

THE JOURNEY TO EDUCATION REFORM

# EDUCATION BRITAIN

# SETTING THE SCENE

As a nation, we have created some of the world's best schools, college and top universities and the best of Britain is considered to be world class. In 2007, our export of education and training technologies and expertise was also larger than the export of our whole UK financial services sector (British Council 2007).

We have also developed a wealth of 'national education treasures' that are often overlooked for the benefit of the wider system including: our approach to special educational needs; our further education colleges and work based learning providers; our after school and informal learning programmes; and the education opportunities provided by our cultural and sporting institutions.

Our nation succeeds in effectively educating millions of young people. This is testament to the commitment of those who work every day in our schools, colleges, work places and universities across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Yet for a significant minority, education has yet to deliver.

We cannot afford complacency at any level.

## The world is changing

Despite our history as education pioneers and exporters to the world, we are now in danger of being left behind. A mixture of global and national data show a reputation as one of the world's best for education is at risk.

Long term and damaging UK wide trends that have a major economic and social impact are stubborn and hold back the system including:

## UK statistics

- In the 2009 OECD PISA assessment of 15-year-olds, the UK performs around the average in reading and mathematics and above the average in science among the 34 OECD countries (OECD 2011)
- 11-year-old pupils eligible for free school meals are around twice as likely not to achieve expected standards in literacy and numeracy (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2010)
- The UK has the ninth highest proportion of 15-19 year olds not in education, employment or training, which is higher than Germany and France (OECD 2011)
- Young people are leaving school and college with serious shortfalls in their employability skills. Over half of employers (57%) are finding weaknesses in school leavers' self-management skills and 68% believe they have inadequate business and customer awareness (CBI, 2010)
- Between 2000 and 2008, the proportion of young people graduating fell from the third highest to fifteenth among top industrialised nations (OECD, 2010)

Evidence consistently shows that those who are better educated earn more and are less likely to be unemployed, are healthier and live longer (DfE, 2010).

And despite major investment in interventions and initiatives, the achievement gap in England is more significant than in the US, Germany and Australia (Sutton Trust, 2010).

## A turning point

Education in the UK is at a crossroads. Our system is fragile and framed by old arguments that focus on division rather than consensus and collaboration. Too much energy is wasted that takes critical focus away from solving major challenges.

The path we choose today will determine the shape and success of the UK education system for a generation. There is a national challenge that requires new solutions and new ways of working and fresh thinking.

In the Summer of 2011, The Education Foundation sought to respond to this challenge and to start the debate about what we want from the education system and priorities for education reform.

Our first step as a solutions-focused education think tank was to gather a group of thirty-five leading thinkers: an inspiring, influential mix of teachers, policymakers and other practitioners. We asked them three simple but far reaching questions: what's important?; what works?; and what next?

The aim of their responses is to provoke discussion about creating an Education Nation. In this report we set out some key principles for education reform.

We now want practitioners, students, parents and partner organisations to join the debate.

## The report in brief

Taken as a whole the contributions to this report forcefully take us beyond the worn out positions of the past and make an urgent case for a more rounded debate about an education nation.

As well as an inspiring range of views and opinions they also include a catalogue of the achievements of key organisations, schools, colleges and universities at the cutting edge of education reform. The following section is a quick reference guide to enable you as a reader to make connections that the report provides and the system deserves.

**Note:** The contributions from our experts are rich in ideas and sources. Footnotes and references have been omitted from this version of the publication, but will be included in full, in the final version of the publication.

### Editors

Ian Fordham and Ty Goddard



The importance of empathy in education and its teaching as an extra layer to enrich our schools and relationships in and around them.

*Professor Simon Baron Cohen*

Balancing an excellent curriculum with a dynamic and fit for purpose assessment system.

*Ruth Binks*

A vision for education – aspiration, access and achievement for all.

*Professor Sonia Blandford*

Injecting more flexibility, practicality and self reliance into pupils, teachers and our curriculum – we need to be able to do things as well as know things.

*Rod Bristow*

The need for a flexible, progressive and forward-thinking education system, ever open to new ideas and better ways of working.

*Rachel de Souza*

Schools and academies should remove the inhibitors to educational performance not in the epilogue of a child's educational career but in their prologue.

*Dr Antony Edkins*

The first decade of devolved education in Wales has enabled us to see ourselves as we are, the second must ensure that we can become as we would want ourselves to be.

*Emeritus Professor David Egan*

With an adaptable approach to education, we can develop adults' and young people's talents and skills to learn how to invent and make our future.

*John Ellison*

Scotland is determined to build on the strengths of its educational heritage – ambition, universalism and excellence.

*Leslie Evans*

Recognising and realising the ambition of education in Northern Ireland in helping to prepare young people to live and work and become architects of a shared and better future.

*Professor Tony Gallagher*

If we value and respond to the needs of the individual child and provide early intervention to prevent long-term failure, we equip them to participate, contribute and share in all our success.

*John Griffith Jones*

Learning by doing should be valued equally with academic learning and high quality technical, practical and vocational learning should be an integral and valued part of every young person's education.

*Jan Hodges*

Now and in the future, we must believe in pursuing excellence and equity, leadership centred around path-finding, risk taking and perpetual learning and have the same expectations for all young people.

*Hugh Howe CBE*

Two Britains living side by side - while there may be no silver bullet to social mobility, education is the closest thing we have, for the individual, their family and the country

*Sally Hunt*

Students are growing up in a complex digital world – technology should not be used merely a tool rather a medium for communication and creative thinking.

*Joanne Jacobs*

Achieving parity of esteem through valuing the right route for the individual and for their intended destination

*Asha Khemka OBE*

A need for education reform that empowers the consumer rather than manages the producer - voice based, rather than choice based reform

*Lord Knight of Weymouth*

Rising above political differences and realising the ambition for education

*Brian Lightman*

A holistic vision of education based on excellence, trust in teachers and breadth in the curriculum

*Tony Little*

Harnessing the potential of parents in driving forward the education system

*Lord Lucas of Crudwell and Dingwall*

Reflections on the challenges and opportunities in education in a diverse 21st Century world city

*Munira Mirza*

Every school a good school, through freedoms, proven models of success and ambition

*Baroness Perry of Southwark*

The importance of early years - empathy, engagement and empowerment

*Stephen Pisano*

The role of further education in building learning communities and the spirit of the Big Society in social cohesion and collaboration

*Lynn Sedgemore CBE*

Schools and Universities – from a factory model to a world class system

*Dr Anthony Seldon*

Schools, Further and Higher education - creating a seamless and integrated system

*Dr Elizabeth Sidwell CBE*

Raising our national ambition - competing in an international arena

*Graham Stuart MP*

The limitations of the state in delivering education policy and practice

*Professor James Tooley*

Diversity, flexibility and independence – the keys to building a civilised, compassionate and functional society

*Dr Bernard Trafford*

The creative and professional role of teachers in a hyperconnected world

*Greg Whitby*

Young leaders tackling educational disadvantage and improving the system

*Brett Wigdortz*

Rebalancing schools and local government to the needs and the impact on the child

*Hywyn Williams*

Connecting the worlds of business and education - entrepreneurial education as part of the DNA of every school

*Honor Wilson Fletcher MBE*

Freedom and releasing innovation in the education system

*Rachel Wolf*

Globalisation and a new paradigm for education

*Professor Yong Zhao*

“ Further and higher education have a critical role to play in ensuring Britain succeeds as a nation and secures for itself a prosperous future. Our universities have an enviable international reputation, producing world class research and attracting more international students than any other country except the United States. They make a substantial contribution to the health and wealth of our nation through their deep involvement in wider society and the economy. Our further education colleges are stepping up to the urgent challenge to provide the skills businesses need to thrive and grow.

The Government has embarked on a series of reforms to ensure for universities and colleges a firm financial footing in these tough times and the elimination of unnecessary bureaucracy. The changes put learners at the heart of the system and ensure they and employers have high quality and impartial information to assess the qualifications on offer. We have welcomed the robust and thoughtful debate that has accompanied our reforms, it has undoubtedly improved the policies now being implemented.

The formation of The Education Foundation is a very positive step in ensuring that this debate continues. I wish you every success.

**Dr Vince Cable MP**  
Secretary of State for  
Business, Innovation  
and Skills

“ It would be an understatement to say that we’re living in interesting times. The country has suffered the worst financial crisis since 1929. Our economy is weighed down by the burden of debt. Europe is in turmoil. Meanwhile, we’re witnessing a rapid and historic shift of political and economic power to Asia - and a series of scientific and technological changes are transforming our culture, economy and global politics. While our competitors race ahead, Britain has fallen down the league tables and the attainment gap between rich and poor remains stubbornly wide. The challenges are unprecedented. If we do not have a school system capable of adapting to this changing world, we will betray a generation.

But against this bleak backdrop, there is genuine cause for optimism. We have the best generation of teachers ever and a fantastic crop of dynamic heads. New opportunities have opened up: operational autonomy for schools has increased, teachers are being given greater freedom, and new providers are being welcomed into the sector. The potential for real innovation is huge.

So at this critical juncture, it’s vital that there is serious, thoughtful debate about our future. I’m delighted that The Education Foundation has brought together so many great minds to do just that

**Michael Gove MP**  
Secretary of State for Education

“ I welcome this important contribution to the debate on Education reform. High standards and rigour in our education system are imperative if we are to make sure that all young people get the best start in life.

This collection of essays raises important questions about today’s education system and sets challenges for the education system we aspire to see in the future; one that addresses attainment for all young people, irrespective of their social background and one that meets the needs of the economy.

I look forward to working with the Education Foundation in the debate on reform

**Stephen Twigg MP**  
Shadow Secretary of State for Education

# WHERE NEXT?

In their landmark report, 'How the world's school systems keep getting better', McKinsey argue that the starting point for every system embarking on an improvement journey is to decide how to overcome present challenges and inertia, and create an impetus to start education reform. In other words an "ignition moment". Professor Michael Barber also argued recently, we need "reform without rancour" – we strongly agree.

In our view, the UK has reached a critical point in time through a combination of economic challenge, the impact of a number of high-profile, critical reports on the system's performance and the energy and input of new leaders and practitioners in the system, including many who have contributed to this report.

Looking ahead we must reach agreement on abiding national priorities and focus. It is vital that energy and investment across the UK are committed to a radical approach to education reform based upon the following principles:

## Principles of education reform

### 1. Looking back to look forward

Learning from the successes and failures of past policies, basing decisions more on reason than instinct and building on cross party initiatives

### 2. Analysing what works

Developing the evidence base for education to the level available in other professions such as medicine, then shared and used more effectively by all

### 3. Learning from the global, national and local

Learning from the best the world has to offer, sharing education innovations and connecting education reformers who exist in every school, college and university

### 4. Crossing divides

Making the most of opportunities created by collaborating in ever more ambitious ways between state and independent schools, informal and formal learning institutions and from employers and the world of work

### 5. Debating ends and means

Creating a new consensus and a degree of local flexibility about the outcomes we want for our children and young people

### 6. Collaboration not conflict

Working across silos, sectors and networks to make the most of limited resources to maximise the impact of teaching and learning

### 7. Transforming leadership

Raising the bar in our expectations, cultivating leadership at every level and confronting the 'soft bigotry of low expectations' in many communities

### 8. Learning about teaching and learning

Shining a light on grassroots level, peer led innovation, including the quality of practice in early years settings, schools, colleges and universities

### 9. Minding the Gap

Focusing ambitions on social justice and social mobility to improve opportunities for those at most risk of failure or underachievement

### 10. Building a powerful alliance

Creating a movement for education reform that brings about significant culture and infrastructure change in the system

# NOW IS THE TIME FOR ACTION

This is why our first step as the Education Foundation is to create **The Coalition for Education Reform** – a new alliance that brings together people, organisations and partners from across the UK with a passion for positive and long lasting change in the education system.

We need Education Reform Now. 15 million young people across the UK deserve nothing less.

## Editors

Ian Fordham and Ty Goddard

Co-founders, The Education Foundation

## CONTENTS

|         |                                     |
|---------|-------------------------------------|
| 08 - 09 | Professor Simon Baron Cohen         |
| 10 - 11 | Ruth Binks                          |
| 12 - 13 | Professor Sonia Blandford           |
| 14 - 15 | Rod Bristow                         |
| 16 - 17 | Rachel de Souza                     |
| 18 - 19 | Dr Antony Edkins                    |
| 20 - 21 | Emeritus Professor David Egan       |
| 22 - 23 | John Ellison                        |
| 24 - 25 | Leslie Evans                        |
| 26 - 27 | Professor Tony Gallagher            |
| 28 - 29 | John Griffith Jones                 |
| 30 - 31 | Jan Hodges                          |
| 32 - 33 | Hugh H Howe CBE                     |
| 34 - 35 | Sally Hunt                          |
| 36 - 37 | Joanne Jacobs                       |
| 38 - 39 | Asha Khemka OBE                     |
| 40 - 41 | Lord Knight of Weymouth             |
| 42 - 43 | Brian Lightman                      |
| 44 - 45 | Tony Little                         |
| 46 - 47 | Lord Lucas of Crudwell and Dingwall |
| 48 - 49 | Munira Mirza                        |
| 50 - 51 | Baroness Perry of Southwark         |
| 52 - 53 | Stephen Pisano                      |
| 54 - 55 | Lynn Sedgemore CBE                  |
| 56 - 57 | Dr Anthony Seldon                   |
| 58 - 59 | Dr Elizabeth Sidwell CBE            |
| 60 - 61 | Graham Stuart MP                    |
| 62 - 63 | Professor James Tooley              |
| 64 - 65 | Dr Bernard Trafford                 |
| 66 - 67 | Greg Whitby                         |
| 68 - 69 | Brett Wigdortz                      |
| 70 - 71 | Hywyn Williams                      |
| 72 - 73 | Honor Wilson Fletcher MBE           |
| 74 - 75 | Rachel Wolf                         |
| 76 - 77 | Professor Yong Zhao                 |

# EDUCATION AND EMPATHY

Professor Simon Baron Cohen

**Education prioritises exam league tables but we shouldn't lose sight of the need to teach empathy in schools. We take empathy for granted, as if all children will develop this without any specific help, but clinicians in mental health know all too well that many children struggle to develop empathy, which is followed by clear difficulties.**

Among these are children who end up needing a diagnosis, for example, on the autistic spectrum, or for conduct disorder, or who in adulthood end up with a psychiatric diagnosis, such as a personality disorder. But empathy difficulties are not confined to these extreme groups in the population, who together may add up to less than 10%. Rather, all children and teenagers can benefit from developing their empathy to higher levels.

Empathy has two major components: (1) the ability to identify what someone else is thinking or feeling, and (2) the ability to experience an appropriate emotion in response to another person's thoughts and feelings. There are teaching methods that can help people with the first of these (e.g. emotion recognition

educational software and training tools) and imaginative teachers may even be able to foster the second (e.g. through role play techniques).

The empathy is important in team building, relationship building, and conflict resolution, among other functions. Empathy also promotes a more caring community and, by extension, a more caring society. A narrow focus on education being only about 'what is good for me' could end up with children and young people pursuing qualifications for their own career (which is of course good) but this emphasises individualistic goals at the expense of ensuring we create rounded citizens who are sensitive to each other, including those less fortunate than themselves.

Empathy is not just about caring for those

who are suffering (though this is very important). It is also about understanding the impact of our own words and actions on others, and how to avoid hurting others, not just physically but emotionally. It is about learning to see there is always more than one perspective, and that considering the other person's viewpoint is both more democratic and less likely to lead to a deadlock.

The teaching of empathy needs to be carefully packaged if it is not going to come across as boring to pupils and students. Given that it lies at the core of human interactions, imaginative teachers should be able to present this in ways that make the subject feel highly relevant to young people. Calling it 'empathy education', for example, would be a major mistake, but teaching

empathy around key issues could help communicate its importance. For a teenage class it might be part of considering why some people engage in racism or sexual violence. For younger children it might be part of considering why some children engage in bullying, where bullying comes from, and how to prevent it. Equally, for children or teenagers, getting the opportunity to boost empathy by using film, to see how others see you, may help children develop greater self-awareness.

There are opportunities to include the topic of empathy in many existing academic courses in the curriculum. An example in history might be when analysing the causes and effects of war (and how a specific war might have been avoided) or in geography when considering the social impact of different urban designs or development projects. The possibilities are endless but it requires teachers to keep the topic of empathy on their radar, and to consider if and how to bring in this dimension to whatever topic they are currently teaching. Equally, a focus on empathy would be easy to integrate into after-school activities that are outside the curriculum, such as projects that twin a school with a less privileged school in a

developing country or clubs that involve students contributing to the local community.

In our work at Cambridge we have used multi-media tools to help teach empathy. One example is the Mind Reading DVD ([www.jkp.com/mindreading](http://www.jkp.com/mindreading)) that shows actors and actresses portraying every human emotion and which the student can study at their leisure to understand facial (and vocal) expressions of emotion. A second example is for preschoolers and is the animation The Transporters ([www.thetransporters.com](http://www.thetransporters.com)) which aims to hook the interest of young children on the autistic spectrum by showing them films of trains (which they love) with human faces on the front that respond emotionally to different situations. Other excellent teaching materials have also been developed and there is an opportunity to expand this important area.

In sum, the traditional focus on reading, writing and arithmetic remain important, just as does inspiring teaching of subjects such as science, history, music, and even politics. But there is an opportunity to make a place for the teaching of empathy that does not squeeze time from other subjects, but which can easily be an extra layer within these and which would enrich our schools.



# SCOTTISH EDUCATION: THE FUTURE'S IN THE BALANCE

Ruth Binks

**Scotland has long shunned league tables and 'high stakes testing' in primary schools. Our previous 5–14 curriculum used national testing to verify teacher judgement of a child's individual progress through five different levels (A–E). These levels spanned the first year of primary to the second year of secondary.**

Whilst in theory 5–14 created a structure and ethos that allowed children to progress at their own pace, it was felt by many primary school teachers that the curriculum became too linear, segmented and crowded, with little time for breadth and depth of learning. In addition, the issue of attainment as measured by the 5–14 levels became 'high stakes' for some parents, schools and local authorities.

The Curriculum for Excellence has kept the principle of the individual progress of each child and has striven to match this with broader experiences and outcomes that allow for more professional freedom for teachers and greater personalisation and choice for learners. With its introduction there is an entitlement for each child to a broad general education up to the end of S3 (equivalent to Year 10 in England and Wales). The values of the curriculum say:

*(The curriculum) must be inclusive, be a stimulus for personal achievement and, through the broadening experience of the world, be an encouragement towards informed and responsible citizenship.*

The clear link between successful academic and

wider achievements and how these will impact on lifelong learning now underpins the whole of the Scottish curriculum. The four capacities (successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors) that the Curriculum for Excellence is based on are an acknowledgement that society needs citizens whose skills and attributes go beyond academic certificates and cannot be recognised solely within 'school time'. The four capacities were communicated to schools at the very outset of engagement and have remained firm foundations on which to build. They sum up the emphasis on learning being wider ranging than the classroom, both in breadth and longevity.

The Curriculum for Excellence has given teachers the freedom to exercise more professional judgement in the classroom. Literacy, numeracy and health and well-being now permeate the whole curriculum, resulting in a less segmented and more joined up approach to learning and teaching.

On the whole teachers seem to be embracing this freedom. Certainly the change of emphasis to include more interdisciplinary learning

and the transfer of skills into new and different contexts is one that sits very naturally in the primary context. Such change is perhaps a more difficult challenge for our secondary colleagues. As a result of this freedom the primary school curriculum has become much more engaging for pupils. This is because it allows the time and flexibility to visit concepts in depth and follow learners' interests and enthusiasms, rather than the previous constraints of the fragmented and busy 5–14 curriculum where coverage could often take precedence over understanding. Also the curriculum can now extend beyond the school gate and cultivate partnerships that will encourage and develop opportunities for wider achievement.

Pupil engagement with their own learning and opportunities for personalisation and choice is also a key feature of the Curriculum for Excellence. This is proving to be a challenging prospect for both learners and teachers but it is crucial to get the balance right between curriculum delivery and learner choice if we are to ensure sustainability and success. If done well, with high quality dialogues and identification of preferred learning styles and learner pathways,

then the prospect of creating autonomous learners who 'learn how to learn' and can use these skills in new situations into adulthood is a very attractive one. Learner profiling and personal learning planning as a vehicle to do this are foremost in the minds of most schools at the time of writing. For me, the key to success has to be building up the capacity of learners and teachers to engage in a meaningful dialogue about learning. It is the ongoing process not the end product that is important. The risk is that this process, if not understood properly, could become a meaningless add-on to learning that disengages rather engages the pupils. It also relies on varied approaches to teaching being embedded in the pedagogy across a school that truly allow pupils to take more responsibility for their learning. This continued move in Scotland towards a learner-centred approach is both laudable and ambitious. The challenge and hard work ahead of us is making sure that it actually impacts and raises attainment and achievement for all pupils.

Whilst teachers and head teachers welcome the freedom of the new curriculum, there is inevitably anxiety about the change. For head teachers, identifying and designing curricular pathways for learners has proved to be challenging; not an unwelcome challenge, but one that has required real consultation with the wider community about the ethos and values that underpin their school. For teachers, whilst the freedom of a broader curriculum is welcomed, there are concerns about what to focus on, the expectations of parents and carers and how to ensure that learning is progressing appropriately. High quality continuing professional development for school leaders and teachers is crucial to ensure the success

of the Curriculum for Excellence. Learning communities talking about pedagogy are beginning to emerge, and with this an enhanced feeling of professionalism and willingness to share and improve practice. In the future professional development through the sharing of practice will become increasingly important. The very skills we are developing in our pupils to engage with their learning are those we are now expecting of our teachers and head teachers. By creating a teaching profession that has greater autonomy over its own practice and higher professional expectations, the future of Scottish education can only improve.

How then do we measure improvement and assess learner progress? This is where, if not balanced carefully, real barriers could be created to the success of Curriculum for Excellence. How do we 'raise the bar' and guard against an academic complacency if we completely remove benchmarks and have nothing to measure against? On the other hand, creating too many benchmarks can constrain a curriculum, would simply replicate the mistakes made in the linear 5–14 approach and remove teacher courage to provide opportunities for breadth and depth of learning. Wherever the balance for the quantity of assessment is struck, it is important that teachers fully embed the concept of Assessment for Learning into their classroom practice as part of learning and not view assessment as an add-on.

In my own view, if we are to improve teacher autonomy in the classroom there needs to be a real move towards designing and using better quality assessment tasks. That is to say, teachers should become more skilled at designing inbuilt assessments into children's learning as part of

the teaching process and using this information to identify progression. This approach is the rationale behind the National Assessment Resource (NAR) currently being created and shared across Scotland. NAR is an online tool that allows teachers to share and moderate standards online. The process has started but progress is slow.

We need to ensure the balance of breadth, depth and challenge in all learning to secure a successful future in Scotland's education system. We should make sure that learner engagement with their curricular pathway doesn't become an extra task that takes away from learning itself. There should be a balance between the freedom to be brave and make your own choices and guidance to showcase best practice. Finally, and perhaps most crucially, getting the balance of the assessment mechanism right and ensuring that our assessment approaches are fit for purpose. Too much, and it will undermine the core principles and values of the curriculum; too little and we may possibly be left floundering and wondering exactly what impact the changes have had. If Scottish education can get these balances right, then the admiration of our new curriculum currently limited mainly to academic circles will spread wider and Scotland may take pride in a true Curriculum for Excellence that fully prepares pupils for their future.



# ACHIEVEMENT FOR ALL – A VISION FOR EDUCATION IN THE UK

Professor Sonia Blandford

**The importance and value of education is something that is often lost on many of those compulsory school-age children participating in the process, particularly the lowest 20% (or more) who do not attain even the basic level of literacy and numeracy needed to gain sustainable employment, a fundamental requirement for economic and social prosperity in this country.**

The lack of aspiration, access and achievement that underpins our education system is evidenced by the majority of schools in the UK in their failure to address the needs of the disadvantaged, vulnerable, those with special educational needs and disabled learners. Schools annually celebrate examination results that exceed academic targets, boldly claiming significant success if the attainment of GCSE A – C's or Key Stage Level 4's exceed 70% or more. There is rarely any mention or comment of the 20 – 30% who have failed to reach the basic levels of literacy or numeracy. What are the life chances of the lowest 20%? Those without GCSE qualifications in maths and English are dominate the numbers in our prisons, in drug centres and those dying prematurely.

The outcomes for the disadvantaged continue to be are challenging; the correlation between low family income and special educational needs is over 70%.

What is important for education in this country is that we could have an educational system driven by the vision where aspiration, access and achievement apply to all learners; where teachers, leaders and support professionals raise expectations to provide a system where the importance of education is understood and valued by all pupils and their parents.

My vision for education is a system that raises the aspirations of all pupils, (supported by parents, teachers, leaders and professionals) and provides access to quality teaching and assessment that inspire, drive and inform learning for all children, the outcome being achievement is seen as a genuine possibility for all.

Underpinning the vision of achievement for all are the '3As' needed to drive practice in schools:

Aspiration encompasses the expectations, beliefs, understanding and capacity of learners to engage fully and positively in the learning process. We need to revise the mind-set that underpins all educational endeavours, so that practitioners, carers and learners have a shared understanding of what can be achieved through the setting of goals (short, medium and long term) culminating in the raising of academic and personal aspirations.

Access has a two-fold meaning; the first is the removal of barriers preventing access to learning such as low expectations or physiological, social, environmental, educational barriers; the second is the opening of doors, the provision of education, compulsory, further and higher for those who might not have perceived education as having any significance or value in their lives.

Achievement is a term that has been devalued by the political drive to treat examination results as an indicator of educational success. While it is essential that the workforce is literate and numerate, appreciating what achievement is, having the self-efficacy to achieve one's goals and recognising when this happens is fundamental to learning. Achievement lies within and extends beyond exams. Social, artistic, musical, sporting and leadership endeavours all count towards achievement. It is the breadth of success that will facilitate learning, the confident application of knowledge and skills to work and life.

## **What works?**

In June 2009, the Department for Children, Schools and Families provided funding for the development, implementation and evaluation of Achievement for All in 10 Local Authorities spanning the length and breadth of England. The framework was created through a partnership between the National College, the National Strategies and the Department.

Introduced to 454 primary, secondary, special and PRU schools, the impact has been profound. Evidence from the independent evaluation by the University of Manchester, published by the Department for Education, demonstrates that

Achievement for All works. The outcomes for 28,000 SEND pupils 2009 – 2011 include:

- Pupils have made better than expected progress, in some cases exceeding that made by SEND and non SEND children nationally (An average progress of 4 point scores per annum in English and maths);
- Year 5 pupils with SEND have made significantly better progress in English than pupils without SEND nationally;
- Schools using the Achievement for All framework, reported positively that it provides a broad structure which head teachers can adapt to fit their needs and priorities, so that schools don't feel improvements were simply bolted on" or "done to them"; and
- The programme has been successful in working with pupils identified with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (BESD), this being one of the groups which have made the most academic progress.

Achievement for All is based on the belief that teachers and school leaders can have a profound impact on all children and young people by developing their achievement, access and aspirations. This means having high expectations of what they can achieve, working in partnership with parents to set targets for their learning and their progress, and increasing the range of learning opportunities and wider experiences available to them.

Achievement for All has three approaches to school improvement, creating a framework of practice and continuing professional development, which ensures whole school support over a two year cycle:

1) Improving the aspirations, progress and achievement of all children and young people, through high expectations, high quality teaching

and learning, effective use of assessment and focused target setting, supported and informed by;

- 2) Improving engagement with parents/ carers of children and young people through target- focused structured conversations; and
- 3) Improving the achievement, access and aspiration of children and young people and providing a wide range of learning opportunities in the classroom and beyond.

#### **What next for education?**

Across all phases and types of schools in the UK, school leaders are deciding to implement the Achievement for All framework and adopt achievement, access and aspiration. The National College and Achievement for All pilot team commissioned national research into effective leadership to ensure success for all children. There were few surprises in the findings:

- Schools need a shared vision; a core set of values and belief, shared by all staff, that all children and young people have the right to opportunities to develop their learning;
- Leaders need staff and community commitment to creating an ethos and culture of achievement across the whole school, determined to secure the best provision for vulnerable children and young people and the effective continuing professional development of staff.
- Collaboration is at the heart of success, with parents, children and young people and others within and beyond the school, including other schools, working together to develop and share best practice.

#### **What next for education policy in the UK?**

As the SEN Green Paper (England) moves to White, the Coalition is asking schools to report on the outcomes for the lowest attaining 20% of pupils. This will mean that schools will be looking even more closely at their progress and their achievement. The potential of Achievement for All and, for those who are driven by GCSE and Key Stage 2 results, is the possibility of close to 100% success.

For systemic change to occur in schools - in the classroom, in school and support teams, and in leadership - practices and behaviours in school need to be revisited. The impact of Achievement for All is improved outcomes for all vulnerable children and young people and their parents through raising aspirations in every lesson; confident school leaders and teachers; and practice that is transferable to learning throughout the school.

Our shared goal needs to be the ongoing review of practice in schools, until we have reached the point where all children are inspired to learn, where there is a shared understanding of the aspirations of all learners, where barriers to learning are removed and all children can achieve. The goal is the time, when, in 5, 10, 20 years, all pupils and parents understand and value the importance of education. This could be achieved by embedding the vision and practice that embeds and enhances achievement, access and aspiration for all children in all schools.



# KNOWING HOW, IS AS IMPORTANT AS KNOWING THAT

Rod Bristow

**Education is a subject absolutely riddled with false dichotomies. All state, or all private; personalised learning or drill and practice; subject-based or cross-curricula learning. The list goes on and on, but one false dichotomy that gets more costly by the day is the old chestnut of academic versus vocational learning.**

Until now, most people have tended to see the academic route as right for those who are 'able' and the vocational for those who are not; a worthy second best option. It's a debate that has raged for over 100 years. How do we get the balance right and make sure our young people can make the contribution they want and we need?

But, while the debate drags on, the world outside is moving on. The UK's young people aren't just competing against each other for jobs any more. In the 21st century they'll be competing against Indian engineers, Chinese designers and African investment analysts. Because our young people – and their parents – know this, university applications in the UK are at a record high of more than 675,000 in 2010, up almost 10% on 2009. That's why

nearly all the growth in higher education is in vocational subjects.

Although increasing participation in higher education seems inevitable, we need to be equipping young people for the global skills market at earlier ages too. Perhaps half of all pupils starting school now will work in careers or industries that are yet to be invented.

So one of the things I think most crucial in the UK today is how we inject more flexibility, practicality and self-reliance into pupils, teachers and our curriculum. Young people in formal education today need to be able to do things, as well as know things.

When Pearson surveyed employers in early 2011 about the quality of school leavers, just 16% thought that the young

people they saw had the right mix of practical and academic skills, and over 80% thought students would benefit from studying vocational subjects alongside an academic core.

For much of the 19th and 20th century, our education system was about dividing young people into those that went into higher education for professional jobs and those who learned technical skills and 'worked with their hands'. Our schools followed a factory model of inputs and outputs with children taught a set canon of knowledge and how to follow instructions. But things started to change some time in the last century, and in the past twenty years, the change has accelerated to the point where we are educating children with very little certainty about the type of jobs they will

in future need and want to do. Whole industries are being created, and destroyed, and shifted to other parts of the world.

So we need an education system that does the basics well, but also provides practical and vocational learning that goes well beyond the traditional manual trades. Subjects like creative media design, ICT and engineering all engage the brain in a mix of academic and practical skills that can be applied in the real world, and engage young people in the content of what they learn in very different ways.

In his inspiring 2009 book *The Case for Working with Your Hands*, American author Matthew Crawford writes that the education system is based 'on a certain view about what kind of knowledge is important'. He suggests that 'knowing that' has wrongly taken precedence over 'knowing how', and eloquently explains the economic, social and personal case for raising the status once again of vocational education. He says that in the early 19th century, with the invention of management as a science, the world did divide more neatly into managers who needed to think and make decisions, and workers who did not. He speculates that may be one reason for a decline in the

value of practical subjects. But those days are gone; jobs no longer divide neatly into thinking and doing. In my view, it's both through knowing that and knowing how that our young people will have the best chance of reaching their potential.

In 2009, Pearson published a global study of what employers looked for in education systems ranging from Saudi Arabia to India, South Africa to China and the UK. Employers felt that education systems everywhere were not interconnected enough and did not focus enough on problem-solving, multi-tasking and creativity.

If we are to educate and train the engineers, programmers and designers that will compete internationally, we must go much further, much faster, in helping schools to build networks, collaborate and expand on successful careers and enterprise education programmes.

We must help the new University Technical Colleges that the government is funding to succeed and flourish as hubs for world-class practical education. But we must make sure that incentives for

all schools give practical learning the right priority so that league tables don't focus solely on the core academic subjects. And we must use technology not as an optional extra in schools but as the essential medium that supports both vocational and academic learning.

In the 21st century, economic growth and our national reputation for innovation both rely on thinkers who can act and practitioners who can think. And our young people want an education that provides that; in fact they're depending on it.



# A VISION FOR BRITISH EDUCATION

Rachel de Souza

**There is one issue and one issue alone when we talk about what is important for education in Britain. Forget the Latin and the RE lobbyists. Forget vocational versus academic. Forget new technology and using smart phones in the classroom. Forget new ways of teaching. All details. What our children and our country need is a flexible, progressive and forward-thinking education system, ever open to new ideas and better ways of working.**

Let me expand. The main game remains studying for the GCSE 5 A\*-Cs including English and maths. The Adonis reforms of adding English and maths were right. Check the figures. In the summer of 2010, 56% of students achieved 5 A\*-Cs, once you take out equivalents, sport, travel and tourism, etc. That's very close to the 53.4% who achieved 5 A\*-Cs including English and maths. In other words, English and maths are a good indicator of the right academic standard. Of course, there are issues. I hear debate, sometimes heated, up and down the country about how to restore respect for this system - my beef is that the GCSE gradings have three pass grades and five fail grades. How does that make sense? But polarisation is not helpful nor is harking back to the golden days of O- levels. We cannot go back to 1984 when I was in the last cohort of 16-year-olds to take the O-level, it's a long time ago and the world has changed.

A one-size fits all education is doomed to failure, given the multiple intelligences and abilities of our students. As part of a flexible mix, I would choose to introduce iGCSEs for my most able students, a better and more vigorous preparation for A-Levels, particularly in mathematics, and university than the normal GSCE route. These are the qualifications upon which the Russell Group of universities is

increasingly focusing. These students have always responded well to linear courses and terminal examinations. I have no issues with the Ebacc either. The Ebacc, which simply acknowledges good grades in English, maths, the sciences, a language and a humanities subject, has spurred us into thinking about what we teach. We have written a brilliant new curriculum embracing astronomy, law, classical Greek and Mandarin. Our music, art and performing arts have all been strengthened significantly.

We badly need a range of demanding craft and trade courses for 14-19s, developed in conjunction with industry and commerce who are the experts in what they want. Many of these students do not respond well to the linear courses. We also need real vocational qualifications, VRQs and NVQs, embraced by the secondary education sector. I have opened a fully-professional beauty therapy salon at Victory Academy that is open to the public and runs as a business, preparing our students to be work-ready. No other academy in East Anglia has done that, to my knowledge. In the concept stage is a professionally-run coffee shop, supported by an industry partner, again preparing students to be industry-ready.

University Technical Colleges (UTCs) will play a key role in this vocational push; we must grasp the nettle and begin opening them and creating ready-for-work opportunities for students in the better-performing schools and academies. The sooner, the better for our students.

Let me illustrate the importance of flexibility with two examples from my Academies. Presilia was one of six daughters of a family without English who didn't work. She approached me one day while on duty in the playground. "Please, Miss, I would like to go into politics." We did it the Academy way: put her on the most rigorous courses, sent her to Parliament with our local MP, ran a strong campaign to get her elected as Youth MP. Now she has a place at Oxford, studying PPE. Luke, our Victory head boy, has studied engineering as well as his science, maths and English. He has a passion for the vocational side. In a strong field of 300, he managed to secure one of two apprenticeships with British Sugar. Two contrasting examples of Academy success and the importance of developing aspiration.

By the Government's new measure of international comparison, we will be firing our best shots at the competition with such a flexible and innovative system.

What is the present state of play in education? From the figures I have mentioned, the national 5 A\*-C pass rate is in the fifties. The Government benchmark for schools is 35% five A\*-C GCSEs including English and maths with plans to raise that to 50%. All very positive, but what worries me as a Principal is the other side of the coin, the massive numbers who are being tossed onto the qualifications scrapheap each year. The rising number of NEETs in Britain has got to be one of our worst social problems.

My philosophy is that every student at Victory is capable of achieving 5 A\*-Cs including English and maths. This is a policy set in concrete. We never give up on any student, even to the extent of collecting them in the Academy bus on exam day if there are doubts about attendance. I will not have children discarded and condemned to a possible lifetime of failure. We've achieved a 27% improvement in 5A\*-C GCSEs in our first year. Our English figure was 98% A\*-C. Our A-Level A\*-A (what you need these days for the best universities) was up 26%. All of this was with existing staff. With a lot of hard work and motivation, much can be achieved. From our figures, we are one of the most improved schools in Britain. Surely we have to adapt the system, improve the teaching and develop the focus so that all students leave with some acceptable qualifications, whether they be academic or vocational, whatever suits. Otherwise, what was the point of education for nearly half of our children? That is a shocking thought, isn't it?

A word about context. A flexible, progressive education system will only work in the appropriate environment. We have introduced a new Academy day which works well, brought in new behaviour standards and a smart Savile Row-designed uniform, placed a big emphasis on traditional values, focused attention on healthy food and sport and started a comprehensive enrichment programme. I have appointed an Assistant Principal in charge of raising achievement, a new Director of Teaching and Learning to improve teaching standards and develop chalk-face training and a talented young Data Manager to keep a rigorous eye on achievement data. We work closely with local businesses and other organisations, such as the Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital, to strengthen our teaching, an important future pathway for education. We are also extending Victory to 3-19, working closely with our feeder schools. Young students with high standards and aspirations will achieve so much more at secondary level. All important supports for pursuing the goal of every one of my students achieving the best possible results.

The dim, distant future of education, a generation away? New and more technology, you'd suspect. ICT is a particular bugbear of mine. We need a national debate - and decisions - on ICT provision

and sooner rather than later. In so many schools, it is appalling. We are in the 21st century whether we like it or not. And it is not just good ICT systems, but high-level ICT skills to make us internationally competitive. Think of what is happening in Singapore, one of the countries held up as an example of quality education. I understand the financial constraints; it is a question of priorities. But I am worried that the same sort of debate that we are having now will still be continuing in the future. Remember the Butler reforms in the 1940s were about academic and vocational learning and providing a basic education for everybody. That's getting on for three generations ago. Embracing a flexible, progressive and inclusive system now with a diverse high-standard qualification framework and a relentless focus on achievement will save a lot of pain for our grandchildren.



# ACADEMIES AND SCHOOLS MATTER

Dr Antony Edkins

**Academies and Schools Matter! Indeed, well run schools impact positively on most young people. However, even though successive administrations have suggested that a minority have been failed by institutionalised education, it would be wrong to promote alternative learning environments at the expense of schools. In this short article, an example drawn from family and working life creates the backdrop for exploring the future of education.**

Our 13-year-old daughter had been grounded on the first day of the 2011 school summer holidays – the reason for which now escapes me. With certain freedoms removed, including confiscation of her Blackberry, Eleanor latched onto me. That morning, we visited Manchester's United Learning Trust (ULT) Academy, where I have an office. Boredom quickly set in, to such an extent that she responded willingly to my request that she did the washing up in the conference room. Her kitchen husbandry complete, she returned full of questions.

- Why are there photographs of Year 11 students on the walls of that room?
- What is Jesson?
- Why are some Year 11s placed under

## **High Jesson and others under Low Jesson?**

I explained that ULT tracks students' progress from Year 7 to 11 using a system devised by Professor Jesson from Durham University. Each student is expected to make 20 or more points of progress, from entry at the age of 11, during their five secondary school years, and that every child's progress is tracked six times per year. We quickly calculated Eleanor's KS2 points score and what GCSE grades she would need to achieve in Year 11 using this model.

Understandably, she was full of questions about what Jesson might mean for her in school. Indeed, her own school, like Manchester Academy, shares three similar defining characteristics, namely:

1. They have consistently secured student achievement way above expectation;

2. They have been recently judged outstanding by Ofsted;

3. They are led with an effective and distinctive style of female leadership which is rare to find in this country.

There was no poverty of aspiration in Eleanor's now evident engagement with this approach to raising achievement. Her observations present, perhaps, all the more reason to confront those who believe that the future of education lies in alternative learning environments rather than schools – the latter is perfectly capable, with the right structure, of providing breathtaking opportunities to learn.

From Eleanor's short visit to Manchester Academy, four questions emerge which, although contestable and problematic, might help shape our thinking about the future of education within the school setting – and thus provide the structure of this article.

In posing questions rather than offering statements, a query can begin in a speculative mind. Indeed, our understanding of the educative process is constantly changing and we must therefore expect contributors to this debate to recognise that this educational framework will be shaped by discourse.

## **What needs to happen to eradicate (not narrow) the achievement gap?**

Research for well over twenty years has found that in international testing of young people, UK's students are outperformed by those in places such as the

Pacific Rim countries. We find too that there is a big difference in performance between similar groupings of local authorities. At the school level too, considerable variation in performance not only exists between subjects but also between similar students. Successive administrations tell us the gap is closing but it does not take a genius to demonstrate that the rate of improvement is too slow. Business leaders appear not to be impressed that just over half of students nationally in 2010 achieved five good GCSEs including English and maths. Other vocal captains of industry question why the remaining half did not gain that qualification. Whilst one or two others are bold enough to say that this lack of success, if experienced in industry, would lead to one or more employees being fired!

It would therefore be sensible to understand better what works in removing underachievement in this country and also in other countries, especially where a previous culture of underachievement has been replaced by outright success.

The majority of my career has been spent working in challenging contexts and areas of significant deprivation. Often these are places where many families from certain socio-economic groupings would not send their children. Schools serving such geographical areas, unless the quality of their provision is excellent, will not necessarily be popular and will not eradicate the attainment gap – unless as a society we are brave, invest heavily in the right manner and plan more for excellence in these underperforming contexts. Excellence is not about hearing that repetitive mantra of the importance of timely interventions and seeking that next 5% in improvement.

Schools and academies should build and add capacity

now – not in the epilogue of a child's educational career but in their prologue. We need to remove the inhibitors to educational performance early on and recognise that all students possess a latent potential, which if not nurtured may never become utilised. Underperformance is not an option.

The most striking drive in tackling underperformance has come from the government requirement that all 16-year-olds gain five good GCSEs including English and maths. This administration's rugged determinism in this respect has resulted in yearly improvements. However, in driving for improvement, achieving the highest possible GCSE grade has given way to ensuring that as many students as possible cross that GCSE C grade threshold. Even with more rigorous analysis of achievement data, it would seem that whether a child could have achieved a better GCSE grade than a C has not been as important a focus as reporting the overall headline figures. In too many of our schools with 'good' reputations, mainly because the local community folklore perceives them so, underperformance is rife. League tables and reported outcomes will always be part of our education system – however, across the piece we need to be sure that analysis of performance by each school reports on performance in relation to potential by individual student rather than by cohort in a more adept manner than is currently used.

### **Can we be agreed about what constitutes an acceptable quality of provision in a school? What are schools for?**

Schools exist for many purposes. Through history, some would argue that the horrors of life depicted in Dickens's *Oliver Twist* prompted the concerned citizen, and not just the policymaker in Victorian society, to ensure young people were kept off the street. By 1944, the UK had education in place for 5 to 16-year-old students. With the late 1960s and the 1970s, this country saw some very radical approaches to education – for example, Michael Duane's liberal approach at Rivinghill School in Islington – which resulted in national dismay. By the millennium schools were, for what may have been the right reasons at the time, focused on offering a plethora of services for young people as well as providing an education. This is misguided; our liberal society has allowed multi-faceted approaches which have been costly to certain pockets of our young.

In the core hours, schools should exist to provide an education for young people. That education has to be about promoting the basics, such as securing the highest levels of numeracy and literacy. Enrichment and any other important additional offer must come outside of the school day. Schools need, not just in the short term, to get on with this core business without interruption. Our schools are critical sites for education

and our young cannot afford for their core time to be diluted with non-educational (although important) well-being issues.

Across England in 2004/5, the separate directorates of Education and Social Services in each local authority were brought together to form a single directorate called Children's Services. Given the importance of schools, Children's Services need to account for the benefits they bring to schools. It is questionable whether schools and academies have been well served by these arrangements. Indeed, knowing what we do now, and if given the opportunity again, would it be in the best interests of children to merge two quite different departments under the one umbrella?

### **Have we secured the most effective style of leadership fit for purpose in our schools?**

A lot has been implemented to strengthen the quality of leadership in our schools. We have seen the introduction of various leadership programmes via the National College of School Leadership (NCSL), with experienced head teachers and principals (many of whom now work on such projects in retirement) providing coaching and mentoring. There is now even a 'talent scout' approach to school leadership which encourages the early identification and development of potential leaders. It is not disputed that many head teachers do a good job and indeed good headship creates good schools. However, a growing number of sponsors of multiple academies have failed to recruit to principal posts via traditional routes – the 'cutting edge' applicants simply are not out there. Consequently, numerous sponsors, freed from the shackles of inflexible assessment centre criteria, are now using their freedom to develop leadership in-house.

Until recently, I have questioned the utility of national leadership initiatives with government ministers. Having reflected further, I would like to see a closer working relationship between academy sponsors and the NCSL which allows exploration of a 'grow your own' leadership base locally and regionally. Equally, I would like to see more emphasis on prescription and compliance required for those new to leading schools and academies – too much freedom in the early stages can lead to disaster.

### **What type of approaches to parenting will work with our diverse communities?**

The experiences of 2011, not least because of the negative scenes provided by the riots across the country in August, have prompted a debate yet again about parenting and what our young value. Fortunately, most of our young people are neither bad nor have gone off the rails, but the reasons for the 'brokenness' that does exist are hugely complex. In these adverse times, communities have seen some very responsible

and mature responses from our young people. Equally, there is much good parenting out there in our society. It is important too not to dismiss those parents and carers who may have appeared to have given up (a position accentuated because of recent public disorder events). Time and time again school colleagues tell me about meetings with parents and carers (mainly mothers) of disaffected young people (mainly young males) who have clearly tried and are continuing to try their best but alas to no avail.

But where we see evidence of the 'broken' relationship on the streets, in the home and in the school, there is a need to respond appropriately and firmly. A quick-fix approach to mending this sort of parenting and the care of our young will not work. Our society needs people of vision who can make our dreams about everyone being a responsible parent not only a reality but also systemic. In our schools and academies, there is no need to run explicit parenting courses for our students. Positive messages about parenting and being a good carer exist already throughout the curriculum – from significant figures in English texts and historical accounts to those in more practical subjects. Through the existing curriculum every teacher could be a teacher of parenting.

We need though to secure 'buy in' from our parents. In the most vulnerable areas and with those groups of students who have an almost predictable legacy of underachievement, such as those in receipt of free school meals, bold policy is needed to engage full parental support. The Pupil Premium initiative together with the proposal below is designed to provide the necessary 'push and pull' factor required to incentivise. As such, this country should offer tax relief or education vouchers to parents/carers for each school aged child in areas where underperformance is most likely (as defined by the Pupil Premium).

To qualify for this tax relief, each eligible child must demonstrate excellent attendance at school, consistently good behaviour and make expected progress or better. There would be hard data on each child which would inform a school-based administration process. For those on no or low income, the tax relief equivalent would be paid via the benefits system, with spending tightly ring-fenced.

In austere times, this incentive must be paid for, in full if not in part, from cost-cutting measures elsewhere. Only 10% tax relief should be allowed on childcare vouchers for 40% tax payers. In addition, where a parent's personal tax allowance has been completely used, no

tax relief on childcare vouchers should be allowed. High earners with young children who receive an early education grant of 15 hours of free provision per week for 38 weeks per year should also lose that entitlement.

However, providing such incentives and removing entitlement, is hugely complex. Careful thought and consideration will be needed so that the agreed models of implementation are not inaccessible or appear to unnecessarily penalise certain groups. Along with other contributions in this report, plenty of ideas have been offered which propose change. These ideas require exploration in a recognised setting. There is a need to explore the infrastructure which engages with, informs and shapes this thinking with policy nationally and globally – the full impact of which will only be seen when there is no differential between poverty and achievement.



# EDUCATION IN WALES

Emeritus Professor David Egan

## What is important?

In 1999 for the first time in modern history Wales became able to shape its own education system and destiny. In the initial years that followed devolution the heady air of freedom it created led to many new and distinctive policies and programmes being developed. More recently there has been a change of mood. It has become apparent that whilst progress has been made in improving the historically low levels of student achievement in the education system in Wales, the country still lags behind the other UK nations and many other countries.

The reasons for this can be made to appear complex but in essence are pretty straightforward. Until the late 1980s employment in agriculture, extractive and manufacturing industries had dominated the economy of modern Wales. The relatively high levels of skilled and unskilled employment that existed within this economy largely did not depend upon qualifications provided by the education system. During their early teenage years, most boys and many girls waited often restlessly for their chance to join the workforce.

Those times are now gone and have been replaced by significant levels of long-term unemployment, families living on benefit payments and rising child poverty. Wales has always been a relatively poor country and in recent years as the economic recession has deepened this has grown. The effects of poverty on educational achievement are negative and serious in Wales as they are in most countries. The difference between what young people who live in poverty achieve by the end of

their period in school and their more fortunate peers is vast and there is evidence that it is increasing.

So Wales' history has meant it has not been a country of high educational achievement and the present difficulties it faces, particularly the effect of poverty, mean that it is not able to progress at the rate it would wish. This is the simple explanation. The complication arises when Wales is compared to other parts of the UK that have had similar experiences: the former coalfields of the North-East and of Yorkshire and Lancashire for instance. Wales does significantly worse than these areas leading to economists portraying it as one of the most difficult nuts of all to crack in regeneration and development terms. Why is this so? Again the reasons are complex, but are cultural and psychological in nature. We seem to prefer to kid ourselves that we are a 'small but smart nation' when in reality we are not that smart and we resist change.

So as Wales passes through a period of introspection and self-analysis how should we respond and move forward in education? To begin with we should recognise that the evidence is pretty clear on how education can contribute to creating the good and egalitarian society that the national consensus in Wales desires for its future. It provides individuals with resilience and it contributes significantly to happiness and wellbeing at a personal, family and community level. Education is good for you and for your country. Being literate and numerate, having ICT skills and the ability to cooperate with others and to ask questions are all life affirming things. Do we, therefore, have a curriculum in place in our schools and exciting opportunities in education and training outside of school for people of all ages to

engage in education and achieve their full potential? The answer is probably a bit of a 'yes' but more of a 'no' and we need to do something about that.

What is more dominant in discussion about the purposes of education in Wales as just about everywhere else in the world is the importance of education for employability. Even in these difficult times and with the many conditionals that need to be made, in essence this is patently true. Skills and qualifications make you more employable if you are preparing to enter the labour market for the first time or to re-enter it. They enable you to progress in employment and to have greater transferability between jobs and careers. This being the case, we need to think and plan much more carefully what future employment opportunities are likely to be available and to ensure that our education system prepares people appropriately for them.

So an education system that allows people to fulfil their potential and to be employable is what Wales needs for the future. Currently the latter is a bit too dominant in our thinking and neither are as fully developed as they should be.

## Transforming Education in Wales: What Works?

So how should Wales respond to these challenges? Lots of things need to be done of course, but I would prioritise three.

Firstly, we need to radically alter the school system for students aged 8 to 14. In 2004 along with Roy James the then recently retired Chief Inspector of Schools in Wales I carried out an extensive review of the school curriculum in Wales for the Government. We noted that whilst the best primary school

practice offered young people a curriculum based around skills with those of literacy and numeracy being prominent, that most secondary practice was based around the traditional subjects of the curriculum. Our view was that this disjoint was the major reason why so many young people did not progress well through the upper primary and lower secondary phase of their education. We recommended that the curriculum for 8 to 14 year olds should become a single entity planned together by primary and secondary schools and that it should be based around the skills of the curriculum.

Our recommendations were not adopted as we hoped they would be and to my mind this represented a huge missed opportunity. More recently in 2009 I chaired a Task and Finish Group for the Welsh Government on the 8-14 education phase in Wales. The head-teachers, HMI and local authority representatives on the group unanimously came to the same conclusions that Roy James and I did in 2004 and recommended the same solutions to the Minister of Education and the Government. For reasons that I fully understand they were not adopted. As long as this situation continues a significant percentage of our 8 to 14 year olds in Wales will not make the progress they should and the excellent investment we have made in the early years curriculum for 3-7 year olds in Wales (the Foundation Phase) will not result in the outcomes desired.

Secondly, we must reduce significantly the influence that poverty has on educational engagement and achievement. I am fully persuaded that intelligence is randomly distributed in the population. I also recognise that those who come from more affluent backgrounds and communities will have a wide range of opportunities and support to maximize the raw potential that they were born with and that this will not be true for the great majority of their more disadvantaged peers. This is completely immoral and unacceptable. We will never achieve the education system and the country that we aspire to in Wales as long as this continues.

The commitment to do something radical about this is now one of the main priorities of the Welsh Government. What then actually needs to be done?

Well again a lot of things, but two that are the most important. Firstly we need schools to work from the premise that the biggest difference they can make will be for students who come from a background of poverty. To this end they need to use the vast resources available to them in the school to focus on this objective, without of course detracting from the work they must do with other students. What is needed is a mindset- a moral purpose. Secondly, in many cases schools can't do it alone. To turn around a school you also need to turn around a community. We need area-based strategies where the whole community and everything that goes on within it is focused on improving education as one of the main ways of achieving community regeneration.

My third and final solution for transforming education in Wales is the much greater emphasis that needs to be put on high quality vocational learning and qualifications. Despite all the talk that has taken place about this and numerous expensive initiatives, I'm not really convinced that we have made much progress in this area since I was myself a secondary schoolteacher over 20 years ago. We allow the curriculum at school level to be shaped by teachers who are themselves the product of a particular type of curriculum and way of learning and who go on repeating that prescription even though the evidence is pretty clear that it does not appeal to or excite a considerable number of our young people. The growth in educational participation post 16 and post 18 including the massive expansion in higher education provision demonstrates much of the same trend.

We, therefore, need to move from the skills-based curriculum that is offered to our 3 to 14 year olds to one that from the age of 14 continues to offer the traditional curriculum to those who want it, a high quality vocational curriculum (including achieving English and Mathematics to GCSE Grade C level) for what is likely to be a significant group of students and opportunities for those who want to 'mix and match'. This will inevitably mean that large numbers of 14 to 19 year olds will spend most of their time in work-based learning and further education settings where they can access the level of resources and

expertise they require to succeed. The balance between post-19 progression into apprenticeships compared to traditional higher education routes should also change. We will need far more apprenticeships (including the opportunity to study at HE level) and far less traditional higher education places.

### **What next for Education in Wales?**

Wales is a small country and it has limited resources and capacity. There is much in its current education system to be proud of and to build upon. As the period of self-analysis that it has been embroiled in for the past year comes to an end it will enter one of where there is a major focus on standards, accountability and performance- related interventions driven from the centre. Given where we are the need for this is undeniable.

Part of the rationale for this is the need to reduce the influence of poverty on achievement. My view is that this, along with the adoption of a skills-based curriculum (embracing the importance of literacy and numeracy) for 8 to 14 year olds and a massive expansion in the quality and quantity of vocational education should be the yardsticks by which everything else is justified and assessed.

The first decade of devolved education in Wales has enabled us to see ourselves as we are. The second must ensure that we can become as we would want ourselves to be.



# “CAN DO”- TALENTED AND SKILLED FOR WORK, ADAPTABLE TO RAPID CHANGE, ABLE TO INVENT THE FUTURE.

John Ellison

*'It is not the strongest of the species that survive nor the most intelligent but the ones most responsive to change.'* Charles Darwin

How will we rise to the challenges of this century? How can education and learning make us fit for a radically different future? Can formal education work effectively in partnership with informal learning and business to innovate, adapt and work together in common purpose?

Our own government's foresight programme tells us that we face unprecedented pace of change. Demands of our increasing population (7bn by November 2011 projected 9bn by 2050) for, resources, energy, food and water, housing, recreational space, minerals, and much more are impacting on our environment and its ability to sustain us.

Technology and innovation are major drivers of change and the types of industry and jobs which form the 21st century economy, so offer opportunities for our UK economy and its place in the globalised economy. Due to demographic changes, we face a future where a smaller proportion of people of working age will support a greater proportion of an ageing population. We must therefore ensure that all in work and entering the workforce are best equipped to and do contribute to our society and economic life. A significant proportion of the 2025 UK workforce are adults already in work who will need to adapt as economies and industries of the future develop and require new skills, adaptation and extension of existing skills. Nurturing, play,

education, training and development of the young who will enter the workforce is essential as their economic success will be crucial for meeting the costs of caring for an increasing proportion of aging population (you and me).

What will be the lifelong mental capital, skills, cognitive, emotional and social resources human beings in this global society will need? What do we need to prepare adults and young people for?

Our world is changing rapidly. Adults in work and young people making the transition from education to work are competing with highly motivated, able and larger populations across the globe. We face a very different world as we shift towards a low carbon more sustainable future which recognises our fundamental dependence on natural systems - the ecosystems which sustain us, and underpin our economy, the agriculture which nourishes us, the contact with nature which promotes human health and happiness.

Our societies, economies culture and ecosystems are vulnerable to the pace of change. Our education and training systems must respond rapidly (adapt) to equip us to exploit opportunities this change presents. Energy, economic and resource challenges are our opportunity to invent our future in a clean low carbon sustainable economy in more equitable and sustainable cohesive communities. We can rise to this challenge with a sense of urgency, choose to adapt and invent our own future.

To seize this opportunity we need to develop both adults and young people who are adaptable can do and think for themselves, who are practically competent and can think critically, solve relevant, real-world problems, are socially and emotionally capable. We will need people who are adaptable for unpredictable change. We need people who are, intellectually confident and technically competent to apply their skills to those roles and new industries which are predictable.

We need transferable employability skills allied with self-reliance, entrepreneurial, creative innovation and commercialisation skills. The development of Academies and University Technical Colleges are interesting progressions. Increased flexibility is to be welcomed if it enables our education system to horizon scan, innovate and adapt rapidly in the face of changing economic needs. There are grounds for optimism in the face of economic turbulence if our education, training and learning approaches equip our people with adaptable, transferable skills, social, emotional and practical competencies and capabilities to take control of their lives and act as agents of genuine change through their work, and the communities in which we live.

Some steps in the Education Act (15 November 2012) move us along this road to greater flexibility are welcome, if they enable greater genuine collaboration between formal education and employers, businesses, the informal learning and training sector with educators at all levels in the

formal systems from play through compulsory education through 16-19 to HE and professional development and training in the workplace. The greater autonomy which characterises best performing education systems gives head teachers and teachers greater flexibility to use their judgment and expertise to get the best results for their pupils, is to be matched with sharpened accountability. Moves towards greater flexibility and hence adaptability for change in the Education Bill currently before parliament are to be welcomed if they will open the education system to wider yet accountable flexibility and the ability to engage effectively and equitably with the informal learning and lifelong learning sectors, training providers, employers in public sector, private sector and social enterprise sectors.

If rigour of our educational assessment and qualification regimes were to be intelligently applied to smaller necessary bodies of content, this could free up curriculum time to simultaneously enable and encourage wider applied choice by both learners, educators, businesses and the communities they serve as to applied contexts for learning. If current funding models changed to promote opportunities for immersion in workplace and in informal learning, then greater emphasis on the experience of doing and real confidence based on developed and demonstrated competence, could raise both achievement and participation in a society which values a wider, more adaptable and practical set of doing and thinking skills essential for a vibrant UK economy.

China, Korea Singapore, USA and some EU nations have invested in science learning (STEM), design, creativity and public communication. They have understood the value of learning and engagement and opportunities for innovation which take place

beyond formal study and training.

Collaboration with a genuine partnership between formal education & training, and the enormous cultural resource and investment represented by the UK informal learning sector, science centres (who engage with 20 million of our society's people annually), museums and galleries, our natural environment, third sector and social enterprise, business and employers of private and public sector, offers an unparalleled opportunity to gain national economic advantage through rapid and responsive innovation in learning approaches including those so who inspiringly demonstrated 'how to' at World Skills 2011.

If collaboration to innovate can be allied both to recognition, greater flexibility and portability of qualifications, and recognition of experience through awarding organisations, we could move to provide a more responsive, less bureaucratic process. In this way both qualifications and working experience could enable a trajectory from constraining monopolies towards diverse, adaptable partnerships and greater innovation in how we learn and who we learn with.

There is a wonderful, exciting opportunity to innovate, change and invent a new future for ourselves to rise like a phoenix from the 19th and 20th centuries.

In this 21st century people and organisations of good will across business, the informal learning scientific and cultural sector and across formal education and training can and should work together to apply the best of our practical ingenuity, skills and technologies to develop solutions for a sustainable future.

With an adaptable approach to education, we can rise to the challenges we face across energy, water, food, population, our economies and the ecosystem upon which we all ultimately depend. There are great commercial opportunities for inventing and designing new technologies, and making new stuff - manufacturing - provided by the shift towards a low carbon sustainable economy.

We can work together to develop adults' and young people's talents, skills, knowledge and energies through an approach to education that engages 'head' 'heart' and 'hand' with practical competence, innovation and implementation skills to learn how to invent and make our future.



# LEARNING IN SCOTLAND – AMBITION, UNIVERSALISM AND EXCELLENCE

Leslie Evans

**Scotland has a long tradition of excellent, free universal education which has helped numerous Scots distinguish themselves and push the bounds of knowledge across a range of fields. Scotland was the first country in the world to introduce universal school education when, in 1696, the Scottish Parliament passed an act establishing a school in every parish.**

At a time when schooling for the poor was a rarity in most countries, this step saw all children in Scotland receiving an education and it laid the foundations for a strong ethos of valuing education.

Scotland's oldest university – St Andrews – was established in 1413, with the universities of Glasgow and Aberdeen also being founded in the 15th century. With the creation of the University of Edinburgh in 1583, Scotland had four universities – at a time when England had only two. These universities powered the Scottish Enlightenment and, today, Scotland continues to pursue quality in research and university degrees. The latest Times Higher Education survey placed five Scottish universities in the top 200 of the world's higher education institutions – giving us more world class universities per head of population than anywhere else in the world.<sup>1</sup> The Scottish Government is determined to build on the strengths of this educational heritage – its ambition, universalism and excellence.

## **Our priorities**

From my own perspective, this is undoubtedly a privileged time to be part of Scottish education. The Scottish Government's overarching purpose is to increase sustainable economic growth and to provide opportunities for all. Its response to economic and fiscal challenges has been to prioritise education and lifelong learning within spending and policy decisions. It recognises the important contribution that education makes to the overall economy and to the life chances for all citizens.

Our aims for education policies are: to ensure the best life chances for Scotland's children and young people; to improve attainment; and to raise ambition by, and for, our young people. We will deliver this through a priority focus on the early years; on the successful implementation of Curriculum for Excellence in schools; and through post-16 education. We are investing in an education system that meets the individual needs of our young people – a system that learns and innovates.

## **What is important in education for Scotland?**

The Scottish education system broadly performs well internationally. As well as excellence in higher education, our 15-year-olds perform well compared to the OECD average. However, there is a clear link between deprivation and attainment and breaking that link to enable all young people, regardless of background, to flourish is a priority.

The early years – pre-school and, in some cases, pre-birth – are a critical period as children grow, develop and prepare for learning in school. Getting It Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) is a national programme to ensure we tailor services around the needs of the child, including the most vulnerable children, and that we take collective and well-informed decisions to improve outcomes for each child. Early research has shown that this approach is enabling faster and better quality sharing of information, thereby ensuring children's needs are identified at an earlier stage and freeing up staff for direct work with children and families. We are also

supporting positive parenting so that every child has the best start in life.

Curriculum for Excellence is a coherent curricular approach for children and young people aged 3–18. It sets out four capacities that all young people need to develop: successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens. It also recognises the key input that professionals make in tailoring learning and teaching around the needs of each child.

We are working hard at partnerships with key stakeholders, local agencies and delivery bodies. We have established a National Parent Forum of Scotland and work closely with local authorities and with the Association of Directors of Education Scotland (ADES). Earlier this year we created a new executive agency – Education Scotland – to bring support and challenge to improve learning and teaching from early years to adult and community learning.

At higher education level, ministers have reaffirmed their commitment to wide access to university education. Scotland will not introduce tuition fees for Scottish domiciled students and is exploring the introduction of a minimum income guarantee of £7,000 for students who are most in need.

### **What next?**

Children and young people in Scotland need the right support – from families, peers, teachers and health professionals – from the very early years right through to employment, study, or positive social engagement. We are engaging

with stakeholders, including children and young people themselves, to shape legislation and funding support that reflects our early years policies, and to ensure that public services are focused on prevention, appropriate early intervention and child-centred service delivery.

We remain highly ambitious for Scotland's schools. New qualifications are being developed to reflect Curriculum for Excellence and we are working across the system to see the new curriculum approach successfully embedded. A skilled, motivated workforce with strong supportive leadership is critical to success and we have a programme in place to continue to develop and strengthen in these areas. Scotland has a significant number of 16–19-year-olds who are not in employment, training or education. The Scottish Government has recently pledged a place in education or training to each of these young people. The Government is reforming post-16 education by pursuing a focus on outcomes for young people; minimising bureaucracy and increasing flexibility and

shared provision; and developing a simple, flexible, navigable learner journey. We are also strengthening links between colleges and improving interaction and shared provision between schools, colleges and universities.

This is an exciting and dynamic time for education in Scotland. The economic and fiscal environment has provided challenges but also opportunities for change. We have talented, dynamic and motivated people throughout the education system to help us increase our significant reputation – and, what really matters, to give each of our children and young people the best possible chance in life.



# EDUCATION IN NORTHERN IRELAND

Professor Tony Gallagher

**Northern Ireland is a small region with about 1.5 million people in which the status and importance of education among parents and the wider public has rarely been in doubt. The education system is somewhat conservative and traditional in approach, and while this provides some level of reassurance to many, it also means that outdated aspects of the system remain in place.**

For such a small country there are not only too many schools (about 1,000) but also a plethora of school types. This is due to the operation of parallel systems of schools serving the Protestant and Catholic communities, and more recently developed systems of religiously integrated schools and Irish-medium schools. In addition, Northern Ireland has retained a system of academic selection to mediate the transfer of pupils from primary to secondary education. Further education has recently undergone significant restructuring to consolidate the number of providers, and there are two universities and two teacher training colleges.

Northern Ireland is also a heavily administered system, with five local authorities (Education and Library Boards), a curriculum and examinations body (Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment), a leadership training unit (Regional Training Unit) and a number of statutory and non-statutory bodies representing differing educational interests.

Over the last decade education has also been politically contentious, with unresolved debates over the future of academic selection at 11 years, the structure of the post-primary schools system, the rationalisation of local authorities, and the role of educational interests within local authorities.

Disappointingly, education has become a proxy battleground for disputes between the main political groupings, which might not matter too much save that the shared governance arrangements require a high degree of consensus before policy decisions are confirmed – and there has been little or no consensus on core educational issues for a long time.

A further consequence is that discussions on the future of education for too long fell back on an unseemly trading of claims that sought to establish that the system was either one of the best and hence in need of only minimal change, or that it was fundamentally dysfunctional and required radical overhaul. Such a context has not proved to be conducive to the rational analysis of evidence and the dispassionate consideration of options for the future.

In consequence there has been:

- Too much time spent lauding past achievements and too little spent exploring responses to future challenges.
- Too much focus on examination results and too little attention on the quality of what all young people are learning.

- Too much celebration of high achievers and too little support for low achievers.

In a context of significantly reducing resources it is crucial that policymakers stop battling claims back and forth and focus on the key challenges facing education over the next few years:

- We have the lowest qualified workforce in the UK and a consequent need not only to expand the quality of vocational skills, but an urgent need to raise the esteem of vocational qualifications.
- Many of our academically selective grammar schools achieve remarkable levels of performance, but the environment which enables this also imposes increasingly difficult challenges on secondary schools which are already bearing most of the negative consequences of falling rolls.
- A laudable attachment to traditional academic standards and ambitions means that many young people are tracked towards professional careers, but there is insufficient encouragement of entrepreneurial skills or inculcation of the attributes most valued by business and industry.
- The average level of performance in the schools system is on a par with the OECD average, but the level of inequity is one of the worst – and

this despite the fact we still attract some of our brightest and best to join the teaching profession.

- In a society which is little more than a decade out of an enduring period of political violence, there is still insufficient attention given to the social goal of promoting social cohesion, understanding and reconciliation with the past.

Over a period of several decades we have been through an endless succession of school improvement strategies, and while the overall level of performance appears to rise inexorably, the very high level of inequity in performance persists. Far too many children leave primary school without attaining acceptable levels of literacy and numeracy, and far too many complete their compulsory period of education with little or nothing of marketable value to show for their time in school.

Schools in Northern Ireland are remarkably data-rich in comparison to the past, but require investment in their capacity to use this data for performance management. Similarly, while we often boast of the extraordinary ICT infrastructure available to schools, there is a persistent sense that we have devoted insufficient attention to the development of innovative pedagogies to take advantage of this potential.

Community-led initiatives in the past have demonstrated a facility for connecting educational providers with disadvantaged, and often disillusioned, parents, children and young people, but all too often these efforts have gone unacknowledged. At a time of rising youth unemployment this is a particularly important issue: all post-conflict societies need to offer productive and meaningful options, particularly to young men, as they are all too vulnerable to simplistic narratives of blame and attribution. We have to provide all

young people with a meaningful sense of purpose and opportunities to lead a fulfilled life.

On a wider vein, the challenge of diversity, opportunity and economy are being addressed through initiatives aimed at encouraging collaborative networks of schools in which resources and expertise can be shared. When these collaborative networks cross denominational and sectoral boundaries, they also provide opportunities for social cohesion which might better heal the legacies of political violence and societal division.

For the immediate term the education system in Northern Ireland is about to face a dramatic reduction in resources which will require an equally dramatic rationalisation of provision. This will raise the bar on every challenge the system is already facing; it also raises the priority in addressing those very challenges. The key to the future will involve addressing:

- The crippling level of inequality of outcomes in education, not least because of the disruption this will bring to social cohesion
- The need to strengthen vocational education and provide all pupils with access to skills for 21st century careers.
- The need to encourage and enable genuine innovation in educational practice, by asking educators to look over the horizon and develop next practice, rather than over their shoulder to seek out (past) best practice.

- The importance of personalised routes through school so that young people are enabled to identify and enhance their many attributes, rather than forced onto the narrow tramlines defined by institutional conceits.
- Recognising the key social purpose of education in Northern Ireland in helping to prepare young people to live and work in a divided society and, in this way, become architects of a shared and better future.

But perhaps fundamental to all of this will be a responsibility on elected politicians to cease their decade-long habit of blocking decisions they do not like, and engage in the difficult, but necessary, task of finding agreement on measures to tackle the ever-increasing challenges faced by our schools.



# PRIMARY EDUCATION: THE CASE FOR EARLY INTERVENTION

John Griffith-Jones

**Are you going to treat a man as he is or as he might be? Morality requires that you should treat him as he might be, as he has it in him to become; business on the other hand requires that you treat him as he is. Raising what he is to what he might be is the work of education.** William Temple

With the number of unskilled jobs available in this country predicted to shrink from around 3 million to just 600,000 by 2020, the economy cannot afford to leave any child without qualifications. As things stand, 15 million adults in the UK have very poor literacy and/or numeracy skills and one in six companies have to provide remedial classes in literacy and numeracy.

Despite years of government spending, national statistics show that around 30,000 children (approximately 5% of the annual cohort) have continued, year on year, to leave English primary schools at age 11 with literacy skills at the level of a 7-year-old or worse; around 30,000 with numeracy skills at a similar level; and around 20,000 facing this predicament in both these critical areas. Although the attainment gap between schools serving poorer and richer communities has narrowed significantly over recent years, the gap in attainment between individuals

eligible or not eligible for free school meals has narrowed less – and widens considerably as disadvantaged pupils go through their years of statutory education. Statistical analysis shows that this widening gap is a particular feature for white British pupils.

Research from the KPMG Foundation has demonstrated robust, persistent correlations between poor literacy and/or numeracy skills on leaving primary school and disillusionment with education, antisocial behaviour, crime, low pay, unemployment and the intergenerational cycle of disadvantage. There are, of course, associated costs to schools and society at large. A typical primary school will spend £2,187 over Key Stage 2 (ages 7–11) on special needs support for each pupil who has not learned to read by the age of 7. The KPMG research found that an investment of £1 in early intervention had the potential to save, long term, £12–19 to the public purse.

Educational research has demonstrated that early school-age intervention provides a chance to level the playing field. For example, an academic survey of a cohort of children born in 1970 found that children who were poor performers at the age of 5, but managed to become high performers at the age of 10, were as successful in adult life (in terms of factors such as educational success, wage levels and absence of criminality) as if they had never been underperforming at the age of 5. A number of studies have provided evidence for continuous interventions throughout the initial school years in order to ensure that the most disadvantaged children are to make appropriate progress in basic skills.

This is why, since 2005, the work of the Every Child a Chance Trust has been so important. We are a unique collaboration between the business sector, charitable trusts and government which has brought innovative

thinking and funding from the business sector to tackle the intolerable problem that we still had a school system that widens the gap between the talented and the less able. Underpinned by a conviction that all children should be able to read, write, count and undertake basic mathematic calculations by the age of 7, the Trust set out to work in partnership with school leaders, teachers, parents and the academic community to develop personalised learning support through a specially trained teacher for those children who were unresponsive to whole-class teaching methods and would otherwise struggle to come close to the achievements of their peers. The result has been the very successful Every Child a Reader and Every Child Counts programmes which, to date and with the support of government investment through 2005–10, have reached well over 50,000 of the lowest achieving 5–7-year-olds. Using standardised tests, evidence demonstrates that on, average, these children make between four and five times the normal rate of progress, thus closing the gap with their peers:

- An average gain in reading age of 21 months after 40 hours of individual teaching.
- An average gain in number age of 14 months after 20 hours of individualised teaching.
- Well over 70% going on to achieve nationally expected levels at age 7.

- Follow-up tests at three and six months after children have completed their programmes show that gains are maintained and progress continues.

Mindful of the need to maximise the cost-effectiveness of providing such specialised teaching, the Every Child a Chance Trust ensured that the programmes prioritised a focus on whole school improvement, by placing at the core the expertise of the specialist teacher – not only to provide individual tuition but also to help the school improve overall standards in literacy/mathematics. This included, for example, providing training for and monitoring the work of teaching assistants, helping class teachers to include lower achievers more effectively in class lessons, and supporting parental involvement. In 2010, national analysis of statistics for attainment by 7-year-olds showed that schools involved in Every Child a Reader and/or Every Child Counts outperformed national trends.

In his 'Breakthrough Britain' work, Iain Duncan Smith noted the programmes' track record of dramatically improving results for underachieving pupils and suggested that 'this approach will help ensure that all children are able to leave school literate and numerate'.

The Every Child a Reader and Every Child Counts programmes were developed in recognition of the power of basic literacy and numeracy to enable and enhance all types of

learning and to give the children most at risk of educational failure and social exclusion an even chance to succeed in both education and life. By tolerating failure in core literacy and numeracy skills we lower not only our aspirations for that individual; we undermine our aspirations for society as a whole. The evidence base for early intervention to prevent long-term failure is clear, and with schools now taking responsibility for deploying their budgets to close the attainment gap for disadvantaged pupils, we need to ensure that schools have access to independent evidence of 'what works' and are held to account for demonstrating the effectiveness of their chosen strategy.

As a nation, we need to show that if we value and respond to the needs of the individual child and provide early intervention to prevent long-term failure, we equip them to participate, contribute and share in all our success.



# VALUING THE VOCATIONAL: A VISION FOR 14–19 EDUCATION

Jan Hodges

**Speaking in the House of Commons on 17 October, Michael Gove said: ‘Under the previous government working-class students were too often denied the opportunity to study the academic subjects that would lead them to university ... (This) is a contributory factor in the freezing of social mobility over the course of the past 15 years.**

The message is clear: in future, working-class students will have the opportunity to study academic subjects that will lead them to university; and this will increase social mobility. What a beautifully simple argument! It appeals directly to our sense of social justice to the point where it is, quite simply, unarguable.

Similarly, the Wolf Report on vocational education concluded that: ‘Young people are being entered for “vocational” awards at the end of KS4 for reasons which have nothing to do with their own long-term interests.’ Furthermore, young people should not be tracked or steered ‘into programmes which are effectively dead-end’. Again, who could possibly argue against such clear conclusions? Not me!

So where does that leave the Edge Foundation? Our purpose is to raise the status of technical, practical and vocational learning. How can we do this if too many young people are being denied the opportunity to study academic subjects, and too many are being steered towards dead-end vocational subjects?

## **Let’s start with the question of entitlement**

The English Baccalaureate (EBacc) sends the clearest possible message: in the eyes of the

coalition government, some subjects are more important than others. At Key Stage 4, these are English, maths, science, history, geography and foreign languages (ancient and modern). These subjects are said to provide an essential body of knowledge, enabling young people to progress to higher levels of learning. In particular, they enable them to move on to A-level subjects favoured by Russell Group universities. This has caused a good deal of debate, not least amongst teachers and supporters of music and religious education, who claim their subjects provide as good a basis for progression as history and geography. More importantly, the EBacc implies that learning about things is more important than learning to do things. I disagree.

We need people who can make, do and invent as well as people who can read, digest and communicate. Indeed, we need people who can do all of these things; they are not mutually exclusive. It is a mistake for young people as young as 14 to be steered away from learning by doing.

So yes: let all young people be entitled to study EBacc subjects. But let them also be entitled to study practical subjects which develop their ability to do as well as to think.

## **Let’s move on to social mobility**

In politics and the media, social mobility has come to mean ensuring working-class kids can compete for jobs in the professions. This means (again) making sure that academically able young people in deprived neighbourhoods have the opportunity to study subjects welcomed by Russell Group universities. There’s absolutely nothing wrong with this ambition, except it only tells part of the story. For one thing, it tends to be limited to a very particular definition of ‘the professions’. Doctors, lawyers and accountants get a big tick, but that’s about as far as it goes.

For another, there are numerous steps on the ladder. If your parents had no qualifications to speak of and earned a living in unskilled jobs, any step up the ladder can be counted as social mobility. For those occupying the moral high ground, this last remark will be anathema. Just by stating a simple fact, I will be accused of striving to keep the working classes in their place. Far from it. I want all young people to leave education with the confidence, ambition and skills to succeed. But I also want them to choose the path best suited to their motivation, talents and career aspirations. If they want to become chefs, what’s wrong with that? If they want

to be landscape gardeners, why shouldn't they? These may not fit the old-fashioned definition of 'the professions', but they are challenging, rewarding careers.

The third point about social mobility is that it's not a one-way street. Someone born on the top rung of the ladder might end up a few rungs below. Furthermore, they might actually be happy about it! They, too, might want to be chefs or landscape gardeners. Why ever not?

Once again, this means we need a balanced entitlement. All young people, regardless of their family background or where they live, should be able to choose technical, practical and vocational learning as a recognised route to success.

Thirdly, let's turn to the controversial issue of vocational qualifications (VQs). I agree with Alison Wolf: some young people have been short-changed. Some VQs have been offered not because they are right for individual students, but because they are easier to pass than GCSEs, and because they count as two or more A\* to C passes in the league tables. This has to stop.

Interestingly, however, Professor Wolf also said this:

"Any examination of English vocational education quickly highlights numerous examples of excellent practice, and of institutions and qualifications that are highly respected, and of high quality, and which provide students with new and valuable skills which are extremely well aligned with today's labour market, as well as generalisable to future jobs and opportunities"

We need to build on this positive endorsement of the very best our education and training system has to offer. In March 2011, Edge and the Baker Dearing Educational Trust asked the Royal Academy of Engineering (RAEng) to establish which technical qualifications in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) should be considered for use in university technical colleges. RAEng's very detailed analysis considered a range of criteria, including (amongst others):

- The likelihood of progression to meaningful employment or further study (including apprenticeships).
- Whether candidates develop and show both knowledge of their subject and related practical/technical skills, including problem-solving and analytical skills.
- The extent of industry/employer recognition and endorsement.

The criteria developed by RAEng provide a sound basis for assessing all technical and vocational qualifications taken by young people aged 14–19. This would undoubtedly rebuild public confidence in VQs, showing how they develop knowledge and skills and encourage meaningful progression to further learning and work.

I would only add that the same criteria could, and probably should, be applied to all qualifications taken by 14 to 19-year-olds – including GCSEs and A-levels.

#### **Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland**

I am often shocked to discover how little is said – in England – about education elsewhere in the United Kingdom. I admit that this very article is proof, if proof were needed! What I will say, however, is that those of us concerned with education in England would do well to find out what is being done (and achieved) elsewhere in the UK.

In Wales, the Deputy Minister for Skills has announced a wide-ranging review of all qualifications for 14 to 19-year-olds. The aims are to identify the most relevant qualifications and ensure that they are available to learners, are trusted and understood, and remain fit for purpose. Whereas Professor Wolf's review was limited to vocational qualifications, the Welsh review will also encompass GCSEs, A-levels and the Welsh Baccalaureate. In Scotland, the Curriculum for Excellence was introduced to help pupils develop skills and knowledge which they can apply to life outside the classroom. As well as subject knowledge, the curriculum aims to help young people become

collaborative, creative, flexible, resourceful, positive, self-aware, optimistic, adaptable, resilient and determined to succeed.

Practical learning is an important part of the Curriculum for Excellence, not least through Skills for Work courses which offer practical experience linked to a variety of careers. From 2013/14, new National Qualifications will replace current Standard and Intermediate 1 and 2 qualifications, and new Higher Qualifications will follow a year later. In Northern Ireland, the Department of Education and the Department for Employment and Learning plan to develop a coordinated programme of provision for 14 to 19-year-olds. This will take account of existing commitments, including the Entitlement Framework, under which schools will be required to offer access to a minimum of 24 courses at Key Stage 4 and 27 post-16. At least one third of these courses should be general and at least one third applied.

#### **Edge's vision**

In all parts of the UK, we must recognise that there are many talents and paths to success. One size does not fit all. Some young people will follow a predominantly academic route, others a predominantly vocational pathway. Many will combine both forms of learning. Whichever route young people choose at 14, 16 and 18, knowledge alone will only take them part of the way: success comes when knowledge is applied.

For that reason, 'learning by doing' needs to be valued equally with academic learning. Technical, practical and vocational learning should be an integral and valued part of every young person's education. From 14 upwards, young people should have the right to choose learning experiences and pathways based on their talents and aspirations. Academic and practical learning should be combined in proportions matched to the aims and interests of each young person. As part of this entitlement, we must also ensure that technical, practical and vocational education and

qualifications meet high quality standards and are recognised by employers.

Finally, we must ensure that all young people, whatever their different abilities and interests, leave the education system with confidence, ambition and the skills to succeed in adult life. Delivering the inaugural Edge Lecture in September 2010, Michael Gove spoke about academic and vocational education for young people aged 14 and over. He said 'securing (a) core base of knowledge would not preclude the study of technical or vocational subjects as some have suggested. It's not either/or but both/and. I couldn't agree more.'



# THE FUTURE OF THE UK EDUCATION SYSTEM

Hugh H Howe CBE

**If I draw on my faith background, I might disappoint and turn away some colleagues and readers, but a thought that I hold dear – and one that has helped to shape my vision in leading schools and my current college – is that ‘Faith without action is death’ (Book of Proverbs).**

It has always been particularly challenging to be able to turn a vision and a dream into a practical reality in the context of national initiatives and what I believe to be an increasingly fragmented education system. However, our vision cannot be any more profound than for the power of schools and education to be able to transform the lives of all young people.

What underpins my vision is a strong and simple educational philosophy that informs my development, beliefs and experience and matches with the imperatives of leadership. There are also some fundamental starting points:

- I believe that all children are entitled to an education that creates opportunities for them to maximise all their abilities and potential, regardless of race, gender, social class or religion.
- Leadership that is inspirational, with a strong commitment to the ‘college’,

its students, staff and the community, distinguishes the most effective institutions.

- My work and experience in a variety of schools with high community priorities has confirmed and validated my belief in the synergetic potential of a range of partnerships, enterprises and innovative approaches to education.
- There must be the opportunity and structure to support and also empower learners, raise standards and enthuse another generation to aspire to be the best they can be in a culture that promotes diversity, high equity and excellence.
- There is no single route to the development, growth and improvement of a centre of learning, nor is there a single point on its journey to maintaining and extending excellence at which we can stop and call the process complete.

Our young people live in a complex and ever

changing world. They will face opportunities as well as new and yet to be defined challenges. Here at Beauchamp College we all have a passion for learning. We expect our students to share our passion and our commitment as we draw upon over 600 years of learning and tradition. More recently, the college has been innovative with the empowerment of students which has resulted in learners striving for excellence in all that they do.

They do some pretty remarkable things: the “Insted” team of students are trained, internally, as inspectors and assessors of lessons and learning. They make a valuable contribution to the effective evaluation of learning and teaching and at times bring a refreshing viewpoint to our process of self-evaluation. They take responsibility for leading their own clubs and societies and engage with staff on ‘learning walks’ which have local and national as well as global dimensions to inform our approaches and

to aid even more our understanding of effective learning and teaching. Research, whether staff or student initiated, is very much promoted in the college and again is a wonderful aid to learning.

As learners at Beauchamp College, and not just educators, we all play a crucial part in helping the next generation to be prepared to be confident, mature, aspirant and active young people. I very much believe that these qualities and other transferable skills will help in our determination to maintain and to raise even further the excellent standards that we have. Our students attain well and achieve through a broad, balanced and appropriate curriculum which opens many doors into higher and further education, training or entry into the world of work. This should be the norm for all young people and indeed is a feature of many schools and colleges who go out to make their dreams a reality. To not be active in this manner and to not empower young people is to compound the stereotypical view of 'them' and 'us'. Not to dream the best dreams and try to make dreams a reality, in my view, often results in some young people lives being 'nightmares'.

Leadership, for me, is also about path-finding, risk taking and perpetual learning. If these are essential, how can education and schools move forward to be successful, effective and different with a cutting but caring edge? There is a need for a new look at innovative partnerships to deliver education for the 21st century, to meet and indeed define educational, social and global standards and imperatives. For all, the journey to be world class should be an appropriate fulfilment of

each evocative, inclusive and realistic vision freed from the chains of crass accountability and an equitable redistribution of resources.

We must work with colleagues to enhance learning and teaching, as well as with governors, parents, students, the communities and partners as we plan for the advancement of teaching and learning. We should do this with confidence, determination and an approach that:

- Blends traditional as well as innovative approaches to learning and teaching with creativity and curriculum models responding to the challenges of the 14–19 agenda for education and training. This will require careful thought about strategic work with the emergence of new and broader partnerships. There is a need to maintain and further develop curriculum and progression links to partner schools.
- Champions through personalisation the effective use of new technologies for learning, teaching, communication, assessment and reporting students' progress. Good access for parents and the community to new and emerging technologies must also be a priority. Turning what one colleague has called students' hand-held gadgets into effective learning tools.
- Develops further the learning environment that is aesthetically pleasing, safe and is a true reflection of learners' aspirations for a distinctive ethos and curriculum, underpinned by strong universal and spiritual values.

- Shares with stakeholders the vision and potential of inclusive centres of excellence, equipping the next generation to be even more able and active citizens in an ever-changing society and world, as we develop a 'global learning' and not the school/college site.

A challenge for us all now and in the future is that we must believe in pursuing excellence and equity and have the same expectations for all young people. We know only too well that there are different starting points and different experiences but we can and must promote, with even more commitment and resources, the benefits to our students of service to others and respect for oneself and others.

I am always thrilled when I see an increasing number of young people for whom education is a key ingredient in planning for a better tomorrow right now today.



# THE IMPORTANCE OF SOCIAL MOBILITY

Sally Hunt

**Access to education is the key determinant of your life chances. While there are always exceptions, in general those with qualifications go on to be healthier, wealthier and more active citizens. What is true of individuals is true of countries too. As the UK tries to emerge from the worst economic recession since the 1930s the case for renewed investment in the education of our adult population is overwhelming.**

As well as being a force for social good, education is a key economic driver. Research conducted by the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills, shows that people who started a further education qualification in 2008/09 will generate an additional £75bn for the economy over their working lives.

UK Universities generate £59 billion for the economy every year, which puts the higher education sector ahead of the agricultural, advertising, pharmaceutical and postal industries when it comes to wealth creation. For every £1 million pounds invested in a university the UK economy gets £2.5 million pounds back.

There are clear economic benefits for society as a recent report from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) revealed that, on average among developed countries, the total value of public investment in an individual's tertiary degree is \$34,000; yet the net public return on that

investment is \$91,000 - almost three times the amount of public investment.

There is also evidence that the better-educated fare better in difficult times. On average across developed countries, 25-64 year-old men who do not have the equivalent of five good GCSEs are nearly twice as likely to be unemployed as those who do, and are almost three times as likely to be unemployed as men who have a degree. The OECD report also revealed that, in the UK, adults without the equivalent of five good GCSEs have borne the brunt of the economic crisis and seen a marked drop in their employment prospects.

Educational underachievement and social exclusion cost the country billions of pounds every year. A recent report by the University and College Union (UCU) revealed that in some areas of Britain, such as Glasgow and the West Midlands, more than one in three people have no qualifications, compared to just one in 50 in others such as west London.

The report showed two Britains living side by side - one with access to education, and all the associated benefits, and the other without. While there may be no silver bullet when it comes to social mobility, education is surely the closest thing we have - for the individual, their family and the country.

In some places where having no qualifications is becoming the norm, there is a real danger that children will have their ambition blunted and never realise their full potential. The report looked at the national picture and also analysed 21 individual cities and surrounding areas and discovered many examples of educational haves and have nots living side by side.

People living in Newcastle-upon-Tyne Central, for example, are almost twice as likely to have no qualifications compared to people in neighbouring Newcastle-upon-Tyne North. Of the 20 constituencies with the highest percentage of people with no qualifications,

the West Midlands accounts for eight of them and has four in the top ten. There is a clear east-west divide in London where three-quarters of the 20 worst-performing constituencies are in the east. In contrast, a similar proportion of the best-performing constituencies in the capital are in the west.

How the government responds to these challenges is vital if we are to ensure that people, no matter what their background, have the opportunity to get on in life and strive for qualifications. Research warns that the people who would profit most from education are those who are already suffering the most in these tough economic times.

A September study from the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) warned that the government's austerity programme will cut the living standards of Britain's families by more than 10% over the next three years. Worryingly, it concluded that it will be those on the lowest incomes who will suffer most from tax increases and spending cuts designed to reduce the budget deficit.

In November, economists at PricewaterhouseCoopers said the north-south divide had widened since the start of the recession and identified the north-east and Yorkshire as the areas most likely to be hardest hit by rising unemployment and falling house prices. The report said the north-west and Wales had suffered the most since the recession began, followed by the West Midlands. In contrast London had enjoyed the strongest earnings growth and the south-east and East Midlands were expected to grow the most strongly this year.

Earlier that month a Work Foundation report revealed the UK cities with the highest numbers of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET). Of the 10 areas with the highest percentages of NEETs, eight were in the north of England. Just Birmingham (ranked seventh) and Swansea (ranked ninth) were not. Although no city from the south of England featured in the list of cities with the highest percentage of NEETs, they made up the overwhelming majority of cities with fewest NEETs. Aberdeen and York were the only cities from outside the south of England that featured in the top 10 cities with lowest percentage of NEETs.

The benefit of education does not need spelling out to me or UCU members. They do the jobs they do because they get to see first-hand how education can change people's lives. They understand that education needs to be at the centre of plans for recovery and social mobility, not on the periphery. That is why it is so frustrating to see English government policies on university fees, student support, access to college courses and English classes for foreign speakers that run contrary to the importance of education. There is a clear need for a fresh approach. On tuition fees, for example, we need to find a way to ensure that all those who benefit from higher education make a fair contribution.

The landmark 1997 Dearing report listed the three beneficiaries of higher education as the individual, the state and the employer, and said the key was finding a fair way to get all three to pay their share. Since that report university fees have been introduced and raised in England and the state has invested, but the employers' contribution has been negligible. Despite benefiting from more generous business tax arrangements than other countries, UK employers spend less on employee training and development and invest less than the global average in supporting university research and development. The difference a degree makes in terms of the health and wealth of the individual and the nation is quite compelling. Government across the UK must reconsider pursuing a path that will restrict social mobility at a time when those with limited access to education have never needed it more.



# ADAPTING TO ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL CHANGE

Joanne Jacobs

**We are living through a period of immense change in the entire education sector. As governments move away from heavily subsidised educational models to partnership-oriented funding contracts with individual learners, the priorities for learners has also shifted to more professionally relevant curriculum and training.**

While these changes may not be entirely welcome across the sector, it is arrogant to assume that they compromise the quality of education simply because they differ from traditional models.

Indeed, it may well be argued that the failure of educational institutions to adapt to economic and cultural change belies a weakness in educational systems in preparing the critical thinkers it has always claimed to foster. And as governments struggle with international debts, it seems – at least in the short term – that funding models will not improve. As such, it becomes incumbent on educational reformers to plan for change and to provide the best opportunities for graduates who will be emerging into an increasingly complex and crisis-oriented world.

## **Key priorities**

The key priorities for education in the 21st century are focused on preparing students for this complex world. The first of these priorities

involves a different form of learning than has been traditionally valued. Recall of facts and rote learning are simply no longer relevant. In a society where mere information is instantly accessible through digital resources, skill does not lie in fact recall/access but instead in the capacity to evaluate information sources and to interpret the importance and implications of that data. This means students need to be trained in the use of information-access tools and in critical thinking and problem-solving. It also means that instructor-dominated learning has become inherently problematic. The act of limiting learning to a single source of information, or to just an instructor and a textbook or two, essentially represents a failure of educational systems to acknowledge the need to develop skills in source evaluation.

The second major priority is the fostering of both innovative and adaptive thinking. The focus on innovation and creative thinking which pervades all industries today must

be addressed in learning environments, but there must also be a clear articulation of the need for adaptive thinkers as well as innovators. Complex problems require critical thinking that considers modification of existing resources and systems as much as new mechanics to deliver benefits. This is beginning to be acknowledged in professional environments – for example, in just three weeks gamers solved a problem that had stumped researchers for years, by discovering how enzymes were structure – but the value of fostering adaptive thinking is yet to filter down to curriculum frameworks.

The final priority for learning in the 21st century relates to engagement in digital environments and technology-mediated communication and negotiation. Perceived lack of access to technologies among students must not inhibit institutions from adopting technology-mediated learning. It is the equivalent of assuming that a student's gender or race will determine their career

path, and thus any education that falls outside that career path should be ignored. Technology is not an option. Its use is a requirement of the information society, and failure to prepare for that use – educating students about how to communicate safely, how complex systems operate, and how to solve difficult problems in digital environments – can only be regarded as an indictment of the curriculum. Technology should be adopted in learning environments not merely as a tool, but as a medium for communication and creative thinking.

### **Learning and teaching methods**

The consequences of these three priorities for learning and teaching methods are profound. The old structures of classes, subjects and semesters are all challenged. Multidisciplinary learning is both facilitated by technology-rich learning environments and is a product of the fostering of innovative and adaptive thinking. The interaction between students, and between instructors or information sources and students, is not adequately facilitated by traditional classroom environments. The architecture needs to change, just as the scheduling of classes needs to be rethought.

Emerging best practice in (complex) games-based learning and other technology-mediated learning has recognised that what

Csikszentmihalyi has identified as a state of 'flow' should be fostered by flexible learning scheduling, so that critical thinking is not shut down by timetables. Further, the cross-over between in-class learning and learning taking place in the home or in other contexts is blurring. School environments should be considered as opportunities and contexts for an exchange of ideas rather than information access portals. Information can be accessed from home or elsewhere; the physical presence of students in school environments should be considered as an opportunity for developing negotiation skills and for collaborative learning.

Again, the presence of technology will affect learning and teaching practice. Appropriation of 'natural' communing technologies for educational activities will de-emphasise physical proximity as a requirement for effective information exchange, and instead provide a context for cooperation.

### **The future of education**

Whilst these changes in education priorities and practice are inevitable, their spread will take time. In five years, it's likely that technology will be more widely adopted in learning across the education sector, but its integration will remain unsophisticated in many contexts. While educators continue to

regard technology as a tool rather than as a medium for learning, then learning benefits will be limited. Only when technology is fully integrated and used for complex problem-solving will its true value be acknowledged. That's more likely to take twenty years to realise. But through a consolidated programme of education reform and sound educational research, which identifies optimal architecture for learning environments, curriculum structures and complex thinking assessment techniques, I am confident that we will achieve precisely what is desired of education today – professional relevance, as well as strong, critical and adaptive thinking.



# ONLY TRUE PARITY OF ESTEEM WILL ENSURE FUTURE PROSPERITY

Asha Khemka OBE

**There is no doubt that education can be the ‘silver bullet’ to tackle some of the issues that have been so graphically played out in our towns and cities of late. Issues of youth disaffection, adult skills, competitiveness, and maintaining our place at the forefront of innovation and research, are all solvable by a coherent and cohesive education system that ensures individuals are provided with the right opportunities to succeed.**

For too long, we have revered the academic route through education. What we need to do now is value the right route for the individual and for their intended destination. I, too, need to personally assess why it is that I wanted my own children to follow a more ‘traditional’ route through education and into a profession. Why did I push for university over vocational training and learning ‘on the job’?

When we scan the current landscape and hear the government rhetoric, one could be forgiven for thinking that vocational education was to finally have its day – that routes such as apprenticeships were in the ascendency. This is not the answer either. It is not about one route being better than the other – it is about

all routes carrying equal value and delivering equal value to UK PLC. It is about finding the right route to suit the individual.

For decades there has been talk about the need to ensure the parity of esteem between vocational and academic qualifications. And there has been much talk about the need to ensure a simple and, more importantly, transferrable qualifications framework that is meaningful to the employer and delivers real benefits to industry and the economy. In our current economic climate and challenging employment situation, it is important that students leave school, college or university fit for the world of work. We need to create a flexible workforce, able to cope with often

rapid change and the potential for two or three different careers altogether, let alone different jobs. Our graduates from whatever route should be ‘work-ready’ – able to self-motivate, work in teams and communicate effectively with customers as well as colleagues. If we do nothing else as educationalists we must deliver these fundamental skills.

But we have been failing in this task. Organisations such as the Confederation of British Industry have reported problems with employability skills for a long time. Its most recent skills report, published in May 2011, maligns the basic literacy and numeracy of our young people and makes a plea for recruits with the skills necessary to be an effective employee. Education providers such as colleges are

fantastic at producing employees with technical skills, but not necessarily the skills to be a successful employee. These are not new issues; this is the fourth year that such matters have been reported by employers through the CBI. More worryingly still, employers are reporting that in some cases basic literacy and numeracy has got worse and not better.

In a rapidly-changing world of work, education providers need to ask themselves "Are we equipped to deliver these skills? Do we even know what these skills are anymore?" Opportunities for both students and teachers to engage with employers should become common place. Employers are, on the whole, willing to give their time if they see that this commitment will deliver results. If employers seem unwilling at the moment, maybe they feel we have let them down in delivering what they need to make their businesses successful.

So how do we achieve this vision? Instead of thinking about courses, we need to concentrate more on destinations. Rather than thinking about individual institutions, we need to think creatively about structures. And rather than thinking about qualifications, we need to think about skills and knowledge. We need to celebrate our success across

all platforms. Apprentices should become as valued and celebrated as the Oxford or Cambridge graduate.

The practicalities of achieving this vision are complex and requires a change in culture, a re-evaluation of our education system and a root and branch review of how we channel our young people down a particular route regardless of whether it is right for their ambitions. Why can't the 'straight A' student do a vocational course? And why can't someone who enjoys practical learning achieve academic success? As education providers, it is up to us to break down some of the stereotypes about what kind of person should follow a particular route. Qualifications must deliver not only technical competence but also emotional intelligence, so that employers get what they ask for – which is a well-rounded individual that is ready for the world of work when they leave education.

Ultimately, our single vision for education in the UK must be to make sure that our education aids employability and makes the contribution to the future growth of

the nation and the future prosperity of the individual that we know it can. Our economic recovery remains slow and therefore skills – more importantly, the right skills to enable increased growth – must be the priority for education providers across the UK.

Whether these skills relate to more vocational preparation in schools so that young people are equipped to join the workforce as an apprentice at 16, or whether these skills are within the field of research and development to stimulate innovation and new business growth, education providers from all sectors must work together more effectively and play their part to lift the country out of recession.



# THE NEXT STAGE IN EDUCATIONAL REFORM MUST CHANGE CULTURES

Lord Knight of Weymouth

**Debates about education are riddled with cliches: education is about children; children are our future. The future is uncertain and we must stick with what works – with great teaching and strong autonomous leadership.**

In the future, global competition between nations will be defined by the strength of their education systems. The success of nations will be characterised by those that view education as an investment and those that view it as a cost.

These are all cliches and, like most cliches, they are true.

What is also true is that numerous examples around the world, most notably England and the United States, have shown that just spending more money doesn't bring improvement. Investment is useless without reform. I would also observe that in England extended investment and reform have delivered steady educational improvement but no great outcomes for social mobility, for lessening NEETs (Not in Education, Employment or Training), or any appreciable narrowing of the attainment gaps between rich and poor.

For me that is what is most important about education. Every child matters and every child must be given the opportunity through education to be the best they can be. Education is the driver of a fair, just and meritocratic society.

No one has really cracked this anywhere in the

world, but those that have come closest have done so because of culture.

Look at the confusing pattern in England. Here the last ten years have seen a significant narrowing of attainment gaps between rich areas and poor areas. We have observed the same narrowing between schools with more poor kids and those with more rich kids. But at an individual level – despite the success of the academies programme, of more and better teachers, of stronger leaders held more accountable, of the first significant shift in primary school reading results and other real achievements – the attainment gap between rich and poor kids at an individual level hasn't really narrowed.

What does this tell us? Accountability and money deliver change and that schools will deliver what they're incentivised to do. It seems those almost making the grade were helped over the line, but those who were a long way from making the grade haven't shifted. It means that choice based school reform won't deliver on a system-wide basis. Free schools, every school an academy, smarter accountability, these are all capable of making a difference to communities but they won't work unless they tackle the neglected leg of the stool of educational success – the home.

Why is Finland so successful with its comprehensive school system? It has a culture that values and celebrates educational success and where being a teacher has such high status that it is a master's level profession.

Why are the highest achieving ethnic group in English schools the Chinese? For the same reason that Chinese jurisdictions are soaring up the comparisons of educational performance – the Confucian cultures place the highest importance on the family, on respect and on educational success. The children of economic migrants outperform others because they too come from aspirational homes.

Governments can spend a lot of time and money on teachers and leaders but until they crack parental engagement and aspiration they will get only marginal returns. The key to the success of our best schools, including independent schools, is that their parents are ambitious for their children, get involved in their learning and consistently challenge the school to make the learning interesting and engaging for their kids.

For the future we must therefore be thinking about education reform in terms of how we empower

the consumer rather than how we manage the producer. That doesn't mean more choice-based reform, it means more voice-based reform. The results could be more relevance in the curriculum and in pedagogical diversity, more engagement with employers, smarter use of consumer technology for learning and all in the context of more globalisation in education.

Andreas Schleicher, the head of the OECD Education Directorate, recently commented: 'If you were running a supermarket instead of a school and saw that 30 out of 100 customers each day left your shop without buying anything, you would think about changing your inventory. But that does not happen easily in schools because of deeply rooted, even if scientifically unsupported, beliefs that learning can only occur in a particular way.'

Schools around the world are disengaging too many youngsters because they are being taught in a way that is irrelevant to them or their families. Rote learning, chalk and talk, children sat in rows listening to the teacher imparting academic wisdom; these are the recognisable pedagogical techniques of a century ago. They work well for some but have never worked for all. They are even less likely to work now when outside of school we have the most stimulated children in history, thanks to the revolution in media and communications.

If we want all parents to engage in their child's learning then we need change.

A more consumer responsive school makes learning relevant by relating it to experiences outside school. That means more employer engagement – teaching in the context of what local parents are doing now and can relate to. It also means valuing sport, creativity and practical skills alongside academic ones. The Playing for Success scheme with elite sports clubs in England is one of many examples where a non-school aspirational environment, coupled with something relevant to learners and

their parents, improves academic results and overall educational performance.

Relevance also means utilising what parents are buying their children to use at home for learning. The Home Access programme in England got 163,000 poorer families online at home. The evaluation found that 'the national attainment gap between FSM (Free School Meals) and non-FSM pupils has reduced substantially in the last two years – which is consistent with the hypothesis that 2008's sharp increase in internet penetration rates in low income households with children has helped to lead to improvements in educational attainment for these children.'

Already two-thirds of 11-year-olds have their own smartphone. This will build rapidly and mean that outside school children will have powerful online computers in their hands. A world of information will literally be at their fingertips. They will share, collaborate and innovate together. Schools will soon realise that these are an extraordinarily powerful educational tool and will then embrace mobile phones in the classrooms. They will teach in new ways: more peer-to-peer learning, more e-textbooks, fewer IT suites, less paper, less cost in recharging school laptops. They will teach how to use technology safely and how to take this world of information and then create knowledge and innovation.

Embracing consumer technology and relating learning to the world of work as well as academia means new pedagogies. Teaching the same things in the same ways as thirty years ago works well for those who were a success in school thirty years ago. It is a disaster for parents whose school experience was not positive. If what your child is now learning

was meaningless and boring to you the first time then, with the best will in the world, it will be hard for you to support and be confident with your child the second time around.

New inclusive, relevant pedagogies that are powered by technology encourage good communication, collaboration and creativity. They will equip our children well for a globalised world, whilst connecting parents more easily to learning.

The Confucian cultures value education and perform well against the traditional academic measures. But in Singapore and China are struggling to create an environment that is sufficiently creative to engender innovation. If we can improve the engagement between home and school to raise aspiration for all our children, we will get better results in narrowing the gap between rich and poor. If, in turn, our schools embrace collaboration and creativity, our children will then have the skills our employers need for the country to compete successfully in the world.



# EVERYONE CAN SUCCEED

Brian Lightman

**The crux of my vision for education lies in the last three words of the mission statement of the school I led for eleven years in south Wales: 'everyone can succeed'. Head teachers' most important role is to establish an ethos in their institutions which enables that vision to become a reality by living and articulating it in everything they do.**

This is how we foster self-belief in young people and give them the self-esteem they need to achieve those things that they would never have believed possible. We do not accept mediocrity or underachievement and we create a culture that champions and celebrates every step of progress that students make.

I do not think there has ever been a period of greater ambition for our education service than the one we have witnessed in the last ten or fifteen years. The whole notion of 'failure' is simply unacceptable to our profession. We hold ourselves accountable to those who are responsible for shaping policy, to our society, to employers and above all to the young people we serve. The driving force behind every professional working within our education service is and must remain to enable every young person to receive a successful education.

But what does that mean? How do we define success in terms of such a broad and ambitious objective? And what are the challenges that accompany that level of ambition?

Let us first look at what is working well. The vast majority of our schools are orderly, well led and well-managed organisations staffed with teams of well-qualified and committed professionals. They have clear aims and objectives and a determination to take hold of their own destinies, as evidenced by the way they have responded to the autonomy they have been afforded ever since the early days of local management of schools in 1988.

There is a widespread consensus that our teaching workforce is the best we have had with highly motivated and well-trained entrants coming in. Our criteria for good teaching are more clearly defined than ever before and our expectations with regard to that have been raised beyond measure. Teachers are expected to have a high degree of understanding of pedagogical issues, methodology, subject knowledge and skills in the techniques of assessing and tracking pupils' progress. A key role of leaders and managers is to monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching and learning, know exactly where a school's strengths and weaknesses lie and put in place strategies to address any shortcomings or gaps in provision.

In terms of outcomes there is no question that more young people than ever before are leaving school with better qualifications. We have seen beyond a shadow of a doubt that interventions carefully targeted through sophisticated assessment and tracking techniques at pupils who do not appear to be making the progress we would hope for are highly effective. There is no doubt that aspirations have been raised and more young people are progressing into higher education, although we may be at a turning point in this trend.

So can we say that our education system is successful? It certainly means that there is a wealth of good practice in our schools and colleges, although we are still not very good at sharing it. This should be catalogued and made available so that it can be spread more widely across a system which is at risk of becoming more fragmented under current policies of autonomy. Similarly there is a profusion of educational research which relatively few serving teachers and school leaders have the opportunity to discuss. It is absolutely crucial that we address this. This could be a key role for the newly formed teaching schools working in partnership

with the research departments in our universities.

But before this contribution risks looking complacent, we also know how much more there is to do in addressing variation in levels of attainment and achievement within and between schools and colleges. This has never been in sharper focus than in the aftermath of the August 2011 riots. What is the definition of success for a young person who took to the streets or one who seems to be heading for a life of unemployment or even crime? I believe that this debate highlights the greatest challenge facing everyone who has aspirations towards my vision of education.

Most of our maintained schools are populated by students from a wide range of backgrounds. For many, if not most, the journey through the education system will be relatively straightforward. Their starting point is a supportive home background which has already put in place the building blocks of a good education before they walk through the doors of their first school. They have been taught the rudiments of the difference between right and wrong and basic interpersonal skills which will develop as they grow up. They have been shown boundaries of acceptable behaviour. They have received loving care and attention and then have been sent to school with the encouragement that comes from a parent who values education. None of this is about wealth or poverty. It is about values and parenting. Many, if not most, of these pupils will progress through the system to become effective citizens, reliable employees and responsible adults. For these pupils the definition of success in school is to gain the highest possible examination grades coupled with a full range of employability skills learnt through a carefully planned and suitably broad curriculum, including a wide range of

educational opportunities made accessible to them regardless of their families' ability to pay.

Others arrive at school with the odds stacked in the opposite direction. They have never experienced clear boundaries, heard the word 'no' or been given the steer I have just described. They may not even know why they are at school. They do not possess the basic tools to become good citizens, effective parents or competent employees. In the most challenging circumstances these children attend schools alongside a majority from a similar background which adds to the challenge of demonstrating to them that there is another way. All too often they hear confusing, destructive messages in the media which tell them that the education they are receiving is of poor quality and that the system is failing them. The economic context in the areas where they live often backs up this message. Surrounded by such negativity, ready-made excuses and a lack of support, schools face an enormous challenge in raising their self-esteem. Before a conversation can begin to take place about qualifications and access to further and higher education and employment, they require a fundamental level of moral and social education together with programmes which equip them with the basic skills to access the curriculum. Expectations have to be clear and consistent and underpinned by a belief in their ability to break the cycle of educational deprivation which goes through the entire ethos of schools and society. Often the parents of these children are battling against seemingly impossible odds and need help and support with the role society needs them to play.

The greatest challenge facing our education service is therefore one which has very little to do

with resources, building programmes or further initiatives. The challenge is to rise above party political differences and the agendas of the different interest groups and get to a point where policymakers and educators alike demonstrate faith and trust in our education service, talk up its strengths and take forward a collaborative, constructive, professional discussion about how it needs to develop further.

Since the change of government in 2010 the pace and range of policy implementation has largely overshadowed a discussion of longer term challenges. It is crucial that we now return to those issues and discuss the kinds of topics that the Association of School and College Leaders investigated in a research project entitled '2020 Futures: Making Sense of the Future'. This looked into the impact of projected changes in population, society, climate change, health, information and communication technology, brain science, public services and the economy. In each of these areas the implications are far reaching and need to be thought through not only at institutional but also at a national level.

A high level of ambition for our education service is absolutely right but commentators abroad must look at us with consternation as messages are sent out which talk down our achievements rather than sharing our successes and learning from those of others. It is in the interests of every young person in the country that we change this ethos.



# A COMMITMENT TO EXCELLENCE, TRUST AND AUTONOMY

Tony Little

## **What is important for education in this country?**

*Structures and systems.* Any organisation needs systems and structures in order to be effective. Structures and systems are relatively easy to monitor and assess. Politicians and other national leaders are likely to focus on aspects of education which can be evaluated in a robust, empirical way. This is an understandable reaction (politicians need to be seen to be doing something) but runs considerable risk. A dominant focus on those things that can be measured, not least public examination results, can reduce the value of less measurable educational values to the point where they are seen to have little or no significance.

The key purpose of good schools is to develop positive relationships between human beings. There are many other ways to deliver and receive knowledge. There are those who would argue that technological developments might render the traditional form of the school redundant. This could never be the case if the primary purpose of schools is seen as the building of relationships. Children and young people crucially need to learn about friendship, getting along with people they do not like and active tolerance (the ability to exchange and accept a range of views openly). They also need the structure of a school to develop ideas of social responsibility, self-discipline and a sense of the value of community. In these ways they are likely to become useful, purposeful citizens.

*Commitment to excellence.* We need an education system that has an unabashed commitment to excellence. We have suffered too long from a national malaise where in many schools young people get the message (or in some instances are actually told) that a particular aspiration is 'not for the likes of them'. Whether it is the study of physics or playing guitar in a rock band young people need to strive for, embrace and celebrate excellence. The notion of excellence is wholly acceptable in premier league soccer; we need that open appreciation of quality to be extended through all areas of school life. Young people need to be encouraged to aim for standards they might not have believed possible in themselves, but crucially also to recognise and applaud the quality they see in others. They also need to learn that there are no short cuts: hard graft is always needed.

*Adaptability.* Research, trends in the workplace and common sense suggest that school leavers will need to be highly adaptable if they are to be successful in the developing global marketplace. It has become an article of belief that whereas young people might once have anticipated four jobs in a working lifetime, in the future it will be four different careers. One recent American report suggests school leavers today will have fourteen jobs before they are 38 years old; another claims that 40% of today's school leavers will work in jobs not yet invented. Our school curricula and exam system still prepare for a linear path. Bodies of knowledge are important,

but students need to test that knowledge in unfamiliar and even uncomfortable situations.

A reverse of the shrinking curriculum. In the past twenty years, we have valued and measured smaller parcels of knowledge with greater intensity. The tyranny of assessment objectives has reduced the scope of learning. The pressure on academic results has limited the breadth of the co-curriculum (the arts, sports and the rest). A reversal of this narrow-minded approach is urgently needed. The holistic approach is not only a traditional strength of the British liberal tradition, it is directly relevant to the range of skills and qualities young people need now and in the future.

*Trust.* Trust in teaching as a genuine profession with knowledgeable expertise, honed skills and pastoral commitment.

## **What works?**

*Autonomy.* Autonomy devolved to schools is one way to begin to inculcate a greater public trust in the profession of teaching. School distinctiveness aids the creation of a positive ethos. There is a danger however. Devolution in isolation may produce pinpricks of light but will not illuminate the nation. Autonomy works best within a national consensus about the purpose of education which, at present, is not apparent.

*Some selection.* While selection is still a prohibited word in swathes of our schools, the growing acceptance of the efficacy of setting by subject augers well. The key is the pace

of a lesson. I favour setting by subject in all subjects with regular review. Students should be comfortable with the idea that they may move up or down according to performance. The way such movement is handled should be a priority for the school.

*Collaboration.* While still in its infancy, there is greater openness to the idea of collaboration between students in school, between students and teachers in different schools and between the institutions of schools.

*Breadth.* Despite the selling of school playing fields, the reluctance of some teachers to go beyond their contractual obligation and the increasing pressure on academic performance, British schools still manage to uphold a liberal tradition of breadth in curriculum in support of the vision that school education should be holistic. The availability of extra-curricular activities is well above the OECD average. A traditional strength should be celebrated and given greater scope.

### **What next for education?**

*Releasing the logjam of public exams.* Post-qualification application (PQA) should be introduced. Universities would not be allowed to offer places other than on a student's performance at 18. A-levels (or equivalent) should be revised in consultation with universities.

GCSE should be scrapped in its entirety and replaced by matriculation (pass/fail) on key subjects: English, maths, science, possibly a modern language. This opens the way for a wide variety of inventive courses to be devised, taught and assessed by schools, and moderated

externally. Young people may then, if they wish, leave school at 16 with a national standard in key areas and a portfolio demonstrating their enthusiasms and, crucially, the extent to which they have actively engaged with their chosen courses. Academically minded students would be able to work on academic subjects and their application more inventively (e.g. in engineering) without exploring the cul-de-sac which GCSE often represents.

*Teacher training.* There is a need to move more to the Finnish model. There should be degree standard teacher qualification for all, embracing, for example, neuroscience and worldwide education systems. As it stands, teaching is not seen as a high-status profession and, by many, not a profession at all.

*Early years.* Repeated research shows the crucial significance of early years learning. A litmus test of the health of the education system will be when teachers of primary and pre-primary age children are at least as well professionally qualified and seen as significant (and as well paid) as secondary teachers.

*Student-led learning.* As an extension of 'student voice', this means direct, active and sustained student participation in the school's approach to learning (e.g. students formally observing lessons, mentoring other students, involved in the recruitment of teachers).

*Harnessing technologies.* Rapid developments in technology prompt visions of universal virtual learning with schools becoming hubs. Within twenty years it is possible to conceive of the

demise of traditional teacher-pupil models for imparting knowledge and developing skills. In this case, the teacher would become a facilitator and trainer in the use of technologies – a skilled technician capable of identifying effective technologies for different pupils. This would be a distinctive 21st century version of differentiation. Such a development, however, should be seen in the context of the next point.

A constant focus on the pastoral needs of young people. Especially in a world in which it is more likely that young people may lead lives more distanced from personal contact with other human beings than ever in the past (as a consequence of social change and technological opportunities), the central purpose of teaching will need to become more clearly articulated: teachers help people connect effectively with each other through their shared learning and group experiences.



# EDUCATION FROM A PARENT'S VIEW

Lord Lucas of Crudwell and Dingwall

**I have seen my two older children through education, watched my three stepchildren complete theirs, and have started again: I now have a 9-year-old in the middle of her schooling. On top of this, I have edited the Good Schools Guide since the turn of the century. So, as you might expect, I approach things from a parent's point of view.**

Or, to be more precise, from the point of view of a parent who cares. There are many who don't. They and their children are a great challenge to the education system. We properly devote much ingenuity to allowing these children to live a full school life despite the lack of help and support at home. But our focus should be on the vast majority of children and parents who want a good education, and on running an education system that harnesses and respects the inexhaustible power of parents' ambition for their children.

Parents want their children to grow up to live happy and prosperous lives. They want to know what is going on at school and, increasingly, to play a part in it. These desires are the engine of our education system. That is what works.

Teachers, educational researchers, employers and politicians all want their ideas to have precedence. All are vital to a successful school system, but parents should have the controlling influence. The prime responsibility of the parent for the education of their children is set out in the 1944 Education Act, now expressed in Section 7 of the 1996 Act, which says: 'The parent of every

child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full-time education.' This responsibility confers rights – and not just rights to find a new school when the old one doesn't live up to expectations. They give parents a fundamental involvement with their child's schooling. At the limit, allowing parents to provide or supplement education at home ought to be something that the school system welcomes.

Teachers and the schools they create are parents' partners in the education of their children. Teachers were the masters when I was raised and parents were routinely turned back at the school gates, but parents are now less deferential and better educated. Not that I am advocating that parents should be involved in running schools – that has always seemed to me to be a disaster-prone arrangement. Teachers have the training and talent to run schools and educate children, so the only viable relationship between parents and teachers is trust. But parents must have a good flow of information, and the ability to change things when they need to.

The flow of information at the level of 'How is my child doing?' is survivable but (in most schools) far below what it could be. The best (Westfields Junior School in Hampshire, to praise one I encountered recently) are in constant communication with parents, about achievements as well as absence, not by adding yet more reporting to distract teachers from their jobs, but by using the school's existing (sophisticated and electronic) records. Openness makes partnership possible.

When it comes to 'How is the school doing?' parents have the schools' own view, performance tables and Ofsted. None of them are satisfactory. I have come across schools that have suffered three years of sharp decline without it showing in the performance data (which were kept buoyant by children largely educated under the old regime) or being picked up by Ofsted (which had no contact with the school beyond the data). Parents need information that is much more human and up to date.

The watchwords of a successful parent-led system are autonomy and accountability.

Autonomy so that schools can develop in ways that suit the children and parents they serve and can make use of individual insight, understanding and motivation. As an example, look at the percolation of the Harkness table through the US school system and now the UK (well documented on Wellington College's website). One has turned up at my daughter's school this term. As in nature, variation leads to robustness and responsiveness – leading to a system where parents have a better chance of finding the education that suits them and their children.

Accountability because parents don't want to take chances with their children. They want schools that are going off-track to be picked up early, and need to know that innovators can demonstrate that their changes are for the better. Companies have annual audits, employees have annual reviews. The same should apply to schools. I like the idea of inspectors whose record in their previous (or indeed current) schools commands respect, who spend time each year in the schools in which they have oversight, who write an annual chatty letter to parents updating them on progress. Parents would be well informed and Ofsted could move its troops in before serious damage was done to any child's education. Regular inspection also helps to spread good ideas faster.

To work well, such a system needs outside help. Employers should be strongly involved. For most parents prosperity equals employment, and they want schools to have an understanding of the skills and qualities that employers are looking for. There are some fine examples of schools – like Greenhead College in Huddersfield – which have strong employer relationships, but not many; finding out how best to link schools and employers is one of the areas where we need a bit of innovation.

Parents will even concede a role for politicians. Some things need to be done at a national level. Politicians should be (but have not been) the guardians of the quality of the system. They also have the job of transmitting a national understanding of what education should be about and of the rights of pupils to it. Questions like, 'What should we learn of our culture?' are capable of a million different answers. We need at least an element of imposed unity, an underlying common ground on which we can continue to meet as citizens for the rest of our lives.

We have seen, over the last half century, what education is like when ruled (successively) by teachers, educationalists and politicians. What works best, I believe, is having parents in charge; we have the greatest power and motivation, but also the greatest incentive to work with said teachers, educationalists and politicians to make a harmonious whole.

As for where education is off to in the next twenty years, the safest bet seems to me that, as in the previous two decades, it won't change much at all. Pupils and teachers will still be human, with human needs and reactions. Most of the subjects they study will remain the same. But, as parents, we can certainly hope for a modicum of improvement.

Parents attach much more importance to happiness than the education system has traditionally done – though it is catching up. We'd like to see schools get better at cultivating it by drawing on ideas like positive psychology.

Parental choice should mean a choice between good schools, so I hope that we get better at improving failing schools. A hope not without justification: there have been some excellent examples in recent years of schools (like St George's Maida Vale) where everything has changed except their intake.

We would like more top class opportunities for our children and have an appetite for another world-class university, or two. There is room for a great university running liberal arts degrees as they do so successfully in the United States, and there is scope for a great university that prefers Harvard's ambition for its students (that they should go on to do great things) to Oxford's (that they should go on to be great academics).

Despite league tables and A\*s, parents care just as much for their less academic offspring and have ambitions for them too. I hope that initiatives like university technical colleges and apprenticeships will flourish.

We will, reluctantly, learn to love personal technology and the opportunities opened by using pupils' smartphones and tablets (and whatever comes next) for school work.

And my personal wish is for school to become a more exciting and challenging place. I am part of the 'Behind the Screen' project, along with some great companies and schools, to help make this happen – using and understanding technology, crossing subject barriers, encouraging teachers to become expert explorers and venturing with their charges into terra incognita. I am thrilled to discover how many others share this ambition.

Having a great and continually improving education system lies at the root of our determination to be a successful country in the 21st century. We shouldn't be cowed by the rise of the East. We shouldn't be depressed into thinking that because we were once 'top nation' we are now doomed to sink into the abysmal ooze. We should focus on keeping changing for the better, preserving those great qualities for which we are valued and on being pleasantly surprised by the results.



# EDUCATION FOR A 21ST CENTURY WORLD CITY

Munira Mirza

**London is a city famous for its intellectual, scientific and cultural achievements. We have more museums than Paris, more independent bookshops than New York and many innovative and dynamic businesses. With the Olympics on the horizon, we can claim to be the world's most cosmopolitan city; one that welcomes talent from around the globe.**

For a place so rich in invention and attainment, we rightly expect to be leaders in the field of education. In many ways we are. London has some of the best schools and universities in the world. The city has outperformed other UK regions in terms of improvement in GCSE results over recent years.

Yet, at the same time, there remain serious concerns about the growing divide between state and independent schools and the challenge of finding good school places in the capital. Although there have been some improvements in schools overall, regular Greater London Authority (GLA) opinion surveys show that the issue of education is a constant concern for Londoners of all backgrounds.

First, there is the problem of the shortage of school places in the capital. Major demographic changes mean another 70,000 places are needed over the next four years; 11,000 children are already being taught in makeshift accommodation. It is therefore important to make the case for more schools and funding to meet the needs of a growing city and to ensure that new reforms are managed properly. The Government has recognised this by

awarding £260m recently to London, which begins to help address this.

Today, at least one in five school leavers is unable to read and write properly. Employers in London complain that even some university graduates lack the basic practical and social skills for work, and therefore have to recruit from abroad. Parents are increasingly concerned about poor behaviour in some schools and the rate of truancy and exclusions, which can have a knock-on effect in neighbourhoods through local crime and antisocial behaviour.

London is beset by particularly intense social and economic challenges and some children struggle with difficult and chaotic home lives or neighbourhoods. A number of schools find it hard to reach boys, especially a minority from Afro-Caribbean and white working class communities. The riots in August 2011 highlighted how a number of young people feel alienated from their own communities and do not respect authority. The social and economic expense of these problems is enormous – our inability to educate children at an

early age costs us many times over in terms of the criminal justice system and welfare support.

None of this is to dismiss the many good things that happen in London schools, but the real test is whether parents would be happy for their child to be sent, at random, to any school in the city. The chances are that most would not. Wealthier parents have greater flexibility to 'vote with their feet' by moving house or opting for private schooling, but these possibilities are not available to most.

It is extraordinarily difficult in a short chapter like this to explore all the complex reasons for the problems in our education system. However, it may be helpful to identify some of the general trends and how these might be addressed in the future.

It goes without saying that most teachers are extremely hard working and want only the very best for their students. They are not as highly paid as other professionals but they have traditionally held a degree of authority, based on their subject knowledge and expertise. Over the last two decades they have contended with considerable churn in policy. Governments have placed extra demands

on them to fulfil a range of social aims – increase social mobility, address childhood obesity, teach sustainability, promote equality and diversity, and so on. All these expectations have changed the role of teachers and subjected them to greater demands which can prove difficult to balance with their principal task: to educate.

The nature of teaching in many of our schools also changed as a result of the long-term influence of theories within the educational establishment. Since the 1960s and 1970s, ideas about child-centred learning, personalised learning and the relativism of knowledge have arguably undermined the traditional model of teachers as sources of authority imparting knowledge and skills. I share the concerns of those who believe this led to a 'soft bigotry of low expectations' in some schools, particularly in urban areas where children are not expected to achieve the same levels or have the same interests as those from privileged backgrounds. Ironically, today, it is the 'traditional' approach which seems to offer a radical solution. Top performing state schools like Mossbourne Academy, in Hackney, use similar methods to independent and grammar schools by taking care to offer a broad liberal education to all their children. They impose clear discipline, build character, offer a rich array of cultural, sports and work experiences, teach difficult subjects like Latin, modern languages and Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM), and push their children to aim higher and go for Oxbridge and Russell Group universities.

The ability to deliver excellence in education has also been made harder by factors beyond the school gates, including the undermining by the state of adult authority in countless small ways – from the excessively bureaucratic regulation of adult volunteers who want to work with children to impractical and neurotic 'no-touch' policies that make it harder for teachers to physically restrain

children who behave violently in the classroom.

In the context of these trends, the key challenge is to restore a sense of what education is for. Schools should provide the knowledge and skills to give everyone the chance to flourish and contribute to society in a meaningful way. They are places for tough examinations and training the future workforce, but they should also be about imparting to young people a precious heritage: the best that has been thought and said. This equips them to participate in what the political theorist Michael Oakshott has called the 'conversation of mankind'. For schools to do this they need professional, inspirational teachers who are confident that their authority is taken seriously by children, parents and wider society.

The GLA may have no statutory responsibility for education but it is playing an increasingly active role and the Mayor has recently announced an Inquiry into London schools, to publish in late 2012. In collaboration with others, including boroughs and schools, we want to explore how to improve standards, and create more good school places to meet the needs of the growing city.

In 2008 we initiated the Mayor's Academies Programme, administered through the London Academies Enterprise Trust. It currently runs three secondary schools (two in Enfield and one in Bexley) which promise to provide a strong and enriching academic curriculum, training in skills for employment and a clear pathway for students to further education, vocational training or employment. In the first year, the academies have seen improved results, better behaviour and a stronger ethos overall.

The GLA has also endorsed the creation of new university technical colleges (UTCs) in London, as these provide a strong emphasis on technology and vocational skills, without compromising academic

standards and rigorous teaching. The UTC initiative is very interesting and addresses the weakness of some other forms of vocational education. These colleges should help to restore the role of technology in national life and the economy.

Likewise, for a city so rich in cultural capital, it makes sense for arts and cultural organisations to work with schools. Since 2008 the GLA has run a music education programme to improve provision across London, plus the Big Dance and Fourth Plinth Art programmes which reach into hundreds of schools each year.

Whilst good teaching will be sufficient for most children to learn what they need, there will always be a minority of children who need extra support. There are excellent supplementary schools in the capital, such as those run by Civitas, Shine and other community groups, which provide extra maths and English tuition. We have championed these initiatives, which are particularly valued by ethnic minority communities, and hope to do more to link them to potential partners.

Much of the current government's education policy understandably focuses on schools below the floor target (those with less than 35% gaining 5 A\*-C GCSEs). In London, there are now many schools above this level that may nevertheless want additional support from potential partners such as businesses, the voluntary sector and top-performing schools. We are keen to explore how we can help facilitate and coordinate these efforts. This is an exciting time to be thinking about improving education in a 21st century world city.



# EVERY SCHOOL A GOOD SCHOOL

Baroness Perry of Southwark

**‘Every school a good school’ has been a mantra for education for as long as I can remember. Of course that must be the goal: but we haven’t succeeded in getting anywhere near it with the present structures. So how can we do better?**

It is generally agreed, and indeed it is self-evident, that the quality and standard of teaching is the determining factor in pupils’ success. Teachers who are confident, passionate about the subject they teach and the knowledge and understanding they impart, can excite and inspire their pupils, raising their performance and achievement regardless of the background from which those young people have come. We know this because we have seen it happen over and over again. Such teachers rarely experience discipline problems because the interest and enjoyment they generate is sufficient to hold their pupils’ attention.

Conversely, the teacher who sees no hope for young people because of whence they come, who says ‘What can you expect? Look at their background’, will assuredly kill ambition, as the pupils in their charge will internalise these low expectations and, lacking any self-esteem or enjoyment, will soon exhibit predictably poor achievement and discipline.

So if we are to achieve the skilled and educated population which the country needs, the structures of the school system must above all support and encourage the freedom and professionalism of teachers, raising their expectations towards their pupils and increasing their enthusiasm for the work they do and for the subject and knowledge they teach. Governments in the past few years have with the best of intentions altered structures, but have failed to accompany this with measures which give strength and confidence to teachers. Indeed, recently the opposite has been the case; teachers have had their professional freedom taken away piece by piece. Over-regulation, aggressive inspection, detailed central interference and micro-management as well as fear of public ‘naming and shaming’ have sapped the professionalism and weakened the authority of teachers.

My vision for schools in the next few years is of institutions free to determine their own priorities

for the pupils in their care; free to choose how to spend their money and to generate extra income; free to determine, within the law, what they teach, and above all, how they teach. I hope we shall see heads and teachers with their authority restored, and I would hope to see teachers trusted by government as mostly they are trusted by parents.

The measures to support this vision are already appearing. The bill currently making its slow way through parliament goes a long way to restoring teachers’ authority, for example: to search children they suspect of carrying knives or other disruptive objects; to exclude those who are preventing others from learning by their disruptive behaviour; to keep a pupil in detention the same day as she or he has committed an offence against the rules. The media will no longer be able to report allegations against a teacher by a pupil before any formal charge has been made, thus slowly tipping the balance again towards the status

and respect which teachers must be able to command.

Inspection too is changing. Inspectors will come to judge a school on the basis of its success in raising the achievements of pupils, not on a tick-box list of myriad pre-judged elements, many of which have little to do with the quality of learning.

The structure of schools is changing fast in ways which enhance this freedom. The academies, set up under Labour on the model of the City Technology Colleges (CTCs), have multiplied in the past year. These schools, along with the new free schools, have freedom of budget, curriculum and staffing arrangements. To a large extent they are free from inspection, their accountability resting in their governors – local people from the community who most care about the quality of education and school life on offer.

These are a proven model. CTCs and academies have shown remarkable results over many years now. Freed from both central and local authority interference, they have developed ways of raising aspirations, and therefore achievement, in young people for whom previously there had been no prospect and a bleak future. To their critics who say the system being created is one of a chaotic mix of different types of institution, I would say that we have always had a multiplicity of types of school – independent, grammar, comprehensive, secondary modern, voluntary aided or voluntary controlled, special schools and so on. A one-size-fits-all approach has never existed, nor would it serve the variety of communities and young people for whom the system must provide. Diversity is not the enemy of

excellence, indeed it may well be the necessary condition for it.

My vision for both structure and content is one in which pupils' needs are met and their talents allowed to flourish whatever those talents might be. We have, as a nation, not done as well as we should for the brightest of our young people, either those academically especially gifted or those gifted in the many other ways our society and economy needs. For this reason I welcome the English Baccalaureate, a new standard ensuring that those who are academically competent will be steered into the 'hard' subjects which will win them both intellectual challenge and a route to higher education. Equally, I also welcome the initiative of Lords Dearing and Baker to set up 14–19 technical schools with university sponsors to ensure rigour.

These developments mean a school system based on what I call 'election not selection'. Young people at the age of 14, when their talents and interests are well formed, should be given the freedom to choose their path. Their freedom should lead to positive development of a future workforce fit for purpose in the economy. Sadly at present we have no such thing. Attempts to force all young people into the same academic mould have only produced a disaffected majority who have failed to achieve the accepted standard at GCSE, and who have little to offer or expect in the market for skilled work. Over the next few years,

I hope to see 'election not selection' becoming the reality for more and more young people, meeting both their needs and the needs of our nation.

At the end of this decade, I trust that this quiet revolution, which nevertheless builds on proven models of the past two decades, will have given us a widely diverse system of school education, with each local school free to develop in a way which meets the needs and aspirations of its community. While choice is an element in this, we must remember that for many parents, particularly those in rural areas, there is no choice. Even in towns and cities the overwhelming majority of parents choose their local school. The freedoms now being given to schools should therefore enable each school to honour that choice by meeting local need and aspiration. If all happens as planned, and as we fervently believe and hope, maybe at last we shall indeed be nearer to realising the dream of 'every school a good school'.



# CREATING AN EQUITABLE, COHESIVE AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION SYSTEM

Stephen Pisano

**Debates about education are riddled with cliches: education is about children; children are our future. The future is uncertain and we must stick with what works – with great teaching and strong autonomous leadership.**

## **What is important in education for this country?**

Effective primary and early years education concerns translating the principles and values agreed by schools and the communities they serve into action. As a member of the Advisory Group to the Cambridge Primary Review I was privileged and honoured to make a contribution towards the fundamental principles that shaped the conclusions of the final report: equity and empathy, entitlement, engagement and empowerment, expertise and excellence. These principles provide a moral framework in the quest to create an equitable, cohesive and inclusive society where education matters to all, especially children and families that are 'vulnerable' or 'disadvantaged', enabling economic independence, lifelong learning and social responsibility. However, after recent events during summer 2011 there is clearly still much to do.

After three decades of intensive critical analysis and educational reform, one can be forgiven for feeling a little bewildered as to where next to focus the debate towards achieving an educational policy consensus and a greater sense of societal cohesion. Always an optimist, I have picked out some key principles from the Cambridge Primary Review report as reference points in a journey towards an excellent and equitable education system. The pursuit of principles such as

empathy, engagement and empowerment is a worthy starting point if we are to develop the shared values and an educational consensus that are essential for achieving the successful outcomes for all our children.

Why these principles in particular, you may ask? Looking back over my life of learning, they seem to have influenced my choices and decisions since attending a comprehensive school in Lambeth in 1968. Even back then I felt the system cared and urged me to overcome the challenges I faced – elected to the school council, captain of the football team, a tennis partner to the Head of Maths, ballroom dancing with the over-50s at the Evening Institute, accepting a volunteer social worker into the family and being encouraged by the Head of RE to volunteer on a Disabled Young People on Holiday scheme. No wonder then that after attending a progressive college of education I rejected my first teaching post in an 'oppressive' boys secondary school to work in a school for 'maladjusted' children, driven by the values of compassion, care and a determination for those less fortunate to succeed.

Now, a primary headship and a decade of educational consultancy later, I feel convinced that the comprehensive ideal – a just and equitable 3–18 educational system – is as important as ever to play a part in repairing the current social fabric. The

extended schools movement and the Every Child Matters (ECM) framework are modern manifestations of the Inner London Education Authority way – cradle to grave community provision, underpinned by the principles of respect and empathy for the lives of all. The best schools and children's centres serve their broader communities in this way through excellent wrap-around universal services backed up by early intervention and prevention programmes for those in need. These are delivered in partnership with parents, statutory, third sector, business and community partners.

## **What works?**

I was rather saddened recently when listening to the BBC news to hear a number of parents of the new free schools saying how they really liked new idea of breakfast clubs and after-school clubs. My work for the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA) from 2007 to 2010 to promote the extended schools core offer helped to facilitate the growth of extended services such as these in hundreds of London schools – but also much more.

As the London TDA coordinator of the parent support advisor scheme I oversaw the recruitment and training of parent support workers in London schools. This Department for Children, Schools and Families initiative

built on existing but patchy practice nationwide to accelerate the trend in parent partnership working in schools. Just as the ECM agenda had achieved consensus in schools, so too were many school leaders committed to extending their capacity to engage with parents. These workers found creative ways to maximise the standards and life chances of children, particularly those experiencing home and community barriers to learning. A plethora of new relationships came about after parents became more involved in their schools based on principles of empathy, engagement and empowerment. These included:

- Workshops on how schools work and related community services for parents.
- Homework clubs that coached parents to support their children.
- Capacity-building parent groups and forums for parents feeling isolated.
- Parenting skills developed through coaching, informal or structured groups.

My work with Coram, London's first children's charity, also promotes best practice for improving outcomes and life chances for children facing loss in various settings. A long history of early intervention and prevention through parent partnership includes the opening of the first children's centre in the country. Ofsted has recently commended Coram's Ealing Outreach service for their early years expertise, informed by an unswerving respect and belief in the capacity for excellence in all families. This is an outstanding example of partnership working between the children's centre, the local authority and Coram. They deploy a team of skilled outreach workers to build relationships with isolated families in order for them to gain access to the multi-agency services provided within the children's centres, some of which are delivered by Coram. Parents matter but don't often feel that they do, until the experience of a caring supportive relationship convinces them otherwise.

Early intervention through outreach has been pretty convincing in Ealing.

Coram also delivered a similar partnership project in Thamesmead, providing skilled family support across a cluster of schools and a children's centre, originally funded through the 'On Track' programme. This multi-agency partnership programme (facilitated by Coram) encouraged a deep level of participation between parents and heads, school staff, third sector groups, social workers, educational psychologists, health workers, youth workers, counsellors, police and childcare providers. Through shared values and principles the project grew into a flagship cluster that planned extended service provision with agreed joint commissioning protocols across the locality, sharing resources and venues to provide easy access for children and families. This level of partnership working has its challenges, but the impact upon the community in a relatively short period of time was striking.

We are all familiar with the old adage: prevention is better than cure. No surprise, then, that the recent independent report into early intervention underlined that many of the costly and damaging social problems for individuals can be eliminated or reduced by giving children and parents the right type of evidence-based programmes from 0–18 and especially in their earliest years. Another good example from Coram was recently highlighted by the TES – illustrating how the Coram Life Education programme builds children's self-esteem, social skills and their capacity to make informed healthy choices.

#### **What next for education?**

Our greatest challenge in these austere times is to continue to view standards and inclusion as two sides of the same coin. My last example, rightly in my view, focuses on the community or locality as the locus of service delivery to meet this challenge. Local management of schools has given us many benefits since its inception in 1988 but schools working in isolation are at risk of being detached from the most

vulnerable in the communities in which they serve. For schools to make a sustainable contribution to a just, equitable and cohesive local community, partnership working within locality commissioning frameworks will be necessary – in effect local children's trusts. This and other ideas from the 21st century schools White Paper (archived on the DfE's website) are still worthy of further consideration in the development of schooling in the future. Ideas such as: really early intervention and support where parent engagement is critical, schools as a resource for the whole community, ensuring extended services are used by those that need them, measuring the impact of these services on outcomes and more community-based and less school-based activities.

To enable all of us to feel part of this great democracy, I want to see school leaders engage in trusting relationships at every level of the system, based upon mutual respect and empathy and the belief that to share power is to increase its impact. This requires exceptional leadership, as demonstrated in the Harlem Children's Zone (HCZ) by Geoffrey Canada, the leader of the successful multi-agency project that has inspired President Obama towards the creation of 'Promise Neighborhoods' across the United States based on the comprehensive, data-driven approach of the HCZ project:

*"For children to do well, their families have to do well. And for families to do well, their community must do well. That is why HCZ works to strengthen families as well as empowering them to have a positive impact on their children's development."*



# LEADING LEARNING COMMUNITIES - THE KEY ROLE FOR FE COLLEGES

Lynne Sedgemore CBE

**The 157 Group represents a group of large and successful further education colleges and our members have a very clear view on the direction of change needed in further education. In essence a successful future lies in greater college autonomy combined with greater accountability to local communities.**

College leaders need to refocus and concentrate their expertise, time and energy on leading innovative and high quality teaching and learning as well as on curriculum development that responds to local needs and national priorities. Fortunately there are clear signs that the government supports this view.

Fe colleges have always adapted to meet the demands of a changing economy and society; colleges are renowned for being proactive and innovative in the face of change and new challenges; and are highly responsive to and adapt at shaping policy reform. However, it is important to stress that colleges (and schools) should be seen as more than just delivery agents for government programmes. As independent but public institutions and major community and social assets they have the ability, strength and resources to shape the local education and skills system: and they need sufficient autonomy to bridge the inevitable gaps and tensions in the wide

range of policy to deliver the best outcomes for learners and to be most effective .

The need for an expanded role for colleges was recently set out by a leading think tank, the 2020 Public Services Hub at the RSA, which described an ambitious long-term future role for the FE and skills sector in the new ecosystem of public services. As the Coalition devolves responsibility away from Whitehall and empowers service providers and citizens, the report challenges the FE sector to shape and create a new learning ecology. It proposes that the sector faces a choice between 'sleepwalking into a dangerous future' or grasping the potential of a 'social productivity alternative'. These two futures distinguish between a future:

- In which financial pressures encourage a culture of retrenchment, where market mechanisms and current relationships with citizens prevail and where the sector becomes a marginalized service pushed

and pulled by more powerful local players; or:

- Another more collaborative, networked, and socially productive future based on the concept of social productivity where colleges and providers are incubators of social value and hubs for service integration; where further education serves the needs of learners through being a creative partner in local growth and service reform agendas.

The 157 Group has strongly welcomed the steps that government has already taken in encouraging this direction. The creation of a single adult budget with more freedom for providers to respond to the needs of local communities is an important step forward. The confirmation that colleges will not be restricted in determining who is entitled to fee remission is another important recognition by the Skills Minister of the importance of the local dimension; as is the delegation of learner support funds to colleges to be

used at their discretion. Perhaps the most important step however is the move to refocus performance measures – away from centrally set targets and towards plans and outcomes agreed with local communities. Now, more than ever the FE sector and colleges need to collaborate with the wider skills community including local businesses and employers to shape an exciting and compelling future learning vision and landscape.

Individual learners and their learning be central to the FE system of the future and as such we welcome moves to change the information that colleges are required to publish; away from the needs of government agencies and towards the needs of those who use the system. We are clear that learners of all ages, their families and employers, need to have information that enables them to make the best choices about their and their learning and their future. We are working closely with other sector bodies to bring about this overdue reform.

The 157 Group believes that a renewed focus by all leaders on the importance of good quality teaching and learning should pivotally influence and inform the shape and nature of the further education system in Britain. More than anything else, the quality and impact of the teaching and learning experience is fundamental to the success of education in this country, but this has been in danger of being sidelined through the need to keep up with a plethora of new and differing policy innovations and the demands of managing diminishing resources. a new

pedagogy is also needed, to take into account the changing world around us. We believe the key to making this happen is by fostering high quality leadership with a clear and passionate focus on teaching and learning. In our recent think piece, Leading learning in further education, we describe the impact that effective leadership can have on learners and practitioners, leading to better results for all concerned.

Government is right to expect that leadership and management will focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning, and that leaders and managers at all levels will work to raise learners' aspirations and drive improvements in their achievements and experience. But effective leadership does not just involve the successful delivery of the curriculum, however innovative and ambitious it may be. It must also involve curriculum design with a clear focus on meeting the needs and interests of the local community, and a new pedagogy in tune with the lives and lifestyles of the contemporary world. Distance learning is one way of doing this, but making more effective use of social media platforms may now be essential if colleges are to keep up to speed with what its learners truly want and expect.

Our approach links closely with the spirit of the 'Big Society'. Effective teaching and learning can lead to an ethos of 'learning

through life' and should help empower individuals and communities to take charge of their improving their circumstances. Colleges are important hubs to help to bring about social cohesion in their local communities and to support the development of a local learning ecology involving local authorities, employer networks, and cultural institutions working more collaboratively with one another. FE colleges are keen and able to become the institutional backbone for local lifelong learning, bridging the needs of local communities, occupational sectors and wider regions in the interests of better learning outcomes for all. As peter drucker, a leadership guru once said

"The best way to predict the future is to create it – together."



# WHAT NEXT FOR SCHOOLS AND UNIVERSITIES?

Dr Anthony Seldon

## What's important?

Schools and universities should be places of challenge, enrichment and deep fulfilment: where all the faculties that a student possesses are identified, nurtured and developed, and deep learning takes place. The world over, schools and universities seem increasingly to be closing the mind and the heart, not opening it. Schools should be highly prized as they are in emerging countries like Vietnam and Uganda. The young at school in Britain should be grateful to learn in such well resourced environments, and their parents should be appreciative too, and readily support the school in educating their children.

The absence of gratitude often from our schoolchildren and their parents for the education they receive – whether free or paid for – is a key part of the British malaise.

Universities should be rounding off the education experience, taking undergraduates to new heights of scholarship, excitement and learning, and giving them the profoundest intellectual experiences of their lives.

Higher education should be stretching students broadly too, beyond the merely academic, preparing them fully for life. They should be turning out responsible, capable and deeply fulfilled young men and women.

## What's happening?

British schools should be leading the world academically and in the provision of psychologically nurturing environments in which they develop their young. They are doing neither.

British universities should be leading the world in teaching, research and innovation, as well as be chomping at the bit to export their unique qualities abroad. They are losing ground on the first and are failing to capitalise fully on the second.

British schools and universities are falling far short of what they could and should be.

Figures from a major analysis of OECD countries, the PISA study, published in 2010, show that the UK has dropped from 7th in 2000 to 25th in reading, and from 8th to 28th in maths, among the thirty OECD countries,

while some countries like Poland and Estonia have forged ahead.

Britain, despite billions of extra pounds spent in the last decade, has stood still against our competitors. 'We are a C country with A\* pretensions', was the editorial verdict in the Times Educational Supplement.

The sobering fact is that our schools are not even doing well at the one objective that all else has been sacrificed in order to achieve – securing good exam passes. Our schools are ineluctably moving towards becoming exam factories, an unthinking batch process of rote-learning, with inert students and teachers moving along a mechanical assembly line from lesson to lesson until spat out at the end of the process clutching in their anaesthetised hands a certificate listing largely meaningless exam passes.

Peter Abbs and Guy Claxton have for many years been two of the most persuasive voices decrying the impoverishment of education. The former writes: 'the fear is that schools, colleges and universities have become no more than corporations run by managers ... without character, charisma or charm.'

Britain is not alone in this new 'industrial revolution'. Tony Wagner of Harvard, author of *The Global Achievement Gap*, says that US schools are similarly failing because their passive learning environments and uninspiring lessons focus on preparing the young for tests which merely reward memory, not intellect.

Britain can't even boast that its young people are content: it comes bottom in league tables for child well-being, most recently in a 2007 study of twenty-one industrialised nations conducted by Unicef. What is truly shameful is that little or nothing has changed in response to devastating reports such as this. The coalition government shows little sign of responding to this shameful indictment.

British universities, meanwhile, are slipping against overseas competitors, with funding levels considerably below the United States. This is madness. Almost alone in the OECD, Britain offers a fudge in its higher education – a root cause of our poor international performance.

At worst, British universities are becoming thoughtless factories: peopled by undergraduates with little idea why they are there, save as a stepping stone to a job or love for their subject, taught by academics with little interest or ability at teaching, whose research, especially in the humanities and social sciences, is taking us no closer to true knowledge. Alain de Botton writes of his hope that the humanities at university will allow students to become less 'selfish, unempathetic and blinkered human beings' of greater benefit 'not only to the economy, but also to our friends, our children and our spouses'.

Yet we are not preparing them well enough even to manage their lives while at university. A YouGov survey conducted amongst undergraduates showed that 25% report themselves as actively stressed, with financial anxieties ranking high.

Let me clarify: I am not attacking teachers in schools or academics in universities. This is not an assault on school students or undergraduates. It is most definitely not an attack on the state sector in Britain, from whom the independent sector could learn so much more. Much good has happened in the state sector in the last 15 years. Indeed, to its shame, the independent sector has lagged behind the state sector in innovation and professional development.

School leadership has in my view been superior in state than independent schools, helped in part by the greater emphasis on professional leadership associated with the National College of School Leadership (NCSL) and the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust (SSAT). In independent schools, school leadership is often mere management of the existing status quo, with a desire not to offend anyone.

The independent sector has conspicuously failed to use its independence to be innovative or imaginative. Year after year, it has trotted out the same formula. Despite PR-fuelled appearances, the reality is that most independent schools are much like each other.

The independent sector in general has remained too much in a cocoon, with little attempt to learn even from the innovative approaches such as those adopted in Steiner schools or the marvellous collaborative and

enquiry-based approach to learning pioneered in Italy's Reggio Emilia schools and taken forward by different institutions including Harvard's 'Project Zero'.

Ideally, all state schools will soon become independent. Till then, independent and state schools urgently need to work even more closely together, following the lead of many existing partnership projects, often funded by the schools themselves.

### What next?

Something far more radical – and fundamental – is required than anything envisaged so far by the coalition government. The November 2010 White Paper document contained much that was valuable, including the encouragement of academies and free schools.

Allowing schools to be more autonomous, a move backed by bodies as diverse as the World Bank and management consultants McKinsey, is indeed vital.

More autonomy will let school leaders lead – it will encourage able people to become heads. Agility and continuity of school leadership are identified by McKinsey as core attributes for successful leadership in their study *How the World's Most Improved School Systems Keep Getting Better*.

But it is naive to believe the current malaise will be solved by more autonomy alone. The malaise is so deep that a systemic solution is needed, one where academic standards and scholarship in schools are, at last, taken seriously, where technical skills become regarded highly and are better taught, and where young people are given appropriate vocational skills in a way that engages them.

Remedies are at hand, and come in five areas.

First, government should divide schools into three roughly equal-sized streams at 14, an academic, technical and vocational stream. The academic stream would ensure that all pupils who have genuine academic ability and interest could be again stretched at school in a scholarly manner.

Second, Britain badly needs an overhaul of its outdated school exams, which have changed little in fifty years. We do not mean more exams, as the government seems to be thinking in response to the PISA bombshell, but different and better exams.

As a purely interim measure, with immediate effect, all January modules should be immediately scrapped at AS levels and A2. AS-levels should be sat only at the end of the lower sixth, carrying 30% of the final mark, with A-levels at the end of the upper sixth year, carrying the remaining 70%.

The government should promote a diverse exam choice for schools. High among those systems it should be championing is the International Baccalaureate (IB), consistently the most successful exam system in the world. The IB exists at three levels: the primary years programme, up to age 11; the middle years programme, for 11 to 16-year-olds; and the IB diploma, for 16 to 19-year-olds.

A third major area for change is in its inadequate valuation of the broader purpose of schools to prepare young people not only for higher education and work, but also for life.

The eight aptitude approach, derived from the work of Howard Gardner on multiple intelligences, which underpins this approach, has been attacked by John White and others in the educational establishment for lacking empirical evidence. To this I would respond that sixty-five years of empirical research in university education departments has failed to produce much incontrovertible information about schools: whether classes should be single-sex or mixed, streamed or mixed ability, small or large, didactic or child-centred.

The failure of the education establishment to deliver on its promise to provide a more scientific underpinning for schools calls into question the grounds for university academics decrying what professionals who work in schools know to be intuitively correct. My own experience, leading schools for fifteen years and as a parent of three children, tells me education should be holistic, not just based on exam-passing – after all, schools are preparing young people for life.

Every school in Britain should thus follow the holistic model. Where children come from less advantaged backgrounds, it is all the more important that school provides this breadth of education, because the opportunities for holistic development, including cultural enrichment, sporting opportunities, leadership and character development, may not exist to the same extent at home.

'Character building' can, and should, lie at the heart of every school. The 'moral' aptitude requires the young to understand clearly the difference between right and wrong, and allows them to discern for themselves which actions they might or might not want to commit. The instilling of good values is a fundamental yet neglected part of education today.

Missing from many schools too is development of the 'spiritual' aptitude. Researchers David Hay and Rebecca Nye find that by primary school age children demonstrate a natural spiritual awareness. But subsequently, lacking encouragement, spiritual awareness in many cases has begun to wither by the teens.

Fifth and finally, schools need to change in a host of other ways too to enhance 'active' learning. The work of John Hattie of Auckland University shows that what really matters for learning is whether teachers themselves are learners, with a profound commitment to their own professional development, and whether the young are being engaged as active learners.

None of the gains will flow unless schools are consistently more orderly places than at present.

With that sense of order will come a shared sense of values. Students should respect their schools, and if that means they must face the ultimate sanction of being ejected from the school, then that must be the penalty when the child and the parent show they do not respect the school and its values.

Students themselves should be closely involved in the drawing up of the rules of their school. In the best, it is clearly understood that an offence is not only one against another child or adult, but against other students and the good name of the school to which they belong.

The practice of restorative justice championed by Charles Pollard when he was chief constable of Thames Valley Police in the 1990s, should be adopted throughout British schools. In this, the perpetrator and victim of a school crime are brought together. The offender has the chance to learn, grow and make amends.

No one is more important in promoting active learning in schools than teachers. Yet heads regularly find it hard to improve or, where necessary, to dismiss teachers. Unions, to their shame, have put the interests of (unsatisfactory) teachers above those of children at schools – who have no second chances.

In all these five ways, none costing vast sums, schools can be immeasurably improved, and at last succeed properly in educating the young for life.

At stake isn't whether we can afford to do all this but whether we can afford not to do so. Nothing is more important to invest in than education. It is the present. It is the future. We have no option but to change.



# CHILDREN ONLY HAVE ONE CHANCE TO SUCCEED

Dr Elizabeth Sidwell CBE

## What is important in education?

My passion for the past twenty years has been to raise standards in our most deprived communities. One poignant fact that has stayed with me throughout my career as a head teacher, and now underpins the work I do as the Schools Commissioner, is that children only have one chance, one very small window to succeed; and it's down to us – heads, leaders, local authorities, sponsors and free school proposers – to make sure we exploit that window to its full potential. So, in my mind, the most important thing in education is that the best is available to all our children, regardless of background.

To achieve this, of course, we need a steady flow of good leaders. We all know that great teachers make a great school and the most important job a head does is to appoint the staff. Similarly, the most important task of the sponsor or governors is to appoint the head. That is why we are supporting organisations like

Teach First, Teaching Leaders and Future Leaders. They are bringing fresh blood into the school system and are focusing on the most challenging schools. It is vital that we bring outstanding leaders to our most challenged schools because they understand what excellence looks like. These people will ensure that exciting and sustainable progress is made.

## What works?

Academies and free schools work. Their added independence means they have greater freedoms to innovate and raise standards. Independence is a state of mind that empowers. It enables heads to make decisions that are right for their students at any given time. New subjects may therefore be introduced, term dates varied and the length of the school day revised, if needed. I know this works – I have seen it and I have done it. At Haberdashers in New Cross Gate, we took over a severely underperforming school and used our independence to tailor the curriculum in year one to core subjects

and then built it up steadily. Now, five years on, there is the full range of subjects and over half of the pupils achieve five good GCSEs including English and maths. The school is oversubscribed by five to one.

I truly believe that by promoting more of this independence through the state sector we will go some way to closing the attainment gap and raising the aspirations of our children. Academies and free schools also promote a culture of partnership, challenge and collaborative working. I know from first-hand experience that this is key. We work best when we work together – in isolation we cannot share our expertise, stretch each other or come together for a shared purpose. The guiding principles of academies and free schools is that they will be at the heart of the community, collaborating and sharing facilities and expertise with other schools in the wider area. We now expect all high-performing schools applying for academy status to partner a weaker school.

### **What next for education?**

Despite the enthusiasm and commitment to turning around education at secondary level, there is much more to do, and quickly. There are around 1,400 primary schools below the floor standard, with approximately 200 having been below the floor for the last five years. That's hundreds of children who have been let down. Primary schools are the bedrock of our education system. Children deserve access to high-quality education from the first day they arrive at school. If we achieve this, then the transition to secondary and beyond will be that much smoother. From nursery to university should be our mantra.

Once again, this can only be achieved through schools working together to share expertise and primaries utilising the innovation of businesses, community leaders and faith groups. There are a number of federation models open to us: all primary, primary and secondary, or all through. Each offers advantages and is based on school-to-school collaboration.

Whilst primary and secondary schools and further and higher education institutions have their distinctive features, I would like to get to a place where they see themselves much more as part of one seamless and integrated system. I am convinced that universities working with colleges, colleges with secondaries, secondaries with primaries, state schools with the independent sector and the whole system utilising the entrepreneurial and innovation skills of business partnerships, faith groups and voluntary organisations is the way we will succeed. I want this to be the norm rather than the exception.

We already have some of the best schools in the world. Together, we now need to work in partnership and learn from the best there is to make sure all our children are given the education they deserve and the best possible start in life.



# COMPARE, CONTRAST, IMPROVE

Graham Stuart MP

**The dynamic, wealth creating, pastime enhancing world of 2011 owes a lot to the inventiveness, industrial might and intellectual curiosity of the people of the United Kingdom. It was the British who nurtured the industrial revolution, championed liberal democracy, and encouraged global trade. If any country is the leading architect of the modern order, then we must surely be the one.**

But history does not suggest that successful cultures and states necessarily remain that way. Civilizations from Ancient Greece to the Ottoman Empire have seen their fortunes rise and fall. And as we all sadly know, Britain has also seen better times. History, like politics, does not do gratitude well.

In today's world of uncertainty we have a choice. We can accept the inevitability of our decline, and be party to a self-fulfilling prophecy, or we can turn things around and determine to do better. Disraeli said, "Upon the education of the people of this country the fate of this country depends." That is even more true today when the link between educational attainment and long term economic growth is so well correlated. Yet vast numbers of our young people are unemployed, our children are the unhappiest in Europe, and educational outcomes are worse than Estonia and Poland.

After so much activity and expenditure in education over the last 25 years we need not only to act but, more importantly, act correctly. We need to combine a sense of urgency with caution about identifying easy answers and commitment to make sound policy on the basis of evidence. The Centre for Excellence in Outcomes in Britain and the What Works Clearinghouse in the United

States use research to try to make sense out of what works best in education and translate that into real world practise for teachers in the classroom. They, and other researchers, should be encouraged, promoted and given better access to policy makers.

We can also learn a lot from international comparison studies. The latest Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) results from the OECD say we have dropped from 17th to 25th in reading and 24th to 28th in maths, as compared to our performance in 2007. The stakes are high and that means that the decisions we take now will have a huge impact on the next generation. So what lessons can we learn from the PISA exercise? The first, and most important, is that no education system can be better than the quality of its teachers. The best systems attract the brightest individuals, provide first class training and then work hard to retain them. In the top performing jurisdictions such as Finland, Korea and Shanghai teaching is highly respected and entry is fiercely competitive.

The Children, Schools and Families Select Committee (the predecessor of the Education Committee which I now chair) reported in January 2010 that entry requirements for teachers in England were far too low and should be raised across the board. The Coalition

Government agreed and postgraduate trainees now need at least a lower second class degree while additional incentives are being put in place for the top performers including £9000 bursaries in shortage subjects such as physics and maths. In addition the Teach First programme for high performing graduates from top universities is being doubled in size and continues to spread geographically.

Raising the quality of the teaching workforce is the central task of the Department for Education. Every decision should be taken in that light and policy making should relentlessly focus on getting the best out of the teachers we have while raising the bar and the competition for future entries. Good teachers can have particular impact with the youngest children and the most disadvantaged. We know that children who fall behind at three, four or five tend to be left behind. That's why effective early intervention is so important, as Graham Allen and Dame Clare Tickell's reports make clear. The Education Bill will expand free nursery places to two year olds from low income families, the number of health visitors is set to be increased and all six years olds will have a phonics check to help pick out those with a reading problem. If we are to avert later educational difficulties and raise the attainment of the

poorest children then the focus on the early years must be maintained.

We spend a lot of time talking about the scale of public investment in education but international comparisons suggest its relative unimportance. PISA tells us that expenditure only explains 20% of the differences between educational systems and shows that other factors are more important. England has had one of the largest increases in expenditure over the last decade but has not shown commensurate improvement in standards. The Education Committee will follow the new pupil premium initiative particularly closely as it is not the allocation of the money which counts, but how it is used.

We know that the best systems manage high standards and equity. Poland rejigged its education system and removed an educational tier for lower performers. By insisting that all children can succeed they raised overall performance by the equivalent of half a school year. The government here needs, likewise, to remove hiding places for schools which are letting children down. The national curriculum review, implementation of Alison Wolf's report on vocational qualifications, encouragement of the English Baccalaureate and the removal of disproportionately high "equivalences" for non GCSEs should all work in that direction.

PISA, like the McKinsey report "How the world's most improved school systems keep getting better", indicates the importance of autonomy to school improvement. This broadly supports the Government's drive to set up more academies and free schools so that heads are better able to tailor their offering to meet the needs of the local population. When coupled with strong accountability, greater autonomy for heads correlates with improved performance, particularly when performance figures are publicly available.

The detail of how a much more autonomous school system in England will actually work in practice remains to be determined. In education early adopters tend to be the most enterprising and often the most successful. The Education Committee will look closely at whether academies really do help raise standards

for children in the long term. It's possible that the long tail of less exceptional schools may prove an impossible headache for the Department for Education if there is no real intermediary tier between the Secretary of State and potentially large numbers of struggling institutions. The challenges will not just be educational either as, necessarily, more autonomous schools will provide greater opportunities for the dishonest or the incompetent to spend public money. The Department has been taken aback by the success of its academies programme and has struggled to meet demand. Now it needs not just to resource the facilitation of academy status but ensure that the whole system is sustainable, particularly with the addition of primaries.

I have a particular interest in accountability systems. They are designed to influence behaviour and are successful in doing so. They can, however, drive perverse as well as positive actions on the part of schools. The Children, Schools and Families committee pointed out in its School Accountability report in 2009 that the measures then encouraged: "teaching to the test, narrowing the curriculum, an inappropriate focusing of resources on borderline candidates, and encouraging pupils towards 'easier' qualifications, all in an effort to maximise their performance data".

Cliff-edge performance measures can be particularly harmful as they do focus effort on borderline candidates at the expense of the brightest, who fail to be pushed, and of the weakest (and, often, the poorest) who tend to be ignored. The Government has committed to increase the data released in the league tables and in particular to highlight outcomes for the poorest children and those of the lowest performing 20% of pupils. This is welcome but the previous government's five good GCSEs (A\* to C) measure is being retained as the main accountability mechanism for secondary schools and will continue to cause some negative behaviours. Work should continue to ensure

that the progress and attainment of every child is given equal value within the system, not just in theory, but in the incentives given to heads and teachers.

While moving away from cliff-edge measures, we also need to do more to engage all types of learners, even if they aren't naturally drawn towards traditional academic pathways. One way of doing this is through apprenticeships, which are a key way of making sure that talented young people who may benefit from more practical, hands-on instruction can be successful. If we can keep young people engaged in education post-14, and provide them with multiple pathways to success, we will benefit an entire generation.

PISA has only been going since 2000 yet its results show that school systems can show significant improvement in as little as six years if the right policies are followed. The Coalition Government and its Secretary of State are driving changes which broadly accord with the lessons from PISA and, indeed, the select committee's reports. I think we can be hopeful that standards and opportunities for our youngsters will improve. Watch out for those PISA reports, though, because as Churchill once said, "however beautiful the strategy, you should occasionally look at the results".



# RECLAIMING EDUCATION FROM GOVERNMENT

Professor James Tooley

**The key question in education policy is: what should be the limits of government in education? I believe in liberal principles – including the principle that governments are justified only in restricting our freedoms when necessary to solve problems that we ourselves cannot solve on our own. Governments the world over have completely overstepped this mark.**

The UK is no exception. It matters not only in terms of freedoms though. By getting their fingers stuck into the education pie, governments have distorted and corrupted educational aims, kicking around an educational football prone to party political predilections. Government intervention in education has created a monolith with strong vested interest groups which resists desirable innovation and improvement.

The greatest priority, therefore, is to roll back the boundaries of the state in education, for the people to 'reclaim education' from the state, for the sake of freedom, access and quality. Some might think – although I doubt if many give this any thought at all – that without government we wouldn't have education at all. This is completely false – but a symbol of how successful government propaganda over the decades and centuries has been on this front. Historical evidence from a range of countries and settings – New York, England and Wales, New South Wales, for instance – shows that with only

marginal involvement from the state, there was near-universal provision. In England in 1858, as reported by the Newcastle Commission of 1861, only 4.5% of the school-aged population were not in school – with schools provided by church, philanthropy and a burgeoning for-profit private sector, including for the poor. Forster's Education Act of 1870 explicitly set out only to 'fill in the gaps' left by private provision, not to provide universal state education, for such was clearly not needed. And all this was achieved with only very small state subsidies in some schools from 1833.

Some might argue that Scotland is a counter example. Not at all. It is true that the Scottish government got in earlier on the educational act than England, with 'parochial schools' established from 1696 – with some public funding for buildings but teacher salaries paid out of school fees; however, by 1818, this system was creaking, with one survey showing fully two-thirds of schoolchildren in private un-endowed

schools, and the poor especially not well catered for by the parochial schools. And in 1818 the Scottish system was catering for more or less the same proportion of the population as in England – where there was zero state intervention. So all Scotland showed was that a much-vaunted (by historians of education policy) state intervention led to no increase in the population in schools, but allowed for about one-third of the population, certainly not the poorest, to attend subsidised schools; even in these, the significant part of the costs were still paid in school fees.

We don't have to rely on historical evidence either. In developing countries and emerging economies today – from India and China to countries across sub-Saharan Africa – where there is a dysfunctional state system, the private sector is responding to demand, including from the poor. In the slums and low income areas of Hyderabad and Patna, to take two disparate cities at either end of India, at least 65% of schoolchildren are in low-cost private schools,

which outperform the government schools at a fraction of the cost. In Lagos, Nigeria, my research found 75%, but some are now suggesting that it could be as high as 90%.

Without the state, people rise to the occasion. They show that they don't need state intervention in order to provide educational opportunities for the vast majority – perhaps only a small minority needs some targeted intervention, as was intended in 1870 in England.

But how can we roll back the state in education? There are reforms that have been tried around the world which, in general, where proper studies have been conducted, show some degree of success. These include reforms like charter schools in Canada and the United States, free schools in Sweden, targeted vouchers and tax credits in some US states, universal vouchers in Sweden and Chile, and academies in England and Wales. All these aim to give more power to the people, to parents and children, away from politicians, bureaucrats and unions. They've been shown to serve disadvantaged groups better than the alternatives, and even sometimes to stimulate the rest of the state sector to improvement.

The problem here is that these reforms have been largely rather small scale, heavily constrained and often bitterly fought over. It's difficult to roll back the state once it has become entrenched. While we can applaud those who try, I doubt if the major changes required in education will come from policy wonks convincing politicians to champion school

choice reform and finally getting these past the teacher unions and local authorities to make some favourable impressions on students' experience.

No, I think desirable change will come from elsewhere. In particular, from India and China. No one now dismisses the thought that what might happen in these countries will be irrelevant to what is happening here. No one should, as they will be respectively the third and first largest economies in the world by 2030 (with the United States wedged between them). But a revolution is happening in those countries that will have an enormous impact on us – in India especially, but true in China too. The revolution is the grassroots privatisation that is taking place in education. It's happening for the poor, as I indicated above. But it's also happening – even more so – for the lower middle classes, the middle middle classes and the higher classes. One senior government politician admitted to me that 'there is not one parent in India today who sends his or her child to a government school by choice'. The role of government in education is becoming increasingly marginalised. Very importantly, chains of schools are now emerging in quite large numbers – Ryan International, Delhi Public Schools, Gowtham Model Schools, Narayan International Schools, to name a few. And other education companies are emerging that are providing the research and development to bring far-reaching improvements to these chains. Companies such as Edurite, creator of excellent educational software, which was

bought by TutorVista, a distance tutoring company, in its turn bought by Pearson, now rebranded as a global education player.

These emerging chains and supporting education companies are extremely important: with education now meshed into both the discipline and the creativity of the market, cost-effective innovations are helping to improve educational quality and reach, and bring down educational price, making it potentially more affordable to many. And while some of these innovations may appear to be fads, unless they serve a very real educational purpose they will be quickly abandoned. Pressures from parents and students will see to that. Unlike in the state sector, where fads become set in stone, resistant to change.

My prediction is that these chains will continue to grow and expand. And they'll look to educational markets like those in the United Kingdom and United States and see that they can offer higher quality provision at a lower cost than is currently offered here. Then parents will start moving across, slowly at first, then in a migration to match that taking place in India today. And the politicians will start following, huffing and puffing as politicians do, to catch up with the trends, to take some credit for the emerging school choice. It may not happen in five years, but in twenty-five years I guess – and hope – that the rolling back of the state, the reclaiming of education, will be largely underway.



# THE REAL VALUE OF EDUCATION

Dr Bernard Trafford

## The vision

Education is central to building and maintaining a civilised, compassionate, functional society and must, like society itself, value and esteem everyone; not just intellectuals, wealth creators and leaders, but equally 'humbler' workers – shop, factory, cleaning and maintenance staff. It must honour the dexterity of the craftsman; the ingenuity of the engineer; the patience of the gardener.

## Opening doors

Education must equip all young people with skills and aptitudes not only for employment but also for enjoyment of their families and their leisure. Many jobs are humdrum but necessary, so future citizens must be able to explore active interests in order to live fulfilling lives. Even in an entirely routine job, they must be equipped to make the most of human interaction with colleagues or customers.

Education must furnish opportunities for all young people to develop their talents and potential; sample new things; follow paths previously unknown. As they get older and can move, with due guidance, from breadth of opportunity to an appropriate degree of specialism, they must be supported to pursue those chosen paths as far as they want to and realistically can.

The system must not place arbitrary barriers in the way of children, put pressure on them or force them into niches in society or the economy. It must open doors, and support and encourage them to pass through and benefit from what they find on the other side.

Education must allow and help young people to go where they can go, giving them authentic choices and a real voice in the decisions that affect them. They must be encouraged not to chop and change but to develop perseverance and the ability to stick at things. Resilience should be a central theme.

## Realism

No one can be good at everything; systems should not give young people the impression that they can be or raise false hopes. Teachers should not encourage them to follow courses when they know they will be unable to complete them satisfactorily, or to work for qualifications that have no currency in the world of work.

Realism must extend to helping young people to understand when they have reached their limit; not a barrier created by the system, but a realistic acceptance that they have gone as far as is appropriate for them down that particular path.

## High expectations and challenge

Teachers love that moment when children's faces light up, when they surprise themselves with what they can achieve, feeling fulfilled, proud and confident. The greater the difficulties overcome, the greater the sense of achievement and satisfaction. Our education system must aim to give all students both those individual moments and a sense of culmination.

Education must not shy away from risk; young people need more, not less, challenge in their education. They must be able to cope with failure, recognising how they learn from it. They must be given opportunities to experience that vital sense of challenge met; to aspire, absolutely, but realistically.

'Realistically' does not mean keeping everything safe and predictable – certainly not seeing target-setting and meeting benchmarks as any worthwhile aim. Education at its best sets a goal just beyond what pupils think possible, and allows them to find that they can achieve it. That is high expectation: aspiration yet an achievable ambition, given resilience and hard work. Children's resulting sense of flow and mastery is vital to their growth. The experience must be given to all, carefully judged so as to be appropriate to their levels, aptitudes and potential.

## The purpose of education

Society must recognise a successful education as one that sees young people leaving full-time education having developed – but retaining the capacity to go further in – skills, abilities, knowledge, emotional intelligence, maturity, self-knowledge, resilience, sense of self and empathy with others, so that they may play a full part in adult life, fulfilled as individuals and in their families and communities.

Education should not seek specifically to create the workforce of the future or to create an economic future for the country. But a successful education system which turns out well-equipped and assured young adults, at ease with themselves and with others, will contribute to all aspects of social well-being, including economic strength and prosperity.

## Things that work

- Diversity

The vision outlined above demands diverse pathways for children. The most successful schools specialise – they accept they cannot cater for all. Moreover, a monolithic, homogeneous structure discourages innovation and creativity.

The current diversification of school types is beneficial and should be extended. Above all, high quality, highly desirable schools must be created that provide a variety of routes as alternatives to the academic. There must be real creative thinking and courage among policymakers to free them from the shackles of a curriculum that, for many children, is excessively academic.

- Multiple pathways

It is appropriate for some young people to progress to university, but to set arbitrary participation targets is wrong. Nor should we set university education on a pedestal, for many there are other, more fitting routes into adult life and work. We must eradicate the

snobbery that values academic achievement while looking down on the practical and vocational.

By pushing them down academic (or pseudo-academic) routes, the system gives too many young people in the UK an experience of failure and alienation from an inappropriate form of education. Compulsory education to age 16 (rising to 18) is too full of academic content for many students. The inflexible, unimaginative nature of the National Curriculum imposes a watered-down-former-grammar-school education unsuitable for many, instead of providing real breadth of choice for everyone. The inspectorate as it currently operates exacerbates the problem, exerting pressure on schools to conform to the government's agenda of the moment.

- Issues of choice and selection

If the coalition's vision of school diversity is to bear fruit, we can no longer shy away from the issue of selection. The most academically successful schools in the country are among the best in the world – and they are academically selective. What did harm to the tripartite system created by the 1944 Education Act was not the existence of the grammar schools (though many were inflexible and complacent places) but lack of a viable or desirable alternative for those who were not selected for the academic route.

This should be a matter of shame for successive past governments. In a new world of multiple pathways, the alternatives to the academic route must be fantastic institutions sought after by parents and students alike. Vocational schools and colleges must have the best teaching and technical facilities, providing first-rate training leading to apprenticeships and jobs. The recent university technical colleges initiative should be monitored and, if successful, built on.

Where children have particular needs, whether exceptional ability or learning difficulties, their parents should not have to fight the system. Blanket insistence on mainstream inclusion of children with special needs is wrong. Children with a range of difficulties or disabilities must not be ostracised or sidelined, but they must be enabled to attend institutions that truly

meet their needs – they too must be appropriately challenged, not sidelined or wrapped in cotton wool.

- Debate and open-mindedness

Selection must therefore be the subject of a genuinely open-minded national debate. The discussion must cover a vast range of aptitudes beyond the simplistic academic/vocational divide: choice by parents and children must carry weight. Government must be prepared to work with the private sector. Where the best provision in an area is currently offered by an independent school, government should support children who would benefit, perhaps via a voucher system. That is real diversity of provision.

- Flexibility

Selection and assessment are not foolproof. There must be flexibility to allow children to change track when they need to. Schools must be as willing to relinquish as to accept pupils. And in schools and colleges of all types, the courses and qualifications offered must have validity and value.

The curriculum must be flexible. The syllabus should follow the child, not vice versa. Children who have not 'got it' at the age of 8 must no longer be left behind by inflexible literacy or numeracy programmes. Rigid, prescriptive programmes must no longer encourage unimaginative teaching. The previous government launched but failed to follow through a plan for one-to-one coaching for children left behind; instead, primary programmes of study and the teaching of them should be more flexible and child-focused.

- Independence: freedom and trust

Governments talk independence but rarely grant it to any extent. Freedoms given to Labour's new academies were swiftly rescinded. Inspection, 'guidelines' such as the English Baccalaureate, targets and benchmarks all belie the coalition's claims of encouraging schools to act independently and in their own best interests.

The success of school heads dubbed 'outstanding' generally lies in their individual confidence and refusal to bow to difficulties or government pressure; but hero

heads are in short supply. Government must accept responsibility for the negative effects and the perverse incentives created by constant pressure. Independence must mean real power and freedom genuinely given to schools. Trusted to do so, schools can pursue their strengths to the benefit of their students.

- The system envisioned

The education system envisioned will be vibrant and confident, achieving a balance never seen before: confidence without complacency; aspiration balanced with realism; choice and flexibility so that young people can opt and be chosen (a fraught balance to be struck) for pathways appropriate to them. Schools will specialise in what they are good at.

Children will pursue and gain qualifications because they are right for them and have real validity in the adult world of work; never because governments (or their schools and colleges) push them to achieve particular targets. Nothing will be done formulaically or following some crazy regulation or government initiative. Institutions will have the highest expectation of, and aspiration for, all children according to their needs and aptitudes; no platitudes, but realism and total commitment; freedom for professionals to do the job as they know best; and government empowering and enabling, not controlling or limiting.

In that vision we might indeed manage to heal our 'broken society' – and build instead a civilised, compassionate and functional one.



# DIGITAL NATIVES IN A HYPER-CONNECTED WORLD

Greg Whitby

## **What is important in education for this country?**

Marc Prensky, the man who coined the phrase 'digital natives', recently observed that 'one can change almost everything about the "system" and still not provide an education that interests our students and gets them deeply engaged in their own learning or that teaches all of our students what they need to be successful in their 21st century lives.'

The 'system' that Prensky is referring to is the well-known industrial model of schooling – the one-size-fits-all approach where students sit in rows, teachers are at the front and content is delivered en masse. This is the system of education that governments and reformers have spent decades trying to fix and, often, improve.

We're now in the knowledge age or what journalist Thomas L. Friedman refers to as a 'hyper-connected world'. Our schools must reflect the reality of their social and digital contexts.

The challenges facing the UK's education system are no different to the challenges facing education systems around the world. As expenditure on schooling continues to increase exponentially, student achievement and engagement is flatlining. It requires an urgent rethink of the very nature of schooling

in a contemporary and connected world; where the arbitrary lines between learner and teacher are replaced with networks of learners. The greatest challenge we face is making schooling relevant for today's learners living in today's world.

If the industrial model of schooling was built around the standard delivery of content and uniformity, then a new model of schooling must be built around the pillars of learning and diversity supported by cloud computing.

The reason why there are greater expectations and demands on schools today to deliver quality schooling is not just of relevance to the 'digital natives' argument; rather, the world students are living in absolutely requires them to be collaborators and critical thinkers – skills that are needed to succeed in a knowledge age.

When we talk about learning in today's world, it must be in the context of the development of the student, not the class or the school. It is a professional commitment that each learner is an individual with different backgrounds, abilities, interests and learning styles. Personalising learning requires teachers knowing each of their students and responding to these differences using flexible strategies and appropriate modalities. It shifts the focus of teachers from transmitters

of information to pedagogical designers and curriculum constructors using today's technologies.

When the goal of schooling is personalising the learning, diversity becomes the norm. Diversity accepts that there is no one path to knowledge, no typical learner, no standard curriculum or programme, no one data set or assessment to measure student progress. Diversity empowers teachers to look for new ways of providing challenging and rewarding educational experiences for every student, which are 'personally meaningful and intellectually rigorous'.

## **What works?**

Discussions about schooling in today's world should not be focused on technology or how to fix the system but on the quality of teaching. We know from research over the past decade that the quality of teaching has a positive influence on student learning outcomes.

A knowledge-based economy, according to Harvard Professor Richard Elmore, requires a knowledge-based teaching profession. Elmore argues that this is done by 'investing heavily in the knowledge and skills of all teachers at all stages of their careers'. An example is Singapore's teacher education programme, which is being designed to engage 'candidates in the kind of inquiry

and reflection in which they are expected to engage their students in the schools, so that they can teach for independent learning, integrated project work, and innovation’.

It highlights the importance of teachers being critical and creative thinkers, continually looking for ways of improving their practice so as to enrich outcomes by making learning relevant. It also highlights the importance of schools becoming effective learning organisations with teachers engaged on a daily basis in productive dialogue, teamwork, problem-solving, reflection and shared learning.

In 2007, McKinsey released *How the World’s Most Improved School Systems Keep Getting Better* observing that the quality of an education system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers (and leaders). The focus therefore of education systems must be on building the knowledge, skills and capabilities of its leaders and teachers at all stages to deliver quality schooling in today’s world.

### **What next for education?**

What is next for education is dependent on what we do now. It calls for teachers to revisit the critical questions of what, why and how in the context of today’s world. Who are our learners? What are their needs and interests? What possibilities are opened up by cloud-based technologies?

Author and blogger, Will Richardson recently wrote: ‘The Web and its accompanying

technologies, as well as games and mobile devices we’re all carrying around, are driving a surge in personalized learning ... We live in a world where we can literally create our own learning networks in which we pull in content and mentors and collaborators to participate with us. If we know what we’re doing, we can create our own classrooms, our own curriculum and to some extent, fashion our own online learning portfolio for others to evaluate and assess.’

We already have the technologies available to personalise learning and create experiences and environments designed around the needs of students. This dimension is already being cultivated through the customisation of a curriculum in real-time, delivering exactly what students need through the most appropriate and effective modalities.

This technology will enable students to take greater control of their learning as they become more confident creators, contributors and collaborators within and beyond the school environment. For teachers, it will enable them to network into more expansive learning communities where teachers continually share, learn and reflect on their practice and there is a sense of what is possible.

As cloud computing becomes more pervasive, it will blur the boundaries between the physical and virtual, between what happens in schools and at home, between the teacher and learner and between learners and the way in which they acquire knowledge.

It’s no exaggeration to say that we stand at the beginning of a transformation of schooling. A successful re-imagining of what schools might yet become will lead us into a deeper, more practical understanding of how learning can be effectively nurtured in today’s world.



# TEACH FIRST – THE POWER OF EDUCATION TO CHANGE LIVES

Brett Wigdortz

**Nine years ago, in 2002, Teach First was founded as a charity with a clear mission – to address educational disadvantage and close the educational achievement gap between children from higher income and lower income families. Much has changed over the past decade – six secretaries of state for education have been in post; the department responsible has had three names; Cool Britannia has come and gone; and the Queen has moved from celebrating her Gold to her Diamond Jubilee.**

There have also been many improvements in education in Britain, even over the last few years. In 2006, 44% of young people achieved five A\*–Cs in their GCSEs, including English and maths. That percentage rose to 55% in 2010. I've visited over a hundred schools since Teach First began and many of the schools I visited during our earlier years, places children from less advantaged backgrounds were forced to attend, were, to paraphrase the words of one minister at the time, schools you wouldn't want to touch with a barge pole. Test results were below poor and it was clear that very little actual educating was taking place. There was no doubt within a few minutes of observation that the children were being woefully failed by the adults who were responsible for their education.

Luckily, many of these schools have changed for the better. Some have seen substantial improvements. Schools like Burlington Danes Academy and Bethnal Green Technology College have gone from less than 20% to around an 80% five A\*–C GCSE pass rate in only the past few years. However, most have merely come up to a higher level of mediocrity, too content with results that schools with a more advantaged intake would never allow, and doing little to actually change the educational trajectory of the children under their care.

The data bears this out. The stark reality is that with 16% of pupils who are eligible for free school meals progressing to university, compared to 96% of young people educated in independent schools, the link between low family income and poor educational attainment remains greater here than in almost any other developed country.

One issue at the very heart of this is the gulf between these pupils' access to opportunities and resources. For example, on average, nearly £4,000 more is spent per pupil in the private sector than the state sector. This gap is present in the home lives of children as well. Just one example is that 28% of those from low income families have access to the internet, a huge educational resource, compared to 85% from high income backgrounds.

However, I believe even more important is the gulf in the expectations society has of them.

A recent Financial Times opinion piece pooched the idea that teachers could change children's education trajectories by saying: 'teachers and pupils are like jockeys and horses; even Lester Piggott couldn't drive a lame nag to victory'. I have heard similar beliefs even from some educational professionals whose job it is to change this situation.

One head teacher I spoke with recently was exceptionally proud that his school was able to get 40% of his children achieving five A\*–Cs in their GCSEs. When I asked him how many of his leavers made it to university, he couldn't think of any and dismissively said: 'You need to be realistic. No matter how much you polish rocks, you're not going to make diamonds.'

Too many of us instinctively believe these statements – even subconsciously – and are happy with lower expectations for other children than we would ever accept for our own.

This has to change.

The last nine years have taught me that these beliefs are nonsense. There are many schools that are proving them wrong day in and day out – effectively changing the educational and therefore life trajectories of their pupils. If the Burlington Danes and Bethnal Green Technology Colleges can do it, then why can't all of them? Education can change children's lives. It needs to change children's lives. It can raise their aspirations, achievements and access to opportunities in a way that nothing else can. If a school is not doing this, then it cannot claim to be successful.

We know that education levels are directly linked to a person's happiness, earning power and even health and longevity. Against the backdrop of the riots in August 2011, we have been reminded anew of this. Research released in the subsequent weeks by the Institute of Public Policy Research found that, in almost all of the worst-affected areas, educational attainment was significantly lower than the national average.

This situation cannot possibly lead to a fair society, to a fair Britain. Today, educational disadvantage remains one of the UK's most destructive and pervasive problems.

This is why, in 2002, we founded Teach First – to work with others and be part of the solution.

Teach First believes that, at its heart, this is a leadership challenge. Not a challenge just of school leadership teams, but leadership from every adult working with pupils. The best leaders somehow find ways to get people to achieve things they originally didn't think possible. The best teachers, and I've seen them in almost every school I have visited, do this on a daily basis.

Back in 2002, almost everyone in the country believed something that was fundamentally false – that, bar a few exceptions, there was no way the UK's best young leaders would want to teach in schools facing challenging circumstances, and that there was no way those schools, and the pupils in them, would accept those teachers.

A year later, 186 Teach First participants entered schools in London. This year, Teach First was rated the seventh most prestigious place for a graduate to work by The Times and 6,000 applicants, from a broad range of universities, applied for 787 places teaching in schools in low-income communities across the country as part of the 2011 cohort. They are united behind our mission of addressing educational disadvantage and most stay in teaching long term. They are bucking a trend

which sees only one in ten consider teaching in a school facing challenging circumstances.

In July 2011, all forty-four elements of their training were marked as 'outstanding' by Ofsted. An evaluation by the University of Manchester, completed in November 2010, found a significant correlation between those schools in challenging circumstances which partnered with Teach First and improved pupil achievement.

So pessimism about the future really should be tempered by the fact that great teachers can, and do, make a difference.

But what works in terms of helping an individual to become a great teacher? There are four elements that we think are critical. They're not rocket science, but they work when we apply them consistently.

Firstly, we are working to ensure that the candidates with the best leadership potential are attracted to the teaching profession. For us this means recruitment from a wide range of universities, not just Russell Group. We also focus our selection based on an applicant's ability to demonstrate relevant subject knowledge and a range of competencies including: humility, respect and empathy, interaction, knowledge, leadership, planning and organising, problem-solving, resilience and self-evaluation. While our academic requirements are high – 2.1 degree or above (300 UCAS points) – showing that you have the right personal attributes to really engage with a classroom of pupils is critical.

Secondly, Teach First is committed to supporting participants to raise pupil achievement, aspiration and access to opportunities – to, in essence, take personal responsibility for each child's learning. Last year, 88% of Uxbridge High pupils gained five or more A\*-C grades at GCSE, or 64% with English and maths. This year, the school was rated outstanding by Ofsted. Head teacher, Peter Lang,

attributes the new-found success of the school in no small part to the contribution made by Teach First teachers, saying: 'They have helped us to create a culture of achievement and we do not expect any of our children to underachieve now. This is the mantra of the Teach First and of our school.'

Thirdly, Teach First benefits from Initial Teacher Training in partnership with fourteen schools of education, school-based mentoring and partnerships with dozens of other training partners including businesses, charities and international expertise. We would strongly recommend the benefits of those support systems for any teacher training route. In this way, our participants do not learn in isolation – they draw on the experience and expertise of the wider teaching community.

Finally, Teach First and our teachers share a strong mission-focus and common values. We all believe that educational disadvantage can be addressed and children from all backgrounds can succeed at the same level. We are united by our values of collaboration, commitment, excellence, integrity and leadership. This serves as a focal point for our entire community.

As we approach our tenth anniversary year, we have been exploring just what is needed to address educational disadvantage. We believe that this is not just a question of educational attainment but, in future, pupils should be entitled to a rounded, holistic education, focused on literacy and numeracy, yes, but concerned too with aspiration and overall well-being. In this vision, all young people have equal opportunities to access further education or training, whether that is at university or through an apprenticeship.

The last nine years are evidence of the significance of partnership and of refusing to accept that something is impossible. It is indicative of the fact that great teachers never fail in the high expectations that they have of themselves, that they have in their pupils and in the power of education to transform lives. Since Teach First began, we know that we have changed pupils' lives and played a part in change within schools. Now we want to change society, working with others to rewrite the story of educational disadvantage forever.



# PERSPECTIVES ON EDUCATION IN WALES

Hywyn Williams

## **There are two key issues facing education in Wales**

First and foremost, we must be able to develop well-rounded, caring and responsible citizens across the whole of our society. This requires placing great emphasis on well-being and personal development. This is, of course, true for all young people, but our society has to accept that to achieve this to a greater extent than is presently the case, we have to intervene early with whole families, especially vulnerable families, in a targeted, coordinated and differentiated way. Whilst there are many initiatives and funding streams attempting to do just this, they are too uncoordinated and hence the impact is often lower than the scale of the investment. This is why our attempts to tackle poverty over the last few years have not been as successful as they should have been. In Wales, there is a genuine hope that the extension of Flying Start and, more recently, the Families First initiative will address this, to some extent at least. Unless this issue is dealt with effectively, we will never break the cycle of deprivation and the huge demands this places on the public purse, not to mention the integral link this has to the achievement group.

The second key issue is raising achievement at child and classroom level – a seriously important and necessary matter. To do this effectively, it is crucial that effort is concentrated in the right place, namely the classroom. For too long, the focus has been on distant structural and policy issues such as the slow introduction of national policies and

strategies, which have not reached the classrooms quickly enough, or at all in some cases, and hence not impacted on standards sufficiently. These two priorities are intrinsically linked; one will not happen without the other. But too often in our policy development work and structural models at national, local and school level, the intimacy of these issues is not considered or designed into working models adequately. All too frequently the problem with policy and initiative development is that the child is not the unit of analysis, hence the way we go about delivering improvement is, by definition, not child or family-centric enough. The unit of analysis is usually the system – be it at national, local authority (LA) or school level.

Introducing improved focus, leadership and accountability can improve all these systems and there is good evidence that this has happened in LAs and schools, but there is a ceiling to that improvement unless the child is really and unrelentingly the unit of all analysis. Nowhere is such detailed analysis more necessary than in disadvantaged communities. We are extremely good at analysing broad indicators of deprivation (usually based on free school meals) and specific challenges to do with disabilities, which is absolutely right and proper, but how often do we consider disadvantage as a real issue? The three issues (deprivation, disability and disadvantage) are different challenges faced by children and families and on an individual basis. We only really have structures and plans to deal with the second matter referred to above, and we capture this

usually under the banner of special educational needs. We need to drill down further to really work out how deprivation and disadvantage impacts on learning.

## **Better definition of roles and responsibilities required**

In order to address some of these challenges, careful consideration has to be given to the roles and responsibilities within the whole education system. Too much uniformity and direction from central and local government, at times, leads to a constraining one-size-fits-all mindset. The further your focus of analysis is from the child, the more generalist it becomes. Too often the developments that stem from such analyses are aimed, in a blunt way, at tackling a general problem in a generalised way. A problem in one place means that there is a problem everywhere, and therefore let's change the whole system. This approach, together with too much micro-management, can lead to a depression in creativity and innovative professionalism. Too much prescription at an inappropriate point in the system stifles progress.

The role of national government has to be one of setting a vision and an accountability framework, and, yes, identifying and disseminating good practice. As long as the accountability framework is prescriptive enough, but not overly so, the rest should be down to schools with the support of a local structure, be it an LA or regional structure. If the child is to be the unit of analysis, then schools as organisations have to be the point of effort and

focus. The introduction of the School Effectiveness Framework in Wales took three years but has had little or no impact on schools. In fact, teachers and head teachers, like some directors, have been and are still vague about what it really means. Although a much clearer focus is now emerging, it has yet to impact directly on schools. Is it therefore any wonder that Wales still lagged behind in the 2010 PISA world education ranking report? There is potential for this hierarchical lethargy to get worse with the need to, quite rightly, consider collaboration between LAs as we attempt to address efficiency and improvement agendas. However, if the model we develop places children and schools at the heart of any supportive structures, such a risk can be avoided and the greater efficiencies and additional capacities created by a 'beyond boundary' solution to supporting educational improvement has the potential to be a sustainable and powerful way forward.

With a contracting LA function stemming from public service cuts, additional delegation of budgets and the protection offered by the Welsh government pledge to safeguard school budgets, it is unavoidable that more money and accountability will go to governors and schools. This is the right approach. However, such a strategy does carry risks, the main one being that additional delegations can lead to school leaders being distracted from the core business of standards and pedagogy and driven more towards sorting out fringe issues, such as asset management, human resources and other support services. In order to avoid this, capacity not only has to shift from the LA

to schools, but to be really effective at addressing such issues, schools have to work in clusters, sharing staff expertise in order to create local capacity and protecting the fundamental role of the lead education professional (the head) as the standards and pedagogical powerhouse for the school. This is particularly relevant in rural and small school settings.

### **Real leadership for learning**

Such a shift has the potential to deal with the reducing role of LAs, the increasing role of larger functional units such as regional consortia, whilst also protecting schools' capacity to concentrate on the core business of learning. This point emphasises the key dependency on the professional leader as the individual that needs to be freed to tackle the improvement agenda for the school, concentrating on the quality of teaching, tackling classroom variability, creating the right ecosystem for learning, securing robust distributed leadership across the school, maximising the use of talented staff, both teaching and non-teaching, whilst also being an optimistic storyteller about how things can get continually better.

### **Believing in our philosophies for learning**

As we progress into securing a better future for education in Wales, we must make sure that we have confidence in our philosophies for learning. In the early years, we must let the foundation phase become properly embedded and not become too concerned if the results at Key Stage 1 stagnate or dip. It is easy to measure what is easy to measure, which can equate to measuring the

wrong thing. If the foundation phase philosophy is the right one, and I believe it is, then we may well reap the benefits, not at age 7, but at age 11 or even 14 and beyond. It is not a quick-fix solution; we must pause and let the positive effects materialise over time. The same goes for the diversification of the curriculum offer at Key Stage 4. This has created much needed motivational energy that reduces the risk of disengagement and dissatisfaction amongst learners, keeping them in school, securing qualifications for them and an interest in furthering their learning beyond 16. Clearly, such diversification has to be balanced with achievement in the key skills. But it is just that – a balance. There is a danger that the positives stemming from the 14–19 agenda can be stifled by a reversion to concentrating too greatly on qualifications in the key skills, which can lead to a less attractive offer for young people. The current approach to banding schools can bring about the narrowing of the curriculum – an unintended or maybe an intended consequence? We clearly do urgently need to improve Wales' global standing, but this has to be done in a way that is balanced and not reactive in its approach. We need an approach that meets the important elements of my two key priorities – not one or the other, but both.

To conclude, we have to trust the adopted approaches in Wales in the foundation phase and in the 14–19 agenda – they are and will continue to make a difference. We must also allow schools to creatively concentrate on developing a skills-based motivational curriculum for our learners between age 7 and 14, whilst not allowing

simplistic measurements to derail our established philosophies for learning. Timely and well-coordinated interventions are needed at the child and family level to secure a seamless link between inclusion, equality and the standards agenda. Above all, we must make the child the centre of all analyses and impact assessment.



# THE SERIOUS BUSINESS OF EDUCATION: ENTREPRENEURIAL TEACHING AND LEARNING

Honor Wilson Fletcher MBE

## What is important in education for this country?

Firstly, it must be fair. Everyone should have access to a good education that gives them the best possible start in life, no matter where they live or what their background. A good education is one that gives young people the skills and qualifications they need, which instils confidence and prepares them for the challenges life presents, enabling them to fulfil their full potential. Students with a good educational experience are 'life ready'. It should not be seen as 'fortunate' if someone has a good education; this must be the expectation for all young people.

Now, more than ever, we need students to leave school with an entrepreneurial approach to life. By this I don't just mean weekly enterprise lessons or an occasional visit from a business leader offering inspiration to students. We need something more innovative, substantive and transformational. We need entrepreneurship to be put right at the heart of the education system.

The Confederation of British Industry recently commented that while businesses do not expect students to arrive at the door 'job-ready' they do want young people who are literate, numerate and have good employability skills, alongside good qualifications. The education sector reasonably argues that its role is to prepare people with a broader set of skills than those needed for the workplace. The Aldridge Foundation believes that making education more entrepreneurial is the key to both. It contextualises learning, contributes

to improving standards and opens up greater opportunities for young people.

We don't think that everyone ought to leave school and set up a business (although we want to help those that do). We do believe that by teaching people key entrepreneurial attributes, we will give them the tools they need to improve their opportunities and achieve whatever they want in life, no matter who they are or where they were born.

To us, to be entrepreneurial is to be prepared to challenge the status quo, to be fearless about trying things and taking risks – with an appetite for investigating new approaches if their first attempts don't succeed. Entrepreneurial people are passionate about what they do and prepared to take risks, thinking creatively to achieve their goals. Entrepreneurial people are good at working in a team and recognising the skills of others.

One of our youngest students recently described our approach to being entrepreneurial as 'having a dream and making it happen for yourself'.

## What works?

With three academies open and two more to follow over the next couple of years, we are putting our ideas into practice every day. The academies we sponsor place the teaching of key entrepreneurial attributes at the heart of everything they do. We define these core attributes as problem-solving, risk-taking, teamwork, creativity, determination and passion. We reward these positive behaviours in

students and staff, and integrate them into lesson planning. They also have an impact on the style of teaching, lending themselves well to practical, hands-on approaches to learning.

We recruit entrepreneurial principals – inspirational leaders who understand how entrepreneurial teaching has the power to transform lives. We include a Director of Specialism on each academy's leadership team who is responsible for ensuring that entrepreneurship runs through the DNA of the academy.

Our teachers are being given the training and the freedom to be entrepreneurial, and are encouraged to try new ideas and find different ways of addressing issues. Stimulating risk-taking behaviours in staff is as vital as fostering them in students. We work on the basis that the real world is the most valuable 'toolkit' for education – ensuring students engage with it at every opportunity. We challenge students with inspirational visits which they actively contribute to, rather than passively consume, taking on transformative and rewarding experiences outside of their everyday experience. We also greatly value the contribution that professionals who are not teachers can make in preparing our students for life.

And we make it real, bringing the entrepreneurial attributes to life. In Darwen, in Lancashire, we have students with a real talent for art. In the past their work would have been displayed around school at the end of term, but the students came up with

a completely different idea. They found an empty shop in the town centre, refurbished it and put not just their own art on display but invited other local artists to do the same, and they sold their work.

Through this they learned how to develop a business plan, how to promote their work and win customers and, most importantly, they learned that they could do it for themselves. In an area with high unemployment, this is life changing.

Our academies are also hubs for business and community activities. Each has a 'Creates' entrepreneurship centre with ready-to-use facilities where students can develop ideas and put them into practice. Local people also benefit from the facilities, at low rent and with all the support they need to get started. By working alongside other people, students can share ideas and experiences and learn from their mistakes more quickly.

Our approach is working. Our first two academies have seen impressive increases in the number of students securing five or more GCSEs at A\*-C including English and maths. Brighton Aldridge Community Academy has just announced an increase of 64% and the best results in the school's history. At Darwen Academy, 56% of students achieved this benchmark, up from below 30% when we first took over.

And success is breeding success. The first five students of the new sixth form in Darwen to apply for university all secured places – these were not just the academy's first students to go to university, they were the first members of their families to do so. This year, twenty applied and they have all secured places.

### **What next?**

If entrepreneurial education is to be the key to unlocking learning, we should apply this way of working in every school. Education is risk-averse and, as the chairman of Google recently noted, in danger of becoming anachronistic for many young people as a preparation for 21st century life.

### **We need to start at the very beginning.**

If we are to create entrepreneurial students, then we need entrepreneurial teachers. We want to see teacher training overhauled, so that teachers themselves are taught how entrepreneurial attributes can help them achieve great results in the classroom.

To achieve this, the new National College of School Leadership should promote the development of an entrepreneurial mindset and point to the benefits of innovation and the use of entrepreneurship as a cross-curricular whole-school theme at the heart of teacher training.

We know that when entrepreneurial thinking is put right at the core of the curriculum in a school it can deliver great improvements, so we would like to see it at the heart of the National Curriculum, with Ofsted monitoring the use of entrepreneurial teaching methods as a key feature of their inspection programme. This should also improve the rigour and quality of the entrepreneurial teaching and learning on offer, and counteract the negative impact of some of the mixed bag of resources and approaches currently in use.

We should also start younger. Our recent report on entrepreneurship and education pointed to the receptiveness of primary-aged children to entrepreneurial approaches to learning. Let's ensure that as young children establish their independence, learn new skills for life and acquire the ability to use those skills, they do so with the knowledge of how powerful and important those attributes are. Better preparing children for the challenges of secondary education through early acquisition of the core entrepreneurial attributes will, we believe, reduce the negative impact of transition, and will reduce the 'fallout' of children becoming disengaged with education as it becomes more challenging.

We think that instead of the business world criticising education for not producing students with the right 'job-ready' skills, they should get stuck in and help – understanding the challenges and contributing at a strategic level. Mentoring and work experience are valuable, but contributing to the development of a curriculum 'for working life' could be priceless.

Finally, when debating the future of education we need to reflect on how this must look to increasingly baffled parents, trying to work out the difference between all the new approaches currently being rolled out. We must watch our language, be clear and precise, and be better at helping parents work out what 'good' looks like for their children. We risk spending too much time talking to each other, and not enough talking to our parents and carers. Ultimately, like them, we are only interested in what works, not what it is called.

The more active, confident, independent and engaged young people there are in our schools and the communities around them, the more the rest of us will benefit, and the more stable, dynamic and productive our society will be.



# PUTTING PARENTS IN THE DRIVING SEAT

Rachel Wolf

**In September 2011 we gained a glimpse into the future of education. Across the country twenty-four 'free schools' – established by the hard work of parents, teachers and charities – welcomed pupils for the first time. With many created from scratch in just over a year, these schools clearly reflect the aspiration, dynamism and creativity which can be harnessed by putting parents in the driving seat.**

Under the previous government's academies programme, it took five years to start twenty-four new schools. By next year, we expect at least one hundred free schools. More importantly, these schools will inject innovation and higher standards into the education system, playing a crucial role in shaping the education system of tomorrow.

Many schools already do a fantastic job of helping children to reach their potential. But too often you need money to access them – moving into the right catchment area or paying the fees at an independent school. These are options many simply can't afford. Free schools will give all parents the options that have previously been the preserve of the wealthy.

That is why we have seen enormous demand for free schools. Thousands of parents are already working with teachers and charities to develop schools which will give their

children the education they deserve. And far from free schools being created for the 'sharp-elbowed middle classes', most of this interest is coming from deprived communities across the country – in Bradford, Durham, Rotherham and Newham.

Free schools will also release a huge amount of innovation into the education system. Instead of being told what to teach by politicians, schools will now be able to decide what kind of school enables children to make the most of their talents. Rather than having to jump through educational hoops, teachers will be able to develop curriculums which inspire in pupils a genuine passion for learning.

This diversity is evident in the first wave of free schools. Some schools are offering a traditional academic curriculum, others a Montessori model and one an extended day with year-round childcare. Harnessing this

creativity, free schools won't just offer parents greater choice, but will allow our education system to develop new ideas and practices which could benefit all children.

It is the combination of freedom to innovate and genuine parental choice which explains why free schools will drive up educational standards. Subject to the same inspection and exam processes, they will be as accountable as any other school for their performance. However, the freedom to set their own curriculum, extend school hours and pay great teachers the salary they deserve means free schools can dedicate themselves to helping pupils achieve in whatever way is necessary.

This transformation will be aimed at the areas where it is needed most, with half of the free schools opening in 2011 located in the 30% most deprived communities. One example is the King's Science Academy, which will

serve one of the poorest neighbourhoods in Bradford. This free school was started by a local teacher who believed children in the community deserved better. We are working with hundreds of other teacher groups who want to address educational disadvantage by opening and leading schools.

The impact of free schools will also extend beyond their classrooms, as their successes drive up standards in the schools around them. With parents able to choose a great school down the road, other local schools will have the incentive to improve. This has already started to happen: one local authority where a free school is opening has finally taken action over its failing schools. Why? Because parents are no longer forced to send their children there.

By putting the interests of parents and pupils over those of unions and bureaucrats, free schools have attracted some predictable opposition. But despite this I know they can work. Why? Because there is overwhelming evidence they have done so elsewhere. And by learning lessons from studies conducted around the world, we have the opportunity to introduce a generation of new schools which are even more successful.

We know from the experience of charter schools in the United States that free schools can have a huge impact on pupils in the poorest areas. Professor Caroline Hoxby of Stanford University found that charter schools in New York reduced the rich-poor gap by 86%

in maths and 66% in English, whilst Professor Josh Angrist of Massachusetts Institute of Technology concluded that Boston charter schools have a consistently positive impact on student achievement in both subjects. Many of these charter schools were established by young, idealistic teachers who wanted to transform education; precisely the kind of groups we are already working with at the New Schools Network.

Evidence from Sweden also shows that free schools can help other schools to improve. In Sweden parents are able to go to their existing local school and say 'if you don't improve, we will set up a free school'. Usually, the school improves. Studies in Sweden have shown that the creation of free schools improves all schools in the area.

Equally compelling is the evidence from McKinsey's study of twenty-five education systems around the world. It showed that any country that freed schools from central control and got better quality teachers into the classroom could make rapid improvements in their performance. By liberating schools from the interference of local authorities, allowing them to decide how they achieve their results and controlling how they structure their staffing, that is exactly what free schools can do for education in this country.

In the next five years the first free schools should be joined by hundreds of others across the country. Offering a range of educational models and curriculums, they will give the choice of a good local school to thousands of parents. Established by committed parents, teachers and charities, they will begin to address educational disadvantage in some of our most deprived communities and drive up standards in schools around them.

In twenty years time, I believe every parent will know that if they are unhappy with their child's education, there is an alternative. Free schools in the most deprived areas should have helped dramatically to narrow the gap between rich and poor and their effect on other schools will have raised standards across the system. By constantly innovating, free schools will ensure our country is at the cutting edge of educational thought and performance in the future.



# THE EDUCATION WE NEED: PREPARING GLOBAL ENTREPRENEURS, NOT EMPLOYEES

Professor Yong Zhao

**Changing the questions we ask is the most important thing in education today. What should be included in the National Curriculum? Should there be national assessments and league tables? How do we hold schools and teachers accountable? Why are other countries ahead of us? These hotly debated questions dominate today's educational conversations and appear to be important. But in reality they are the wrong questions to ask and, as a result, trying to answer them is a complete waste of time and resources.**

These questions are wrong because at best they may bring about incremental mechanical fixes that lead to possible improvement of the existing machinery, but what we need is a complete paradigm shift. We know perfecting the horse wagon won't get us to the moon; we should also know that perfecting the existing education regime won't deliver us the education we need for the future.

The current education paradigm is founded on the belief that the primary function of education is to equip children with the knowledge and skills required to find gainful employment. Thus the first task of education is to define what knowledge and skills are worth teaching, as Herbert Spencer did in his essay 'What Knowledge is of Most Worth' in 1859. Today's attempt to define a national curriculum is very much a continuation of Spencer's line of thinking.

Once the required knowledge and skills are defined, schools are required to dispense them in the most efficient way. Standards and accountability measures are then put in place to ensure that a child has acquired the right amount of the prescribed knowledge at a pace expected by authorities. International comparative assessments and national league tables were introduced to show which nation or school has the most effective knowledge transmission system with the hope that those less effective can learn about the engineering of better systems.

This logic works fine for closed societies with slow and little changes because a group of smart people can predict relatively easily what the future will be like based on past experiences and thus determine what knowledge and skills are needed. It also works tolerably in a society where the predominant economical mode is mass production

and standardisation, which requires lots of people with similar skills and knowledge and values standardisation and conformity. It also works well in a society where knowledge is not easily accessible and skills are possessed by a few experts.

But such a society no longer exists, at least in today's developed world. Interconnectedness and interdependence brought about by globalisation have made all societies open to outside influences. Jobs can be easily sent to other countries. People cross national boundaries in increasing numbers. Ideas travel around the globe at light speed. Technological changes continue to accelerate. All evidence suggests that Alvin Toffler was right: we have entered the 'third wave' society, where the industrial-era creed of standardisation is no more.

As a result, it has become increasingly difficult to predict the future, to know what jobs will be

available in a given society because they can be outsourced or replaced by technology, and to even know where and for whom our children will be working. It is, as has been recognised by many, no longer possible to prescribe the knowledge and skills children may need for future careers and employment. The idea of 'career ready' is but a fancy dream when one does not know what careers will exist when a child leaves school. Furthermore, teachers or schools are no longer the only source or even the primary source of knowledge or opportunities to develop skills.

It is time to enter a new paradigm.

In this new paradigm, education does not aim to prepare employees but rather entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurs do not have to be only business entrepreneurs. They are simply people who actively and creatively develop and use their unique talents to meet the needs of others. Thus everyone can and should be an entrepreneur who invents jobs instead of seeking or waiting for jobs.

This new paradigm should not presuppose nor is it necessary to define what knowledge or skills are worthwhile, because in an open and changing society where human needs are so diverse all talents are valuable and can be useful. In this new paradigm, the 'curriculum' is one that follows the child. It starts with the children: what they are interested in, what excites them, what they are capable of and how they learn. This paradigm does not assume all children are the same thus it does not impose artificial standards or age-based grade-level expectations. It takes where children are and helps them move forward. Furthermore, it does not believe children are simply empty vessels ready to be filled with knowledge, but rather it assumes that each child is a purposeful agent who interacts with the outside world. Education following this premise

aims to guide, support, and celebrate individual students rather reducing human diversity into a few employable skills.

It would be mistaken to believe that this new paradigm denies the importance of the common and essential knowledge and skills required of all citizens in a society or the ethics and social norms necessary for any community to function. On the contrary, advocating entrepreneurial spirit is to encourage more responsibility in others. By promoting child-centred learning, the responsibility of learning is placed on the child instead of external agencies. By following a child's passion and interest, this paradigm capitalises on their intrinsic motivation and their natural curiosity to learn. When a child has a reason to learn, the basics will be sought after, rather than imposed. If they are true basics, it is hard to avoid.

This new paradigm also recognises the arrival of the era of globalisation. Children will no longer live in isolated societies and thus their context of learning and living should not be confined to a physical location any more. They cannot just become citizens of their local community or their nation – they must be citizens of the globe. Hence the new paradigm asks that the education we need makes the global society the default context of learning.

To create the education we need, it is urgent and important to change the questions we ask. Instead of asking what should be included in a national curriculum, we should ask what makes an optimal environment conducive to developing individual talents, cultivating entrepreneurial spirit, fostering creativity, and promoting ethical, moral and responsible conducts. Instead of holding schools and teachers accountable for raising test scores, we should ask what measures have been taken

to ensure that the unique needs of each child are met, their individual interests and passions are respected, and human diversity is preserved and celebrated. Instead of asking if other countries are ahead, we should be asking what differentiates us from others, how our local strengths are being capitalised and what meets our local needs. Global competitiveness does not come from doing more or better in the same area as others, but doing different things and being able to collaborate with others.

If and when we can stop tinkering with the existing education regime, we will be able to move to using technology innovatively, instead of using it to monitor student progress down a journey that leads to nowhere. We will be able to use technology to help children learn to invent and create instead of simply consume. We will be able to use technology to connect with others – to experience the world as a globally connected village. We will be able to learn to serve others by making and providing authentic products and services. Finally, we will be able to use technology to construct a learning environment that brings in resources from beyond the physical boundaries of schools so as to meet the diverse needs of all students.



"My vision for schools in the next few years is of institutions free to determine their own priorities for the pupils in their care; free to choose how to spend their money and to generate extra income; free to determine, within the law, what they teach, and above all, how they teach. I hope we shall see heads and teachers with their authority restored, and I would hope to see teachers trusted by government as mostly they are trusted by parents"

Baroness Perry of Southwark

*"Energy, economic and resource challenges are our opportunity to invent our future in a clean low carbon sustainable economy... but we need to engage with 'head', 'heart' and 'hand' with practical competence, innovation and implementation skills to learn how to... make our future"*

John Ellison

"EDUCATION IS GOOD FOR YOU  
AND YOUR COUNTRY"

Professor David Egan

*"Bold policy is needed to engage parental support...*

*The pupil premium initiative together with tax relief in areas of underperformance where each child must demonstrate excellent attendance, good behaviour and making progress... would provide the necessary 'push and pull' factor"*

Dr Antony Edkins

"Colleges are important hubs to help to bring about social cohesion in their local communities and to support the development of a local learning ecology involving local authorities, employer networks, and cultural institutions working more collaboratively with one another"

Lynne Sedgemore CBE

*"After so much activity and expenditure in education over the last 25 years we need not only to act but, more importantly, act correctly. We need to combine a sense of urgency with caution about identifying easy answers and commitment to make sound policy on the basis of evidence"*

Graham Stuart MP



## The Education Foundation

The Education Foundation is the UK's first independent, cross party, education think tank. Launched in November 2011 it aims to lead, shape and deliver change and reform in the British education system. It will connect people and organisations across country boundaries and sectors from: early years, schools, work based learning, further and higher education. It will identify solutions to challenging issues and focus rigorously on what works and help to scale up projects and organisations that deliver impact.

Leaders in government, national education bodies, businesses, schools, colleges and universities have welcomed the prospect of a new think tank. We intend to work with a range of businesses and partners to help improve the education and learning opportunities of millions of young people across the UK.

### Contributors

We are delighted that the following education and business leaders have shared their vision in this report of what's important, what works and what next for education in the UK.

Visit [www.ednfoundation.org/educationbritain](http://www.ednfoundation.org/educationbritain) to read and download their contributions

**Professor Simon Baron Cohen**, Director, Autism Research Centre, University of Cambridge

**Ruth Binks**, Headteacher, Central Primary School, Inverness

**Professor Sonia Blandford**, CEO, Achievement for All

**Rod Bristow**, President, Pearson UK

**Rachel de Souza**, Principal, Ormiston Victory Academy

**Dr Antony Edkins**, Regional Executive, United Church Schools Trust

**Professor David Egan**, University of Wales in Cardiff

**John Ellison**, Head of Education Strategy, The Eden Project

**Leslie Evans**, Director General for Learning and Justice, Scottish Government

**Professor Tony Gallagher**, Pro Vice Chancellor, Queens University Belfast

**John Griffith Jones**, Chairman, KMPG Europe

**Jan Hodges**, CEO, Edge Foundation

**Hugh H Howe CBE**, Principal, Beauchamp College, Leicester

**Sally Hunt**, General Secretary, University College Union

**Joanne Jacobs**, Adjunct Professor, Queensland University of Technology

**Asha Kemkha OBE**, Principal and Chief Executive, Vision West Nottinghamshire

**Lord Knight of Weymouth**

**Brian Lightman**, General Secretary, Association of School and College Leaders

**Tony Little**, Headmaster, Eton College

**Lord Lucas of Crudwell and Dingwall**

**Murina Mirza**, Adviser to the Mayor of London, Youth and Culture, Greater London Authority

**Baroness Perry of Southwark**

**Stephen Pisano**, Adviser, Coram

**Lynn Sedgemore CBE**, Executive Director, The 157 Group

**Dr Anthony Seldon**, Master, Wellington College

**Dr Elizabeth Sidwell CBE**, Schools Commissioner, Department for Education

**Graham Stuart MP**, Chair, Education Select Committee

**Professor James Tooley**, Professor of Education Policy, Newcastle University

**Dr Bernard Trafford**, Headmaster, Royal Grammar School, Newcastle

**Greg Whitby**, Executive Director for Schools, Catholic Education Diocese of Parramatta

**Brett Wigdortz**, CEO, TeachFirst

**Hywyn Williams**, Corporate Director, Learning & Communities, Denbighshire County Council

**Honor Wilson Fletcher MBE**, Director, The Aldridge Foundation

**Rachel Wolf**, CEO, The New Schools Network

**Professor Yong Zhao**, Presidential Chair, College of Education, University of Oregon

# JOIN THE DEBATE