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11. Changing cultures and schools in England and Wales

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Introduction

Education systems are built to contain and resist change yet, everywhere, they are expected by policy makers to initiate it. This apparent paradox is part of their condition. Our schools must motivate, acculturate, instruct, select, adjust children to their local context, provide opportunity for them to wind up, intellectually and morally, elsewhere and ensure economic growth while resisting moral decay engendered by lack of religious faith, family breakdown and economic dislocation. All of these things are to be achieved without significant disturbance to existing distributions of economic and social power and resources. Other social agents produce; schools are among those that reproduce. They have some autonomy but it is fragile and comes easily under pressure.

Modern state systems are, above all, relatively recent inventions and highly institutionalized, 'made up of rules providing sweeping standardisation across social and physical space' and 'true by definition' (Meyer, 1987: 158). Bernstein (1996: 112) enjoins us to look for 'the sponsors and shapers of pedagogic discourse' located in the fields of production and symbolic control, whose complex division of labour 'were the products of new technologies of the twentieth century relayed by the education system' (p113). They can be shown empirically to be engaged in competition and struggle for the truth of definitions, for control of the 'pedagogic device', the rules that govern what forms of knowledge and consciousness shall be distributed to different social groups and the criteria that govern how that official knowledge may be offered and received. In this pedagogic discourse, instructional intentions and practices always presuppose and are constrained by their regulative context. Students come from families, communities and classes within societies that precondition and have expectations as to what is usual and possible. Two important considerations follow. Change that occurs in social practice and belief may flow into schools and alter what is possible and expected, while change that schools attempt, including borrowing what appear to be successful ideas and practices from elsewhere, are likely to founder for want of recognition and the means of realization by either teacher or taught. In Meyer's terms, 'in a

system in which institutional rules are a driving force, *appearances matter*, and maintaining them may be a central means to effectiveness' (p 170, emphasis in the original). Students show up because of the institutional control education exerts over their futures; school conservatism and curriculum inertia arise from active reliance on this institutional authority. Variability and the interpersonal tend to be concealed by low classroom visibility, the front of standardized content and individual grading. As successive analyses of our whole-class-method-dominated pedagogy have shown, children know that they have been taught even when they have learnt little or nothing (Dahloff, 1971; Evans, 1985; Westbury, 1978).

While quiet indifference to, enjoyment, or rejection of their life in classrooms and schools may be key points of difference in the fates of students passing through them, the public debate about why we send them there appears to have lost some of its historic meaning. As nation states have always sought to control their populations through schooling, so the modern notions of education as release from the accident of birth and local content into wider forms of understanding, as preparation for the social mobility required by increasingly knowledge-based production forms and as a route to common identity have been of great importance. They have always competed with views of school as carrying out *parens* 's' will, creating each generation in their image. Private schooling predates state provision and continues to reach complex accommodations with it, predominantly through religious and ethnically based agencies. As Coleman (1987: 180) put it:

struggles for control of the school... show that schools are not merely for children, regarded as individuals whose interests and goals can be assumed. Schools are for families, for communities, for cultural groups, for societies, for religious groups, for local governments, and for central governments... school policy is not solely aimed toward goals for children as individuals, however insistent the rhetoric surrounding policy.

Coleman draws a distinction between functional and value communities, the former built around either 'traditional' or merely work and residence groups, the latter simply involving those sharing values about education and child rearing. He contrasts both with the 'unintentional' communities that most US schools serve, and outlines the likely consequence of having more or less value consistency and intergenerational closure between and within families and community and school. Coleman refers to areas where little or no British educational research either has ventured or now ventures. If it did, it would involve worlds where once schools might have expected and received orderly acceptance of the dominant values that they embodied, even from those who felt them wrong or oppressive or those whom they 'selected' on attainment or class criteria. Many more likely sites now exist where material and value difference and dissensus within their messy zones or catchment areas, the non-functional 'communities' that schools serve, are reflected in their trou-

bled disciplinary regimes, where neither value consensus nor publicly acknowledged pluralism exists. These thrive alongside the schools of value communities long established by religious bodies and by the state, with screened or selective or linguistically distinct intakes, reinvigorated by recent policies of 'choice'.

We would do well when considering 'changing cultures' and values in schools in England and Wales, or anywhere else, to remember, as Bidwell (1987: 206) enjoins us, that our dominant 'resource analysts have not paid much attention to the social structure of the school, even though this structure organises not only the way schooling resources are distributed but also the way they are combined to affect what students learn'. In particular, he reminds us that the Durkheimian task of moral education is a real one involving not simply the content of what is taught but the shape and character of the message systems that contain it. Its *summum bonum*, in his view, is engendering capacity for reflective moral judgement, commitment and conduct, which he sees to be complexly related to the existence of 'community' within the school and its degree of closure among staff and students. How this community is contrived is a matter for school policy in relation to staff and staff groupings, whose messages to students may differ significantly depending upon, particularly in secondary school, the 'openness' of the school student body, the continuity of school and home, community and media values and school differentiation processes. Bidwell's colleagues (eg Dreeben and Barr, 1987; Gamoran, 1987) have shown us convincingly that children going to the same building may only in a limited sense be attending the same school. Their experience of different tracks or routes, of differentiated reputational or identity universes within them, may quite overwhelm any experience of similarity planned by school. Indeed, when schools refer to themselves as communities, we may suspect, more than usually, an excess of appearance over reality, a moment of humbug.

The same is broadly true of talk of educational change. The president of the British Educational Research Association put it very succinctly. 'No doubt all generations feel that their lifetime is a period of unprecedented change' but consideration of our granny's experience should give us pause for thought in the matter (Mortimore, 2000: 7). Change there is, both with and without progress, some of it relevant to and penetrating education. While recognizing and dealing with it is a task among many for schools, policy makers invoke its necessity, in defence of national priorities, as part of their apparatus of control. We shall see how particular conditions of change in globally inspired economic conditions has underlain the huge, recent increase in centrally imposed innovation on British schools, prefaced by the establishment of a regime of truth that positioned them as largely responsible for national decline and failure.

The urge to reach for the intellectual holster should also grip us when politicians, preachers and educationalists talk of values as causes, as they frequently

do. While moral judgements exist, *sui generis*, values and behaviour or action have an entirely empirical relationship. We need no complex theory of ideology to tell us, as Blake and Davis (1964) did, that holding motives, intentions and values and not acting in terms of them is as likely as any of the other three possible relations between them. Moreover, our understanding of how interests, power, knowledge and ideology work ought to leave us with the irremediable suspicion either that values may be epiphenomena of material conditions or that evincing them may not create more than desired appearance.

All of these considerations make clear that values, meanings and practices, that is to say, culture, in any social context, let alone those of schools, cannot be understood apart from considerations of power, control and institutional or structural relationship. The 'values education' that goes on in our schools consists of a whole array of messages transmitted by their practices concerning who gets in, how they are organized when they do so, what they are taught and how, under what resource conditions and how they are assessed. Each one will embody value and provide source for identity. Their purposes are explicitly cognitive, moral, social and political.

By way of final introductory note, it must be understood that the United Kingdom is not an educational entity. The systems of England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland all show considerable difference, though those between England and Wales are relative, 'limited, except for the existence of Welsh-medium provision and a number of other, minor differences in the rest of the curriculum and some real resistances to aspects of market-oriented change supported, not least, in Wales by a collegial rather than punishment-centred inspectorate (Fitz, 2000). All our references to schools are confined to those of England and Wales. While our focus has to be delimited in this way, we are also aware of not offering a separate section on 'global' influences, for central to our argument is that worldwide economic forces are precisely those that have, locally adapted, altered and shaped our system, particularly since the 1960s. Somewhat at our imperceptive peril, we borrow practices, particularly from those systems that we believe are 'outperforming' ours.

Economic trends

In the second half of the 20th century, Britain completed its shift in economic base from primary and manufacturing production to a service economy. Farming, though still in the main under heavy European Community (EC) subsidy, now employs fewer people than the education system and will shrink further. Mining and heavy industry are vestigial, and manufacturing is predominantly assembly-based and highly penetrated by foreign capital, particularly in vehicles and electrical goods. The service sector, in areas like travel, hotel and catering, leisure and entertainment, and banking and finance, is the dominant employment area. The old public services have been privatized,

wherever politically possible, including telephones, electricity, gas, water and public transport. High technology, information and communications-based activity, whose development successive government policies has privileged, is small and it is not simply to caricature to say that Britain exports rather than develops technical and commercial ideas.

The post-Second World War consensus upon the centrality of full employment to public policy lasted barely a generation. US post-Vietnam devaluation and the oil shock produced Britain's first serious post-war recession in 1974-75, neatly dividing the period into one where jobs were almost impossible to avoid and one where they were almost impossible to find, especially for the unqualified school-leaver. A period began under Callaghan's Labour government and continued under the successive Thatcher and Major administrations, barely assuaged by Blair, of blaming schools and teachers for British uncompetitiveness and unemployment identified as stemming from lack of training and skills. Thatcher's earliest moves in 1979 were to free the pound, end industry-wide labour training schemes and abolish teachers' industrial bargaining and representational rights. The first led directly to the recession of 1990-92 and defection from the European Exchange Rate Mechanism with Britain, chronic international overspend, left with high interest rates and low investment, incapable of improving a weak domestic market, and high taxation required to finance the cost of high unemployment and its concomitants. The pursuit of low inflation acted as a final disincentive to job creation, though it was instrumental, along with labour deregulation, in providing the low-cost, easy planning environment that was attractive to foreign capital. Britain became, particularly on its highest-unemployment productive periphery, a major site of attraction for US, Pacific Rim and European capital. Only at the end of the 20th century had manufacturing capacity regained the levels of 30 years ago. Only now has a much-massaged unemployment rate approached 4 per cent at the national level and 'full' (though not necessarily 'full-time') employment re-entered the political vocabulary. We maintain low inflation as the central policy objective at the cost of high interest and exchange rates. Having refused at Maastricht to accept the European Social Chapter, we now waver about rejoining the Exchange Mechanism.

For education, we must note three categories of effects. Firstly, throughout this period of relative economic bust rather than boom, the extent and character of the labour market has been under stress and change. Government-financed training, regarded, particularly by its consumers, as being of dubious quality except as a stopgap, has replaced work for the unqualified school-leaver, with significant backwash effect upon schooling. Government policy has increasingly been oriented toward the role of schools in enhancing competitiveness and flexibility in the labour market, imposing 'business values' on their activities where possible. Secondly, although public sector expenditure has risen almost continuously, both in absolute terms and as a share albeit of a GNP more than 10 per cent below the OECD average for most of the

period, health and social service expenditure has been under constant relative pressure, education's share, having peaked at 7.6 per cent in 1976, barely sustaining 5 per cent since. Thirdly, the repositioning of teachers as a workforce through a concerted campaign of blaming their 'producer interests' for barring the way to educational improvement led to crisis in their relations with government and their substantial withdrawal of industrial goodwill in response to the 'discourse of derision' (Ball, 1990) that they faced. This has left its marks upon the micropolitics of schools, as well as their extra-curricular activities, particularly games, long officially regarded as central to the shaping of community and individual character and further sacrificed to the demands of the national curriculum core. It has also been central in realigning their relationship with the state. For further elucidation of the centrality of economic conditions and policy to British life, Hutton's (1995) account is particularly apposite, and for analysis of their economic consequences Avis *et al* (1996) develops most themes.

Social, cultural and political factors

Behind any school system, the rhythms of economic life are always intertwined with demography's blind grope. Compulsory school education must cope with those who come forward, providing them with places and teachers. The bass note of many of the changes and policy initiatives in our schools and teacher training is to be found in the bulges and dips in the age cohorts passing through schools. At the same time, schools respond to the shape and pressure of the changing class structure. Changes in the occupation structure that underpins it and in state fiscal policy that adjusts real income and wealth levels have been marked over the last half-century. The traditional class pyramid has become onion-shaped. Unskilled work has declined, and service classes have also grown and become more differentiated. The character of work in what is referred to as a post-Fordist system (Williams, 1994) has shifted. Labour is required to be more 'flexible' and 'adaptive', its character 'intensified'. Class identities have, arguably, shifted in the direction of a more consumption-oriented lifestyle rather than a production, work-related basis engendered by post-war affluence and Welfare State provision, where income and social differentials appeared, in some respects, to be declining (Cahill, 1994). While never without their critics, some aspects of these views now, certainly, seem to be erroneous. Britain is now a less equal society in terms of income distribution (often measured in terms of shares of national wealth of top and bottom percentiles) than 30 years ago. At the same time, incomes have risen so that the reality is of relative wealth and poverty commingling, both by region and social category. Child poverty and the size of a persistently growing pensioner group dependent on state income support are central focuses of government policy.

By contrast, the apparently runaway phenomenon of autonomous youth culture in the third quarter of the century has been doused by youth unemployment. The single-parent family and the teenage mother, drugs being perceived as an affliction of all social classes, have taken the place of folk devil, in large part. The former is largely the product of rising divorce rates, in turn the output of complex social and legislative change. Marriage is more avoidable and conditional, and teenage motherhood, arguably linked not only to unemployment but to exigencies of social benefit and housing policies, as well as changing family structures and the weakness of sex and social education in our families and schools, is the highest in Europe. The 'usualness' of growing up continuously in a two-parent family has become no more than a two-in-three chance, varying significantly by class and ethnic group. The definition of the importance of school and training to employment prospects has, with little exception, strengthened, even where their links appear to be most tenuous, as in areas of highest unemployment and poorest skill formations and job structures. Post-compulsory school participation rates are also among the lowest in Europe at less than 60 per cent. As with income distribution, we have the reality of plenty and shortage coexisting in respect of qualifications and employment nationally. The UK Skills Survey for 1997 estimated that while 42 per cent of those in employment were 'adequately educated', more were 'over educated' (32 per cent) than were 'under educated' (20 per cent). The positive link between 'more' education and earnings remained in all categories. At the same time, most small and medium businesses complained of skill shortage, suggesting either that the skills available were of the wrong type or level or in the wrong place or that they failed to find or attract such that existed.

Britain has also become a multi-ethnic society, more in urban England than elsewhere. The majority of inward migrants in the period of relatively open entry until the series of immigration and race relations acts from 1962 to 1971 were from Commonwealth countries in the Caribbean and Indian subcontinent and located in unskilled and semi-skilled jobs where shortages were most acute. While the obvious common feature of their experience has been the prejudice that they have encountered during successive policies of assimilation and multiculturalism, they constitute an extraordinarily diverse set of communities of whom Phillips (1999) suggested, on the evidence of Modood *et al* (1997), there has been a:

decoupling of material disadvantage from cultural (in this case racial) inequality at least for some minority groups. On a range of economic indicators relating to income, qualifications, housing and employment, it no longer makes much sense to describe African Asians (those whose families were expelled from Kenya and Uganda in the late 1960s or early 1970s) or the Chinese as economically disadvantaged groups; and while Pakistanis and Bangladeshis are seriously and consistently disadvantaged, those of Caribbean and Indian origin are edging closer to parity with the white population.

So, though it would be mainly, it was and is far from exclusively, true that the experience of these groups of British schooling has been of working-class, relative failure. Gender differences in responses to school have also been a salient feature among these groups. Overall, their under-representation in higher education and courses of professional preparation remains evident.

The final crucial social category that must be recognized is gender. The position of women in Britain's mainstream cultures has shifted, somewhat unevenly, across a number of fronts. Formal gender equality in wage rates, conditions and benefits have often been nominally achieved, though part-time and discontinuous employment contribute to female lifetime earnings under the glass ceiling still languishing around 25 per cent below those of men. Despite evidence of sexism in school, classroom and curricular practices, female progress within education has been substantial, the long-established cognitive superiority of girls by early adolescence now translated into continuing better performance than boys at school-leaving examinations at 16 (the General Certificate of Secondary Education – GCSE) and higher education entrance at 18 (Advanced or A level). Female participation in higher education and their final examination performance there has now moved marginally ahead of parity with males. Among our current preoccupations is the 'underperformance of boys' and its possible linkage to economic and occupational changes that may have altered traditional masculine identities. While this almost certainly rests on statistical mythology (Gorard, Salisbury and Rees, 1999), it is interesting how rapidly there was an official 'awakening' to this issue in comparison with the length of time that it took for female 'underperformance' to lead to corrective action. At the same time, there are still huge differences in subject participation that begin in school and become crystallized in post-16 and higher education and continue to underpin male hegemony over most key economic activity.

There is a good deal in the argument that the terms of debate about equality of opportunity have shifted from class to categories such as gender, sexual orientation, disability and ethnicity, the prospects for economic equality having been seriously lowered by loss of confidence in radical or socialist economic reform in the last quarter of the 20th century and the organized force of women's, black, gay and other minority movements, initiated particularly in the United States, succeeding, in their turn, in redefining access to the political agenda. In our schools, provision for students with special educational needs (SEN) of various sorts has, since the Education Act 1970, moved decisively in the direction of inclusion, as far as possible, in mainstream experience. While the division between mental and manual labour may remain the villain of the piece in sustaining lifetime political and social hierarchies, access to education and training is seen as a vital ingredient in its assuaging. While such access has made only halting progress, in Phillips's (1999) terms it is recognition of equal human worth, avoiding the misrecognition, cultural domination and disadvantage experienced by Western minorities as diverse as the

Muslim and the homosexual and accepting its economic concomitants, that matters to political and other equalities.

A shift in the division of labour to place those who control the means of enunciation alongside those who merely own the means of production, the rise of the 'symbolic worker' and the new middle classes who live on little more than words alone in a global rather than a national economy, has had a profound and interactive effect on governance and politics, culture and schools. These changes, which were well under way in what we might call the dream-world of British politics in the third quarter of the century, became the nightmare of calling in the International Monetary Fund and the serious deterioration in industrial relations that followed.

Beginning in 1979, Thatcher contrived 'the "counter-revolution" to Keynesianism, known as Monetarism' (Keegan, 1992: 51). The boundaries of the state were to be rolled back; government was to facilitate rather than conduct business. Denationalization, outsourcing and competitive tendering would, as far as possible, characterize the more than one-third of economic and transfer payment activity in the public sector. Public expenditure on welfare would, thereby, be reduced, and trade unions required to relent in the face of managers' 'right to manage' in pursuit of the employment and financial disciplines of the private sector. Considerable state apparatus was to be dismantled, including much of the power and operations of the local government that Thatcher's 'one best way' policies found awkward, even immoral, their daring departures from class politics giving particular offence (Davies, 1994). In a state already the most centralized in the Western world, apparently without sense of shame or contradiction and in the name of 'choice and diversity', the local state was steadily replaced by a galaxy of quangos, revolving only about the source of political heat and light at the centre. Esland (1996: 40) depicted these 'New Right' political strategies 'in relation to education and training policy' as reliant 'on both a narrow, protectionist view of nationhood and a Taylorist form of managerialism designed to maintain a tight regulatory control over the culture, content and practice of education', where 'internal divisions within the Conservative Party have ensured that the determined defence of Britain's cultural sovereignty has prevented any serious engagement' with 'a more international concept of citizenship' that might be expected to flow from the prioritization of globalization. The spate of school, as well as further and higher education, legislation that flowed from this mixture of restorationist and new trainer (Williams, 1961) oriented convictions has been unparalleled in British experience.

Religious movements

At the same time as formal participation in Judaeo-Christian worship has reached historic lows in modern Britain, we have also developed relatively

substantial Muslim, Hindu, Sikh and other communities associated with our growing ethnic minorities. While the state and monarchy remain Anglican, church membership and attendance has been in steady retreat and nothing remotely like the US religious right has manifested itself in British life or politics. A nationally conducted poll has suggested that among 13–15-year-olds belonging to Christian faith communities, two-fifths claimed to believe in God, one-third were agnostic and the remainder atheist (Francis and Kay, 1995). To judge by the character of our premature millennium celebrations, religious ritual has little significance in national life, having been substantially replaced by media-contrived and managed celebrity. In our schools, while the privileged position of Christianity has been preserved, its impact has also waned. Parochial schooling, almost exclusively Anglican and Roman Catholic and amounting to nearly 7 and 5 per cent of provision respectively, continues to have the protection of the forms of autonomy initially settled in the 1944 Education Act, including control of pupil intake.

Religious education lies outside the national curriculum described below. The daily religious worship required of schools has long become, in many establishments, neither daily nor worshipful. An attempt to strengthen and revive this aspect of school collective life was embodied in the Education Act 1993, which reconfirmed the 'mainly Christian character' of school assembly, required secondary schools to provide sex education as part of 'basic' education, as well as RE, while not tampering with parental rights to withdraw their children from any of these. In most non-religious foundation schools, RE lessons are few in number and agreed local syllabuses tend to include teaching about many faiths. Their lack of popularity among the majority of children is shared by the schemes of personal, social and health education (often referred to as PSE or PSHE) found in virtually all state schools, though also outside the national curriculum. The instatement of 'family values' as central to the policies of all major political parties, initially identified with the Thatcherite belief that there was 'no such thing as society', has intertwined with resurrection of attitudes in public policy that see the poor and unsuccessful as, if not simply undeserving, untapped sources of self-righting self-help. The 'normality' of families consisting of cohabiting, heterosexual married parents is enshrined in successive curricular requirements, most famously represented in Section 28 of the 1988 Local Government Act, which prohibited the promotion of ideas of the normality of homosexual forms of relationship. The fury of the current debate about New Labour's attempt to repeal it provides the most characteristic noise about 'values' in our schools at the turn of this century, bus owners and archbishops experiencing a meeting of homophobic minds that leaves most teachers wondering about what images of classroom practice furnish them. Even the typically immoderate English chief inspector of schools is reduced to stating the obvious with regard to the centrality and difficulty of schools' moral educative role.

The fact that Islam now has as many, if not more, practising adherents – there are notorious problems of computing the number of followers of religions and denominations – than Anglicanism in Britain's has not yet led to any great inroads either in school provision or the curriculum that might match its growth. The first state-supported Islamic school has been established but otherwise there has been clear resistance to public funding and legitimating of not only Islamic but black evangelical Christian and other thriving voluntary forms of schooling. Here, as elsewhere in educational policy, the British are steadfast; those who have shall hold.

Legal frameworks

Selection and measurement, both between and within schools, have characterized British provision throughout the period since the 1944 Education Act. It had provided for primary, secondary and further and higher 'stages' to which pupils should gain access according to 'age, aptitude and ability'. Administrative exigency modified the stock of schools in existence, for what was to become an escalating age group, in terms of selective grammar and residual modern schools for which the streamed primaries prepared. Technical education during compulsory schooling remained vestigial, technical schools or streams only marginally penetrating the system in the period up to the 1960s and initiatives like TVEI after 1983 and NVQs later in the 1980s becoming rapidly absorbed into mainstream curriculum and funding.

In retrospect, the trend toward reorganizing secondary schools on 'comprehensive' lines, driven by local initiative and indicative planning and avoidable central funding constraints, led to enormous LEA variation and subterfuge and has proven a quite short-lived and imperfect interlude in our selective history. 'Common' secondary schooling, particularly in our urban areas, has never led to schools with ability intakes any more equal than the neighbourhood primary schools that feed them. At the same time, in the period predominantly from the 1960s to the 1980s, primary schools were places where (in Bernstein's 1973 terms) the pedagogic code had shifted, in some degree, from visible to invisible: from strong subject boundaries and tightly framed, teacher-centred methods, with overt public testing and considerable pupil-teacher hierarchy, towards content juxtaposition, if not mixing, more individualized and pupil-centred styles of working, feedback rather than assessment and more relaxed adult-child relationships. Notwithstanding work, especially that of Galton, Simon and Croll (1980), that showed that '[primary] teachers value the 3Rs as much as they ever did' (Delamont, 1987: 11) and that secondaries remained untainted by its presence, 'progressivism' was already under attack. Moreover, unduly egalitarian and simultaneously self-regarding teacher producer interests, held to imbue schools with anti-industry and enterprise values and practices, were rediscovered to fuel the attack from 1976

onwards (Ahier, 1988). While, not unexpectedly, this led to a number of industrial education and economic awareness projects that schools took in and denatured as easily as they dealt with TVEI, their most important upshot became the simultaneous policies of nationalizing the curriculum while denationalizing the schools, whose centrepiece was the 1988 Act. Its claim to enhance 'diversity and choice' barely concealed the party and class basis of Thatcher's populism (Jessop, 1990), an appeal to an insular nationalism that eased an inward slide of foreign capital and international control of British assets.

All schools were required to 'locally manage' their own essentially pupil-number-driven budgets and to offer 'open enrolment' based on 1979 intakes. Their widened governance privileged parental and local enterprise interests. Schools were to wax and wane as parents preferred and those who wished to leave LEA supervision altogether might opt for grant maintained (GM) or city technology college (CTC) status. Though not initially allowed to change the character of their intake, schools were, by degrees, allowed to increase their selectivity. These policies ran alongside the assisted places scheme (now phased out, along with GM schools), introduced in the 1980 Education Act, which, essentially, subsidized the entry of lower-middle-class children to independent schools.

The Act had also given parents new rights in choosing schools and such a policy of 'choice' required market information about 'standards' in the system, which in turn required a national curriculum to which they might sensibly relate. Out of this, a since regularly modified 10-subject (11 in Wales, including Welsh) curriculum finally emerged in the 1988 Act, made up of three core (English, maths and science, and Welsh in Welsh-medium contexts) and seven foundation (modern language, including Welsh as a modern language in non-Welsh-medium schools in Wales, humanities, design and technology, music, art and PE) subjects, to be regularly tested by teacher and 'standard' or national assessment across three 'key stages' at 7, 11 and 14 and a fourth by GCSE at 16. The national curriculum was presented in terms of broad programmes of study and national attainment targets. There was no accompanying apparatus of textbooks or teachers' guides or specification of timetable or teaching methods. Apart from introducing science and technology to many primary classrooms where there had been little or none, it did little more than confirm established content and practice for, in its devising, despite unsubtle attempts at intervention by Thatcher in English, maths, history and physical education (see, for example, Evans and Penney, 1995), it fell into the hands of subject panels dominated by professional educationalists. Teachers railed at losing autonomy, while, with little exception, being not uncomfortable with the national curriculum content. The same could not be said concerning national testing, which has produced an onerous regime of recording assessment at eight levels through the stages and which has provided the core of a burden of discontent such that in 2000 an ICM opinion poll conducted for the *Guardian* (Carvel, 2000) showed that more than a third of teach-

ers under 35 expected to quit within 10 years and nearly a half within 15, particularly in primary school and this in a context where, given their bulge in numbers over the age of 40, 40 per cent of them will be expected to retire 'normally' over the next 10–25 years anyway.

The 'heavy workload' that inclined three-quarters of the primary teachers sampled towards thoughts of early quitting has been accentuated by the even more recent policy of nationalizing their pedagogy. A pervasive managerialism has settled on the schools through target setting, benchmarking, publication of league tables of results, insistence on the centrality of the leadership of heads and senior managers, regular external national inspection and, in prospect, performance-related pay. It has been substantially sanctified by the 'findings' of a school effectiveness literature that has neither conceptualized, let alone measured, pedagogic process and whose pliant, latter-day discovery has been of the improving properties of whole-class teaching, putative key to the secret of high-performing elementary classrooms in some Pacific Rim systems. This has become the promised means of effecting what the national curriculum and testing system, introduced in the name of 'improving standards', failed to.

Alexander (1997: 193) in a fascinating discussion, not least with respect to how his talents as an academic were used and misused by politicians, contended that it was not until 1991, after the initial round of national curriculum innovation, that government gave first sign that it recognized 'that content and pedagogy are indissolubly linked'. By 1995, the English school inspectorate, OFSTED, had provided in its *Guidance on Inspection of Nursery and Primary Schools* an official quasi-orthodoxy on primary pedagogy, organization and resourcing with built-in means of enforcement. It linked positive factors in standards of achievement to subject knowledge, direct teaching, a mixture of teaching strategies and grouping by ability, and negative ones to non-instructional, facilitative teaching, poor time management, increase in the use of undifferentiated worksheets and dull, unchallenging work tasks. The conditions for the creation of the 'literacy hour' for English, with similar arrangements for maths, were now present to complete the over-recording, planning and monitoring of a narrowed and assessment-led curriculum.

Meyer's world of that which is 'true by definition' was never more complete than in our present one where neither British major political party any longer questions fundamental structures of education or the distributional effect of its practices. Our much-competed-for 'middle England' electorate is held to dislike tampering with their educational privileges as much as their taxes, so both are avoided. Every classroom in the school becomes capable of untold but targetable improvement, out of existing resources. Secondary schools are told that unless they can achieve 25 per cent 'good GCSE' pass rates they will be closed, without the slightest reference to policies that have allowed schools to come into existence that cannot normally achieve them. Having systematically dismantled local (LEA) democracy, school autonomy

and such professional associational resistance as has ever existed in Britain, the state may now, as a perfectly normal occurrence, indulge in such pronouncements and mainline the fad of the day, month or year as statutory requirement. The wilfulness of its misunderstanding of and necessity for and character of change in a system built to absorb and resist it in the greater interest of social and cultural reproduction could be regarded as a key system value and immoral. Public policy actually celebrates processes of 'naming and shaming' teachers, schools and LEAs who fail to meet performance standards, while being unwilling to question the structures and institutional practices that generate them. It may hardly be surprising that teachers experience stress in their expected work of 'raising and praising' their charges under such conditions though we do not say this with any sense of belief that there was some previous golden state of the system.

What must be asked, indeed, is how the changing character of school as it impinges on teachers is experienced by pupils and their parents. To glance back at a collection such as Lester Smith's (1954) where headteachers depicted their secondary school as 'Christian communities' is to inspect a mythic world of order, service and vibrant, extended extra-curricular experience that was far from normal then and is unusual now. The ability, social, ethnic and gender diversity of many schools make them unlikely close communities, more likely places where differences sharply coexist and become invidiously ranked. School peer cultures, always differentiated, are complex identity worlds formed not only by the home, community and the media, teachers and subjects, ambition and occupational prospect, but perhaps, more than ever, attainment. Schools are more instrumental places, their images of appropriate conduct, character and manner more open, their forms less ritualized. The purposes of their often-vestigial pastoral systems are procedural rather than didactic. The manner and practice of teachers and subject departments, particularly in secondary schools, are likely not only to be different, as they have long been, but openly critical or antagonistic of one another or of school policies. In these senses, schools have become more like society: less deferential, more honest, slightly less given to cant, potentially open to the celebration and enjoyment of their differences.

On the evidence of the *Guardian* poll, the great majority of parents rightly believe that standards have been maintained or improved in them over the past 10 years and are fairly or very happy with their own children's schooling. But schools are not like families except in the rhetorical, regulative discourse of headteachers nor are they democratic nor particularly given to unconditional positive regard. The values that curriculum carries tend to be more explicit, less socially biased and often form the objects of study. The curriculum is also generally more open to outside experience, though highly deficient for the great majority of pupils in consideration of the social sciences, including economics and politics. Social studies being expunged and economic awareness having died, the final loss of English empire through devolution to Scot-

land and Wales has brought forth the prospect of civics in the compulsory curriculum by 2000. Quangos and spin doctoring may well yet become the commonly shared and understood heritage of key stage 3/4 students alongside their well-honed and closely tested phonic reading and mental arithmetic skills. It would be nice to think that this would enable them to penetrate the character of their experience, as Bidwell hopes, more reflectively. Perhaps even more urgently, we need to consider the case of our new primary teachers, who know nothing but change, as part of a group that has had its autonomy, including the habit of questioning official orders, so eroded that we put them in jeopardy of the ultimate professional downfall, that of not knowing how to answer back. Few things could be more dangerous to our school cultures and values.

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