Policy-Making in Education

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Abstract

The introduction to the chapter outlines factors which need to be borne in mind when analyzing the making of educational policy and highlights some of the major contrasts between states and nations in different parts of the globe. The chapter then moves on to a case study of the historical development of educational policy and policy-making in the UK. This history is seen as a contributory factor leading to the crisis in policy-making which has developed at the present time. The chapter concludes with a brief analysis of that crisis and argues that a reconsideration of how education policy is made and where it is leading is required, which can only be effective if it takes account of the issues raised in the chapter.

Keywords

Policy-making · State · Nationhood · Social and economic change · Media

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Introduction

Educational policy is never made in a vacuum, and this means that any meaningful account of policy-making in the field of education needs to bear in mind several considerations. These may appear obvious but need to be highlighted at the outset.

First, the nature and history of the particular state in which policy is being made needs to be borne in mind. Countries such as China, India, and the USA are enormous in scale and face different issues from those faced by smaller countries. There may be, for example, a much greater need to devolve responsibility to local agencies but, at the same time, an imperative to ensure that any policy reinforces, or at least does not undermine, a sense of nationhood and shared values. More fundamentally, what comprises "the state" may differ markedly from country to country and depend too on which stage of state formation that country has reached. All of these factors will bear, in one way or another, on the making of policy over a wide range of fields and certainly in respect of educational policy.

The tensions which can develop between central and local agencies in a country which is vast are nowhere better exemplified than in the USA, in respect of both the working of the system and the details of the curriculum (Taylor et al. 1997). So, if we take the two issues of the desegregation of schools and the teaching of evolution or creationism as examples (both key issues within the education system of the USA during the most recent century), it is clear that, although separate states have pursued different policies from time to time and Congress has sought, intermittently, to give an overriding direction to educational policy, the controlling agency has been the Supreme Court, which has ruled repeatedly on a succession of pleas and which has in reality been defining what is and is not acceptable across all the states of the union.

Thus, in respect of desegregation, the infamous Jim Crow laws of the late nineteenth century culminated in the Supreme Court's Plessy v. Ferguson ruling of 1896 which confirmed the legality of "separate but equal" educational provision. This applied to Louisiana but was widely seen as a test case for the whole nation. Similarly, it was a series of Supreme Court rulings during the years following the Second World War (most notably the 1954 Brown v. Topeka Board of Education case) which defined what came to be seen as acceptable practice across the whole country. Although that ruling applied only to the State of Kansas, it meant that the development of segregated schooling became an impossibility across the USA.

In much the same way, it is possible also to chart the changing national mood in respect of the teaching of evolution through a series of Supreme Court cases, most notably Epperson v. Arkansas in 1968 (which ruled the Arkansas ban on the teaching of evolution to be a contravention of the First Amendment) and Edwards v. Aguillard in 1987, which similarly overruled a Louisiana statute requiring the teaching of creationism. Thus, under the convention of "the separation of powers," which has always (at least until 2016!) been seen as paramount in the USA, the judiciary is given a key role in specifying exactly how and within what parameters policy will be implemented. In the process it becomes the de facto maker of policy.

In India, by contrast, the challenge is far more one of stimulating and overseeing economic and social development (VaIdyanatha Ayyar 2009). This has had the effect of obliging central government to take control. The guarantee of minimal educational standards across a vast country with sharp contrasts between rural and urban areas is paramount, alongside the development of the skills which are needed in a quickly developing society. In this situation, central government has, since independence, been the key arbiter of educational policy. A National Policy on Education was devised for the first time in 1968, revised in 1986 and again in 1992, and is currently awaiting yet another reworking. To achieve this, central government, working through the Ministry of Human Resource Development, is conducting a series of regional consultations. On 30 April 2016, this resulted in the publication of a lengthy progress report from the Committee for the Evolution of a New Education Policy. Thus, in India, educational policy-making is tightly controlled by central government but through a very overt and democratized process which runs the risk of becoming extremely bureaucratized.

China, too, contrasts with the USA, since it has no tradition of federalism, but finds it necessary for central government to assert itself in a situation in which the world's biggest country is being dragged (at least since the Cultural Revolution) into modernization at a bewildering pace (Zhang 2011). Here, the imposition of a single model of education on a widely divergent society has involved the introduction of a 9-year compulsory education program in 1985. At the same time, the administration of the education system was devolved to regional governments. But the scope for local variations is slight, since this is all overseen by the State Education Commission, a national body. In brief, it is largely because every aspect of China's educational system is answerable to a central government, which sets tight targets and parameters that society has been able to modernize at an amazing pace.

Secondly, the stage of social and economic development that a society has reached must also necessarily help determine which areas of policy predominate and which directions educational policy might take. For example, the Victorian emphases on drill, repetition, and memorization in school, which dominated the provision of elementary education in Britain are clearly not generally seen in the early twenty-first century as being appropriate, although they were widely seen as necessary at the time. Equally, the growing interest among policy-makers on higher education which developed in the 40 years after the Second World War contrasted with its complete neglect a hundred years earlier. This was clearly, in retrospect, part of the response to a quickly developing tertiary sector of the economy and a transformation of the skill requirements of young entrants to employment.

Analysts need to reflect too on who are the makers of policy. Where does power actually lie in any particular state? With politicians? If so what are their backgrounds and aspirations? Or with civil servants? If so what are their prejudices and predilections? Or is the making of policy devolved to advisory and ancillary bodies? If so, where are they coming from (both metaphorically and in reality) and what are their aims? In developed economies, and certainly across northern Europe, policy-

making involves all of these agents, although their respective influence may vary from time to time, depending on the issues under consideration and the particular political context.

Important too is the mood music around educational policy. What are the wider influences on educational debate? What is the role of the mass media, the press, and a number of other authorities? Alongside this we need to keep in mind the lobbyists, advocates, and interest groups who all play their part in shaping educational debate and attitudes to education and who are, often, themselves direct players in the political process. Thus their influence may be both direct and indirect. Among the most important of these are the churches and faith groups which involve themselves in social issues. In many parts of the world, they play a decisive role in making educational policy. Traditionally, industrialists, manufacturers, and commercial interests play a powerful role, as do professional organizations and trade unions. But increasingly significant in recent times are the special interest groups which have campaigned for equal rights or at least recognition in respect of gender, for ethnic minorities, and for LGTB groups.

Not least, we need to reflect on the extent to which power and decision-making is devolved to the schools themselves. Some states afford little if any power to individual schools. Recently, across the developed world, as "management" has been used increasingly as a motif to distract from governmental interference, considerable powers have been delegated to individual schools, although this is always within a framework that lays down tight regulations and is usually backed by a strong inspectorial regime, which allows blame and responsibility to be placed squarely at the door of the individual agents rather than the policy-makers. All of these questions have generated a rich field for sociologists as well as historians of education, and there is already a considerable literature dealing with these issues. This work provides an important backdrop for this analysis (Ball 1990; Daglish 1996; Whitty 2002).

Against the background of these considerations, we can now turn to examine the historical development of policy in one country (the UK) to get a glimpse of how these factors have played out in practice in one location over time.

The Evolution of Educational Policy-Making

Any meaningful account of the development of policy-making in the UK will bring into focus from the outset its intimate interconnections with social and economic change and the evolution of the state. This is particularly true in respect of education.

In Britain, it was not until the early nineteenth century that the state began to take on its recognizably modern form. One of its characteristics was that for the first time, government began to take a direct interest in the educational provision (Archer 1979). Previous to this, if there was such a thing as an "educational policy," it belonged to individual agencies such as the churches or to lobbying groups such as the London Corresponding Society or perhaps to those industrialists who were keen to start factory schools. Any legislation which impinged on education was aimed at

some other issue. For example, the 1559 Injunction regulating education was nothing more nor less than a part of the process of imposing a religious settlement on Elizabethan England by obliging the Anglican clergy to promote education and banning all Catholics and Puritans from any involvement in teaching (Sylvester 1970, p. 124).

The picture is made more complex by the simple fact that, certainly before industrialization and arguably up to the present, the Anglican Church was itself part of the state, playing a central (and sometimes exclusive) role in local and national governance and administration. As the major provider of popular schooling during the first industrial revolution, acting through the National Society, it confirmed its centrality to educational policy-making (Cruickshank 1964).

But industrialization, urbanization, and population growth generated a series of crises, either perceived or real, which demanded some response and which led to the establishment of government departments. Education was to be one of the first of these, established in 1839, followed quickly by the establishment of a schools' inspectorate. From that moment onwards, the state, as well as the churches, was inextricably and directly involved in the making of education policy.

There is another important point to make at the start. This is, quite simply, that the focus of policy-making in any field to do with social development, and particularly in respect of education, reflects and responds to the changes that are taking place in the economy and in social structure. In respect of schooling, this has meant that the form which schools and colleges are meant to take is itself often a close reflection of the ways in which industry and commerce operate. A changing workplace means a changing schoolroom, as we will see repeatedly in this chapter. Policy-making, to rework the famous phrase popularized by the Watergate scandal, follows the money, and this involves developing a schoolroom which reflects the organization of the workplace.

So, if we turn our attention to the first phase of industrialization, roughly from 1760 until 1870, several points stand out. First, the effectiveness of voluntary organizations, particularly the National Society and the British and Foreign Society, in quickly establishing a near universal provision of elementary schooling at the start of the nineteenth century resulted in real hesitancy about the appropriateness of state provided schooling which took over a century to break down completely and which is still echoed in contemporary support for faith schools. This hesitancy is in complete contrast to the ongoing determination in France to keep the church out of education and to make schooling exclusively secular and state controlled, as was specified in the Code Napoleon.

This hesitancy has placed a dead hand on education policy-making in Britain for over 200 years. No administration, of whatever ilk, has sought to terminate church involvement in the provision and governance of schools. The 1870 Education Act sought merely to augment it. At critical moments, notably 1902 and 1944, the right of the churches to involve themselves in education has been confirmed, and the "dual system" survives and prospers to this day.

During the first industrial revolution, this meant that the determination of policy-makers to restrict the school curriculum to the basics involved teaching of

the catechism in Anglican schools and of the Bible in schools run by the nonconformists. A core curriculum, comprising essentially reading, writing, and arithmetic, was seen as appropriate for a population destined for the factory, and a large schoolroom modeled on the cotton and woolen mills which had sprung up in the north of England was widely thought to be an appropriate environment for the growing child. The school bell taught the punctuality which was required of a docile labor force. In all of these ways, what became the key elements of educational policy reflected both the historical moment and the economic context. As Richard Johnson pointed out many years ago in his seminal article on policy-making (Johnson 1970), the object of educationalists and politicians during the first half of the nineteenth century was social control. The state's concern with and investment in education followed from the fact that schools were seen as the cheapest and surest way to ensure the generation of the labor force which was required.

This was a value system which reached its apogee in two often cited remarks made at the time. First, the Rev. James Fraser, giving evidence to the 1861 Newcastle Commission which reported on elementary education, reflected that "I doubt whether it would be desirable to keep the peasant boy at school until he was 14 or 15 years of age. . .We must make up our mind to see the last of him at 10 or 11. It is quite possible to teach a child, soundly and thoroughly, all that is necessary for him to possess in the shape of intellectual attainment by the time he is ten years old [note the gendering!]." He went on to compile an extremely restricted list of requisite skills, concluding, "underlying all, acquaintance enough with the holy Scriptures to follow the allusions and the arguments of a plain Saxon sermon." His definition of what should comprise an effective policy for education saw him promoted to an Assistant Commissionership and a closer role in the formulation of policy in the years that followed (Maclure 1968, pp. 70–78).

Fraser's gloomy prescription was given shape in terms of policy by Robert Lowe, only a year later, who told the Commons, while introducing his Revised Code for elementary schooling, "I cannot promise the House that this system will be an economical one and I cannot promise that it will be efficient. . .But I can promise that it shall be one or the other. If it is not cheap it shall be efficient, if it is not be efficient it shall be cheap" (Maclure 1968, pp. 79–80). From this moment on, payment by results and an all-powerful inspection regime guaranteed the very limited aspirations of educational policy-making in late nineteenth-century Britain.

There are two further points to be made concerning educational policy-making during this early phase of industrialization. The first is that this restricted education which the state was increasingly involved in planning for the lower orders had nothing to do with secondary schooling, which served the middling classes. As the state began to turn its attention to them during the mid-nineteenth century, there was no suggestion that the two systems should be merged. Such separatism as was advocated by the influential Clarendon and Taunton Royal Commissions only made distinctions between the types of secondary schooling thought appropriate for the different levels of the middle classes, and these were not seen as in any way overlapping the groups which comprised the working poor for whom elementary schooling was appropriate. Industrialization had generated a labor force whose

educational needs were seen as completely distinctive from those of the professionals who worked in the growing towns and the factory owners. The "two nations" needed two quite separate education systems (Simon 1960).

Underlying all this was an assumption which ran largely unchallenged across British society and which underpinned education policy-making. It was, quite simply, that a society which was gendered in almost all aspects of day-to-day living needed an education system which not only reflected but reinforced that gendering by preparing boys and girls for separate and distinct social roles. In Victorian England this was seen as a truism which did not need underlining (Dyhouse 1981). This enables us to make another observation about the formulation of policy. In a situation where there was no strong or visible lobby for women's rights, some aspects of policy-making were based on widely held but unspoken assumptions. The assumptions that men and women were born to different roles and that there should be differing access to public space and to positions of power and influence went largely unspoken, and it was therefore taken as given that the schooling of boys and girls should be distinctive and in many contexts separate. Thus, for the best part of a century, one of the cornerstones of educational policy was formulated and implemented with little or no need for comment. That which was obvious went unspoken, as it often does.

The first phase of industrialization was focused on iron, coal, textiles, and the greater productivity engendered by the agricultural enclosures of the early nineteenth century. It generated large unskilled or semi-skilled labor forces toward whom the schooling we have described was directed. But it is possible to identify a second phase of industrialization, extending from roughly 1870 until 1914, and this began to make new and more extensive demands of the education system (Perkin 1989). During this period, new industries began to develop – electrical, petrochemical, engineering, and the manufacture of bicycles and cars. At the same time, a revolution in administration and financial practice saw the appearance of a plethora of secretarial and administrative jobs which had never previously existed. It was an expansion which reinforced the gendering of the workplace. All of this placed new demands on the education system and was to have a massive impact on educational policy-making.

Not only did policy-making take a new form, but policy itself came to focus on more aspects of the educational provision. In brief, there was a new interest in secondary schooling, which was increasingly needed to staff the new and growing industries, and a growing interest in technical education, for which industrialists and leaders of commerce campaigned extensively. This involved new agencies in the formulation of policy as the school boards and town councils which appeared in the new and growing urban centers became significant players. There is not space here to detail this process, but what emerged by the end of the nineteenth century was a three-way sharing of power, between central government (now reinforced through the creation of the Board of Education), local government, operating in the main through the school boards established after the 1870 Education Act, and the schools themselves, which were left in complete control of teaching method and the delivery of the curriculum (although the national curriculum introduced by Robert Morant in

1904 did specify what that should comprise). At local level, the school boards merged into the new, more powerful local education authorities which were established at the turn of the twentieth century. This three-way sharing of power in questions of policy-making in education was to persist until well after the Second World War.

It is interesting to reflect on how educational policy itself evolved under this new regime. First, there was nothing short of a stampede to provide technical education, but it took place within a system in which elite models of a classical curriculum ruled supreme, and this meant that the massive extension of technical education tended to take place in schools and colleges which were not generally seen as the elite institutions, whatever had been the rhetoric of their founders. Accordingly, those who followed the technical track tended to be drawn from the respectable working class rather than the middling classes who still aspired to a classical education and to Oxbridge for their sons, or at least to a grammar school education leading toward employment in one of the minor local professions (Weiner 1985).

The second major characteristic of educational policy which evolved at this time was a demand for wider and ultimately universal secondary education. But this was only achieved in 1944 at the cost of setting up a system of secondary schooling which was differentiated and socially exclusive. Justified on grounds of ability, the tripartite system of secondary education which evolved in fact served the function of minimizing the interplay of social classes and particularly of ensuring that the children of the poor did not compete on an equal footing with their more privileged contemporaries. The strong lobby from within the labor movement for comprehensive secondary education eventually became enshrined in national policy but never succeeded in creating a system which had the same cachet as the pre-existing grammar schools (Lowe 1988).

At the same time, there were strong demands for the establishment of wider opportunities for girls, particularly through the setting-up of an increasing number of girls' secondary schools (many of them municipal grammar schools). But those who argued for these schools, people such as Michael Sadler, saw them as fulfilling a need for the greater numbers of elementary schoolmistresses, nurses, and secretaries who were needed in this transforming economy. Due to prevailing power relations of gender, these new girls' schools were to sustain the gender gap for much of the twentieth century (Martin and Goodman 2004).

As had happened during the first industrial revolution, the form that schooling was expected to take reflected the changes that were occurring in the workplace. Now, the schoolroom was to be replaced by the classroom, in much the same way that the office was slowly supplanting the factory. This change was the subject of a vigorous policy debate at the start of the twentieth century, much of it behind closed doors (Seaborne and Lowe 1977).

Finally, it should be added that, if one is looking for a diminution of the influence of the churches at this time, it simply did not happen, despite the fact that the secularization of society was already well underway. Rather, the 1870 and 1902 Education Acts underlined and confirmed that the "dual system," by which schooling was provided by the churches and, where that was not happening, by the state,

would be the dominant model for twentieth-century (and even, so far, for twenty-first-century) Britain. This historical anachronism helps explain several characteristics of educational policy in modern Britain, not least the legal specification of a daily act of worship in schools, now more honored in the breach than the observance, but has never been rescinded.

A third phase of economic transformation and growth followed the Second World War, and this too saw major developments in educational policy-making. Now suburbanization accelerated, placing unprecedented demands on the building industry. This was related to the ongoing professionalization of society, as the tertiary sector of the economy grew and increasing numbers were employed in the service industries and distribution. The steady advance of banking services to the centre of the economy continued at this time too. It is no coincidence that the appearance of the "open plan" classroom at this time mirrored developments in office planning which were taking place in the world of work (Lowe 1997).

By now, a steadily increasing number of parents had themselves experienced a more protracted education than their forebears and held strong views in what the schools should be offering, anxious that their own children were given the best start in life. All too often this involved a stress on the basics, on multiplication tables, on the teaching of grammar, and on a concept of discipline which was rarely precisely defined. Admirable as this concern was, by the 1980s, it enabled a transformed press and popular media to generate a new "mood music" around education, playing to the anxieties of parents. Almost inevitably, this involved favoring a core curriculum and what were seen as "traditional" approaches to pedagogy (Chitty 1989).

In this swiftly evolving context, it is possible to discern the main threads of the educational policies which did emerge. Immediately after the war, the key issues were the provision of school places for the "baby boom" and the development of an appropriate policy toward secondary education. For some this meant a lobby for universal comprehensive schooling; for others the preservation of the best schooling for the elite defined increasingly by ability rather than inherited wealth. Also, the expansion of higher education, which had not previously been central to education policy-making, became another political football. Although there were moves toward mixed secondary schooling, this was not seen as part of a more generalized attack on the gendering of society. Consequently, it remained true that the maintenance of separate spheres for the sexes was reinforced as much as brought into question by educational practice (McCulloch 1998).

Initially, the respect for the teaching profession, which had resulted in society never questioning what went on within the schools, survived. But the comment made by David Eccles, the then Minister of Education, to the Commons in 1960 that the time has come for politicians to take a look at the "secret garden of the curriculum" proved prophetic. Within 20 years curriculum reform and teaching methods were at the heart of all education policy-making (Cunningham 1988).

The central argument of this chapter thus far is that the evolution of policy-making in education has followed wider social and economic changes. But looking at the most recent 20 years, it is hard not to conclude that the transformation of the mass media has become an increasingly important driver of educational policy, if not

the main one. This has mirrored the drift of educational policy toward the heart of governmental policy agendas (Lowe 2007). For many years, during the early twentieth century, the education office was seen as a political graveyard. Numerous eminent politicians, not least R. A. Butler during the Second World War, were given the Ministry of Education job as a way of marginalizing their influence. This all changed after Margaret Thatcher demonstrated that it could offer a route to the highest office of state. The growing press interest in education reflected a growing popular concern for "educational standards." Once initiated, this became a process which was irreversible.

This coincided with momentous changes in the mass media. The disappearance in the 1960s of *Reynolds News*, the *Daily Herald*, and the *News Chronicle* left a vacuum which was soon filled by a new style of tabloid. *The Sun* and the *Daily Mail* began to offer not simply a new kind of more simplistic political credo but a new way of presenting it, choosing brevity and succinctness over detailed argument. The trend toward simplification, of argument and issues, was accelerated by the coming of universal television and, most recently, by the instant global communication offered by the Internet. This culminated, most recently, in the implosion of the American electoral system, resulting, in large part, from one candidate's ruthless and cynical exploitation of Twitter.

As these transformations began to hack in, the nature of educational policy-making began to change irrevocably. "Expert" opinion had always been sought, whether through the Royal Commissions of the nineteenth century or through quasi-governmental bodies such as the Office of Special Enquiries and Reports set up at the end of the nineteenth century. This not only had a direct impact on policy-making but became the model for much of the day-by-day work of the Board of Education, whose Consultative Committees offered influential advice impacting on many aspects of the educational provision. After the Second World War, quangos such as the Schools Council continued to sustain the influence of experts.

Thatcher and Blair were the two Prime Ministers on whose watch this system can be seen, in retrospect, to have begun to break down. "Thatcherism" insofar as it applied to education, can be seen to have been driven as much by conservative leaning think tanks, such as the Centre for Policy Studies (founded by Keith Joseph in 1974) as by officially appointed committees, although these were numerous and not without influence. It is perhaps not unfair to comment that, at this time, the role of governmental enquiries and commissions was increasingly to provide a range of policy options from which a government with a clear ideological commitment and with views derived from these think tanks could cherry pick and choose as they saw fit (Knight 1990).

Under Tony Blair, this trend accelerated. Once he had articulated "education, education, education" as a centre piece of his national renewal, the die was cast. Lowe (2007) shows in some detail how this was a decisive moment in the long-term process by which teachers and professionals slowly lost control of the classroom as the panaceas proffered by the new mass media came to dominate the thinking of politicians. What developed was a frenzy of policy initiatives which seemed all too often to be a response to the previous week's banner headlines rather than the result

of balanced long-term consideration. Certainly, under these two administrations, the preparedness to tinker incessantly with the education system through a continuous tweaking of policy reached new levels. A succession of Ministers of Education each sought to leave their imprint on the system, and this meant crescendo of policy initiatives which would have challenged even the most stoical practicing professionals (Chitty 2013).

Yet even within these administrations, longer-term objectives and elements of policy can be discerned. In the case of Thatcher, it was the saving of the grammar schools, the introduction of private funding to facilitate the diversification of secondary schooling, and the provision of several new technical routes through school. Much of this was sustained and even intensified under Blair, although the drive to achieve a massive upturn in the numbers passing through higher education was a policy initiative more clearly associated with his administration. So too was the outsourcing involved in the Private Funding Initiative, a development which has semi-permanently changed the face of schooling (at least financially).

The outcome is that we find ourselves today in a context which is markedly different from that experienced by previous makers of educational policy. The pace of modern life has quickened. The urgency of the social, economic, and educational challenges before us is greater than ever before. Globalization means that it is increasingly difficult to adopt more or less any item of policy without reference to what is going on abroad. The conclusion comments on what this might mean in reality for today's educational policy-makers. It argues that what confronts them is nothing short of a crisis.

Conclusion and Future Directions

This account of the evolution of educational policy-making helps explain the situation in which policy-makers find themselves today but also underlines the uniqueness of the present situation. The overall result of earlier policy is that we inherit an education system in the UK which is deeply flawed. It continues, in numerous ways, to confirm the separate roles of males and females, not simply through the continuing existence of single-sex establishments but through a whole value system which is unthinkingly absorbed by many members of the teaching profession. The author's own daughter, now an experienced GP, had the words "Well done: maybe one day you will be a nurse!" written by a teacher in response to one piece of her school work. You do not need to look far to find myriad examples of this and other kinds of day-by-day unconscious sexism in schools, even at the present time. The survival unchallenged of a powerful system of private schools which is unquestioningly granted charitable status underpins a society which is divided against itself by clear distinctions of social class. The continuing existence of the dual system, together with the encouragement of faith schools, reinforces prejudices and increasingly dangerous religious tensions. These have surfaced most notably in the "Trojan horse" schools in Birmingham when governing bodies were said to be "infiltrated" to the detriment of schools (Miah 2017). A series of false starts and

contradictory initiatives in respect of technical and scientific education have generated a society which is failing to educate the legion of technicians, engineers, and scientists which are needed if Britain is ever again to become a powerhouse of industrial production. Yet this appears increasingly imperative in any post-Brexit scenario. The continued advocacy of and support for grammar schools only strengthens a system which generates massive contrasts of earning power, wealth, and ultimately influence. It is a sorry legacy, and it is one which has become self-replicating.

Further, this glance at the ways in which policy-making has developed serves only to highlight the uniqueness of the situation in which policy-makers now find themselves. A society which deferred to the professionals and to expert opinion and which ensured that the best professional advice was available to policy-makers has slowly morphed into one driven by the social media. First the popular press and, more recently, journalists operating through the radio and television have eroded public respect for the teaching profession, simplified the political messages, and propagandized elite institutions. In recent years the rise of the social media has transformed a trend into a torrent. Any advocate of democracy, however defined, would concede the need for the teaching profession to be answerable to wider society. But what no thinking observer would condone is a situation which turns the teachers into units of production in a system increasingly molded by sound bites. That is the reality of what is happening now.

It is all too easy to extend this critique to become an essay on the difficulties of coherent policy-making at the present time. Historically, educational policy was driven by broad underlying objectives which were open to debate but which were consistent and thought through. Comprehensivization offers a good example. The ideal that all children would attend the same kind of secondary schools firmly founded in the collectivism which developed during the Second World War and which was only slowly eroded during the postwar period. Although it was an argument which was never universally accepted, the calls for a shared experience of secondary schooling had a defensible rationale. The contemporary obsession with privatization and outsourcing stems from a far more arbitrary neoliberal agenda which seems this observer to have as much to do with placating powerful special interest groups by facilitating private profit from public educational ventures as it does with implementing a coherent and universal policy plan. The introduction of "choice" as a driver of policy overlooks the fact that in respect of schooling, any choice on offer must necessarily be illusory. As an example the author can cite one West Midlands' township which for many years has had two secondary schools. What happens when the vast majority choose the same one for their own children? Whatever stratagem the local authority adopts, the outcome quickly becomes the exercise of choice for some, but not all. Equally damaging is the way in which the popular media constantly switch their attention from one issue to another, generating a series of short-term policy initiatives, many of which are not followed through or implemented over time.

But that is only part of the argument, although an important one. Perhaps more important are two side effects which are critical in the field of education. Arguably

the most damaging result of the incessant media concern for education is that policy is increasingly directed toward outcomes which are measurable and limited. A strong inspection regime needs something to asses which can be quantified, and this results in an attenuation of what is seen to constitute a good or successful education. External examination results have become the yardstick by which schools and individual pupils are measured. This constraint has molded what is taught, how it is assessed, and which areas of the curriculum are seen as most important, and it has placed a hobble on effective educational policy-making.

But there is a deeper outcome from all this which goes largely unnoticed and unremarked. This is that in this new policy ferment, children and students become the victims of educational policy rather than the objects of it. Rather than provide the balanced schooling which gives the young the best chance of living fulfilled lives and discovering the full range of their potential, our schools are using them as instruments to fulfill the dreams of their parents or the ambitions of the school by generating an appropriate line of examination results. It is a victimhood which results in greater alienation of the young and which acquiesces in narrow definitions of what constitutes a good education.

The time is long overdue for a reconsideration of how education policy is made and where it is leading. Such a reconsideration can only be effective if it takes account of the issues raised in this chapter.

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