qualifications are important). Yet this defence of the policy is unsatisfactory, especially as Simon is probed by the interviewer. It is a strikingly attenuated vision of education in which it is *either* for pleasure/fun or for qualifications. Within this context it is no surprise if anything non-utilitarian is relegated to marginal categories such as 'informal' or 'leisure' learning. It also becomes apparent that there is a hierarchical distinction at work. The 'lower skilled' need qualifications to get 'back into work', while informal learning is resolutely middle class. It operates as a consolation for those who can no longer afford their second home or whose front room is not large enough for their aspirations. Informal learning is 'fundamentally self-organised and individual' and 'self-directed', designed to help 'people to do more of things that they already do' and it is definitely not 'about the Government setting up courses for people'. Indeed, what is most striking about this description of the fund is how much it resembles the aims of, and tensions within, the Big Society.

How else might we talk about adult education?

What is missing here? How else might we talk about adult education? Jon Cruddas has written:

What interests me is why we have lost that sense of education and a broader sense of fulfilment, self-realisation, human flourishing – which was also central to the democratic socialist tradition. Knowledge was everything and was [a] rich part of the working class socialist experience. Now where did all that go?[10]

The language and tradition highlighted by Cruddas are absent in Simon's account of adult learning. Simon gives no sense of education for the public good or for a social purpose; of its benefits to families and communities, as well as to the individual; of the transformative power of education's *implicit* benefits for the individual, such as in renewed confidence or a changed worldview; or of skills that are not just for work. Nor is there a sense of how adult education can be transformative when it brings together students from wildly different social and educational backgrounds. There is also, as ever, a confusion of ends and means. We seem to have forgotten that qualifications (sometimes) help us to measure what is valuable in education but are not *the* value in themselves.

How can we understand the value of adult education? We talk too easily sometimes of 'education for its own sake', which risks making it sounds as though it exists apart from human concerns. Similarly, we may forget that the kind of economic transformation that education can facilitate should be utilised to create better human lives, not as an end to which such lives might be sacrificed. I have come across many students, on courses for a qualification and those for 'leisure', who were seeking to re-make their lives through adult education: as they recovered from mental or physical ill health, or a period of caring for a loved one; to make up for an unhappy school experience or a turbulent young life; to change career or after a period of unemployment; in order to have a place to think in, outside work, or to gain a new skill that was not for their job; to adjust to life as a single parent; to re-make themselves after a period in prison; to understand their own racial, religious or cultural heritage; or with a sense of urgent need that they could not immediately articulate.

Education is the process by which we make and re-make a sense of our lives, of the world and our part in it. It should be part of how we make a Good Society. Only if a wide range of opportunities for adults exists, in all sectors, can education fulfil its radical and transformative potential, to change individual lives and also to challenge the hierarchies and assumptions within which we all exist.

There is enormous scope for debate about what forms of adult education provision are needed or

9 See http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/education/7958945.stm.

10 Quoted from personal correspondence.

wanted, how they should be organised, when such provision should be state-funded and/or when it should be self-directed and privately funded. Such debates are beyond the scope of this chapter, though they are discussed elsewhere in this volume. But we need to have those debates with renewed confidence about the value of adult education. We live in an imperfect society, whose defining features at present are an ageing population and the slow-motion collapse of our dominant economic model. Adult education intrinsically acknowledges imperfections and is a means by which people and communities can change direction, at however late a stage; it is both a practical and a utopian endeavour. If we are to build something closer to the Good Society, adult education will need to be at its heart.

9. Lifelong learning: chimera, head-nodder or awkward customer?

Tom Schuller

Librarians are rumoured, entirely unfairly, to be fond of saying 'which part of "no" is it that you don't understand?'. Sometimes I feel the same way when I'm asked about lifelong learning. After all, the words which make up the term are all part of day-to-day discourse. But that is being unfair to the questioner, since it remains true that lifelong learning is still a concept which is far from clearly defined and understood.

An alternative, equally common, response, is a sympathetic but slightly impatient nod: yes yes, of course we all agree lifelong learning is a Good Thing, but let's get on to the issues that really have a grip on the political imagination: school selection, or higher education funding. Again, this is an understandable reaction, as these are indeed the items that are foremost in many families' minds, and therefore in the ruminations of politicians.

These are just two of the reasons why it is so hard to get a solid debate going on lifelong learning. Another is the perennial difficulty of tackling an issue that spans sectoral boundaries: not just several educational sectors, not just education and training, but these plus health, social care, community development and so on.

I'm not going here to do the job of definitive clarification, nor offer the compelling rationale for lifelong learning. The acknowledged source for this is David Blunkett's foreword to the 1998 green paper *The Learning Age*, a (sadly typical) example of the unfulfilled promise held out by early New Labour.[1] Instead I want to address the politics of lifelong learning in quite a pragmatic way but raising, I hope, some awkward questions, which political rhetoric on its own will not be enough to deal with.

However, just to be clear about the scope of lifelong learning as I understand it, I'm sticking with the approach we used in *Learning Through Life*, the main report of the Inquiry into the Future of Lifelong Learning:

Lifelong learning includes people of all ages learning in a variety of contexts – in educational institutions, at work, at home and through leisure activities. It focuses mainly on adults returning to organised learning rather than on the initial period of education or on incidental learning.[2]

Some of the awkward issues for me about the politics of the issue are:

- What is the nature of the educational contract between generations?
- What is the desired balance between market and non-market provision?
- How do we reconcile personal aspirations and preferences with education's role as a promoter of social cohesion?

By 'awkward' I mean politically challenging issues on which people who share similar values may well disagree.

Intergenerational justice and educational effectiveness

In *Learning Through Life* we show the gross imbalance in the way public and private expenditure on education is weighted towards the youngest adult age group. We defined this as 18–25, the other three groups being 25–50, 50–75 and 75+ (for the social and epidemiological rationale for these divisions, see www.niace.org.uk/lifelonglearninginquiry). We estimated the total to be of the order of £55 billion annually; 86 per cent of this goes to the first age group, 12 per cent to the second, with trivial amounts to the Third Age and virtually nothing to the Fourth Age. There is now a window of opportunity, with the demographic decline in the numbers of young people, to achieve a rebalancing across age groups without this resulting in *per capita* reduction in expenditure on young people. That proposition, of course, looks implausible in the light of the furore over student finance. Reducing still further the public investment in young people would not immediately recommend itself to anyone just now. Yet the argument remains.

What we need is a serious debate on education as part of the intergenerational contract. The books by Ed Howker and Shiv Malik (*Jilted*

1 *The Learning Age: A Renaissance for a New Britain*, Cm 3790, The Stationery Office, 1998.

2 Tom Schuller and David Watson, *Learning Through Life: Inquiry into the Future for Lifelong Learning*, NIACE, 2009.

Generation) and David Willetts (*The Pinch*) are a good start on this.3 But neither of them deal with lifelong learning, predictably enough. We need two kinds of arguments here. First, a cohort-specific one: for all the arguments about well-off Third Agers, many of today's older people missed out on all the educational expansion of the 1960s and 1970s. This is especially true of older, poor women, whose working lives will also often have been in low-paid and low-skilled jobs, therefore without training and learning built into them. So the argument has specific application now.

Second, though, we need a more general argument about the appropriate distribution of learning opportunities across the life-course. The argument should combine efficiency and equity angles. Continuously extending the period of initial education makes sense on neither ground. Levering more young people into higher education is not the solution. Can we get real about this: can we look at ways in which people are enabled to leave the education system (though not necessarily the learning system) but are guaranteed ways of returning and offered encouragement and support to do so? Are we using both our common sense experience and our research knowledge when it comes to the timing of learning?

Markets and non-market provision

It's not surprising that so much of the education debate today turns around money, and especially around how much public money is available. I totally deplore the abolition of Educational Maintenance Allowances (EMAs), and the reduction in public investment in higher education. I also deplore the language used by Lord Browne in his report on higher education funding. As David Marquand pointed out in his impressive Compass annual lecture, Browne thrusts marketisation on higher education in a way that is objectionably gratuitous (my words not Marquand's).[4]

That said, we need to think harder about what the relationship is between markets and non-market provision. I use the plural term deliberately since there are many markets involved. In lifelong learning especially, there will always be a private sector: people will buy self-help manuals

and pay for tuition of various kinds, unless we attempt some kind of Maoist ban on such activity (even then they still will). The internet now provides massive further opportunities for online learning. Some of these offerings are pure market goods, sold for profit by large or small outfits, with price and quality probably the main determinants of success. Is there any reason to discourage this market? What steps should we take to encourage it as a true market, not distorted by monopolistic practices?

Other provision is of a quasi-market kind: for instance my own main past area of university extramural provision, where we used to set heavily publicly subsidised fees for all kinds of courses, with institutions in some sense competing with each other. I deeply regret the passing of this tradition, as fees have soared to meet market levels. I would (of course) defend the subsidy, mainly on the grounds that such programmes are a part of a healthy democratic culture, even if they benefit the well off at least as much as the poor. But we could not avoid the arguments around the nature of public subsidy: what kinds of activity and services it is most reasonably and fairly spent on (think opera and football).

In any case, this issue will come to the fore if personal Lifelong Learning Accounts get a firm hold, as I hope they will; setting up a proper system of such accounts is one of *Learning Through Life*'s main recommendations. The idea of a mechanism, which enables citizens to build up the means to choose learning opportunities for themselves, is deeply attractive. The public funding for such accounts can be generous or limited. It can encourage employer contributions in a co-funding system; and it can be weighted towards particular groups. Scotland did not lose faith in the idea after the debacle of the first Individual Learning Account (ILA) trial ten years ago, and the Scottish ILA initiative has shown how groups from unsuccessful educational back-grounds can be encouraged.

The Scottish system allows the accounts to be spent only on public-funded provision, quite narrowly defined. I'm not at all sure how possible, or desirable, it will be to maintain this distinction. The important thing is to open up the debate on which kinds of instrument function best. More generally, we need to think about how to tap into all kinds of different sources of learning opportu-

3 Ed Howker and Shiv Malik, *Jilted Generation: How Britain has Bankrupted its Youth*, Icon, 2010; and David Willetts, *The Pinch: How the Babyboomers Took Their Children's Future – and Why They Should give it Back*, Atlantic Books, 2010.

4 David Marquand, 'Towards a realignment of the mind', Compass lecture, 10 February 2011.

nities, and not have the public–private, market–non-market polarisation as it currently stands shape our thinking. How ready are we for this?

Aspirations and cohesion

I was very struck by the trio of attributes offered by Marquand as fundamental goals for education: imagination, empathy and critical thinking. He was referring to higher education, but there is no reason to restrict these to higher education. In one sense, admittedly, these are words which generate warm feelings and no one would disagree with. But they can also serve as a platform for thinking about how we can reconcile people's individual aspirations for careers and good personal living standards with the broader function of education as something which promotes closer understanding between human beings, locally and globally.

To some extent these goals can be aimed at directly and explicitly. But there is a real challenge in working out how far this can be done directly. There is a range of issues here, of a very political kind: how to reconcile people's sense of identity with the flux and menace of the modern world; how to build trust in institutions and other people while encouraging a sceptical democracy; and how to maintain some sense of public authority on what counts as truth in the face of the swirling flux of new global communication patterns.

The challenge here is to maintain public spaces which are in a sense authorised as legitimate places for the encouragement of good communication between citizens, but maybe to do that in an oblique rather than explicit way. In *Learning Through Life* we strongly supported this public space idea, especially through experimentation with what we called local learning exchanges. We also floated the idea of a 'citizen's curriculum', with four key capabilities – digital, health, financial and civic – a national framework to be interpreted locally in very diverse ways. There is no suggestion that this should be a national curriculum such as we have in schools. But, linked with Lifelong Learning Accounts and specific learning entitlements, it is one way in which adult learning might help to promote a stronger sense of social cohesion.

Future scenarios

These three 'awkward' questions concerning justice, markets and cohesion can be addressed in different ways. Below are the outlines of two possible profiles of the system in the future: '*Bigger and better*' and '*Longer and different*'. They are extremely sketchy, but designed to focus debate on alternative ways forward. Personally I favour the second scenario, but the first will find many defenders, and they do not present an obvious 'winner' and 'loser'. Each contains some aspects that will appeal to different people, and so they are an elementary tool for opening up debate.

Scenario 1 'Bigger and better'
An enlarged post-secondary sector based on:

- a more consistent and less diverse and divisive school system
- more public support for students from poor backgrounds (e.g. restoration of EMAs)
- consolidation of further education progress, with colleges as institutional heart of lifelong learning
- general expansion of numbers of young graduates, abandoning stem emphasis; focus maintained on supply side to meet knowledge economy claims
- lower higher education fees, restored (in part) teaching funding
- some greater success in recruiting poorer students to elite universities
- stronger professional training and support for those teaching adults, in all parts of the system
- Lifelong Learning Accounts restricted to public providers.

Implications: caters for aspirant younger generation and their parents; builds on current position of equity-through-expansion, strengthening the parts of the system which favour disadvantaged students but sidelines arguments about horizontal equity (within generation); meshes easily with established view on investing early in life; defers re-examination of efficiency arguments and misses the demographic window.

Scenario 2 'Longer and different'
This would involve:

- much more diverse provision for 18–25 year olds, including part-time and civic service, lower retention rates in secondary schools, and less emphasis on direct progression to university
- stronger stress on work-based learning, intermittent and supported by recognised mentors, guides or trainers
- distributed learning becoming much more important, breaking down the boundaries between teacher and learner
- more emphasis on learning infrastructures which enable people with different learning or teaching ambitions and motivations to link up with each other
- lifelong learning accounts liberalised, so new providers can enter the market
- particular emphasis on collective forms of learning (e.g. family, intergenerational).

Implications: goes against many orthodoxies, on the left as well as the right; potentially addresses both equity and efficiency aspects in a new way, but involves risks, and a bigger shift in the balance of the system; less easy to control, and demands more effort and imagination on monitoring and evaluation.

In short, we have choices. We can openly dismiss the notion of lifelong learning as an unaffordable luxury, a fancy notion whose time came and went, or an area where the UK does passably well already and no further effort is needed.

We can continue to nod our heads at the notion of lifelong learning, be pleased when we hear stirring stories of adult learners succeeding against the odds but continue to focus our attention on the serious, vote-winning activities of schools and mainstream higher education. It would be wrong to say that this is the easy way forward – not much about education will be easy. But it is the path of least resistance, politically and intellectually.

We can revisit the past, recreating university extramural departments and community adult education; I'm being neither sarcastic nor cynical, both of these are legitimate goals. There is much to be safeguarded and even retrieved from past traditions. But there is always the tendency to paint the past a suspiciously rosy colour. In my experience, those inside the system, including often academics who might be expected to take a

more imaginative and rigorous stance, are surprisingly quick to abandon their intellectual standards when it comes to appraising that system's particular characteristics and effects. It is worth asking why this should be so, if it is so. If we want to produce a genuine system of lifelong learning, it will need a hard-headed look at where we have not succeeded in the past; what key shifts are needed in the overall shape of the system; which interests and blinkers need to be confronted; and what the arguments are for the twenty-first century. The long, slow tide of demographic change might just have enough swell to do it.

Appendix: *Learning Through Life* recommendations

Our vision is of a society in which learning plays its full role in personal growth and emancipation, prosperity, solidarity and global responsibility. We begin from the premise that the *right to learn throughout life is a human right*.

1 Basing lifelong learning policy on a new four-stage model
The United Kingdom's current approach to lifelong learning is not responding adequately to two major trends: an ageing society and changing patterns of paid and unpaid activity. A genuinely lifelong view means that a *four-stage model* – up to 25, 25–50, 50–75, 75+ – should be used as the basis for a *coherent systemic approach to lifelong learning*.

2 Rebalancing resources fairly and sensibly across the life course
Public and private resources invested in lifelong learning amount to over £50 billion; their distribution should relate to our changing economic and social context. We need public agreement on the *criteria for fair and effective allocation of resources for learning across the life course*.

3 Building a set of learning entitlements
A clear framework of entitlements to learning will be a key factor in strengthening choice and motivation to learn. Funding of entitlements should be channelled through a *national system of learning accounts*, giving individuals the maximum control over how they are used.

4 Engineering flexibility: a system of credit and encouraging part-timers

Faster progress is needed to implement a credit-based system, and to support people to combine study with other activities. We should *move quickly to implement fully a coherent system of credits* as the basis for organising post-compulsory learning.

5 Improving the quality of work

The debate on skills has been too dominated by an emphasis on increasing the volume of skills. There should be a stronger focus on how skills are actually used. We need *increased understanding of the kinds of work environment which encourage formal and informal learning* as a means of raising performance and productivity.

6 Constructing a framework for a citizens' curriculum

A common framework should be created of learning opportunities, aimed at enhancing people's control over their own lives. An agreed *framework for a citizens' curriculum* should be developed, built initially around a set of four capabilities: digital, health, financial and civic, together with employability.

7 Broadening and strengthening the capacity of the lifelong learning workforce

Stronger support should be available for all those involved in delivering education and training. There should be a *broad definition of who makes up the lifelong learning workforce*, including schoolteachers and early years practitioners, and learning support staff.

8 Reviving local responsibility…

The current system in England has become over-centralised, and insufficiently linked to local and regional needs. We should restore life and power to local levels. The idea of *local learning exchanges* should be developed to connect people as socially networked learners, and to provide spaces for local groups to engage in learning.

9 …within national frameworks

There should be effective machinery for creating a coherent national strategy across the UK, and within the UK's four nations. *A single department should have the lead responsibility for promoting lifelong learning*, with cross-government targets for lifelong learning.

10 Making the system intelligent

The system will only flourish with consistent information and evaluation, and open debate about the implications. A three-yearly report on the state of learning should be published, covering major trends and issues, including evidence collected by and submitted to international bodies. We need stronger and broader *analysis of the benefits and costs* of lifelong learning over time, and systematic experimentation on what works.

10. Education and the economy

Ewart Keep

Introduction

This chapter aims to identify the root causes of our problems with the relationship between education and the economy and labour market. It does not seek to provide a detailed blueprint for future policies in this area, but instead tries to lay down some basic ground rules for formulating such policies.

The nature of the problem

This paper starts with a paradox – one that has dogged policy towards education, learning and skills in England for at least the last quarter of a century (perhaps longer) and which has undermined many policy ambitions in this field. It is the paradox of simultaneous over and under-ambition about what education (in its broadest sense) might best be provided with public support, and what social and economic problems it might be expected to address.

This problem was at its most intense under New Labour, whose political project was riven by a massive tension between pessimism about what was ideologically and practically possible and permissible in the broader social and economic spheres and the very high levels of ambition that were loaded onto one area – education and training – as the key vehicle for delivering progressive social and economic outcomes. As the author has argued elsewhere,[1] education and training came to provide a form of magic, get-out-of-jail-free card for politicians, whereby governments could achieve intervention-free intervention in the economy (boosting the supply of skills, but not intervening in the product or labour market) as well as loser-free redistribution for individuals, whereby everyone could become better educated and therefore obtain access to better jobs.

Over-ambition

The over-ambition has been the expectation that there is an almost endless list of policy problems, most of them complex, messy and often of long-standing (for example, low levels of inter-generational social mobility, and low waged employment) that the education and training system could be expected to address. Issues which have roots in our class structure, the organisation and regulation (or the lack thereof) of our labour market, and the division of income and wealth that the economy and labour market dictate have all been heaped at the door of publicly funded educators and trainers. This has left schools, colleges and universities to try to do what Basil Bernstein long ago warned was impossible: to compensate for the failings of wider society.

The biggest ghost at the policy feast has been the nature of the relationship between education and the labour market. Put simply, policy-makers, and on occasion educationalists too, have chosen to believe that changes in education can act as a substitute for structural change and reform in the labour market. Many of the goals that education has been set – higher levels of social mobility, better jobs for young people, gender and other forms of equality, reducing in-work poverty – are not solvable by education alone, particularly where the supply of jobs, and therein the supply of good jobs, is limited and finite and where all education can do is alter an individual's place in the job queue and in zero-sum game positional competition for what is on offer from employers. The actual policy goals in all these areas are only realised inside the labour market and, in many instances, the underlying causes of the problem also reside there.

Let us take one example: our abiding record of relatively low levels of post-compulsory participation, which is ceaselessly blamed on inadequacies of teaching, school and college organisation, and curriculum and assessment regimes. As Francis Green has noted, in reality much of the problem lies with the lack of demand (and the lack of incentives to learn that this creates) for a better-educated workforce by UK employers:

> Unfortunately, Britain has long been caught in a low-qualification trap, which means that British employers tend to be less likely than in most

1 See Ewart Keep and Ken Mayhew, 'Moving beyond skills as a social and economic panacea?', *Work, Employment and Society*, 24(3), 2010, pp.565–77; and Ewart Keep, 'The English skills policy narrative', in Ann Hodgson, Ken Spours and Martyn Waring (eds), *Post-Compulsory Education and Lifelong Learning across the United Kingdom: Policy, Organisation and Governance*, Institute of Education, 2011, pp.18–38.

other countries to require their recruits to be educated beyond the compulsory school leaving age. Among European countries, only in Spain, Portugal and Turkey is there a greater proportion of jobs requiring no education beyond compulsory school. There is some way to go before British employers place similar demands on the education system as are placed in the major competing regions in Europe.[2]

Education policy cannot directly address this issue, but labour market and employment policy can, for example through the imposition of a widespread requirement for licence to practice. This is not to say that education does not have a part to play in the solution of some of these problems, but the expectation that on its own or as prime mover it can be tasked with dealing with structurally embedded failings over the causes of which it has no direct influence whatsoever is a recipe for setting educational institutions and their staff up to fail, while leaving the original policy problem unresolved.

Under-ambition

When it comes to under-ambition, the problem has been more insidious, but every bit as serious. Here the difficulty has been on two levels. First, a belief at the core of both the Thatcher–Major and New Labour projects, that reform of the economy or the labour market (except for further liberalisation) was either impossible or undesirable (or both) and that therefore education and training was one of the only ways that government could be seen to be doing anything about problems with competitiveness and employment and the rewards it generates. As a result, education and training providers were left trying to deliver outcomes that would in some way sidestep or counterbalance and compensate for wider and larger forces and incentives within the structure of the labour market and the economy.

At a second level, problems have sprung from the unwillingness of policy-makers to understand the deep pessimism and narrow utilitarianism that is now an integral part of their basic assumptions when thinking about what can be offered by way of initial and continuing education, particularly to those who are not seen as academically oriented or gifted. The end result has been a steady drift away from any notion of a liberal or expansive education (however conceived) and its substitution by low-level, narrowly focused workforce training. What has been deemed acceptable fare for the lower end of the ability range, occupational ladder and socio-economic strata has been the very thin gruel offered by an impoverished version of vocationalism.

Lord Adonis, writing on the 30th anniversary of Callaghan's 'Great Debate' speech at Ruskin College, gave the following somewhat disingenuous take on progress:

> At Ruskin, Callaghan made school improvement not simply a national issue but, more particularly, a Labour and working class priority... he poured scorn on the idea that working class education was about 'fitting a so-called inferior group of children with just enough learning to earn their living in the factory'. Instead, first-rate schooling should be the birthright of 'the whole labour movement'. Three decades later, educational excellence for 'the whole labour movement' – in its broadest sense – is at last Labour's core mission.[3]

In reality, much of what continues to be on offer has little in mind beyond 'fitting a so-called inferior group of children with just enough learning to earn their living in the factory', though this objective now tends to be labelled 'employability' and the work is now more often stacking supermarket shelves. Thus the UK continues to be distinguished by having vocational qualifications that offer no substantive broad-based element of general education (on which return to learning and subsequent progression could be based).[4] For example, National Vocational Qualifications were designed to provide only those narrow, job-specific competences that would indeed fit those unlucky enough to be offered them with just enough learning to be able to perform the bundle of tasks that made up a particular job at a particular moment in time. The retreat from lifelong learning and its substitution by workforce training, via initiatives such as 'Train to Gain', is another reflection of the highly utilitarian strand of thinking that came to dominate New Labour thinking on what adult learning might be for and about.

2 Francis Green, *Job Quality in Britain*, UKCES Praxis Paper 1, UK Commission for Employment and Skills, 2009.

3 Andrew Adonis, '30 years on, Callaghan's words resonate', *Education Guardian*, 17 October 2006, p.3.

4 See evidence for this argument from Andy Green, 'Core skills, key skills and general culture: in search of a common foundation for vocational education', *Evaluation and Research in Education*, 12(1), pp.23–53, 1998; and Michaela Brockmann, Linda Clarke and Chris Winch (eds), *Bricklaying Is More than Flemish Bond: Bricklaying Qualifications in Europe*, European Institute for Construction Labour Research, 2010.

The combination of policy over-ambition for the role of education and under-ambition for underlying economic and labour market factors suggests the need to start afresh, rather than tweak or revise the policy legacy of the recent past. The need for radical re-thinking is clear. Besides the very significant failings outlined above, the likely future state of the public finances almost inevitably rules out a return to the *status quo anti* through a re-run of New Labour's attempts to generate a 'skills revolution' through publicly funded education and training.

So what's the answer?

If there is a desire for a new policy approach to the links between education and training and the economy and labour market that leads in a different direction from that which has gone before, and which deploys fresh analyses to policy formation and implementation, then the author would argue there are a number of relatively simple rules that might be deployed to guide thinking:

1. Develop a vision of the kind of society, economy and labour market you would like to see our country have in 10 to 15 years' time, and then work back from that in order to determine what kinds of policies might be needed to deliver this vision, and what stages of development might be needed to be gone through on the journey towards that vision. Notions of the Good Society need to extend beyond education into the economy and labour market if they are to have any chance of generating lasting change and success.

2. Avoid the trap of thinking that you can go from where we are now to where you want to be in one giant step. The history of English education and training policy (and many other areas of policy) over the last 30 years is littered with instances of policy-makers announcing that 'this is the moment' when a step change in outcomes will commence. The chief result has been subsequent disappointment.

3. Be realistic about what the education and training system can and cannot be expected to do to help achieve this vision, both acting on its own and in connection with other areas of policy development and activity. Painting education and training as a universal 'cure-all' carries a huge price for education and training providers (though one not usually paid by senior policy-makers) and often displaces policy attention and political resources from areas that need to be addressed before education and training can contribute much to further progress.

4. Recognise that education and training fulfils many roles, only some of which are to do with employment and the economy, and that maintaining a balance of policy priority and resources between objectives to do with social and societal outcomes, economic gain and learning for its own sake is vitally important. There are many wider social, political and cultural goals that education policy needs to address, not least the notion of learning as a good in its own right and as a part of individual and collective development and the enrichment of life. It is extremely important that whatever priority is afforded to education's role within economic life, its potential contributions to other needs and goals are not displaced as a result.

5. Be clear about the linkages between education and training policy and other strands of policy development and think through how articulation between these different areas can be achieved. For instance, the failure to join up the economic aspects of education and training policy and investment with policies on economic development, business improvement, innovation (in its widest sense), employment and productivity has been one of the key reasons why public investment has not reaped the dividends that have been expected; and why the supply of, demand for and productive utilisation of skills have all fallen short of what has been desired.[5] Improving education works best in the context of more and better employment, firms that are ambitious in how and with whom they choose to compete, and forms of work organisation and job design that seek to maximise skill usage to productive effect. Quality education for quality jobs makes a great deal more sense than quality education for rubbish jobs!

5 Ewart Keep, Ken Mayhew and Joan Payne, 'From skills revolution to productivity miracle – not as easy as it sounds?', *Oxford Review of Economic Policy*, 22(4), pp.539–59, 2006.

6. Remember that many of the outcomes that currently disappoint within the education and training system are often, at least in part, the result of structures and incentives that reside within the labour market, and the patterns of demand and reward for skills that it creates. At present, almost a quarter of all jobs in our labour market are low paid (less than two-thirds median wage) and this rises to about one-third for female employees. Upskilling the workforce will not, of itself, magic this work away. Unless and until reform starts to impact on these jobs and the employers who create them, and to increase underlying levels of demand for skill, incentives to learn will often be weak, patchy and limited.

7. Remember also that within a labour market where good job opportunities are finite and a society where strong class structure still pertains, education is constantly trying to meet the diametrically opposing needs of two different constituencies. On the one hand, it is supposed to be increasing opportunities for social mobility for those at the bottom of the class structure, while at the same time certain institutions (particularly private schools, but also many state secondary institutions with a largely upper middle class intake) exist to ensure that their students gain a disproportionate access to the elite higher education institutions that in turn tend to be the route into many of the 'best jobs'. These objectives are mutually exclusive. In other words, education exists within one rhetorical tradition to contest current class structures, while also being part of another tradition (possibly the stronger at present) that measures its success through its ability to reproduce existing patterns of advantage.

Progress is only liable to be achieved if there is reform within education and also within the labour market. This means the number of good jobs needs to grow more rapidly (which it is not at present), and the gap between good and bad jobs needs to be reduced so that the consequences of not achieving elite employment are smaller.[6] At the same time, government and wider society need to acknowledge and accept responsibility for the problem of competition for a finite supply of good jobs rather than leaving the responsibility for resolving this up to individual education and training institutions, some of which currently have no moral or material incentive to support egalitarian objectives – e.g. public schools.

Final thoughts

The official discourse around English education and training policy has not moved a very great distance in the last 30 years. Unfortunately, nearly all of the problems that could be solved by a simple, publicly funded, supply-led strategy have now been solved, and what remain are a set of complex problems whose roots largely lie outside the education and training system and are imbedded in the ways UK businesses choose to compete, deploy and reward their workers, and how the labour market structures and apportions opportunities. Unless and until policy analysis and resultant policy action moves forward to embrace these broader issues, the room for progress will be very limited indeed. A Good Society requires not merely a particular kind of education and education system, but also a particular kind of labour market and economy.

6 John Goldthorpe and Michelle Jackson, 'Intergenerational class mobility in contemporary Britain: political concerns and empirical findings', *British Journal of Sociology*, 58, pp.526–46, 2007.

11. Re-taking the high ground: steps towards a persuasive progressive position on schooling

Martin Yarnit

Getting beyond polarised debates

If we are going to get beyond a tit-for-tat debate about schooling that fails to connect with public opinion, the centre-left needs to find a new way of framing shared aspirations and showing why we are the best advocates for closing the learning divide.

In the US, much political debate is paralysed and polarised with highly ideological positions taken by left and right on key issues such as gun law, abortion, race discrimination, federal spending and gay marriage. In English politics, schooling is the issue that is similarly benighted with every successive government determined to re-make education policy and to save schools from the hands of the enemy. People on the centre-left find themselves at a particular disadvantage because the tit-for-tat form of the debate favours traditional views of education that chime with the experience of much of the public, with conservatives and their newspapers adept at playing on the fears of parents about poor standards and behaviour. For the left, winning the educational arguments is an up-hill battle that we can never win, unless we can re-frame our case and use a new strategy to present it. The mantra 'a good school for every neighbourhood' makes perfect sense, but cuts little ice with public opinion. It is just not enough to take the moral high ground unless we can also set the style of the debate. So this is an argument for re-thinking the content of our position and for re-shaping the way we go about winning support it.

Learning from successful campaigns

Having moral and intellectual force backed up by well-known experts who can wheel out the supporting evidence is a useful aid in campaigning, but history suggests it is rarely enough to win the day. Shifting public opinion on big issues involves a paradigm shift so that people can view the world in a new way and recognise the potential for change. The campaigns for the abolition of Third World debt, to abolish slavery, to ban smoking and to introduce gender equality all began to gain traction when people began to see the world through new eyes and to make up their own minds about thinking and behaving differently. Here I argue that there are six steps towards bringing about paradigm shifts in public opinion.

1 Develop an inspiring vision

First, there has to be a vision of a different order, one that inspires as Martin Luther King's dream did. Traditional interpretations of educational reality are very powerful because they play on widely accepted truths and images. Most people are comfortable with images of schooling that include classrooms with a teacher to transfer knowledge to respectful students, the pre-eminence of certain intelligences and subjects, and the importance of a broad liberal education for the academically able but practical skills for others.

In the notion of the Good Society, Compass provides the basis for an educational vision with a capacity to inspire rooted in a profound sense of freedom, which starts with the individual but recognises that we only make sense and have meaning in relation to others through inter-dependence. In this sense education is about the most important thing we can ever learn; teaching us to live together and to collaborate to build a better future. From this are derived a set of principles with which we can shape the debate about education and which provide the basis for a new vision.[1] That vision values:

- not simply the ability of every student to realise their potential to the full but also the ability to develop their capacities to play a part in shaping both the society and the school, a fundamental democratic issue
- the common or comprehensive school as an institution that promotes inclusive learning and social solidarity, and a secure, caring environment

1 See http://compassoneducation.org.uk/education-for-the-good-society-statement-version-2.

- lifelong learning – learning throughout the life course
- fairness and equality for all
- a broad, liberal curriculum and qualification system that promotes self-discovery and the public good and that values equally vocational and academic, formal and informal learning.

A school system capable of supporting such change will require both reform of the formal education system and a greater capacity for the self-organisation of education by the community, civil society organisations and individuals. This means going beyond the forms of state education that we have experienced to date. Education for transformation cannot be rooted solely within the state as it is currently constructed. Providing they reflect the vision set out above and promote the public good rather than education as a commodity, schools might take a diversity of forms including, for example, the schools or academies sponsored by the RSA, Edge, the Co-op and Nottingham University.

2 Challenge received wisdoms

To help pave the way for viewing the world in a different way, through new spectacles, it is not sufficient to offer a coherent and inspiring vision. In addition, we have to challenge the truths that people take for granted. We have to lift the curtain on anomalies and misconceptions. The theatrical analogy is very deliberate because it is often best drawn through telling stories and humour, backed up by research evidence and facts.

Here are two examples of received wisdoms, which can be challenged.

Increasingly, the debate about schooling has been reduced to a polarised dispute about standards and behaviour, with the main political parties presenting themselves as the champions of unremitting classroom learning. Yet some of the most successful exemplars of learning are those private schools that pride themselves on educating the whole person, with a broad curriculum that stresses excellence in art, sport, extra-curricular clubs and external visits. That more holistic and enlightened vision is surely every young person's entitlement, rather than the narrow diet of book learning on offer in many schools. Ironically, it is this more progres-

sive curriculum that is more likely to be the educational experience of Conservative cabinet ministers rather than the narrow version of the Baccalaureate they now want to impose on state schools.

Although only a tiny minority can talk from first-hand experience about grammar schools, they have achieved an epic status that is totally at odds with the reality. Above all, there is total ignorance of their failure to help any but a tiny minority of mainly well off kids. Only 20 per cent of children went to grammar schools in the 1950s and 1960s, few of these were working class and 40 per cent of unskilled working class pupils left without a single O-level in 1954. Out of 9000 children whose progress was tracked for the Crowther Report, only 23 from unskilled backgrounds ended up with two A-levels.[2] The nostalgia for the grammar school is impervious to evidence such as this. Much better to demonstrate the way the system actually operates in counties as such as Buckinghamshire and Kent at the expense of the vast majority of children in state schools. What would you prefer for your child: to have failed the 11 plus in a grammar school county or to attend a successful comprehensive or academy?

3 Build faith

And this leads us to the importance of building faith that a new way is possible. Often it is not the logic or reasoning or lack of evidence that prevents people changing their viewpoint, it is the fear of the unknown and the uncertainty of how something new will affect them. On the whole, the middle classes in our society fare pretty well in educational terms, whatever their individual views or philosophy might be. Yet they need to be reassured that change is in their interests. Here, personal accounts may carry more weight than abstract arguments, showing why the university route does not suit all young people, demonstrating that practical, hands-on learning can often lead to more satisfying career options. Working class parents, even if they often have less to lose, similarly need to be convinced that a step away from the familiar will benefit their children. Building faith is all about the continual relaying of stories of how things can be done differently and great success achieved. There

2 Adrian Elliott, *State Schools Since the 1950s: The Good News*, Trentham Books, 2007, p.50.

is no shortage of inspiring examples of good educational practice in Britain, and a constant flowering of educational initiatives. We can draw on the expertise and good will of headteachers and other education professionals, and the work of think tanks and inspiring initiatives such as Whole Education and the RSA's Opening Minds.

Film is a powerful medium for conveying alternative realities, often more effective than the relaying of evidence in written form. The story of the transformation of the Alberta school system, told on film by students, teachers and parents, has an impact because seeing is believing and because skillfully made documentary brings to life debate about values. Rhonda Evans' films open up the complexities of curriculum choice, collaboration and public value to a lay audience, demonstrating that an inspiring vision can be translated into a reality that benefits all.[3]

4 Recongise candour as a political weapon
Truth is one of the first victims of political debate, as we try to pretend that it is only our opponents' case that is weak and inconsistent, their argument is totally lacking merit, or there is no common ground between our position and theirs. With bigoted opponents, this style of debate may win us supporters, but not with a sophisticated politician like Michael Gove, the current Secretary of State for Education.

Despite his maladroit handling of the Building Schools for the Future programme, Michael Gove has shown himself a skilled media operator, with his defence of academies and free schools and, above all, his determination to take the fight to the enemy.

Who said, 'The gap in attainment between rich and poor, which widened in recent years, is a scandal'? Yes, Michael Gove. Who said, 'By the time they reach university age just 45 children out of a cohort of 80,000 on free school meals make it to Oxbridge'? Who said, 'On a moral level, this waste of talent, this blighting of individual lives, is an affront to decency. And in economic terms, as we face an increasingly competitive global environment, it's a tragedy'? Michael Gove, again.

Not only is he determined to usurp the left's territory on educational inequality, he is also adept at rooting his policies, when it suits him, in evidence. There are three essential characteristics

that mark out the best performing and fastest reforming education systems:

- Rigorous research, from the OECD and others, has shown that more autonomy for individual schools helps drive higher standards.
- Landmark work by Professor Michael Barber for McKinsey, backed up by the research of Fenton Whelan, has shown that teacher quality is critical, with the highest performing education nations having the best-qualified teachers.
- And research again from the OECD underlines that rigorous external assessment – proper testing you can trust – helps improve standards.

Gove is also rather good at spotting the weaknesses in traditional Tory stances and fending off attacks:

> In particular we have to move beyond the sterile debate that sees academic knowledge as mutually exclusive to the skills required for employment; and rigour as incompatible with the enjoyment of learning.

Failing to grasp the complexity and appeal of the Tory message would be a big mistake. So the fourth step in our strategy is about taking a leaf out of Gove's book. That means addressing strongly held popular conceptions, or misconceptions, recognising shortcomings in the traditional stances of the left, and beginning to tell a new story about education that reflects the values of the Good Society. Above all, it means giving more attention to the way we frame our arguments.

Too often, we prefer to speak to ourselves, using language that excludes all but the education professionals. The challenge to the centre-left is to reach out to embrace wider concerns and broader perspectives. One way of doing that is by reminding our audience that improving schooling involves a constant balancing act between doing the best for your child and doing the best for all children: never one or the other. We have to provide evidence with accounts of how both have been achieved. And we will need to reassure our audience that we want what they want for their children.

3 See www.evanswoolfe.com/player/alberta1.html and www.evanswoolfe.com/player/alberta2.html.

5 Address popular (mis-)conceptions and shortcomings

In doing so, we have to address a number of ideas that are very widespread and have the status of common sense.

The most damaging notion – because there is a grain of truth to it – is that the left does not care about knowledge and the three Rs. There have been times when progressives got the balance wrong between engaging students and ensuring that they were properly equipped with the skills *and* knowledge essential for independent and creative learning. In a recent piece for the *New Statesman*, Peter Hyman argued that the class divide in his south London comprehensive is about reading:

> Sometimes – weirdly, in my view – those who believe in proper teaching of phonics, grammar and fluent writing are pigeonholed as traditionalists. But for me and, I believe, for anyone on the left, striving for high levels of literacy is a moral imperative. Our greatest challenge in education is to ensure that the children leave school with high-quality communication skills.[4]

He is right, but the best progressive education has always been about combining literacy and enlightenment.

'Vocational is second best.' Although everyone joins in the national clamour for more plumbers, parents and teachers are notoriously resistant to the value of apprenticeships when it comes to their own children. Our vision is of the equal value of practical and academic learning to individuals and society.

'Good behaviour and firm discipline disappeared with the rise of the comprehensive.' It did not, but the commitment of young people to schooling cannot be taken for granted as it was in a more deferential era. Gove recognises the obstacles to engaging students, talks about the need to 'excite and challenge' them, but in the end calls for a highly restrictive curriculum – the English Baccalaureate. We can present a truly exciting alternative vision that is more in keeping with the demands of the modern world.

'Streaming is essential for every child.' Few items of educational common sense are as widely received as the notion that children thrive in the company of their intellectual peers. Yet, the evidence points in the opposite direction towards mixed ability learning. The OECD, based on the PISA – Programme for International Student Assessment – studies, concludes:

> The more schools group students by ability across all subjects and the more frequently schools transfer students to other schools because of their low academic achievement, behavioural problems or special learning needs, the lower the school systems' overall performance.[5]

In other words, too much differentiation by ability lowers overall performance.

We should strenuously avoid defending the indefensible: there are state schools we would not want our children to attend.

6 Promote learner voice and agency

Finally, we need to amplify the voice and agency of students (and parents). Has any movement for change ever been successful unless at some stage (not necessarily initially) it truly engages those most affected – in this case students and their parents? No new product or type of service will succeed unless there is a constant focus on understanding how it meets the needs of the customers, again, in this case students and parents. This must involve deep 'insight' into their needs, not just surveys or focus groups. While many middle-class parents may be fearful of change if it involves their children, the same is not necessarily true of the children themselves who may feel they are succeeding despite the system not because of it. The views of students are a vital piece of the jigsaw, though because they are young, it is one that most people ignore (or pay lip-service to).

Movement for change

In many ways, our biggest challenge is to create or support the development of a network or movement that campaigns for a new education future. The movement must be focused on the vision, revealing the anomalies and building faith. It has to be equipped with the means to reach out to promote a positive vision. It should also act as a lighthouse, warning of the dangers of traditional education policy, holding the Government

4 Peter Hyman, 'Fear on the front line', *New Statesman*, 27 January 2011.

5 See www.pisa.oecd.org/dataoecd/31/28/46660259.pdf, p.80

to account when it talks about social mobility and provides instead greater educational inequality, and offering the practical tools to steer a different path.

We do have a credible and progressive education policy alternative to the Conservatives, but our argument here has been that we will fail to make headway unless we give more attention to the way the message is projected and received by the people we need to persuade – young people and their parents. We need to think more clearly about the way we frame our arguments and recognise that we need a strategy for winning support and building a movement. Policy proposals alone, however brilliant, will not do the trick.

To strengthen our position and tackle the strengths of the Tories, we have to develop a new story about schooling in language that parents and students can understand – a new common sense. At its heart should be the notion that education is about the creation of a good society, about learning the knowledge and skills needed to live together, to earn our living, to develop fulfilling relationships and to realise our capabilities. To bring that about we should propose a new education cultural revolution:

- every child can succeed – every child can become a reader and an explorer, aware of their talents, confident in their abilities from an early age; every child is capable of university entrance, a good work-based qualification or an apprenticeship
- tackle ghetto schools – every mainstream state school should have a comprehensive local intake and no more faith schools should be funded.

After proper debate, let us decide on our strategy, use the emerging Compass brand – open, honest, inclusive and committed to a vision of the Good Society – to collaborate with students, parents, educational professionals, employers, local authorities, think tanks and campaign groups to build a campaign to win the majority.

12. Rethinking the comprehensive ideal – new ways of conducting educational politics

Ken Spours

Party politics and education – a toxic mix

Party politics and education, in England at least, have represented a toxic mix for several decades. There was never a golden age, but in recent times we have plumbed the depths. The problems have been well documented and the record applies to all the major parties. The last 30 years have seen education reforms guided by political and electoral calculation or ideological dogma, leading to constant change tied to ministerial careers and an obsession with structures, whether these be schools or qualifications. Moreover, an addiction to 'dog whistle politics' has meant that both major parties felt they knew what the electorate (or their part of it) wanted. For Labour, it was performance at any price, leading to a regime of targets and accountability. For the Conservatives it is a conviction that parents understand the education they themselves experienced and there is political gold to be mined in traditionalism and the educational image of the 1950s.

This kind of educational politics has resulted in the marginalisation of the voice of professionals who, time and again, have been blamed for the ills of education. A politically informed agenda has produced little continuity or the sharing of ideas but, instead, has fuelled the polarisation of debates – teachers v. parents; knowledge v. skills; academic v. vocational. The dichotomies comprise a long list and David Cameron and Michael Gove are trying their best to add to it. The result has been a chaotic and recriminatory reform process that tires teachers, puzzles parents and employers, and creates a permanent sense of discontent.

Having said this, education is fundamental to society and is, therefore, bound to be political. I am not arguing for a separation of education and politics, but for a new relationship between the two. A priority for all political parties, particularly social democratic, liberal and green, should be not only the creation of new policy content, but finding new ways of practicing educational politics – a new policy style.

Rethinking the comprehensive ideal – five ways of doing things differently

This first Compass ebook has discussed the values that inform the building of the Good Society – fairness and equality, democracy, sustainability and wellbeing. Doubtless, in time, more will be added. These need to contribute to our thinking about education because it is a crucial dimension of the Good Society and its realisation. They help us understand that means are as important as ends; remind us of what is worth struggling for and provide us with a moral compass. They show that our politics will be led by fundamental commitments and, crucially, they can be the basis of a wider dialogue, which aims to educate the population more generally about the wider purposes of education itself.

Drawing on the chapters in this book, I would like to suggest five ways of thinking about the practice of transformative educational politics.

1 Have a long political memory
Politicians tend to suffer from policy amnesia, exhibiting little if any policy memory. Everything has to be shiny and new. However, for Labour and other parties to renew the comprehensive ideal will require the opposite – a very long political memory that stretches back to the mutualism, solidarity and reciprocity that was at the birth of the labour movement. It has to inject this kind of memory into its concept of what is meant by state education if it to become a force for innovation and liberation and not for bureaucracy. A long memory that goes back not only 50 but 100 years reinforces a commitment to pluralism, democracy and collective self-organisation – those things we should cherish and that we lost in statism. A long memory also provides connections with the liberal traditions that also contributed to progressive change in the late nineteenth century.

2 Recognise that strong values grounded in reality are the drivers of change

Values become powerful drivers of change when they are connected to the realities everyone can see. Our young people face an unprecedented crisis of opportunity with one million unemployed and the prospect of being part of a generation that could be poorer than their parents. Here we can lead with the values of fairness and intergenerational justice as a call to arms

3 Look for the different 'adhesives' that bind us together

The left is understandably concerned about institutional diversification and the lack of democratic accountability that exacerbate social differences in localities. In response, it has traditionally prioritised one type of 'glue' – fair admissions policies and the ideal of the common school. While these are worth fighting for, we also need to look to different types of glue or 'frameworks' that bind people together. These include a more unified 14+ curriculum, more equitable funding entitlements and institutional commitment to all students in an area. There are many different dimensions of 'comprehensiveness' and we must explore the power of them all and particularly how they might work in combination.

4 Realise that education can change society, but only under certain conditions

Basil Bernstein's famously pessimistic statement 'education cannot compensate for society' has been countered by politicians who think it can achieve everything, hence Tony Blair's 'education, education, education'. Here we suggest, following Ewart Keep in this volume, that education can be a vital contributor to transformation so long as it is part of a wider political, social and economic strategy. In this sense, education is at its most powerful when it is allied with other strands of reform. Education for the Good Society, therefore, is an integral part of a wider societal vision of change.

5 Understand what the central state should and should not do

Some on the left are still obsessed with centralism and demonstrate weakness when it comes to democratic intent. We should be reducing the power of the state away from the centre so that

its role in guaranteeing fairness and standards is balanced by greater powers exercised by a wider range of social partners and in localities. This is what might be referred to as 'democratic localism'. Social democratic and progressive political parties should commit themselves to giving meaningful power to the local level where there are many local authorities, schools and colleges, civil society organisations and parents trying, often against the odds, to implement a comprehensive ideal.

Towards an expansive and comprehensive vision – seven fundamental ideals

Throughout the various chapters of this book, a set of comprehensive values for the modern age has been proposed as part of the building of the Good Society. Some of these are not new, representing things from the past we should cherish; some have flourished in recent years at the local level, but have not informed national policy; and some are in their political infancy. Rearticulating themes from the first chapter, here are seven to start with: they span different phases and locations of education and training and represent various dimensions of what might be regarded as a truly 'comprehensive' system of education.

1 The belief in educability and human potential

Fundamental to any progressive and inclusive vision of education is the belief in 'educability'; that everyone can benefit from education in all its forms; that everyone can think as well as do; and that education in this form can support individual wellbeing, reinvigorate communities and transform society. Such a belief strengthens the resolve to extend education throughout the lifecourse, to link general and vocational education and to have a deep commitment to those with special education needs.

2 Educating for togetherness

How can we encourage togetherness in a world of growing institutional diversity? The key may lie in the values of togetherness and fairness and actively promoting a wider sense of responsibility that institutions should cater for all types of learners or, in the case of post-14 education and

training, be part of a local system that does. In a world of academies, free schools and state schools, school sixth forms, colleges and the workplace, we have to find the glue. Any local regulation around admissions by reinvigorated local authorities would have to be based on a strong moral and educational case. Rather than seeing commonality as imposed from above, we need to create the situation where government empowers those who seek fairness and cohesion from below. This suggests that a moral and political battle has to precede organisational change and a recognition that educating for togetherness takes place in different ways. Commonality and cohesion can be pursued, for example, through the notion of the 'strong area', in which diverse institutions collaborate. In the current or foreseeable political context, the idea of the strong area or locality may have to prefigure the eventual widespread development of the 'common school'.

3 A more common, yet more open form of learning

The left has traditionally tended to overestimate the reforming power of organisation and underestimated the power and controversy of the curriculum and of pedagogy. What should be taught and how learning should take place has become a political battlefield. As Martin Yarnit observes in Chapter 11, education is full of unnecessary polarities. It is here that we have to show the greatest imagination as we try to turn the term 'versus' into 'and'. It would seem that the fundamental values of educability and togetherness point us towards a relationship between apparent opposites. On the one hand, education is about what we share in common. On the other, innovation and maturation lead to specialisation and diversity. We have to relate the two. A comprehensive curriculum would need, therefore, to be underpinned by a new set of balances – knowledge and skill; understanding the past and discovering the new; the individual learner and the curriculum; fostering learning for its own sake and understanding the power of relevance; individual subjects and their integration; the value of established texts and the open excitement of the web.

4 Educators and democratic relationships

Who is best placed to make sense of all of this? It is well-trained professional educators, collabo-

rating with others and through the art of teaching, who translate these opportunities into practices that meet the needs of their students. Thus far unfortunately, teachers and lecturers have spent a good part of their time and energy on policy damage limitation. A new approach to policy-making could slow down the rate of change and create new freedoms of interpretation in order that professionals can play a full role in the policy process. The kind of 'democratic fellowship' Michael Fielding has talked about in Chapter 7 in relation to students can be broadened to include a range of educational relationships.

5 The Good Economy and the potential power of 'situated learning'

Learning is about much more than schools, colleges, universities and their teachers and lecturers, critical though they are. The most powerful forms of learning can take place outside educational institutions – in the workplace, the home and community, through a variety of formal and informal learning opportunities. Seen in this way, the role of educational institutions is to prepare people to take advantage of this learning landscape although all too often, because they are pressurised by national examinations and other accountability mechanisms, these institutions fail to fully grasp this essential point. Learning in this wider sense, however, does not happen by chance. It has to be fostered. Here workplaces can play a fundamental role, but these have to be places that offer expansive rather than restrictive learning opportunities.

6 Lifelong learning: the ultimate comprehensive ideal

A commitment to education throughout the life-course can be regarded as the ultimate comprehensive ideal. Among its many virtues is the fact that lifelong learning can re-engage those who did not succeed in school as well as provide support for individual and community wellbeing.

7 Thinking ecologically

The ideals discussed here could also be viewed as part of an ecological perspective on education – the nurturing of balance, evolution, interdependence, adaptation and resilience. We have to now make critical choices– either education can be about the reproduction of the divided

and unsustainable consumerist society in which we presently live, or it can begin to reflect the thinking of a future condition in which sustainability in all its senses becomes a guiding principle

Turning ideals into a sense of common purpose

Viewed historically, as we stated at the beginning of the book, the last 30 years have not been all bad. They represent a fine balance of improvements in resourcing and formal achievements offset by entrenched inequalities and a loss of optimism. This has created a static equilibrium and a feeling of being stuck. We have a long way to go to create a sense of direction in which education as a national and unifying public ideal could be held in the same reverence as the NHS.

This book has focused on fundamental purposes, values, principles and lessons to be learned. At a time of political defeat we argued in the opening chapter for a return to considering the real purposes of education. In doing so we have argued for the supremacy of a new (and yet old) set of educational and societal values.

By way of a conclusion, I suggest that the next stage of a long journey could begin by the swearing of an oath – a Hippocratic Oath for Education – in which, for example, teachers declare their duty to all their students; institutional leaders commit themselves to 100 per cent of learners in their area; social partners promise to support public education in whatever way they can; and politicians vow to spread the power around so that a permanent, fairer and more democratic settlement could start to take shape in the English system. This would soon become an act of common purpose.

While ministers still seek to peddle conflict, a growing appetite for dialogue, agreement and creatively seeking out solutions can be detected. Education is simply too important to be treated in any other way and it is the democratic left, working in an open and pluralistic way, that has to publicly say so.

About Compass

Compass is the democratic left pressure group whose goal is both to debate and develop the ideas for a more equal and democratic society, then campaign and organise to help ensure they become reality. We organise regular events and conferences that provide real space to discuss policy, we produce thought provoking pamphlets and we encourage debate through out website. We campaign, take positions and lead the debate on key issues facing the democratic left. We're developing a coherent and strong voice for those that believe in greater equality and democracy as the means to achieve radical social change.

We are:

- An umbrella grouping of the progressive left whose sum is greater than its parts.
- A strategic political voice – unlike thinktanks and single-issue pressure groups Compass can develop a politically coherent position based on the values of equality and democracy.
- An organising force – Compass recognises that ideas need to be organised for, and will seek to recruit, mobilise and encourage to be active a membership across the UK to work in pursuit of greater equality and democracy.
- A pressure group focused on changing Labour – but Compass recognises that energy and ideas can come from the outside party, not least from the 200,000 who have left since 1997.
- The central belief of Compass is that things will only change when people believe they can and must make a difference themselves. In the words of Gandhi, 'Be the change you wish to see in the world'.

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compass

Join today and you can help change the world of tomorrow

Please contribute generously. Compass is funded solely by organisations and individuals that support our aim of greater equality and democracy. We rely heavily on individual members for funding. Minimum joining rates are suggested below. To join, simply complete and return this form to Compass, **FREEPOST LON15823, London, E9 5BR**. Paying by Standing Order or Paypal means we have a regular income to count on, consequently we are offering new members a discount for paying their membership in this way. To join by Paypal you will need to go to the Join Us section of the Compass website at www.compassonline.org.uk/join.asp.

☐ Waged (SO / Paypal) – min £27.50   ☐ Waged (Cheque / PO) – min £32.50

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☐ Organisation (i.e. CLP; think-tank; NGO) – min £42.50

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If you're already a Labour member what is your CLP?

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Please pay immediately by standing order to Compass' account, Lloyds TSB, 32 Oxford Street, London, W1A 2LD (a/c 2227769, sort code 30-98-71) the sum of £10 / £25 / £40 / Other £ (please delete as appropriate) and then annually, unless cancelled by me in writing.

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☐ I'm not eligible to be a member of the Labour Party (i.e. you're a member of another political party in the UK) and I would like to become an Associate Member of Compass (with no voting rights).

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