

Postwar Themes and Phases of Education Policy Making

Foreword

This is an attempt to make critical sense of, mostly, school education policy in, mostly, England since the end of the Second World War. Paraphrasing DH Lawrence and inspired by William Beveridge, I assert that the theme of education should be humanity. I look at some of the language and concepts that, often contrarily, lie within our educational discourse as though they were threads in a tapestry executed by different people who were constantly changing, being distracted and losing the needle only, without thinking, to pick up another needle with a different colour thread. I also attempt to classify different phases in policy making.

I am not putting my classifications forward as all-time definitive and unproblematic. Classifications mingle and bleed into each other and, after further consideration, may have to be modified, even changed radically. My defence, in the spirit of this website, is that I am offering up something for critical conversation.

I do not advocate educational or social uniformity but I am concerned that the inability of contemporary politicians to understand and practise their trade properly will severely damage social commonality. If we really are all in this together then what we are in is a mess, some of which has been deliberately contrived out of unquestioned dogma and some of which has happened because of sheer incompetence.

For some this is about incompetent governance. There is plenty of that. For me, however, it is about incompetent politics. Politics is the inclusive and consensual arrival at values. It is an activity intended to precede policy making. Turning it into something exclusive and ignoring a lack of consent does more than put stress on learners and educators: it diminishes us as humans.

I am not suggesting that almost seventy years ago everything began well and that it has slowly become worse. There is much in Ken Loach's film, *1945*, that accurately captures a spirit of bold, optimistic, consensual humanity to be found in that time: a time when so much was done to make life more fair and fulfilling. In education, however, the pre war social divisions were built into the system. It took approximately twenty years for this injustice to be tackled and for professional educators to become proactive and help to make policy inclusively and even, sometimes, to make it in class and staff rooms.

I record and comment upon the capture and suppression of proactive professionals and what I believe to be their subversion into becoming implementers of the obsessions, strange ideas and ill-considered policies of politicians as they fleetingly gain power. I do not account for it and probably one reason why I have not set out here a possible means of changing things is a worry that far too many minds have already been captured and subverted. Rapid internalisation of policy changes is now a professional characteristic.

Perhaps that is what I need to focus upon next.

NB: there are a lot of endnotes. Not all of them have been written in an objective academic style. In a sense, this being a history, the endnotes can be seen as a professional autobiography. I freely admit to being selective. Another person whose career covered the same period would select, emphasise and criticise differently. If it helps to critique what I have written here you might find the following link useful.

<http://www.criticalprofessionallearning.co.uk/assets/WebcriticalProfessionalConversation.pdf>

Our theme

For DH Lawrence, whether he talked of diamonds or of coal dust his theme would still, he reminded us, be carbon.

For educators, whether they talk of curricula, examinations, league tables, inspections, school structures, performance management or 'closing the gap' the theme should still, we need to remind ourselves, be humanity.

To read today William Beveridge's *Full Employment* (1944) is to hear a now faint and distant discourse of humanity from a time when a bankrupt Britain embarked upon a series of progressive and inclusive policies that reduced inequalities, improved health, extended democracy, provided work and challenged taxpayers to contribute to the social good. We did those things because they were an agreed set of priorities based upon widely shared values.

Learning and enabling the learning of others are socially situated, interdependent human activities. We, however, separate groups of children and place controls upon the variety of potential peers with whom they could interact socially as they acquire knowledge, understanding and skills and develop perceptions of others. We differentiate children, teachers and schools in terms of resource, social advantage, perceived ability and aptitude, gender and religion. And we constantly measure them disregarding the effects of those differentials upon performance. The formal structuring of institutionalised learning is subject to legal requirements, social expectations and governmental imperatives. It is not of its own making. When Tony Blair loudly declared that his priority (singular) was *Education, Education, Education* he overlooked that this also meant *Society, Society, Society*. Educational policies are social policies.

In 1983 Stephen Kemmis and colleaguesⁱ provided us with the notion of a socially critical school: not a school that passively conforms to social structures and norms but a school that plays an interactive, even proactive, role in society. Almost eighty years earlier John Dewey saw education as part of what made democracy workⁱⁱ. He valued the idea of a community school: an idea that was taken up in parts of Britain as comprehensive education spread after 1965 when schools would often have the word 'community' attached to their names.

By contrast, Nurit Peled-Elhanen provides a disturbing perspective on the socially critical roles of learners and educatorsⁱⁱⁱ. Her close analysis of the treatment of Palestinians in Israeli school textbooks reveals what is essentially a dehumanisation of 'others' that also dehumanises those learners and educators that are drawn into a scarcely challenged national narrative. Policies do not have to come in the form of laws when they are so culturally embedded that they do not emerge from the dominant discourse to be identified and disputed.

To look at the work of Dewey and Kemmis and Peled-Elhanen is to be reminded that education is not just about preparation for measurement: it is about growth as a human in relation to other humans. Educational policies, whether formal or informal, extrinsic or intrinsic, affect the terms in which that growth takes place.

Policy without politics

Politics may appear to be about power: acquiring it, using it and trying to hang on to it. Actually politics is about values: about the consensual and inclusive arrival at agreed values: an activity that must precede the construction and implementation of policies^{iv}. Not bothering to establish prior agreed values creates a distance between policy-makers and those for whom the policies are intended. It turns educators into instructors who are under instruction to implement received policy. It often requires performance management of educators so that targets can be hit and, as a direct consequence, the behaviour management of children so that they conform.

The past is a foreign country: they do things differently there

To look back approximately seventy years is to bring to mind L.P. Hartley's opening line to *The Go Between*. We really did do things differently in that foreign country called the past. The most noticeable change has been the exclusive centralisation of policy-making and control by the state over the detail of curriculum, assessment and professional values. And the most strange thing about this change is that it gathered so much pace during Conservative administrations, running counter to their publicly declared values of free markets, free enterprise, loose regulation, light touch inspection and a smaller role for 'the state'. In *Thatcher and Sons: a Revolution in Three Acts* (2006) Simon Jenkins describes Kenneth Baker's introduction of the National Curriculum as a nationalisation. We ought not to expect policy making always to be consistent or to fit neatly into a defined set of beliefs. And the defining of belief can be a less than exact science.

The use and changing meanings of language and our memories of school history lessons

There have been changes to the language of policy making. Words and concepts such as *reform*, *improvement*, *modernisation* and *progress* can be used to represent or disguise quite different philosophical positions and, because they are usually regarded favourably, control of their use by makers of policy becomes crucial for them.

When Andrew Lansley (now replaced) and Michael Gove (still, alas, not replaced) emphasise the word 'reform' to describe the changes being made to health and education they are choosing a word that stirs memories of school history lessons about the abolition of slavery, the factory acts, the introduction of national insurance and the extension of the franchise. It is hardly surprising that policy makers wish to appropriate words that have signified fairness and equality in order to promote their policies.

Schoolteachers talking about 'improvement' in, say, 1975 when Denis Lawton wrote *Class, Culture and the Curriculum* and advocated a collegially produced curriculum probably meant something quite different from their professional descendants using the same word while preparing for an inspection in 2013. The meaning of improvement does not stay still for long and the power to define it is no longer in the hands of educators. Also in 1975 Lawrence Stenhouse contemplated the positive support that Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) might give to schools engaged in research. That is not the role of today's inspectors.

For 'modernisation', as with reform and improvement, the word represents a concept that is difficult to challenge. To question policies presented with the labels 'Reform' or 'Improvement' or 'Modernisation' or 'Progressive' is to risk being accused of being against well-regarded concepts. The military regime of El Salvador in the 1960s and 70s labelled its policies 'modernisation'. Included was a policy to replace schoolteachers with a television set in every classroom broadcasting approved lessons from the capital. As Lindo-Fuentes and Ching^v show, this use of the concept of modernisation alienated the teaching profession, which objected. The 'modernisation' of education was, however, part of the regime's way of fighting the Cold War and lives were lost as a result.

All politicians like to have the word 'progress' in their lexicon so that they can apply it to their policies and deny it to those of their opponents. Even when policies go very wrong we hear the claim that progress is being made towards a solution: to a problem, the blame for which they hope they can pin on their predecessors.

In order to make critical sense of how learners and educators have interacted with policy and policy makers it will help now to plot some of the changes and the sometimes-tangled themes and threads of recent relevant history.

Seven phases of educational policy making since the Second World War

As it is with theories and ideologies so it is with phases of history: the walls of categorisation that we erect between them can be porous, the start and end points tenuous, overlapping and disputable and the names by which we classify them chosen tendentiously. Keeping these cautions in mind we can, nevertheless, discern, name and classify phases to help us make critical sense of the history of educational policy making as experienced by learners and educators. It also helps us avoid the temptation to enter the policy forest and attempt to pin a different label on every tree.

With probably an over representation of examples from England, I suggest seven relatively clear phases from the implementation of the 1944 Education Act^{vi} to today: a period of almost seventy years. The seventh phase is in the process of forming while the sixth has yet to become clear. Chronology is not always tidy.

1. The quiescent autonomous phase

This was a time when no one seemed to be much bothered about changing what was taught, how it was taught, what was examined and how it was examined: when teachers simply got on with the job as they and their schools saw it. The 1944 Act established a tripartite structure of schooling. At the secondary stage the pre-war grammar schools were carried forward and reserved for approximately twenty per cent of children while the rest were to be divided into a minority for technical and a majority for 'modern' schools. Very soon we lost the technical schools leading to the roughly 20:80 divide between grammar and secondary modern. The maintenance of this divide was probably the defining feature of the secondary school system with roots in the pre-war eugenic movement: a movement dedicated to racial improvement^{vii}. Because, however, the 1944 Act preserved a privileged education for those attending private 'public' schools, complete with their own approaches to teaching and learning, their well-established links to particular occupations and universities and their distinct culture, 'tripartite' continued to be an accurate term to describe the overall structure, albeit in the form of a very clear hierarchy of ascribed social value.

In *Parity and Prestige in English Secondary Education* (1955) Olive Banks^{viii} made the point that as long as some schools remained selective and increased the opportunity of their young people to obtain desired jobs and social position non selective schools would never be able to transmit to the children that attended them any similar prestige. It is not, she argued in her 1974 Inaugural Lecture, schools that change social strata but society that uses the school system to reinforce the structures it wishes to perpetuate. These points remain valid and pose awkward questions about the purposes and values of professionalism in education. What, for example, might be the social values that professional educators profess? Ought they to feel uncomfortable if they are used to perpetuate social unfairness, the negative labelling of large percentages of children and their differentiation in terms of religion and social class?

Release from constraint

The 1944 Act released teachers from more than seventy years of curriculum direction, constraint and inspection, including a failed attempt at payment by results^{ix}. Although Gladstone's Education Act of 1870 had for the first time made schooling universally compulsory it also ushered in a period of intense interference in what happened inside classrooms^x. The 1944 release from interference did not, however, spark a flurry of curriculum and assessment experimentation or a burgeoning of professional influence over policy makers who were, at the time, relatively inactive.

The post-war period up to the very early 1960s was quiescent in terms of both educational policy making and professional experimentation probably because it mostly suited us not to change the

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society of the time, which, though stratified, provided many people with a markedly better quality of life than they had experienced pre-war. Beveridge's *Giant Evils of Squalor, Ignorance, Want, Idleness and Disease*^{xi} looked as though they were being conquered and Harold Macmillan was able to win the 1959 General Election for the Conservatives with the slogan *You've Never Had It So Good*.

Secondary moderns in their place: grammar schools and matriculation

There was little need for civil servants, central and local, to direct teachers in secondary moderns to teach in a particular way or to measure the performance of children who left school at the age of fourteen (later fifteen) to work in jobs that seldom required formal qualifications. There was also little incentive for teachers in secondary moderns to stimulate curriculum and assessment change that might challenge assumptions about the social values that their schools had been established to reflect.

There was even less need to direct the professional lives of teachers in grammar schools because the children that attended them had already been selected and even those that left without any qualifications were always able to offer a self-satisfyingly impressive response to what was a key, socially sensitive and vocationally significant question: 'Which school did *you* go to?'. Some labels have always been more desirable than others.

For grammar schools the word 'matriculation' was very important. It means admission to a list of the privileged. Many grammar school sixteen and eighteen year olds were, for example, entered for the examinations of the Northern Universities Joint Matriculation Board (usually known as the JMB). Today we think of examination boards as providing a service used by schools for all children but such a title gives an idea of how closely selection at eleven was once linked to selection at sixteen and again at eighteen. And also of how important it was to ensure that so many children were excluded: de-selected. Examination boards of the time were not there to assess learning: they had 'pass marks' and grades which only a predetermined number of pre-selected children could obtain^{xii}. We might describe the type of teaching in grammar schools as preparing selected children for further and yet further selection.

Our well-established social norms gave us our stratified school system and there was very little perceived need to disturb it by constructing new policies. Professional educators had considerable autonomy but only while they did little that threatened how things were meant to be. This curricular quiescence meant that an opportunity for the profession to work collegially to research and construct common approaches to teaching, learning and assessment was not taken. Perhaps the opportunity was not even noticed by many. Schoolteachers did not cross into each other's territory in order to collaborate; indeed, the system was designed to separate them and those they taught.

2. The proactive autonomous stage

During the 1960s we began to see signs of professional self-confidence and some change in social values. The Newsom Report of 1964 brought attention to the inadequacy and unfairness of the school system and one year later the introduction of the Certificate in Secondary Education (CSE) recognised that children in secondary moderns might wish to stay an extra year and obtain a qualification. As an example of professional proactivity, from 1967-1972 the Humanities Curriculum Project not only helped to prepare the way for the raising of the school leaving age but also stimulated the kind of teaching needed for CSE. Project work was a prominent feature of CSE and it was also possible for teachers to design their own syllabuses and examinations under Mode-3 rules^{xiii}. In 1972 the school leaving age was raised to sixteen making more equal the resources invested in the education of differentiated children and in the same year the James Report included a proposal for teacher sabbaticals. For a while it looked as though the rapidly

increasing number of comprehensive schools would provide a structure and a set of values for the development of collegially produced ideas about teaching, learning and assessment.

In 1971 teachers of government and politics in schools, further and higher education formed the Politics Association. Its purpose was the encouragement of political education and in 1978 a working party generated *Political Education and Political Literacy* (Crick and Porter). The emphasis in that report was on the inclusive concepts and practice of the political process rather than the learning of rights and responsibilities^{xiv}. The political education and literacy movement and so much other curriculum development of the time represented a confident belief that policy could be formed and initiatives taken outside the civil service and political parties. Universities appointed professors of curriculum studies and LEAs had advisors working on curriculum development, even alternative curriculum and assessment strategies^{xv}.

It would, however, have required strong joint action by unions, LEAs and academics to bring about educational change that might have generated lasting significant societal change and central government would have had to stand benignly to one side while it happened. That was always unlikely. Olive Banks' point about the relative powerlessness of educators to alter social structures was well made. Too much of that powerlessness was, I believe, self-chosen.

3. The civil service led centralising phase

The urge to centralise, control and direct did not suddenly return in the 1960s. It was, Richard Pring (2013) points out, always there. Reflecting upon the quiescent autonomous phase it might be said that learners and educators got their hands on the key to David Eccles' secret garden of education^{xvi} at a time when they lacked the willingness, the confidence or the means to effect the kind of changes to the curriculum and examination system that could have created a foundation for the later proactive autonomous phase during which we saw the growth of comprehensive schools and professionally generated curriculum development: a movement that sought to end discrimination between both learners and educators.

Tony Crosland's Circular 10/65 recommending to local education authorities (LEAs) that they introduce comprehensive secondary schools might be thought of as direct party political intervention but it was merely a recommendation and not a requirement and certainly not an act of parliament. The circular affected the school structure but it did not come with curriculum or assessment strings attached^{xvii}.

A polemic

What happened to prompt Lawton's polemic of 1980 when he wrote *The Politics of the School Curriculum* was what he saw as a gradual and secretive (exclusive) centralisation of power over learning, learners and the terms in which their performance was to be judged and presented: terms that tended to reduce learning to what was more easily measurable and to divert it from the philosophy expounded by Lawrence Stenhouse who encouraged schoolteachers to be researchers. If teachers are researchers it becomes difficult to ascribe a clear graded value to teaching and learning: to give them a score: to analyse their value for money: to manage their performance against targets. To establish, on the other hand, a system that ascribes graded value to learners and educators constrains learning as a human activity and means that it is less likely to explore the unknown: less of Bruner's discovery learning: less of Stenhouse's discovery *professional learning*^{xviii}. Lawton devotes a considerable section of his book to an analysis of the Assessment of Performance Unit (APU), which he saw as a civil service attempt to introduce more norm-referenced testing. He also describes official suspicion of the amount of influence teachers had on the Schools Council and attempts to diminish it^{xix}.

4. The party political led centralising phase

An early signal that we were about to enter this phase was James Callaghan's Ruskin College speech of 1976. Prior to this speech we had seen, when Margaret Thatcher was secretary of state between 1970 and 1974, the introduction of more comprehensive schools than at any other time. Even so, politicians were, at that stage, reluctant to be the political tail that wagged the professional dog.

In 1976, as Prime Minister, James Callaghan signalled two of his personal concerns. The first was in the form of an assertion that others besides professional educators had a right to become involved in shaping and influencing matters educational. We might see this as a warning to those who felt that comprehensivisation had the potential to bring about changes to education that could have social consequences: socially equalising consequences. During the previous phase it had been civil servants who represented his 'others' but eventually it became politicians driving change and setting expectations.

The second of his concerns came in the form of a compliment to the people he suggested were capable of teaching informally, thereby implying that what was sometimes known as 'progressive' teaching was not for everybody and should not become the norm. His speech came at a time when some people were becoming exercised about new styles of teaching.

Nevertheless, there remained some commitment to new styles of teaching. Keith Joseph's General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) was introduced just before the National Curriculum with a slogan emphasising that the examination would enable everyone sitting it to 'demonstrate what they know, understand and can do'. Accessibility and differentiation by outcome became important, making questions more open and requiring responses rather than correct answers^{xx}. Coursework was prominent. It did not stay like that.

John Major intervenes

When prime ministers make speeches setting out their concerns it has an impact on how policy is formed. John Major's 1991 speech at the Café Royal in which he raised personal doubts about coursework and differentiation by outcome (not his phrase) had a sudden and unexpected impact upon GCSE that completely altered its philosophy and resulted in almost every syllabus and examination paper having to be rewritten at short notice. Tiered papers were introduced, coursework diminished and the examination became less of a vehicle for learning and making sense of learning and more a means of measuring^{xxi}.

Kenneth Baker's Gerbil

In 1975 Denis Lawton had proposed construction of a common culture curriculum. In 1988 Kenneth Baker provided it, together with a system of assessment and, eventually, inspection. Baker relied upon support from academics to construct the details of the National Curriculum and its system of assessment^{xxii}. This might have been the crucial moment when academics switched from being creators to being implementers. Construction of the National Curriculum was according to a given template^{xxiii}. From then on local authority advisors spent most of their time preparing schoolteachers for what they were about to receive^{xxiv}.

Lawton, by contrast, had proposed a number of stages of construction. Before thinking about the detail he wanted us to think about our philosophy of education and the kind of society we wanted. The place for this thinking and for later detailed planning would probably have been the Schools Council that was established in 1964 but, as Lawton (1980) points out, it was coming under increasing pressure to be less independently minded. It was abolished in 1984.

Gerbil, by the way, stands for 'Great educational reform bill', the basis for the 1988 Education Reform Act: another example of the capture by right wing central governments of the concept of reform.

Given all the party political led policy making under New Labour and by the Coalition Government it might be thought that we are still in this phase. There are, however, reasons why the next two phases need to be classified and treated differently.

5. The routinisation of charisma and performance management phase

Policy making during this phase, including that affecting learners and educators, was characterised by what, echoing Max Weber^{xxv}, we might call the routinisation of charisma and by performance management. *Tony Blair, A Journey*^{xxvi}, is a story of self-belief and the kind of charismatic leadership that, usually in the name of modernisation, could over turn agreed party policy and manifesto commitments such as opposition to the introduction of student fees. A key contributor to this style of policy making was Phillip Gould^{xxvii}. His use of focus groups established a picture of what was in the minds of the voters and how policies would be perceived. Gould saw himself as a Hegelian and was very familiar with the concept of the consciousness of the people^{xxviii}. His distillation of knowledge gained from focus groups fed into policy making, bypassing normal democratic processes.

An even more essential policy component was performance management. In 1997 Michael Barber began his government role in education as chief advisor on school standards. By 2001 he was Director of Delivery with a government wide remit and his book, *Instruction To Deliver*^{xxix} became a government manual with worldwide influence. One consequence for schoolteachers was the performance management conversation^{xxx} with its heavy emphasis upon the delivery of the school development plan which was itself designed to ensure that government targets were met when inspectors called.

The channels of communication and decision-making changed during this phase. Moving from what might be called an 'accountability' model in which both local and central government formed policy more openly to a 'delivery' model made it more difficult to gain a hearing for the values and views of outsiders who could provide different perspectives. Richard Pring^{xxxi} draws sardonic attention to the word chosen to describe the ideology of Michael Barber and the approach to policy: 'deliverology'.

An unheard voice

The introduction in England in 2003 of the postgraduate professional development programme (PPD) providing masters and doctorates for schoolteachers recruited between twenty-five and thirty-five thousand teachers a year for almost ten years^{xxxii}. The research this generated seems, however, to have had little or no influence upon policy. In 2013 the programme is almost closed. We can only imagine what educational policy would be like if politicians looked at such work. I suggest that not understanding how government now worked was a factor in failing to gain a hearing for the voices of schoolteachers: if the new channels to policy makers are known only to insiders the policy flow is only one way^{xxxiii}.

6. The fracking phase

The word 'fractured' to describe society has been used a lot^{xxxiv}. I suggest the phase that began as the Coalition Government assumed power has been devoted to fracture. While this phase has echoes of the values of Thatcherism and the New Right^{xxxv} the policies of the Coalition and in www.criticalprofessionallearning.co.uk

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particular its education policies are different in nature. What makes them different is not simply the privatisation of the school system and the introduction of the profit motive as chains of companies, exercising their rights to commercial confidentiality, are encouraged by government to take over schools that were previously managed by open and democratically accountable local government. The main difference is a deliberately created loss of coherence. Pay structures, holiday patterns, professional qualifications, the curriculum and public examinations are now very uncertain. This has been brought about by a secretary of state using enormous power: centralisation for disintegration^{xxxvi}.

Chaos theory

A hint of the philosophy behind this comes from the current minister for planning, Nick Boles. Chaos, he said, is what we need, not planning^{xxxvii}. I chose the word 'fracking' because, unlike the previous phase that, in the interests of efficiency and delivery, reversed the conventions of accountability and concealed policy making, what we are witnessing is the breaking up of known and understood ways of working and professional relationships and also a deliberate detachment from democracy.

Cohesion is now problematic and contradictory. Centralised powers and anti- terrorism laws are being used to break up forces and systems that have maintained cohesion: national pay agreements, a national curriculum, a national set of assessment instruments and examinations, nationally agreed professional standards and nationally agreed professional qualifications. And yet, the punitive powers of inspection have been increased^{xxxviii}. How, we are entitled to ask, is it possible to form and deliver inspection judgments that imply uniformity and cohesion when so many new variables are being introduced at a very fast pace?

Government continues to focus on 'closing the gap'^{xxxix}. But it is difficult to see what reliable instruments can be used to measure a gap when both the curriculum and systems of assessment change and become optional for some schools but not others. The great irony of the lack of cohesion caused by fracture and privatisation is that if School A is to be compared with School B regulatory bodies and inspectors need more powers.

Loss of cohesion combined with fear of failure is why, even as this phase is being worked through, the next one is emerging.

7. The DIY phase and conclusion

In one sense we are back to autonomy in what might be called the 'Do It Yourself' or DIY phase as schools and teachers search social networks looking for partners and friends while simultaneously competing with them. There are now numerous consultants, who at one time worked for local authorities, selling piecemeal to schools what was once a comprehensive, cogent and coherent public service^{xl}.

Learners and enablers of learning did not ask for this new autonomy, which offers the freedom and equality of the jungle. It did not emerge from inclusive discourse. Values were not consensually arrived at prior to policy making. The government did not even gain electoral endorsement.

Over the last seventy years interaction with policy has, with a brief interlude, mostly meant responding to what was given: creativity confined to implementation: reaction rather than interaction. Learning defines humans. If learners and enablers of learning are excluded from expressing values and contributing to policy it diminishes learning. If learning is diminished so are humans.

If we wish our theme to be humanity and if we believe that learning is part of what makes a democratic society what, now, can we do to make it so? Whatever we do must, I believe, include a

full and proper participatory political process. Policy should be slow cooked with lots of ingredients: not microwaved with only a few.

3rd. December 2013

ⁱ In 1983 Stephen Kemmis and others produced *Orientations to Curriculum and Transition: Towards the Socially Critical School*. The authors argue that schools can do better than simply prepare young people for a world of work or for life as individuals: that they need to realise that schools are not simply preparers for society but are actually participants in society and that this has implications for how they approach what they do.

The book was written in Australia but I have used it with educators in Israel and the UK over many years. For me it helps to show leaders of learning that there are other perspectives: that there is a valid educational language somewhat different from the language of a quality assured pursuit of targets.

ⁱⁱ In the late 1960s, when I was qualifying as a schoolteacher, we were given a lot of Dewey. Looking back, although he was born in 1859 and died in 1952, he could almost be said to have represented the Spirit of 1968. At the time, however, I suppose I lumped him with all the other people such as Rousseau with whom our teachers had chosen to burden us: he and his like were simply yet more 'stuff' that we had to wade through in order to qualify. Having since had to experience formal education as it has entered the cul-de-sac of instrumentalism I find him inspiring. There are far too many books and articles for me to recommend a single text, and I am not suggesting total acceptance of everything he said and wrote, but to be reminded that education is about far more than passing examinations: that it is part of what makes a democratic society he has to be revisited.

ⁱⁱⁱ Published in 2012 Nurit Peled-Elhanan's *Palestine in Israeli School Textbooks, ideology and propaganda in education* confronts an issue that is not confined to Israel. It is the issue of establishing an official national narrative that suppresses the narratives of others. Except that, unless it is revealed, there can be no issue. To be dehumanised and devalued is to be dismissed from discussion. If you are one of the 'others' your maps, your place names, your customs and your celebrated events are not allowed into the classroom.

A review of the book can be found on this website. See [National narrative under scholarly analysis](#)

<http://www.criticalprofessionallearning.co.uk/assets/webNurit.pdf>

^{iv} In 1962, when Bernard Crick published *In Defence of Politics*, his intention was to restore the meaning of politics: to remind us that it is about public values. Fifty years after Crick's book went on sale Michael Flinders, a successor of Crick's at the University of Sheffield, published *Defending Politics* with a similar intention. Why, we should ask, is it necessary from time to time for us to be reminded that politics is an inclusive public activity and not one exclusively limited to a few people making policy?

^v *Modernizing Minds in El Salvador, Education Reform and the Cold War* (2012) by Lindo-Fuentes and Ching describes how, in the name of modernisation, supported by lots of money and designed by very clever people, the military regime of the country managed to create an educational policy that helped to start a civil war. Failing to include schoolteachers at the policy making stage was a contributory, some think key, factor.

^{vi} The '44' Act has generally received a good press over the years, being perceived to have extended secondary education for all. Some people like to lump it in with the Welfare State and the National Health Service as part of a great urge to create a fair society. It could have been but was, especially as implemented, no such thing. For children at the age of eleven not considered to be fit to attend grammar schools (approximately 80%) the extension was limited and less resource was invested in their education. The Act reeked of eugenics and the preservation of social hierarchies. Sponsored by Rab Butler, a Conservative, but in 1945, implemented by Ellen Wilkinson of the Labour Party, the possibility existed under the Act to create an equal leaving age (and, therefore, equal distribution of resource) and to remove structural discrimination by establishing comprehensive schools. Neither was considered a priority.

The Act also left in place that peculiar aberration: the British private so-called public schools. The designers, the enactors and the implementers, none of them, wished to fix the distortions in society that were reinforced by the education system.

^{vii} In *The Morbid Age, Britain between the wars* (2009) Richard Overy includes a chapter on the eugenics movement. Knowing what we later came to know about death camps and euthanasia as practised by the Nazis we may, today, recoil from words such as 'retarded', 'feeble-minded' and 'sub-normal', all in common use until at least the 1960s, and squirm at www.criticalprofessionallearning.co.uk

the thought of compulsory sterilisation of young women because it has been decided that if they breed they will damage the purity of our race. We sometimes forget that racism is not confined to us being prejudiced against people of another definable race: it has often included a drive to improving a race by promoting those specimens that are approved of and holding back those that are not.

It is interesting that Overy reminds us that Marie Stopes, who did so much to promote birth control before WWII, was so greatly motivated by the wish to reduce the birth rate of the racially 'unfit'. Needless to say, such children were not expected to go to grammar schools, let alone mix with the even more privileged children who were admitted to 'public schools'.

^{viii} Olive Banks and her husband Joe were members of staff of the Social Science Department of the University of Liverpool in the sixties. I have two memories of them both and one of her. I was studying Political Theory and Institutions with a bit of sociology at the time. First memory is that Olive and Joe seemed to be the only members of staff on speaking terms with each other. Some of the enmities in the Department were so well known to the students that at times attendance at lectures went up if it was anticipated that there might be some scarcely disguised slagging off of a colleague. The second memory is of student bashes during the height of Merseybeat when undergraduates would be thrashing around doing The Cavern Stomp or The Shake. Across the floor would glide Joe and Olive elegantly slow foxtrotting.

My memory of her was as my tutor. She was very kind and encouraging about an essay in which I questioned Marx's use of the dialectic. Maybe I should have switched from politics and government to sociology but a reading of Talcott Parsons confirmed my prejudice that sociology was full of far too many big words and I felt at the time that although sociology would help me make critical sense of the world government and politics would add to that some inkling of how to change it.

Olive is one of a very long list of people I now think I ought to have taken more notice of when I had the chance. *Parity and Prestige* is about education and the school system (it is based upon her PhD thesis) but Olive was not an educationist. She contributed much to what is often now called the first wave of feminism and was an outstanding sociologist, as was Joe. They are both well worth revisiting. For me they were a missed opportunity. For anyone coming late to their work they can still provide much of value.

^{ix} Payment by results is once again being put forward as a good idea. It now goes by the initials PRP or Performance Related Pay. I think that we ought to raise a few questions. What results count? A teacher of English, for example, will be entering all children for public examinations while a teacher of Latin might well be entering a keen and dedicated few. Ought they to be judged by the same criteria? A teacher with a heavy pastoral responsibility may be responsible for transforming the approach of a young person from negative to positive so that they get a good result. Who will know about this and if they do know how will they construct their judgments of this teacher's performance?

If I have a mortgage and young children and a car that I have not finished paying for how, given that my salary depends upon results, am I to approach my teaching? Well, supposing that I leave to one side any teaching that might be interestingly off the subject and concentrate only upon what I know will achieve the desired result, shall I obtain my reward? Perhaps not, if all my colleagues are doing the same and the school budget will not stretch to cover us all or only provide each of us with very little. How will I feel about my colleagues if they get what I believe should have come to me? Imagine going home to regale your partner with something brilliant that happened because of your teaching to be greeted with the question: 'And will that help you get the results that turn into money?'.

PRP also has the effect of individualising teachers and reducing the collaborative nature of school departments and faculties.

Furthermore, should this policy be adopted, has anyone worked out a feasible set of bureaucratic procedures to operate fairly in every school? And do we believe that the people making the decisions about pay are really any good at this?

As for special schools, has anyone asked them what they think about the idea? Politicians assume that teachers should be responsible for the educational progression of young people. I doubt if it enters their heads that special education is sometimes about trying to slow the rate of regression of children who may be dying. Would anyone care to turn that into a system of payment by results?

^x The 1870 Education Act is often called *The Forster Act* because that was the name of Gladstone's education minister. I like to associate it with Gladstone because I believe to do so emphasises it as part of the social liberalism of his later policies. Another reason is that a Liberal Party politician who knew Harold Wilson once told me that he had a picture of Gladstone on his office wall. Wilson, so I was told, used to say that he expected to be remembered for the introduction of the Open University, which he regarded as completing what Gladstone had started back in 1870.

The 1870 Act was not the only piece of education legislation of that period, which was marked by a number of measures not only structuring and re-structuring what today is known as the 'delivery' of a service but also laying down what was to be taught and in what stages. Under the banner of 'liberalism' also came state intervention. For Gladstone the motivation for state intervention was, however, to right wrongs that only the state (and local government) had the power to accomplish.

^{xi} These Evils are mentioned in the Beveridge Report of 1942. It is worth remembering that, although the 1945 Labour government implemented the findings of the report, thereby bringing into being what became known as the Welfare State, many influential Labour members of the wartime coalition government were not wholeheartedly in favour of it. If we are to award a party political prize for the Beveridge Report and the consequent Welfare State it should go to the Liberal Party. The reforms of Asquith's government from 1906 and the work of Lloyd George as Chancellor of the Exchequer to bring in National Insurance remain the foundation stones of Beveridge and the Welfare State. Beveridge himself became a Liberal MP before the end of the war.

^{xii} The issue here is not just that it was decided that only approximately 20% of children were fit to be selected to attend grammar schools and that this decision has influenced our perceptions of ability and performance ever since. The bigger issue is that we think in terms of norms at all. We have an urge to grade and the effect of this urge is made far worse when we do no research that might discover reasonably reliable norms for educational performance.

Our entire system of public assessment is subject to two contradictory forces, each of which could easily have been avoided. First, we have decided that we must define and place people in different levels of ability. The basis upon which we made that decision was probably eugenic and related to the work of Cyril Burt. It was also probably to do with our attitude to social class. Selection and exclusion are inevitable consequences of that decision. Maybe they were prompters of that decision because of an historical tendency to align approved ability with class. Second, we have decided that we must measure children and teachers and humiliate those that do not pass the test. Children, teachers and parents are now in what is for many of them an unwinnable game. They are required to be top. They can't all be top. If they are not top it is their fault either because they are lazy and feckless or, a re-emerging theme, their genes simply are not good enough.

In this social/educational world the USA has the appropriate model: better and better instruction of an approved set of subjects is what is needed. It is, however, a game that requires losers.

I do not have permission to introduce the following example but as it involves my oldest brother I am sure he won't mind, especially as I strongly suspect him of having been, unlike my other elder brother and me, in the top class at junior school. He left grammar school without a single qualification. His best subject was truancy. If, however, racing pigeons had been on the timetable he would have been top of the class and had his virtues extolled at speech day when he would have walked off with all the prizes. Do you know a school system that will use a child's interest in racing pigeons to develop their knowledge of geography, arithmetic and animal welfare? No, neither do I!

^{xiii} CSE came in three modes. Mode-1 had a syllabus designed by a committee on behalf of an examination board that was also responsible for setting examination papers and mark schemes and for moderating coursework: a conventional examination. Mode-2 had a syllabus designed by schoolteachers but the examination was in the hands of an examination board. From memory there were not many Mode-2s. Mode-3 had both syllabus and the form of examination designed by schoolteachers. They had to be approved by an examination board that also moderated the results. Mode-3 was very popular.

For a while I was what was called a Chief Moderator visiting lots of schools in the North West of England doing both Mode-1 and Mode-3. This not only meant that results were judged according to general criteria but also provided opportunity to witness curriculum development engaged in by many teachers. Teachers using Mode-1 were organised into consortia and attended meetings with colleagues to discuss and make decisions about coursework. A chief moderator always attended those meetings. The examination process was also a professional development process.

To illustrate what this felt like inside a school let me go back to 1973 when I began work in a school that was taking part in what was known as the Childwall Project. This involved lots of curriculum development and to go with it the school designed a suite of nine Mode-3s. As a development this was rather too exciting and somewhat unmanageable so my first act was to reduce the suite to three. The coursework often involved the creation of local radio programmes so the young people who were involved not only obtained examination credit for their work but also got to hear their work being broadcast. Every year the Childwall Project produced new teaching materials designed and tested by the teachers who, like the kids, got to see their work published.

When GCSE was introduced the possibility of a Mode-3 version existed for a while and was, eventually, governed by what was Section Five of the 1988 Education Act. Soon, however, this example of how accreditation could be combined with professional research and learning became part of history.

^{xiv} I was closely involved with the Politics Association for many years from its beginning and also a member of the Political Literacy Working Party. While I was very keen to encourage the move away from citizenship, civics and British Constitution and towards an understanding of politics as a public activity to do with our values I felt that some members of the Association and the Working Party put too much trust in teaching concepts to children. In line with Fred Ridley who had taught me I felt that people should not be lost and confused in and by systems of government. Fred's words were something like: 'It helps democracy to work if people know who to phone when their dustbins aren't emptied'.

Maybe the fact that I was the only schoolteacher on the Working Party and that I worked in a secondary modern in an area of extremely high unemployment helped to form my views. Concepts and values were very important but so was knowing how to talk to your local councillors and administrators and make them respond to you.

^{xv} My experience of alternative curriculum and assessment strategies included involvement in the Northern Partnership for Records of Achievement (NPRA). Records of Achievement were taken very seriously then and, particularly by means of its Unit Accreditation Scheme, the NPRA involved thirty-three LEAs in the North of England working with all the examination boards (from memory, seven) that eventually merged into AQA. Advisors, schoolteachers, children and examination boards were part of a project making collective sense of both curriculum and assessment. For a while it felt that we might be able to find a way to add life to GCSE and the National Curriculum. The National Curriculum steamroller and its Assessment Orders were, however, too strong and could not be resisted.

^{xvi} David Eccles was Secretary of State for Education from 1954-1957 and again from 1959-1962. He believed in selection but was good at getting money out of the Treasury for education. For me a positive is that he laid the foundations for what became the Schools Council which helped to generate so much professional creative self confidence. His complaint that there was a Secret Garden of Education is said to have been prompted by his frustration at not having access to it. So, maybe, it's a bit strange that he helped to build the walls of the garden, such as it was.

The symbolic power of the phrase is huge and very significant. It can be used by both civil servants and politicians who wish to caricature educators as professionally secretive and wanting to prevent anyone but them influencing what happens in the classroom. The derogatory use of the term can be used to justify governmental interference. The extreme irony is that we now have a Secret Garden of Policy Making with very high walls.

^{xvii} As reported by his widow Crosland's famous circular came with his florid intention to close down 'every fucking grammar school'. Margaret Thatcher, however, holds the record for closing them.

^{xviii} From Jerome Bruner come lots of terms that gained currency especially in the 60s, 70s and 80s: terms such as *scaffolding* and *discovery learning* and *the spiral curriculum*. As a psychologist he is interested in how learning takes place as a human activity and how it can be re-visited in differing contexts over time. He also, like Dewey and others, takes account of cultural links and contexts. While some may wish to portray his ideas as simply allowing children to do as they like that would be to disregard the need for careful planning and observation required by his approaches.

What, however, continues to puzzle me is why educators and psychologists such as Bruner in the USA use the word 'instruction' to describe what educators do. It's meaning seems totally counter to his approach.

In 1975 Lawrence Stenhouse produced *An Introduction To Curriculum Research And Development*. It was an Open University set book. The Times Educational Supplement called it 'a profoundly important book' and predicted that it would be read widely. That was a time when thinking and experimenting about what and how to teach and what and how to assess were regarded as proper activities for professional educators and when universities appointed professors of curriculum development: a time when at least some educational policy was made on the ground.

Although he began and did much of his work in Scotland it was in England at a time when the Teaching Council was dominated by educators that he became part of, and a force for, professional research activity. He even saw school inspectors as collaborators with and enablers of schoolteachers undertaking research. We have moved far away from that position and now, monitored by inspectors, must hit targets set up by others.

^{xix} I don't want to allow my general approval of the Schools Council to give the impression that I felt it could do no wrong. My colleagues and I were somewhat dismayed when the Humanities Project that we had ordered arrived in our school. We liked the idea of it but it seemed to have been written by people who had not been in the classroom for a while and whose mental picture of a young person aged 14-16 in an area of declining industry was of an 18 year old in a very leafy suburb. And as for the notion of the teacher as the neutral observer: garbage! We re-wrote it. We did not dumb anything down. We simply made it work with real kids and real teachers.

^{xx} The word 'answer' implies the presence of a correct reply to a question, albeit one that might have degrees of correctness. Chief examiners do sometimes set questions that provide little or no leeway here: the gap between right answer and wrong answer is often too narrow to notice. The word 'response' has a somewhat different meaning because it implies not only a wide gap but also that, rather than simply being able to assess something quickly by use of a mark scheme that lists all the replies worthy of marks, the examiner will have to do some thinking in order to make sense of responses that may include points that are valid but had not been anticipated.

During the early days of GCSE we were trying very hard to differentiate by outcome. The first reason was to avoid the trap of designing examinations merely in order to discriminate between candidates (a strange word, candidates: a throwback to the days of competing for membership of a select group). If all that an examination is intended to do is to produce a rank order (to discriminate) then we do not have to think so hard about its educational purpose. Hence the linguistic obstacle courses sometimes presented to candidates who sat there puzzling out what on earth the examiner who set the question was on about. The second reason was to fulfil the philosophy of GCSE, which was that all that were entered for the examination were to be provided with the opportunity to 'demonstrate what they know, understand and can do.' This meant no differentiation by task, no predicting levels and no restriction to levels or tiers of entry. We tried to set open and accessible questions. They were easier to get into and once into them the candidate might take the examiner into places they could not always foresee. Less time was spent looking for a correct answer and more time was spent making critical sense of responses. It could sometimes feel as though teachers, young people and examiners were engaged in a collaborative learning process. For an examiner it was much more difficult than simple reference to a set of right answers but it was far more educationally fulfilling, especially when sixteen year olds came out of an examination to tell their teachers how interesting the exam had been.

^{xxi} This is a personal story that I hope also makes relevant points about the making and execution of policy. A short while after Major's speech, as a GCSE Chief Examiner, with lots of others, I was summoned to a residential meeting in a hotel in Newcastle in order to work out how to respond to it by writing tiered papers as he now required us to do. For me this meant driving from coast to coast over the snow bound Pennines. Before I left the house in my red (with white roof) Mini Cooper to pretend to be a rally driver the post arrived. Among the post was the second Dearing Report. I threw it on the back seat.

Eventually I took a wrong turn where the sign saying Road Closed had fallen down. I found myself driving over melting ice and snow on a single lane road with a steep hill on one side and, on the other, a complete absence of wall down to a valley bottom about 1,200 ft. below. I came to a point where it was too narrow on the outside to get past a snow drift so, the alternative drop to the valley floor looking rather unwelcome, I tried to batter my way through. I got stuck. No-one around. Working out that there were some telephone wires and that they must lead somewhere I followed them to, after a few soaking miles, the house of a shepherd. He was fast asleep in front of the telly. After a while I managed to rouse him and explain my predicament. He got out his 4x4 with knobby tyres, got me back to my car, we dug it out, I gave him all the money I had, ten quid, and set off again, pausing only to stop at a friend's house where my trousers were put in a tumble dryer.

I was first to arrive at the hotel, which gave me a chance to leaf through the Dearing Report where I read that in about nine months the government's agent, the Schools Examinations and Assessment Council (SEAC) was intending to produce new criteria for GCSE. What, I said to myself, a wasted journey. When the exam board person arrived I showed her the report and suggested she call SEAC to ask why we were having to make all these changes now when the rules were going to change later in the year. 'You must', they told her, 'do as you are required!' So we did. The policy must get through!

The amusing, frustrating, ironic, irritating comment on all this urge to implement policy no matter how illogical or at what cost is that History GCSE failed to meet the deadline to make the required short notice changes. Being, however, such a curriculum big noise subject it was allowed to get away with it and for years avoided the damage inflicted by Major's speech.

The professional options today have become: drive on the edge and risk being cast into the abyss; stay stuck in the snowdrift and wait for retirement; or dissipate your energies trying to make workable the unworkable.

^{xxii} It was around this time that I began to realise that much of my professional life would be about obtaining and making sense of the highest quality up-to-date gossip about policy that I could lay my hands on. Things have not changed in that respect. From that time I reduced my use of the word 'understand' because it implied that I had got to the bottom of things and replaced it with 'making sense of' or 'sense-making' on the grounds that most of the time it was the best that anybody could manage.

I knew a member of the Task Group on Assessment and Testing (TGAT) and at first heard stories of an intention that tasks would be devised for teachers to incorporate within National Curriculum lessons when they judged that it would be

an appropriate time to assess a child who would not even notice that they were being assessed. That seemed both professional and humane. It did not happen.

The subsequent story told to me by my contact was that the TGAT Report had to be submitted to Margaret Thatcher in December 1988 (that was the first TGAT Report; the supplementary reports were published the following March). Just before the report was to go to No.10 it was realised that the word 'task' appeared rather more often than the word 'test' which it was expected Thatcher would prefer to see. So a secretary, fortified by sherry, was asked to go through all of the documents late at night using a spell check to switch 'task' to 'test'. Not all the words were caught. As a consequence, after publication of the report, there was some puzzlement among LEA advisors, schoolteachers and academics who attempted to find reasons for the uses of the different terms. It was probably the sherry. Whatever, tests became the way forward.

Meanwhile, in another part of the policy forest more gossip was emerging. A local headteacher was a member of the Higginson Committee working on proposals for a different approach to A-Levels. It is the same December. They too have a report ready. The same secretary of state is involved. He congratulates the Higginson Committee and invites them to an evening meal in a restaurant in Soho to celebrate the publication of their report. They are looking forward to it. The meal alas, is cancelled and the report not published. Why? According to my contact Kenneth Baker thought he could not get two reports accepted by Thatcher in the same week and so sacrificed the one reforming A-Levels.

There are other stories to account for the failure to publish the report but I like mine.

I think that a factor in both stories was that Baker had to rely upon professional educators to draft his curriculum and the system of assessment. By then the professionals had under their belts approximately twenty-five years of research and experimentation. They also had some confidence and an understanding of the complexities and subtleties of learning and assessment. The pressure from politicians, however, was probably derived from memories of school in the thirties and forties when you passed or failed tests. There was a suspicion of professional language, which was classified as 'jargon'. We were told never to use phrases such as 'the learning experience'. They were 'lessons'. A member of the group writing the science curriculum (an academic) told me how members of the group would try to meet to exchange their views before going to the formal meetings at which they felt that they were being controlled. Soon those academics would be bidding for contracts to devise tests.

^{xxiii} The National Curriculum template had its amusing side. There were ten subjects and ten levels of attainment. So at least doing the timetable and working out the percentages was easy. After environmental studies, integrated humanities, combined science and working thematically it felt as though the whole thing was based upon someone's memories of their grammar school timetable from 1938. We were offered themes, dimensions and skills that were supposed to thread through the lot but there were no tests for them so they were soon neglected.

^{xxiv} I used to work in an LEA team preparing teachers for National Curriculum assessment. This involved lots of detailed planning to explain how standardised assessment tasks (SATs) and teacher assessment worked. At the time we still had Profile Components making things a bit more complicated and the only teachers with extensive experience of collective moderation were secondary school teachers who were familiar with CSE and GCSE coursework procedures.

It was a problem for us that government exercised tight control of preparations for National Curriculum assessment. Training teachers for what to expect when GCSE was introduced had been difficult because of the short time scale but at least the atmosphere was positive and people more or less knew the ropes. Now there was secrecy and instead of giving the contracts for designing and operating SATs to experienced examination boards the decision was made to put them out to tender. Various groups and companies got together to bid. This added to the secrecy because people kept their commercial cards close to their chests. In the LEA we felt that our planning was compromised: we simply did not have the information that we needed.

Our solution was to pretend to be a group bidding for the contracts. This got us invited to the pre-bidding conferences at which information was provided to companies and groups so that they could compete for the contracts. Two memories stand out. It was made clear that successful bidders would be expected to work to a tight budget and university academics putting in bids were warned that the entire exercise had to be disconnected from research: there could be absolutely no publications emerging from this process.

In a possibly vain but, I felt (still feel), gloriously hopeful attempt to protect and promote a belief that critical reflection should remain a part of every schoolteacher's toolkit I persuaded the University of Liverpool to validate our LEA training programmes at the level of postgraduate certificate. I wanted every schoolteacher to know that these were more than training programmes: they were also a critical sense-making process at masters level. We got few takers but, I hope, made a point.

^{xxv} Classically the term 'routinisation of charisma' is applied to a process that follows the death of a leader whose authority depended upon strength of personality. It is when followers try to maintain the regime by introducing administrative systems and structures underpinned by a continuing commitment to what the lost leader stood for: to make routine what was once charismatic. For lots of reasons this is not easy. Studying the history of religions might help.

The reason I have used the term is because it aptly describes the tension between Blair's messianic personal style and the recognition by the delivery minded people who worked to and for him that rhetoric had to be turned into action. The people involved might assert that it was a creative tension. That could start an argument. Studying the history of unwise wars might help.

^{xxvi} My review of Blair's book on this website is titled *From Illusion to Delusion*

<http://www.criticalprofessionallearning.co.uk/assets/bookReviewBlair.pdf>

A friend said that I had not needed to write anymore than the title.

^{xxvii} My review of Gould's book on this website is called *Ersatz politics and deviant governance*

<http://www.criticalprofessionallearning.co.uk/assets/ErsatzPolitics.pdf>

^{xxviii} Tricky stuff the *consciousness of the people*. Step One in governing like this is to tell yourself that you are the special one because you know what it is. Step Two is to convince others that you are the only one that does. Step Three is the ultimate: it is the point at which you convince the people that their consciousness can only be constructed out of your consciousness.

It is a disease easily caught by politicians who cannot tolerate the thought of relaxing their grip on power. Or having it taken from them. It is possible to see the Blair administrations as being maintained by four forces. First you have the charismatic leader (Blair). Then you have the feeder of his faith who uses focus groups to connect him with the people (Gould). The resultant policies are then put into the hands of the delivery people (Barber). Finally we have the keeper of the message (Campbell) who ensures that everyone is on the same page of the same hymn book.

^{xxix} The word 'instruction' is often used in the USA to represent what educators do. I find this puzzling. I concede that education might include a bit of instruction if, for example, someone is being introduced to a new technique or piece of equipment but surely education is a much richer concept? It is about growth and fulfilment. Instruction confines teaching and learning. It implies a training manual. It even implies the internalisation of a catechism. To turn education into instruction gives us simplistic forms of assessment such as multiple choice questions. It is probably why some teachers used to refer to the assessment of the work of learners as 'correction'.

As for deploying the concept of instruction in government what does that imply? I believe that it reverses how accountability once worked. One quarter of what I think was the last GCSE syllabus for Politics was devoted to accountability: the accountability of government to the people. Under New Labour the people were held accountable to government and required to deliver its policies.

^{xxx} Performance management has become the technique of choice in schools, hospitals and companies that work to a regime of goals, plans and targets. Who, we should ask, gets to devise those goals, plans and targets? Are they good ones? And who devises the criteria by which judgments are made about performance? How does the system react when things do not go according to plan? Does anybody bother to examine the significance of unexpected evidence for unintended outcomes? Is intangible evidence allowed to be considered? Is a performance management conversation subject to a power differential? Has leadership and management become a cult devoted to the avoidance of failure when inspected?

^{xxxi} Richard Pring's latest book is called *The Life and death of Secondary Education for All* (2013). For me one of the effects of this book is to re-connect with what Lawrence Stenhouse and Denis Lawton were writing and saying in the 1970s, even with what John Dewey was writing and saying almost a century ago. It is not, however, by any means about wishing for a past. For educators who believe that educational progress is about more than moving from level one to level two it is a faith restorative. And for those who have felt lost for too long in an instrumental educational cul-de-sac it offers at least sight of a way out.

^{xxxii} Between twenty-five and thirty-five thousand schoolteachers in England registered for masters and doctorates in education each year for ten years (approximately 2003-2013). That is a lot. Certainly some of them will have not completed their programmes or left at postgraduate certificate or diploma stages. Some of them will have had to re-sit and some may have submitted no work at all. But, over ten years, it represents a great deal of critical sense making and

research carried out by schoolteachers examining their professional lives. If we add to that the work done by academics working alongside them the knowledge product is huge. Then we must add the annual impact evaluation reports completed by universities and other providers; to which we must add the annual overall impact reports on the reports carried out by the government's agent, the Training and Development Agency. The entire shooting match represents what must be the biggest, by far, collective professional sense-making exercise carried out by the teaching profession in England and, almost certainly, the world.

A question: name a single government minister who, before (or after) deciding policy, has read any of it?

^{xxxiii} I wrote the briefing paper for UCET's meeting with Charles Clarke when he was Secretary of State. It was a very satisfying meeting at which he accepted all our points and (I paraphrase) said that he was learning so much from losing arguments that we must have lots more such meetings. Imagine how good that felt to the body representing all the universities engaged in the education of teachers. We were going through the textbook channels. Very soon afterwards Ruth Kelly replaced him and cancelled all the meetings. She received her instructions about policy from the sofa! We had no access to the sofa.

^{xxxiv} Concentrating on the USA Daniel T Rodgers' *Age of Fracture* (2011) shows us how what once was thought to be common and collective in society has become fluid, fragmented and even broken in an age when corporations manipulate markets. I happen to think that the term 'social fracking' is entirely appropriate for what the Coalition Government is doing.

^{xxxv} The term New Right does its best to evade clear definition. It means different things in different countries. At times it borrows words and ideas from anarchism, which you might expect to be on the left. It can remind you of Poujadism, which, coming to the fore in 1950s France, might best be described as an instinct in favour of small rural shopkeepers and a vision of or yearning for French provincialism in revolt against a sophisticated urban elite who sent out tax collectors and inspectors to disturb the lives of true French people. Margaret Thatcher had some of this instinct within her, leading at times to an atavistic reaction against some of the toffs in her own government.

Here, though, I am thinking of the term as used to describe the approach taken in Chile, not only to the economy but also to democracy and society in general, by General Pinochet in 1973 and then, with less bloodshed, in 1979 by Margaret Thatcher and, in 1980, by Ronald Reagan. It was an approach that tore up wage agreements, gave free rein to exploitative corporative ventures and enormously widened the gap between rich and poor. I once heard this approach summed up by one of Thatcher's economic gurus as (my words) poor people can be motivated by being threatened with less income but rich people must be motivated by being offered greater income. To say such a thing is to rationalise greed.

I think it would be very difficult to argue that New Labour was not of the New Right.

^{xxxvi} Have you ever wondered why Michael Gove has been able to move so swiftly or why he wanted to? One of Gove's big mistakes was to read *Tony Blair, a journey* (reviewed on this website). For some reason Tony Blair bemoans the slow pace of his first administration. It actually was not slow but he likes to believe it was. Michael Gove has publicly declared his love of Blair. But why was Gove able to move so quickly? Why was he able to devastate local democratic capacity to support schools in the blinking of an eye? Why were the profession, governing bodies, unions, parents, other politicians etc. unable to slow him down? The answer? To get his legislation through he used the parliamentary procedures designed to enable emergency anti terrorism legislation to be passed very quickly. Is that not impressive evidence of a Secretary of State taking his job seriously?

By bringing power to the centre he does two things. First he destroys local democratic influence on education. Second, by handing power to some strange and unelected people driven by a variety of motives, including the profit motive, and transferring public ownership to a myriad host, he generates chaos. In that chaos the previously privileged will prosper.

^{xxxvii} Nick Boles and Michael Gove used to be flatmates. Back in 2010 Nick Boles was recorded advocating chaos instead of planning. Blind to the irony of the situation David Cameron made Boles his minister responsible for....planning! Click on the link below if you are interested.

<http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2010/dec/18/coalition-local-planning-boles-chaos>

^{xxxviii} There have been times when if you took part in a governmental or parliamentary or government agency consultation exercise a detailed report would be produced showing how people had responded to the questions and including a list of all that did so. This was not the case for the consultation about changes to the Ofsted inspection regime. We are, therefore, entitled to wonder how people responded to the question on whether the *satisfactory grade* should be changed to *requires improvement* and to the question about inspections with no warning. Satisfactory went but inspections with no warning did not happen. I like to think that Ofsted took notice of my response that pointed out the possibility of an Ofsted team turning up at a school to discover that they were all away at sports day. Instead we have something worse as

schools (and universities) keep listening for the phone from Monday morning till the moment in the week when, if it does not ring, they are able to relax and get on with the job. Inspection now includes the Sword of Damocles.

^{xxxix} 'Closing the gap' has the sound of an exhortation. It makes a good theme for the speeches of politicians, for education conferences and for education publishers feeding off the anxieties of schoolteachers having to defend themselves when blamed for failing to transform bad policy into good policy. The phrase appears inoffensive because who would not agree that it is an entirely worthy intention: to bring children, schools and nations that are at the bottom of the class up to sit alongside those that are at the top of the class?

For me the phrase is poisonous. It implies league tables. Not everyone can be top at the same time. And top of what? Are we looking at an ability ladder, a social ladder or at a ladder of privilege? It also implies yet another well-worn conceptual phrase: the level playing field. A child aiming for the so-called top would be well advised to choose carefully its parents. 'Privileged parents for all children' might be a vote-winning slogan. I remember David Cameron telling the 2012 Conservative Party Conference that he wanted to spread privilege.

See **Children of the Gap** http://www.criticalprofessionallearning.co.uk/assets/Children_of_the_Gap.pdf on this website.

^{xl} The professional on-line network LinkedIn provides lots of growing evidence of schools and teachers reaching out for support and connection. It is almost like someone entering a strange house in the dark for the first time, not knowing where the light switch is, hearing a noise and crying out beseechingly, 'is there anybody there?'

At one time there were democratically backed professionally provided structures to provide this support and connection before Local Education Authorities were abolished and their successors emasculated. As an LEA advisor it was, once, possible to bring together for discussion, exchange and mutual support nursery schools, primary schools, secondary schools, special schools, further education colleges and, in the form of polytechnics, higher education. That was because they all came under the umbrella of LEAs. We could add to that a local university with an education department and some nearby teacher training colleges. Now they are separated, with some accelerating down the road to a hoped for reputation for world class excellence while others are desperately trying to build perceptions of brand value more desirable in the minds of parents and young people than that of their competitors: their erstwhile collaborators.

Meanwhile, LinkedIn now has a population of consultants, some with that telling word in the company name: 'Solutions'. Who, we are entitled to ask, created the problems that require so many solutions?