



# 40@40

A portrait of 40 years of educational research  
through 40 studies



1974–1983

- 1 **An Introduction to Curriculum Research and Development**  
Stenhouse, L.  
1975
- 2 **Class Codes and Control; Volume 3: Towards a Theory of Educational Transmissions**  
Bernstein, B.  
1975
- 3 **Interaction in the Classroom**  
Delamont, S.  
1976
- 4 **Learning to Labour: how working class kids get working class jobs**  
Willis, P.  
1977
- 5 **15,000 hours: secondary schools and their effects on children**  
Rutter, M., Maughan, B., Mortimore, P. and Ouston, J.  
1979
- 6 **Assessment, Schools and Society**  
Broadfoot, P.  
1979
- 7 **Inside the Primary Classroom**  
Gallon, M., Simon, B. and Croll, P.  
1980
- 8 **Origins and Destinations: family, class and education in modern Britain**  
Halsey, A.H., Heath, A.F. and Ridge, J.M.  
1980
- 9 **A Sociology of Special Education**  
Tomlinson, S.  
1982
- 10 **Invisible Women: The Schooling Scandal**  
Spender, D.  
1982
- 11 **Religion, Education, and Employment: Aspects of Equal Opportunity in Northern Ireland**  
Cormack, R.J. and Osborne, R.D.  
1983
- 12 **The pupil as scientist?**  
Driver, R.  
1983

1984–1993

- 13 **Mathematics in the streets and in schools**  
Carrsler, T.N., Carrsler, D.W. and Schlemann, A.D.  
1985
- 14 **The Social World of the Primary School**  
Pollard, A.  
1985
- 15 **Governing Education: a sociology of policy since 1945**  
MacPherson, A. and Raab, C.  
1988
- 16 **The State and Private Education: an evaluation of the assisted places scheme**  
Edwards, T., Fitz, J. and Whitty, G.  
1989
- 17 **Schooling the discouraged worker: local labour market effects on educational participation**  
Raffe, D. and Willms, J.D.  
1989
- 18 **Politics and Policy Making in Education: Explorations in Policy Sociology**  
Ball, S.  
1990
- 19 **'Race', Ethnicity and Education: teaching and learning in multi-ethnic schools**  
Gilborn, D.  
1990
- 20 **Education and State Formation: the rise of education systems in England, France and the United States of America**  
Green, A.  
1991
- 21 **Young, Female and Black**  
Mizra, H.S.  
1992
- 22 **An Exploration of Long-Term 'Far-Transfer' Effects following an Extended Intervention Program in the High School Science Curriculum**  
Adley, P. and Shayes, M.  
1993

1994–2003

- 23 **The Making of Men: masculinities, sexuality and schooling**  
Mac an Ghaill, M.  
1994
- 24 **Triumphs and tears: young people, markets and the transition from school to work**  
Hodkinson, P., Hodkinson, H. and Sparkes, A.C.  
1996
- 25 **The Intelligent School**  
MacGilchrist, B., Myers, K. and Reed, J.  
1997
- 26 **Inside the Black Box: raising standards through classroom assessment**  
Black, P. and William, D.  
1998
- 27 **Teacher Education in Transition: re-forming professionalism?**  
Furlong, J., Barton, L., Miles, S., Whiting, C. and Whitty, G.  
2000
- 28 **Culture and Pedagogy: international comparisons in primary education**  
Alexander, R.  
2001
- 29 **Does Education Matter? Myths about Education and Economic Growth**  
Wolf, A.  
2002
- 30 **Creating a Learning Society? Learning Careers and Policies for Lifelong Learning**  
Gorard S. and Rees, G.  
2002
- 31 **Inequality in the Early Cognitive Development of British Children in the 1970 Cohort**  
F Feinstein, L.  
2003

2004–2013

- 32 **The Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) Project: Findings from Preschool to end of Key Stage 1**  
Sylva, K., Melhuish, E., Sammons, P., Siraj-Blatchford, I. and Taggart B.  
2004
- 33 **Going to University from Care**  
Jackson, S., Ajayi, S. and Quigley, M.  
2005
- 34 **Gender, schooling and global social justice**  
Unterhalter, E.  
2006
- 35 **Education for all: the future of education and training for 14–19 year olds**  
Pring, R., Hayward G., Hodgson, A., Johnson, J., Keep, E., Oancea, A., Rees, G., Spours, K. and Wilde, S.  
2009
- 36 **The Deployment and Impact of Support Staff (DIS) project**  
Blatchford, P., Bassett, P., Brown, P., Martin, C., Russell, A. and Webster R.  
2009
- 37 **'Strangers in Paradise'? Working-class students in elite universities**  
Reay, D., Crozier, G. and Clayton, J.  
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- 38 **Scottish Higher Education, 1987–2001: Expansion through Diversion**  
Iannelli, C., Gamoran, A. and Paterson, L.  
2011
- 39 **Language-universal sensory deficits in developmental dyslexia: English, Spanish and Chinese**  
Goswami, U., Wang, H.L., Criuz, A., Fosker, T., Mead, N. and Huss, M.  
2011
- 40 **Single-sex schooling and labour market outcomes**  
Sullivan, A., Joshi, H. and Leonard, D.  
2011

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# 40@40: A portrait of 40 years of educational research through 40 studies

How best to mark BERA's 40th anniversary? This was a question considered by Council in 2012. Some proposed a history of BERA. However this posed the question of whose history would it be? Council also felt that rather than concentrate solely on key moments for BERA as an organisation, the focus should be educational research in the UK. Indeed, any appreciation of BERA's own history and developments needed to be made in the context of the last 40 years in education and educational research as well as the changing social, political, economic, and cultural environment.

We therefore opened ideas up to the membership and decided to have a range of projects to mark the occasion. An idea that instantly appealed came from Tony Breslin. His idea was inspired by the British Museum's *A History of the World in 100 Objects* and proposed selecting 40 landmark studies that have had a significant impact on educational policy, educational practice, research methodology and/or educational theory over the past 40 years.

As Sally Power (who chaired the selection group) says, the idea was easier than the selection! The final 40 come from across the UK (and beyond where they have had substantial impact in UK settings), from a range

of academic disciplines, from researchers of every background and every perspective, and from a range of qualitative and quantitative research traditions.

To put some of these works in context, we asked Tony Breslin to put together a policy narrative of the past 40 years and this is published here alongside the studies. With his colleague Mike Moores, they draw out the fractures, continuities and ongoing tensions in policy, and the role of educational research in both informing and critiquing policy and the policymaking process. In so doing, they cite the work of a range of educational researchers, including a number of those who are identified as offering examples of investigative endeavour that illustrate the reach, breadth and variety of educational research set out elsewhere in this 40th anniversary publication.

As with the list of studies, this narrative is not meant to be definitive and will no doubt inspire as much debate as the 40 studies themselves. In putting this publication together in the heated last few days of the Scottish independence referendum, we were constantly reminded about the challenges and opportunities of being the British Educational Research Association and in an increasingly divergent policy

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landscape. As Breslin and Moores make clear, as the 40 years have gone on and different forms of devolution have been implemented, it is necessary to almost have four separate narratives.

This publication and the list of 40 studies that it contains should be seen alongside other anniversary initiatives – an interactive timeline covering the past 40 years and the more forward-looking activities including the institution of a BERA Annual Lecture, policy documents around early years services and children and young people and new grants, awards and fellowships. As well as marking the occasion of BERA's 40th anniversary and offering an opportunity for reflection, all are aimed at making the public case for educational research.

In his Presidential Address at BERA Conference in 2013, Ian Menter argued that “we have much to celebrate about the quality, creativity and diversity of educational research. However this is no time to be complacent in our celebration. This is a time to use our celebration to raise much wider awareness of the important contribution that educational research makes in society.” This collection aims to do just that.

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**Nick Johnson**  
BERA Executive Director,  
September 2014

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# The selection process

Back in the Autumn of 2013, all BERA Council members were invited to nominate those studies from the last forty years of educational research which they felt had been the most influential for them. Through Research Intelligence and various other channels, the wider membership were invited to make their suggestions. These nominations were then compiled into a very long 'longlist' and a specially selected panel was appointed by BERA to whittle the list down.

Making the selection of which studies to include – and in particular which to exclude – was extremely difficult and took the selection panel many many hours. Some really excellent pieces of research did not make it to the final cut simply because we already had too many for a particular decade or on a particular topic. We wanted to capture something of the breadth of the field of educational research in terms of its span – from the early years to later life, its methodological breadth – from neuroscience to philosophical approaches, and how it has changed over the last four decades. In order to make the exercise manageable, we decided to select only publications rather than projects or programmes of research. We also decided to exclude the research contributions of the members of the selection panel and current members of BERA Council.

We do not expect you to agree with all of our decisions, but hopefully the range of pieces selected serves to show something of the breadth and depth of the field of educational research. At the very least, the selection will hopefully generate lively discussion.

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**Sally Power**  
Chair of BERA Academic  
Publications Committee

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# Acknowledgements

BERA would like to thank those who helped to put this publication together, in particular Tony Breslin and Mike Moores at Breslin Public Policy. The idea of collecting together 40@40 was Tony's and his persistence in seeing the project through is to be admired.

Thanks also to those BERA members and others who volunteered suggestions for the studies to be included.

Last but by no means least to those who formed the selection committee – Sally Power, Becky Francis and Alison Kington who were supported by the BERA Officers, Ian Menter, Mary James and Colin Rogers.

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# The forty studies



# The first decade (1974–1983)

1

## An Introduction to Curriculum Research and Development

Stenhouse, L.

*London: Heinemann, 1975*

Based on the Humanities Curriculum Project, *An Introduction to Curriculum Research and Development* by Lawrence Stenhouse introduced the 'Process Model' of curriculum development, launched the 'Teacher as Researcher' movement and argued that curriculum development should be based on collaboration between universities and schools, a theme that BERA and the RSA were to return to in a report issued during BERA's 40th year, *Research and the Teaching Profession: Building the capacity for a self-improving education system*.

2

## Class Codes and Control; Volume 3: Towards a Theory of Educational Transmissions

Bernstein, B.

*London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975*

In Volume 3 of his classic collection Basil Bernstein sets out to explore how the school, especially the secondary school, transmits its values to pupils, arguing that, "the child's response to the school is likely to transform the way in which he thinks and feels about his friends, his community and society as a whole".

3

## Interaction in the Classroom

Delamont, S.

*London: Methuen, 1976*

In *Interaction in the Classroom* Sara Delamont – one of the foremost scholars in the sociology of education – provides a classic and rich ethnography of school life, opening up the detail and nuances of classroom interaction.

4

## Learning to Labour: how working class kids get working class jobs

Willis, P.

*Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 1977*

In probably one of the best known books in the sociology of education, Paul Willis provides a definitive account of the roles played by social class and masculinity in the reproduction of educational inequality. *Learning to Labour* combines brilliant ethnography with theoretical sophistication to illustrate as the subtitle says how working class 'kids' get working class jobs.



5

## 15,000 hours: secondary schools and their effectson children

Rutter, M., Maughan, B., Mortimore, P. and Ouston, J.

*London: Open Books, 1979*

*15,000 hours* is regarded as a seminal study on the impact that schools have on young people and takes its title from the number of hours that they spend in them. As such, it helped to give rise to the modern school effectiveness and school improvement movements, albeit that these movements have not always led to strategies of which Michael Rutter, Peter Mortimore and their co-authors of *15,000 hours* would approve.

6

## Assessment, Schools and Society

Broadfoot, P.

*London: Routledge, 1979*

The words of Patricia Broadfoot's introduction to *Assessment, Schools and Society* might have been written at any stage in the last 40 years: "Often the more heated the debate about educational issues becomes, the more the real issues are obscured. A notable phenomenon at the time of writing is the concern about supposedly 'falling standards' and the demand for careful monitoring of the work of the nation's schools". Broadfoot goes on to argue that assessment practices provide one of the clearest measures of a society's expectations of its schooling system because "the aspects of pupils' performance that schools chose to assess reflect very clearly the functions (that) a particular educational system is required to fulfill".

7

## Inside the Primary Classroom

Galton, M., Simon, B. and Croll, P.

*London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980*

In *Inside the Primary Classroom*, Maurice Galton, Brian Simon and Paul Croll explored the findings of the ORACLE (Observational Research and Classroom Learning Evaluation) study of teacher and pupil interaction in primary classrooms to paint a revealing and rich picture of life in the primary school. Maurice Galton, Linda Hargreaves, Chris Comber, Debbie Wall and Anthony Pell were to repeat the exercise 20 years later, with over two thirds of the schools originally studied being revisited.

8

## Origins and Destinations: family, class and education in modern Britain

Halsey, A.H., Heath A.F. and Ridge, J.M.

*Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980*

*Origins and Destinations* is a theoretically informed quantitative analysis that uses data from the British Longitudinal Studies to show the enduring nature of educational inequalities in the UK. The study did much to influence Labour education policy and its impact can arguably be traced through to more recent policy innovations such as the Pupil Premium. Halsey and his colleagues' earlier work had done much to inform the move to 'comprehensivisation'. At a theoretical level, *Origins and Destinations* provides a good example of the 'Political Arithmetic' tradition in the sociology of education.



9

## A Sociology of Special Education

Tomlinson, S.

*London: Routledge, 1982*

Sally Tomlinson's classic text, *A Sociology of Special Education*, is widely regarded as a landmark in the policy and practice of special education. Applying a sociological analysis, Tomlinson describes provision for those that have special educational needs as being "permeated by an ideology of benevolent humanitarianism". She argues that while the then prevailing orthodoxy of distinct provision might have been "enlightened and advanced", it also represented "a social categorization of weaker social groups" (those defined as having special educational needs and their families) by "more powerful social groups" (teachers, social workers and other professionals). The various moves towards more inclusive approaches over the past 30 years owe much to Tomlinson's groundbreaking work.

10

## Invisible Women: The Schooling Scandal

Spender, D.

*London: Writers and Readers Cooperative Publishing Society, 1982*

Dale Spender's *Invisible Women* did much to open up debate about the experience and achievement of females in patriarchal classrooms and schooling systems, contexts in which the achievement of boys was more highly valued by teachers and others, and in which boys dominated classroom discourse, in spite of often being less diligent and less hard working than their female peers.

**The build-up to BERA's formation in the early 1970s was no less eventful than the decade as a whole. Edward Heath's government signified its intent regarding selection at 11 by confirming that LEAs would no longer be expected to submit plans to "go comprehensive", his Education Secretary, Margaret Thatcher, brought an end to free school milk in primary schools, and the school leaving age was raised from 15 to 16.**

11

## Religion, Education, and Employment: Aspects of Equal Opportunity in Northern Ireland

Cormack, R.J. and Osborne, R.D.

*Belfast: Appletree Press, 1983*

Robert Cormack and Robert Osborne's edited collection helped to shape political as well as research questions in Northern Ireland at the time.

12

## The pupil as scientist?

Driver, R.

*Maidenhead: Open University Press, 1983*

*The Pupil as Scientist* set out to give teachers and student teachers a better understanding of the thinking of young adolescent pupils in science lessons and to indicate the difficulties that such pupils have in understanding the more abstract or formal ideas with which they are presented. It is practical in its orientation, with the issues discussed illustrated through examples drawn from dialogue and observations made in science lessons.



# The second decade

(1984–1993)

13

## Mathematics in the streets and in schools

Carraher, T.N., Carraher, D.W. and Schliemann, A.D.

*British Journal of Developmental Psychology, Vol. 3, Issue 1, pp. 21–29, 1985*

In this innovative and inter-disciplinary study Terezinha Nunes Carraher, David Carraher and Analucia Schliemann raise questions about how transferable mathematical knowledge gained in formal school settings is transferable to 'real life' contexts. Approaches and policy interventions that have subsequently emphasised "mathematics in context" and "application of number" find a part of their inspiration in this important piece of work, which is based on a sample of five children found by interviewers selling groceries on street corners and at markets in Recife, Brazil.

14

## The Social World of the Primary School

Pollard, A.

*London: Cassell, 1985*

*The Social World of the Primary School* is an important ethnography of the way in which structure and agency interact as pupils move through their primary schooling careers; as such Pollard's classic study unpicks the detail of primary school life.

15

## Governing Education: a sociology of policy since 1945

MacPherson, A. and Raab, C.

*Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1988*

As the preface to *Governing Education* states "We deal both with the substance of education, its schools and teachers, its curriculum and examinations, and also with its governance, with the institutions and procedures through which policies for education were formed, effected or thwarted. Most of our story is about Scotland, but many of the questions we address have a wider reference, some of them British, some universal. All of our story is about education, but much of it engages broader issues of policy as well."

**BERA's first decade had begun with the miners' strike, the three day week and two barely conclusive general elections; its second began in an equally challenging context, and in a year that George Orwell had rendered synonymous with the idea of an over-bearing government that victimises innocent people and which will stop at nothing to achieve its ends.**



For the educational research community, the launch of the first Research Assessment Exercise in 1986 signalled that the 'performance' focused culture that would dominate the decades ahead, especially in England, would be as significant in Higher Education as it was to prove elsewhere across the educational landscape.

16

### **The State and Private Education: an evaluation of the assisted places scheme**

Edwards, T., Fitz, J. and Whitty, G.

*London: Falmer Press, 1989*

As a review in the *British Journal of Sociology* points out, *The State and Private Education* set out to study one of the first educational initiatives of the Conservative government elected in 1979, the Assisted Places Scheme. The scheme was intended to enable 'bright' children from 'disadvantaged' backgrounds to access independent education, but Tony Edwards and his colleagues were able to demonstrate that many of the 6,000 pupils who benefitted from the programme annually did not emerge from the poorest corners of society, but from relatively advantaged middle class homes. Less than 10% of those taking up places had fathers in manual occupations. The evidence unearthed by the study led to the dropping of the scheme by the incoming 'New' Labour government in 1997 with the funds being used to reduce class sizes in state nursery schools.

17

### **Schooling the discouraged worker: local labour market effects on educational participation**

Raffe, D. and Willms, J.D.

*Sociology, November 1989, Vol. 23, No.4, pp. 559–581, 1989*

David Raffe and Douglas Willms set out to test, and found support for, the "discouraged worker" effect, whereby – as they put it in the abstract – "local unemployment discourages 16 year-olds from leaving school". As such, in revealing a key motivation for the educational participation of a significant number of students beyond 16, questions are raised about the nature and breadth of provision that schools and colleges might need to offer to this age group.

18

### **Politics and Policy Making in Education: Explorations in Policy Sociology**

Ball, S.

*London: Routledge, 1990*

Stephen Ball's groundbreaking text provides an insightful and original analytical framework for understanding policy as something that is actively interpreted and recreated in different contexts. Ball's seminal analysis introduces the concept of the "policy process" and has provided the framework for numerous PhDs on educational reform and on change in educational settings.



19

### **‘Race’, Ethnicity and Education: teaching and learning in multi-ethnic schools**

Gillborn, D.

*London: Routledge, 1990*

David Gillborn's *'Race', Ethnicity and Education* is a landmark study in anti-racist education. The original text provides a rich account of how patterns of teaching and learning produce outcomes disadvantageous to black students. Given a personal award for "meritorious service promoting multicultural education" by the American Educational Research Association special interest group for the Critical Examination of Race, Ethnicity, Class and Gender in Education, Gillborn was recently described as Britain's "most influential race theorist in education" and remains a leading authority in the field.

20

### **Education and State Formation: the rise of education systems in England, France and the United States of America**

Green, A.

*Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1991*

Andy Green's recently updated analysis of the relationship between nation states and the education systems that they establish or support is widely regarded as a classic sociology of education text. As one reviewer puts it, "Green shows how the forming of citizens and national identities through education has often provided the necessary condition for both economic and social development".

21

### **Young, Female and Black**

Mirza, H.S.

*London: Routledge, 1992*

Heidi Mirza was particularly interested in the levels of achievement of black female students. A great deal of quantitative data had been gathered in the 1980s that confirmed the underachievement of black boys but the educational world of black girls remained largely unexplored. Mirza set out to do four things: (1) to examine the validity of the notion that black girls were disproportionately likely to underachieve; (2) to address the applicability of labeling theory to the educational experiences of black girls; (3) to examine the coping strategies adopted by black girls in the schooling system; and (4) to identify the role-models that the girls were inspired by and what their personal and career aspirations were.

22

### **An Exploration of Long-Term Far-Transfer Effects following an Extended Intervention Program in the High School Science Curriculum**

Adley, P. and Shayer, M.

*Cognition and Instruction, Vol. 11, No. 1, pp. 1–29, 1993*

In this important study, pupils in eight schools were given special lessons within their science curriculum based on notions of cognitive conflict, metacognition, and bridging set in the context of the schemata of formal operations.



# The third decade

(1994–2003)

23

## The Making of Men: masculinities, sexuality and schooling

Mac an Ghaill, M.

*Maidenhead: Open University Press, 1994*

In this classic study Mairtin Mac an Ghaill relates the formation of masculinity and sexuality to elements of the school system and the labour market. His critical ethnography focuses on heterosexual subcultures in Year 11 in a West Midlands comprehensive school and the schooling experiences of young gay men in the local area.

24

## Triumphs and tears: young people, markets and the transition from school to work

Hodkinson, P., Hodkinson, H. and Sparkes, A.C.

*London: David Fulton, 1996*

Phil Hodkinson, Heather Hodkinson and Andrew Sparkes raise questions about how young people make career decisions in a marketised education system. They do so through, as one review puts it, “the stories of 10 young people entering the world of youth training”.

25

## The Intelligent School

MacGilchrist, B., Myers, K. and Reed, J.

*London: Paul Chapman Publishing, 1997*

*The Intelligent School* is an important text at three levels; first, it combines, in the words of the authors, “some of the key messages from four inter-related areas of research: school effectiveness, school improvement, teaching, and learning”; second, it is an example of the kind of ‘self-help’ literature that emerged from the school effectiveness and school improvement movements which brought together the distinct activities of academic analysis and practical application in a series of texts primarily aimed at practitioners; third, the authors draw on the notion of multiple intelligences and apply a similar analysis to schools as organizations, thus outlining and articulating what the ‘intelligent’ school might look like.

The Association’s second decade had seen a profound change in the culture that underpinned education policy, one that by 1994 was beginning to become embedded at an operational level across all educational settings. Central to this cultural shift was the placing of the school or college firmly at the heart of a competitive marketplace, one that it would survive in through a combination of shrewd business management and local popularity, the latter increasingly defined by ‘league’ table position and Ofsted judgement.



26

### **Inside the Black Box: raising standards through classroom assessment**

Black, P. and Wiliam, D.

*London: Department of Education and Professional Studies, Kings College London, 1998*

This extensive survey of the research literature on assessment practice brought to the fore the work of Paul Black and Dylan Wiliam and has had a profound impact on teachers' practice in the assessment field, especially with regard to the "assessment for learning" movement.

27

### **Teacher Education in Transition: re-forming professionalism?**

Furlong, J., Barton, L., Miles, S., Whiting, C. and Whitty, G.

*Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2000*

*In Teacher Education in Transition: re-forming professionalism?*

John Furlong and his colleagues provide a detailed and critical account of the changing terrain of teacher education, and in particular the diminished role for university departments of education in a context where the delivery of teacher education is devolved to schools, but within an increasingly centralized system under the auspices of what was then the Teacher Training Agency. Today, the task of overseeing teacher education fits within the remit of another national Department for Education backed agency, the National College for Teaching and Leadership.

28

### **Culture and Pedagogy: international comparisons in primary education**

Alexander, R.

*Oxford: Blackwell, 2001*

Robin Alexander has been a leading authority in primary education for over two decades. His 2001 comparative study is amongst his most important works and preceded his subsequent leadership of the Cambridge Primary Review, which was launched in 2006 and published its final report, *Children, their world, their education: final report and recommendations of the Cambridge Primary Review*, in 2009.

**BERA's third decade was to see a youthful Tony Blair elected initially as Labour Leader and then as Prime Minister after a campaign framed famously by his three political priorities: "Education, education, education", and the emergence of a public service culture of 'targets, tests and tables', one heavily influenced by a former University of London Institute of Education academic, Michael Barber.**





29

## **Does Education Matter? Myths about Education and Economic Growth**

Wolf, A.

*Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2002*

*Does Education Matter?* caused something of a stir at the time of its publication, not least because of its provocative title. Alison Wolf remains a significant authority on vocational education, and a critic of much of it, more recently producing a controversial report for David Cameron's Coalition Government, *Review of Vocational Education: The Wolf Report*.

In England, the new managerialism was underlined by the emergence of Business Managers in schools and colleges, by the launch of the National Professional Qualification for Headship, and by the “Fresh Start” programme under which ‘failing’ schools were rebranded, re-launched and led by another creature of the age, the “Super Head”.

30

## **Creating a Learning Society? Learning Careers and Policies for Lifelong Learning**

Gorard S. and Rees, G.

*Bristol: Policy Press, 2002*

*Creating a Learning Society* presents a highly innovative study of participation in lifelong learning and the problems that need to be overcome if lifelong learning policies are to be successful.

31

## **Inequality in the Early Cognitive Development of British Children in the 1970 Cohort**

Feinstein, L.

*Economica, Vol. 70, pp. 73–97, 2003*

Leon Feinstein identifies parental interest as correlating strongly with educational attainment and this, in turn, with social class, something reiterated by more recent studies concerned with educational inequality. Policy initiatives in fields such as family learning and early years provision owe much to this seminal study.



# The fourth decade (2004–present)

32

## The Effective Provision of Pre-School: Education (EPPE) Project: Findings from Pre-school to end of Key Stage 1

Sylva, K., Melhuish, E., Sammons, P., Siraj-Blatchford, I. and Taggart B.

London: Department for Education and Skills, 2004

*The Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE)* project grew into the EPPSE project and embraced primary and secondary education. It was influential in inspiring or shaping various New Labour education policies, especially those relating to Early Years provision, and established the case for high quality pre-school education, operationalised through initiatives such as Sure Start. Today, the EPPSE project is a Government-funded, large-scale, high profile longitudinal study with a mixed methods design (Siraj-Blatchford et al., 2006; Sammons et al., 2005) and a multi-disciplinary research team (Sylva et al., 2004), and has developed into a major research programme.

33

## Going to University from Care

Jackson, S., Ajayi, S. and Quigley, M.

London: Institute of Education, 2005

*Going to University from Care* identified the very particular challenges facing young people who go, or seek to go, to university after growing up in care. The study, led by Sonia Jackson at the University of London Institute of Education, triggered the introduction of a £2,000 bursary for care-leavers and encouraged many UK universities and local authorities to improve the support that they offer care leavers before and after they enter Higher Education.

**Themes, terms and titles to enter the educational lexicon during BERA's fourth decade included Free Schools, Floor Targets, System Leadership and, at the end of the period, the Research Excellence Framework. Those to leave the lexicon included Connexions, the National Strategies and the Research Assessment Exercise. During this period the education community was to lose the influential voice of former BERA President Ted Wragg and to gain the reforming zeal of the Coalition Government's first Education Secretary, Michael Gove.**



34

### **Gender, schooling and global social justice**

Unterhalter, E.

*London: Routledge, 2006*

Elaine Unterhalter's internationally focused study, *Gender, schooling and global social justice*, was awarded First Prize in the Society of Education Studies Book Awards, 2008.

35

### **Education for all: the future of education and training for 14–19 year olds**

Pring, R., Hayward G., Hodgson, A., Johnson, J., Keep, E., Oancea, A., Rees, G., Spours, K. and Wilde, S.

*London: Routledge, 2009*

The five year Nuffield Foundation Inquiry into 14–19 education and training summarised in *Education for all* engaged many of the key players in the field. Under the leadership of Richard Pring, the authors make the case for an educational system based on an agreed national focus across the 14–19 continuum and for a range of reforms to produce a more integrated and comprehensive entitlement for all learners.

36

### **The Deployment and Impact of Support Staff (DISS) project**

Blatchford, P. Bassett, P., Brown, P., Martin, C., Russell, A. and Webster R.

*London: Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2009*

Peter Blatchford's team assessed the impact of the huge expansion in the use of support staff in schools in England and Wales since 2005 under the Labour Government's "workforce remodeling" initiative. They did so by studying 153 schools, surveying 20,000 teachers and analysing the help received by more than 8,000 pupils in both 2005–6 and 2007–8. Their research called into question the prevailing wisdom about the value of such support and suggested the need for a rethink on the deployment and engagement of such staff. As such, the study opened up a critical narrative about the use of Teaching Assistants that still resonates in current debates about policy and practice.

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### **'Strangers in Paradise'? Working-class students in elite universities**

Reay, D., Crozier, G. and Clayton, J.

*Sociology, December 2009, Vol. 43, No. 6, pp. 1103–1121, 2009*

*Strangers in Paradise* focuses on the way in which students from working class backgrounds negotiate their way through the unfamiliar culture of elite universities, displaying "dispositions of self- scrutiny and self-improvement" and engaging in "an almost constant fashioning and re-fashioning of the self", while retaining "key valued aspects" of working-class identity. As such, it offers a range of key lessons for all involved in the so-called 'widening participation' agenda.



38

### **Scottish Higher Education, 1987–2001: Expansion through Diversion**

Iannelli, C., Gamoran, A. and Paterson, L.  
*Oxford Review of Education, Vol. 37, Issue 6, pp. 717–741, 2011*

This important paper addresses one of the key questions facing policy-makers – whether the expansion of Higher Education is in itself inclusive. Does it bring in a larger proportion of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, does it diversify the nature of provision, in that Higher Education tends to differentiate as it expands, or does it do both, by bringing more learners into an increasingly stratified HE system? Christina Iannelli and her colleagues address this question, drawing on evidence from the expansion of Higher Education in Scotland.

39

### **Language-universal sensory deficits in developmental dyslexia: English, Spanish and Chinese**

Goswami, U., Wang, H.L., Criuz, A., Fosker, T., Mead, N. and Huss, M.  
*Journal of Cognition and Neuroscience, February 2011, Vol. 23, No. 2, pp. 325–337, 2011*

Across languages, children with dyslexia have a specific difficulty with the neural representation of the phonological structure of speech. The identification of a robust sensory marker of phonological difficulties would enable early identification of risk for developmental dyslexia and early targeted intervention. In this important study, the authors explore whether phonological processing difficulties are associated with difficulties in processing acoustic cues to speech rhythm.

**The UK-wide constitutional settlement promised in the wake of the fiercely contested Scottish independence referendum of September 2014 points to further distinctiveness between the UK's four education systems as BERA moves into its fifth decade. As such, it may encourage a renewed and extended interest in comparative educational research across the UK. In any case, it will open up new opportunities and challenges for the Association and its members.**

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### **Single-sex schooling and labour market outcomes**

Sullivan, A., Joshi, H. & Leonard, D.  
*Oxford Review of Education, Vol. 37, Issue 3, pp. 311–332, 2011*

This paper asks whether sex-segregated schooling has any impact on the experience of gender differences in the labour market in mid-life. It examines outcomes for a group of learners, who have experienced single sex schooling, at the age of 42, allowing for socio-economic origins and abilities measured in childhood.



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**40@40:  
educational  
research in  
a policy context**

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# Educational research in a policy context: introduction

In the pages that follow, Tony Breslin and Mike Moores provide a summary and overview of developments and trends in some of the key areas of education policy over the past forty years.

As Stephen Ball (Ball, 1990) has long observed, policymaking is a 'messy' process in which educational researchers are just one of many constituencies to be engaged, listened to, or ignored. Moreover, an educational research community that sits too close to policymakers is arguably one that is not sufficiently analytical or critical of the policy context in which it operates, or as Geoff Whitty put it in his 2005 BERA Presidential Address:

**While some of our work will be aligned in various ways to the Government's agenda, some of it will necessarily be regarded by government as irrelevant or useless. Furthermore, some of it may well be seen as oppositional. Such a range of orientations to government policy is entirely appropriate for education research in a free society.**

Whitty, 2006

In this context, as with the forty studies identified elsewhere in these pages, Breslin and Moores do not set out to *represent* the full range of educational research undertaken across the period – that would not be possible to do in the space available here – but they do attempt to give a sense of how examples of educational research have either informed or been critical of some of the key policy interventions of the past forty years.

Nor, for the same reason, do they address every intervention in every area of education policy UK-wide. They do, however, seek to pick out

the key trends and tensions in such policy over the period, particularly those trends towards marketization and performativity in England that have influenced policy and practice – across the UK and across all educational phases and settings – since the election of Margaret Thatcher's government in 1979, just five years into BERA's existence.

Across the period, policymaking itself has changed. In 1974 neither think tanks nor special advisers, the 'spadocracy' as one of the authors has recently called this new political breed (Breslin, 2014), enjoyed their current prominence. The so-called 'career politician' – free of experience beyond what is now pejoratively referred to as the "Westminster Village" – was the 'lesser-seen' of the political species, causing Denis Lawton, quoted approvingly by Geoff Whitty in the Presidential Address cited above, to reflect that, in recent years:

**Research evidence as well as the views of education theorists have too often been ignored in favour of the quick-fix bright ideas of spin doctors and advisers at No. 10.**

Lawton, D., 2005, p. 142

Some of the challenges facing educational policymakers, researchers, leaders and practitioners in 2014 have a remarkable familiarity to those that were dominant in 1974. Others have emerged over the past forty years, as have a range of opportunities that researchers and practitioners could not have dreamed of in 1974. Chief amongst these are two things: first, the opportunities offered to researchers by the on-line world in its many guises and through its many technologies and, second, those presented by the changing nature of

the United Kingdom as a political entity, which increasingly casts each of the UK's systems as distinctive in form *and* orientation. As if to emphasise this reality, this collection went to press the day after the people of Scotland voted narrowly to remain in the UK in a referendum that remained on a knife-edge until the close of the count and recorded a turnout in the region of 84%, one unheard of in recent UK electoral history. All of this takes place, though, against the backdrop of one prevailing challenge: that of increasing inequalities in national societies that are both more diverse and cosmopolitan *and* starker in the extremes of wealth and poverty experienced by their members.

Breslin and Moores offer an account of the policy context in which BERA has worked over the past four decades. Readers might want to ponder on the reflections that commentators will offer when BERA celebrates its fiftieth anniversary in a decade's time. With regard to technology, we cannot know what these reflections might be, although the emergent phenomenon of "Big Data" will surely play a role. On identity, we must assume that they will be increasingly less English-centric and Westminster-driven. Finally, with regard to the enduring challenge of inequality, we must hope that educationalists, and BERA members in particular, can play their part in ensuring that *origins* have less impact on *destinations* as we move out of the opening period of the twenty-first century.

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**Nick Johnson**  
BERA Executive Director,  
September 2014

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# Educational research in a policy context: a word of acknowledgement

In undertaking this analysis we owe a debt to Nick Johnson and to all of those BERA officers and staff members who have worked with us on this project, notably but not just on the Panel that selected the forty studies presented as part of this publication, many of which we draw on in the discussion that follows. These studies are not presented as a “Top 40” in the manner of a traditional popular music chart but they are intended, as Sally Power notes, to give a sense of the range and breadth of educational research undertaken across the past forty years and of the impact on policy and practice, in its various forms, that these endeavours have had.

We are also indebted to the many colleagues that we have worked with in teaching, advisory work or educational research over the course of our careers. Finally, we have found the work of a plethora of educational researchers and writers of great value – all of those cited in these pages and many others, but notably Derek Gillard, whose web-based *Education in England: the history of our schools* (Gillard, 2011) we have found to be invaluable and which we commend to all.

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**Tony Breslin and Mike Moores**  
Breslin Public Policy Limited  
September 2014



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# The early 1970s: setting the scene for the emergence of BERA

June 1970 saw Edward Heath as Prime Minister and Margaret Thatcher as Secretary of State for Education. This was to be a decade in which the educational landscape would be characterised by controversy and change, and it started in this vein. In due course it would see two General Elections in 1974, Prime Minister James Callaghan's 'Great Debate' speech at Ruskin in 1976, the publication of Warnock Report in 1978, and the election of a Conservative government led by Margaret Thatcher in 1979.

The 1970s would also see the publication of a set of seminal educational studies and texts, for instance, Lawrence Stenhouse's curriculum studies classic, *An Introduction to Curriculum Research and Development* (Stenhouse, 1975), the third volume of Basil Bernstein's work on the transmission of values in school settings (Bernstein, 1975) and Sara Delamont's *Interaction in the Classroom* (Delamont, 1976). Also significant were Paul Willis' *Learning to Labour* (Willis, 1997) and the work of Michael Rutter and his colleagues on the impact of the school on educational outcomes, *15,000 hours: secondary schools and their effects on children* (Rutter et al., 1979). In their number one single, *Another Brick in the Wall (Part II)*, the rock band Pink Floyd, accompanied by a Year 10 Music class from Islington Green School in North London, brought the decade to a close, offering what they claimed were these effects from the perspective of children and young people:

We don't need no education  
We don't need no thought control  
No dark sarcasm in the classroom  
Teachers leave them kids alone

Waters, 1979

The build-up to BERA's formation in the early 1970s was no less eventful than the decade as a whole. Shortly after its election Edward Heath's government signified its intent regarding selection at 11 by issuing Circular 10/70 (DES, 1970), which confirmed that LEAs would no longer be expected to submit wholesale plans to "go comprehensive". That year also saw the publication of the third Black Paper (Cox and Dyson, 1970), which maintained the authors' critique of progressive education, while Basil Bernstein declared that the education system could not be expected to "compensate for society" (Bernstein, 1970). In 1971 Margaret Thatcher's decision to end the free milk that had been provided to primary school pupils spurred a national campaign under the slogan "Margaret Thatcher, milk snatcher". In 1972 the school leaving age was raised from 15 to 16 and Caroline Benn and Brian Simon published their survey on the progress towards a fully comprehensive system, *Half Way There: Report on the British Comprehensive Reform* (Benn and Simon, 1972).

With regard to educational research, moves were afoot which would lead to the emergence of the British Educational Research Association. As Sara Delamont recalls in an article in a recent copy of the BERA Journal *Research Intelligence*:

In 1970 (John) Garner, at Lancaster, proposed an informal network of classroom researchers, and called an inaugural conference. Those who attended that meeting were later on among the 100 founder members of BERA. He felt that no learned society provided a space for scholars who were determined to sit and watch classroom processes, or to make sound recordings, or to photograph or film actual teaching in pro-

gress. Researchers were psychologists, sociologists, anthropologists or socio-linguists by academic background, or, most commonly, working with PGCE programmes in education departments as, for example, the modern language PGCE tutor. When Garner left for Australia in 1972, he handed the informal British Classroom Study Group to me. It had 30 members. By the time BERA began there were over 80 people in the group receiving a mimeographed document three times a year. The ESRC then funded two seminars in 1973 and 1974 (Chanan and Delamont, 1975), which established classroom research as a legitimate topic.

*Research Intelligence*: Spring 2014, p. 14

Michael F.D. Young had published *Knowledge and Control* in 1971 (Young, 1971). This edited collection introduced what Young and his colleagues described in the book's subtitle as the *New Sociology of Education*. The James Report was published the following year and argued for the greater involvement of Higher Education establishments in the training of teachers and for more PGCE-trained teachers (DES, 1972), a debate that BERA finds itself engaged in to the present day (BERA-RSA, 2014). In schools, what Denis Lawton and Barry Dufour had described as the *New Social Studies* were beginning to emerge (Lawton and Dufour, 1973). Subjects such as Sociology and Politics were becoming common at Advanced Level and "Mode 3" syllabuses were enabling teachers in the classroom to actively engage in curriculum development and assessment design.

The passing of the Work Experience Act in 1973 enabled LEAs to set up work experience for pupils in their final year of schooling,

legislation that many associated with the raising of the school leaving age (ROSLA) the previous year. 1973 also heralded the establishment of the Manpower Services Commission (MSC) through the Employment and Training Act. This effectively laid the ground for the Technical and Vocational Educational Initiative (TVEI) that was to follow, in England, a decade later. Together, these developments helped to set the frame for debates about the different status accorded to academic and vocational education that remain pertinent today, debates that the early proponents of comprehensive education would have hoped might disappear with the end, in most localities of the split between grammar and secondary modern schooling.

On the wider social and political front, there were also important developments. In 1973 – against the background of recession, confrontation with the trade unions and the consequences of the oil crisis – the United Kingdom became a member of the European Union, or as it was then known, the "Common Market". In the sphere of education and beyond, BERA was born into an interesting political and educational cauldron; it was to prove no less interesting in the forty years that followed, as the analysis that we provide in the pages that follow seeks to illustrate.

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**Tony Breslin and Mike Moores**

Breslin Public Policy Limited

September 2014

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# The first decade

(1974–1983)

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### **Economic woes, educational challenges and political upheaval**

With the miners on strike and power cuts across the UK, the year of BERA's formation opened with widespread industrial strife, the three day week and the Conservative Prime Minister Edward Heath calling a General Election, in a famous decision to "go to the country". Just for good measure, the right-wing press were resplendent with tales of events at William Tyndale School in Islington, North London, a 'free' school very different in ethos from that which the Conservative Secretary of State for Education, Michael Gove, had in mind when he re-introduced the concept of Free Schools 35 years later in England.

In February 1974 Harold Wilson formed a minority Labour government and, the following month, appointed Reginald Prentice as Secretary of State for Education. Later that year, a second General Election confirmed Labour's place in government, but by the narrowest of margins, and, the following year, the UK reaffirmed its membership of the European Economic Community in a national referendum.

The Labour administration was embarking upon a period in office that would see them form an alliance with the Liberals, framed as the "Lib-Lab pact", and face a growing balance of payments deficit, rising unemployment and sustained inflation, a set of factors that was to lead, in 1976, to a 'bail out' by the International Monetary Fund, currency devaluation and cuts in public expenditure.

Ensuing attempts at wage restraint, offered as part of a "Social Contract" – a policy package that included the introduction of Child Benefit from 1977 – collapsed with the 1978–79 "Winter of Discontent", laying the foundations for the election of the Conservatives under Margaret Thatcher in May 1979.

Those who had hoped that a female Prime Minister might bring a less confrontational tone to politics were to be disappointed, as Thatcher's approach to a series of industrial conflicts, the 1981 hunger strikes by republican

prisoners in Northern Ireland, and the war over the sovereignty of the Falkland Islands were to demonstrate.

This was the economic and political backdrop against which educational discourse and research were played out, and the landscape that BERA's founding members had to navigate their way through. It is no exaggeration to say that many of the educational reforms that were undertaken or initiated during BERA's first decade are still impacting on the work of, and perspectives taken by, policymakers, educational researchers and practitioners today.

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### **Towards integration: special needs, educational research and the teaching of English**

In 1974 aspects of the Special Educational Needs agenda were addressed through a series of Department for Education and Science (DES) Circulars that initiated a move towards multi-disciplinary team-based approaches and the beginnings of integration. Children and young people with behavioural, emotional and learning difficulties were to receive assessment, diagnosis, consultation and treatment through these new structures and systems.

Addressing BERA's inaugural conference, held in Birmingham in April 1974, John Nisbet, the association's first President, examined the growth, trends and structure of educational research (Nisbet, 1974). Again the trend was towards integrated and inter-disciplinary practice. Making particular reference to the range of disciplines that were now informing and engaging with the educational research agenda, Nisbet compared this with a recent past where psychology, and in particular, the primacy of testing in informing the educational evidence base, had dominated researchers' thinking and practice. His lecture, *Educational Research – the State of the Art*, was to initiate a series of presidential addresses that are archived on the BERA website and which provide an interesting summary of the concerns of researchers, policymakers and practitioners over the years.

The Assessment of Performance Unit (APU) was set up by the then Department for Education and Science in 1975 to “provide objective information about national standards of children’s performance at all levels of ability” (National STEM Centre, 2014), a move that reflected a growing concern in some quarters about pupil performance and teacher accountability – concerns that had been voiced since the start of the decade, and which continue to find resonance amongst practitioners, policy-makers and researchers today. Shortly after its launch, its Director, Brian Kay HMI (Kay, 1976), observed that:

**The Assessment of Performance Unit is an important but unheralded development. It represents part of the response of the DES to demands for greater accountability by the educational service for the resources it consumes. The APU is not an educational branch of the KGB or MI6; education is not that vital for national security. But its conception represents a new stage in the developing debate about the state of our schools and the function of the curriculum... The divorce of education and politics never was a real one: the next decade will make this abundantly clear.**

In the same year, Fred Mulley was appointed Secretary of State for Education, Margaret Thatcher became the first woman to lead the Conservative Party and a number of keynote publications pertinent to educational professionals emerged: the Bullock Report, *A Language for Life* (DES, 1975), the fourth Black Paper (Cox and Boyson, 1975), and Lawrence Stenhouse’s *An Introduction to Curriculum Research and Development* (Stenhouse, 1975).

Bullock made a series of recommendations about the teaching of English, arguing for the creation of a network of English advisers in Local Education Authorities (LEAs) and the development of “language across the curriculum” policies in schools, the Black Paper authors maintained their critique of progressive practice, and the Stenhouse text, based on

the Humanities Curriculum Project (Nuffield Foundation, 1974), effectively launched the “Teacher as Researcher” movement, making the case for curriculum development to be based on collaboration between universities and schools, a case that BERA has continually restated, not least in its 40th anniversary collaboration with the Royal Society of Arts (BERA-RSA, 2014).

### **From Tyndale to Ruskin: Callaghan’s call for a “Great Debate”**

In April 1976 James Callaghan became Labour leader and Prime Minister following the unexpected resignation of Harold Wilson. That summer, the press reported on the outcomes of an inquiry into alleged events at William Tyndale, the “Auld Report” (ILEA, 1976). As noted, these had initially come to light two years earlier, just as BERA was launching. In her retrospective on the affair, Kathryn Riley (Riley, 1996) notes how, under headlines such as “Save Our Children” (Sunday Telegraph), “The Classroom Despots” (Evening Standard) and “How to Control Teachers” (Sunday Times), the report:

**...raised issues about teacher professionalism, the autonomy of head teachers, the authority of governors, the rights of parents. It demonstrated conflicting definitions of progressive education and differing interpretations of the needs and aspirations of working-class children.**

Kathryn Riley, *Times Educational Supplement*, 18th October 1996

In September, the new Prime Minister appointed Shirley Williams as Secretary of State for Education, ushering in Williams’ term of office with what is now regarded as a landmark speech given at Ruskin College, Oxford, on October 18th. In the speech Callaghan outlined his views on the purpose of education, the need for schools to prepare young people for the world of work, and issues relating to teaching styles. It was clear that Callaghan felt

that there were many flaws in the education system. In particular, he was concerned that many teachers were not trained to use the newer “informal” teaching methods and that pupils were not being taught effectively. Further, anticipating much that still features in educational discourse today, he contended that too few pupils, especially girls, were opting for science and technology subjects, that the numeracy levels of school-leavers were too low and that too few graduates were going into industry. He called for a “basic” or “core” curriculum and a national debate about these issues.

Elsewhere, the tensions in education policy between inclusion and exclusion continued to play out in legislation that, in different areas, pulled in different directions. Thus, anticipating the Warnock Report (DES, 1978), Section 10 of the 1976 Education Act stated that “handicapped” pupils should be integrated into mainstream schools when this is “practicable and cost-effective” but elsewhere the progress towards comprehensivisation had been slower than expected. In 1976, a decade after the launch of the comprehensive movement, approximately 50% of LEAs were still using the 11+ exam (Gillard, 2011).

1976 also saw the publication of the fifth and final Black Paper (Cox et.al., 1976), and a highly influential study by Paul Willis, *Learning to Labour* (Willis, 1976). Willis carried out an ethnographic study of working-class boys in an industrial town; his account provides a vivid picture of an anti-school counter-culture in action. In particular, Willis managed to “tap into” the deeply held views on school, becoming an adult and masculinity that the “lads” held. The study is acknowledged as providing a genuine and enduring insight into the reproduction of educational inequality and the generation of classroom counter-culture. Unsurprisingly, the study won plaudits among academics; it also became a staple of the A level Sociology texts that some of the lads’ peers (but not the lads themselves for the reasons detailed) found themselves studying.

In 1977 the Green Paper, *Education in Schools: a consultative document*, (HMSO,

1976) was published. This echoed many of the points made in Callaghan’s speech at Ruskin, particularly those relating to child-centred teaching styles. Though it commended such styles when applied effectively the document suggested that, in many classrooms, it was necessary to “restore the rigour” without losing the benefits of such approaches. In short, *Education in Schools* sought to balance the need for progressive pedagogy and the concerns of the Black Paper authors, a balancing trick that emerges as a recurrent theme in education policymaking across the past 40 years. The Green Paper also called upon LEAs to review their curricular policies. In the same year the Taylor Report, *A New Partnership for Our Schools* (DES-Welsh Office, 1977), called for a greater role for parents on governing bodies.

At the BERA annual conference, held at the University of Leicester in September 1977, Brian Simon gave his presidential address. *Educational Research: Which Way?* stressed the importance of historical studies for educational researchers. Simon also emphasized the need for all involved in education to “be aware of the role of ‘intelligence testing’ in maintaining the status quo in terms of inequality of provision.”

1978 saw three educational landmarks: first, the publication of the Warnock Report (DES, 1978) on Special Educational Needs (SEN), which was to shape SEN policy and practice through to the present day; second, the launch of the Youth Opportunities Programme (YOP), an acknowledgement both of the challenges posed by growing youth unemployment and the concerns that had been raised by Callaghan at Ruskin; and, third, the publication of the Waddell Report (DES, 1978b), which recommended that 16-year olds should sit a single exam. Ambivalence may have accompanied the switch to comprehensive schooling, but the seeds of a single, universal and *comprehensive* examination, to be sat by all 16 year olds, had been sown. Beyond education there was a fourth landmark, arguably as profound as any of these – Prime Minister Callaghan declined

to call an expected October General Election, only for the “winter of discontent” to begin, a chain of events cited as critical in Labour’s exit from government.

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### 1979: the start of the Thatcher years

In May 1979 Margaret Thatcher – a former grammar school girl – became Prime Minister and appointed Mark Carlisle as Secretary of State for Education. The 1979 Education Act was passed, confirming that LEAs were no longer under any obligation to end selection at 11. A new era in education policymaking had begun. As one education journalist of long standing was subsequently to remark:

When Thatcher entered Downing Street in 1979, the governance of education was largely unchanged since the First World War. For schools, there was no national curriculum, no parental choice, no systematic means of monitoring performance, no publication of examination results beyond what schools themselves chose to reveal.

Local authorities drew up catchment areas, deciding which children went to which schools, and distributed funds, specifying what should be spent on teachers’ salaries, repairs, books and other items. The education department had little more than back-stop powers, allowing it to veto school closures or changes in character.

Peter Wilby, *The Guardian*, 15 April 2013

1979 also saw the publication of *15,000 Hours: Secondary Schools and Their Effects on Children* (Rutter et al., 1979). This seminal study led by Michael Rutter analysed the impact schools can have on young people. The researchers used a range of methods and identified the key role played by school ethos on both educational progress and student wellbeing. The twelve inner-London schools at the heart of the study differed greatly but the authors were able to identify common factors, such as the level of teacher expectations and the existence or not of

strong purposeful routines that impacted directly on student outcomes. The modern school ‘effectiveness’ and ‘improvement’ movements – that locate the responsibility for student success or failure firmly *inside* the school gates – is traced by some to this study, even though the authors’ analysis was much more nuanced than this.

Another influential publication to emerge in 1979 was the Mansell Report, *A Basis for Choice* (FEU, 1979). Again drawing on some of the themes in Callaghan’s Ruskin speech, and a set of concerns that remain to this day, it called for a review of general vocational courses available to school leavers. As with Rutter’s study, it was to influence practice in the years that followed, notably the emergence in England of programmes such as the General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ).

During the 1970s it had become obvious that the post-war welfare consensus was coming to an end. The election of the Conservatives confirmed this. Once in power the Thatcher government soon revealed that it had plans to revolutionise many aspects of the economy, public services and education. The mantra would be “the market is king” and Hayekian neo-liberal policies would dominate British life – from the sale of council homes under the “Right to Buy” legislation introduced in 1980 to the privatisation of the public utilities that was to follow later in the decade.

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### The rise of the market: a new neo-liberal agenda for education

In the early 1980s there were clear signs of the educational changes the new Government would seek to introduce. In England, weakening the LEAs was a priority. Granting more power and involvement to parents was another. Marketising the school system and introducing elements of privatisation also figured strongly in the Thatcher government’s thinking. Add to these plans a desire to exert greater central control over the curriculum and a commitment to introduce a “new vocationalism” and the outcome is an agenda for change in the education and

training system that was truly radical. A great deal of the legislation that followed in the 1980s and 1990s has its origins in this period.

Against this backdrop, the 1980 Education Act introduced the Assisted Places Scheme, enabling 'able' pupils destined for state secondary schools to access an education in the independent sector, and placed a new premium on the place of parental involvement in schooling. A White Paper, *A new training initiative: a programme for action*, announced the successor to the Youth Opportunities Programme (YOP), the Youth Training Scheme (YTS), and heralded in what soon came to be referred to as the 'new vocationalism'. A second Education Act in 1981 implemented the Warnock recommendations to meet the needs of children with special needs; and the DES-Welsh Office publication *The School Curriculum* (DES-Welsh Office, 1981) set out the government's curricular preferences in a series of detailed guidelines that LEAs had to note with regard to curriculum development and delivery, and which a subsequent DES Circular (Circular 6/81: DES, 1981) obliged them to implement.

The early 1980s were as busy for educational researchers as for policymakers. The first two years of the decade saw the publication of three pieces of work that were to have a significant impact on different areas of policy, practice and the on-going educational research agenda. *Inside the Primary Classroom* by Maurice Galton and Brian Simon exemplified and extolled ethnographic approaches in educational research (Galton, Simon and Croll, 1980). *Origins and Destinations* (Halsey et al., 1980) used data from the *Oxford Social Mobility Study* (Goldthorpe et al., 1980) to chart the life-courses of 8,529 men through the study of "skeletal" family and educational biographies, generating valuable data on class differences and access to different types of educational institutions and demonstrating a highly sophisticated application of quantitative analysis. *West Indian Children in Our Schools* (DES, 1981), known as the Rampton Report, which came in the same year as the Brixton and Toxteth 'riots' and the subsequent commissioning and publication of

the Scarman Report (Home Department, 1983), starkly observed that "West Indian children as a group are failing in our education system".

In 1982 work focused on what is now referred to as the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) agenda came to the fore, with the publication of the Cockcroft Report, *Mathematics Counts*, and the launch of the Technical and Vocational Education Initiative (TVEI). The latter was the practical articulation of the new vocationalism and introduced on an area-by-area basis. Critically, these locally delivered programmes sidelined LEAs and were run by the Manpower Services Commission (MSC), a government agency based not in the DES but in the employment department. For these reasons, TVEI was initially resisted by many Labour-led local authorities, although teachers often welcomed its focus on "equality of opportunity" and "a broad and balanced curriculum for all", a focus that in some schools did much to promote innovative and progressive practice, especially in the use of new technologies (Breslin, 2009).

Dale Spender's *Invisible Women* (Spender, 1982) shared this concern for equality of opportunity and, appearing towards the close of BERA's opening decade, had a real impact on the analysis of gender dynamics in schools. Spender identified schools as patriarchal institutions and revealed how girls' self-confidence was being undermined by everyday classroom processes that gave unequal amounts of "teacher-time" to boys and girls, with boys often "claiming" teacher attention through their "laddish" behaviour. Spender suggested that question and answer sessions in classrooms were a particular arena in which girls typically kept a low profile, even though the evidence was clear: most of the girls in Spender's sample worked harder in school than their male counterparts.

In 1983 Sara Delamont, BERA's first woman President gave her conference address. It had the engaging title *A woman's place in education: myths, monsters and misapprehensions* (Delamont, 1983). In 1983 the extended one-year YTS scheme began.



In December of that year another DES Circular (Circular 8/83: DES, 1983) asked each LEA to show that it had followed the government guidelines issued two years previously with regard to curriculum development. It also asked for information about the parties that had been involved in framing curriculum policy: heads, teachers, parents, governors, employers. In the first four years of government the Thatcher administration had significantly tightened its grip on the school curriculum, effectively laying the foundations for the National Curriculum that would follow towards the close of the decade.

By 1982 the state of the economy and rocketing unemployment appeared to threaten the Conservative Party's chances of holding onto power but the Falklands War sparked a surge in government popularity. The Conservatives were returned to power in the 1983 General Election, increasing their majority by 100 seats. In the years that followed Britain, and British educationalists, would see many more radical policies from the "Iron Lady" (Gillard, 2011)

and a recasting of their school and wider education systems that policymakers of different persuasions and in different jurisdictions would embrace and build on, albeit to varying degrees.

Thus, 'British' education did not move in a single motion. Instead, Margaret Thatcher's confrontational outlook and her commitment to an educational marketplace increasingly highlighted the contrasting approaches to education in England and Scotland. And, while Scotland already had its own distinctive education system, during the decades that followed the differences in educational policy and provision became more marked across the four nations of the UK as the gap in political approaches to the public sector grew and nationalism took on new forms and a new political importance. As noted earlier, these differences foregrounded moves towards increasing devolution in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland in the decades that followed, culminating in the referendum on Scottish independence in September 2014.

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# The second decade

(1984–1993)

### An Orwellian nightmare for educationalists?

BERA's first decade had begun with the miners' strike, the three day week and two barely conclusive general elections; its second began in an equally challenging context, and in a year that George Orwell had rendered synonymous with the idea of an over-bearing government that victimises innocent people and which will stop at nothing to achieve its ends.

For many educationists, it did feel as if they had entered some sort of educational version of "Room 101", with changes coming quick and fast – changes that signalled a declining role for Local Education Authorities and which laid the foundations for the kind of marketisation that has become the hallmark of educational reform in England for the past thirty years. Progressive critics feared for the future of any kind of 'comprehensive' entitlement and were troubled, in particular, by an apparent return to selection in various guises. They cited a re-emergence of bipartite approaches, not necessarily or simply through the structure of the school system but through the new vocationalism, a new 'diversity' of school structures and the rise of 'parental choice' as all being corrosive to the comprehensive dream. The emergence of the National Curriculum in England and Wales and performance tables across the UK towards the close of this period, the latter ostensibly to inform parental choice, were seen by many as evidence of a new culture of control and a deliberate attempt to disempower teachers and those who worked with them, including the educational research community. For this community, the launch of the first Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) in 1986 signalled that the 'performance' focused culture that would dominate the decades ahead, especially but not exclusively in England, would be as significant in Higher Education as it was to prove elsewhere across the educational landscape.

These changes in the education world were mirrored beyond the classroom and the lecture theatre. This was a period that started with the 1984–85 miners' strike, a watershed in the

history of British trade unionism. It also saw the rise of 'privatisation', not just through the selling off of public utilities – such as those concerned with water, gas, electricity and telecommunications – but through a sharp increase in the number of council homes being sold to their tenants. This was the era of the "yuppie", the young upwardly mobile person imbued with the spirit of Thatcherism, a determination to reach the top through personal endeavour, and those symbols of Yuppie status, the early, brick-like mobile phone and the forerunner of today's 'smartphone', the *Filofax*. Elsewhere, the "Big Bang" began the liberalisation of the City of London and ushered in the kind of practices that some were to blame for the banking crash two decades later.

All of this, though, took place against a backdrop of persistently high unemployment, especially amongst younger workers and those nearing retirement, and periodic outpourings of social discord, with a second set of 'riots' in Brixton and Toxteth early in the period and the 'Poll Tax' riots towards its close. In a famous magazine interview Margaret Thatcher had posed the rhetorical question "who is society?" only to reply "There is no such thing! There are individual men and women and there are families" (Keay, 1987). Whether or not one liked the observation, few felt able to challenge the analysis. In 1987, the Conservatives were elected for a third term, with many educational academics troubled by an educational project that was gaining momentum. At the BERA conference that September, President Patricia Broadfoot began her address with the words:

There can have been few less inauspicious years in which to deliver the Presidential Address of the British Educational Research Association. As we all know 11 June 1987 saw the election of a Conservative Government for a further five year term and with it, the reinforcement and possible extension of a hostile policy climate for both research in general and education in particular.

Broadfoot, 1988

By the close of 1990, Thatcher had departed as Premier, but her indelible mark had already been left on the UK and its education system, as Caroline Gipps was to ruefully acknowledge in her Presidential Address five years later (Gipps, 1992), even though many of the educational reforms that it had inspired were not to see the light of day for years to come.

Internationally, the close of the 1980s left one other indelible mark on the educational and child wellbeing landscape, the signing by nations worldwide of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, a set of rights based on “what a child needs to survive, grow, participate and fulfil their potential” and applying equally to every child, regardless of who they are, or where they are from” (United Nations, 1989; UNESCO, 2014).

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### **From common entitlement to individual choice: the rise of the schools marketplace**

At the heart of the Thatcher government’s economic analysis were two beliefs: that individuals made better choices than public agencies acting on their behalf, and that competition between the providers of public services would drive up standards. Privatisation and the removal of existing powers from public bodies such as Local Education Authorities created the market places in which such choice could be exercised, while a growing body of regulators maintained the rules of the game. These new regulators included the Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (CATE), which was set up by the Department for Education and Science in 1984 to set standards for initial teacher education programmes, and Ofsted, which was established towards the close of this period to monitor performance in – and of – schools. In educational terms these beliefs found initial expression in the 1984 Green Paper, *Parental influence at school* (DES, 1984). This heralded the emergence of ‘parent power’ as a political concept and set the template for the legislation that followed, as outlined in the 1985 White Paper, *Better Schools* (DES-Welsh Office,

1985), and the two Education Acts of 1986. It also gave rise to an accompanying body of educational research in which figures such as Stephen Ball (1993) and Geoff Whitty (Whitty et. al, 1998) and, from a contrasting perspective, James Tooley (1996) have been notable.

*Better Schools* was a wide-ranging document which foresaw, amongst other things, a shift towards better balanced governing bodies, the broadening of the sixth form curriculum through the introduction of the Advanced Supplementary Level, the introduction of a national framework for Records of Achievement, the greater engagement of parents, and an improvement of the training of Educational Welfare Officers to address concerns about truancy. It was arguably, though, more important for the tone that it set, calling, in an echo of Callaghan, for “national agreement about the purposes and the content of the curriculum” and encouraging “schools to do more to fulfil the vital function of preparing all young people for work” (Callaghan, 1976). The new vocationalism agenda was strengthened, and the seeds of the National Curriculum were sown, as were those of what has since become known as the “standards agenda”:

**The Government believes that the standards now generally attained by our pupils are neither as good as they can be nor as good as they need to be for the world of the twenty-first century...If the high standards achieved by pupils of all abilities in some schools could be achieved in all schools in similar circumstances the quality of school education would rise dramatically.**

*Better Schools*, DES-Welsh-Office, 1985

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### **Autonomy, control and the abolition of the Schools Council**

The abolition of the Schools Council in 1984 had been seen as a watershed for many involved in educational reform, especially the reform and renewal of the curriculum. It had been viewed as an autonomous and informed voice

in curriculum innovation, and one led by educationalists including educational researchers and school-based practitioners (Barnes, 1977, cited in Chitty, 1989). The Schools Council was replaced by two bodies: the School Curriculum Development Council (SCDC), later in the period to be replaced by the National Curriculum Council (NCC), and the School Examination Council (SEC), which was to subsequently become the School Examination and Assessment Council (SEAC).

This concern was reinforced when the government reacted without enthusiasm to a document from Her Majesty's Inspectorate (HMI), *Curriculum Matters No. 2: The Curriculum from 5–16*, issued in 1985 (DES, 1985). This progressive paper called for a curriculum that focused on “areas of learning” and on how “collaborative work, a focus on relationships and equal opportunities” could help to create a school ethos that is “effective and productive”. Anticipating the work on Cross-curricular Themes that was to be undertaken by the National Curriculum Council towards the close of this period, the document also suggested the need for students to be engaged in a curriculum that addressed environmental, political and health education, the development of economic understanding and a grasp of information technology.

Educationally, 1985 was notable for three other reasons: the proposal from the Secretary of State, Keith Joseph, that a new system of teacher appraisal should usher in an era of performance-related pay which sparked a programme of industrial action led by the teaching unions, the publication of a Green Paper, *Education and Training for Young People*, which made clear the government's controversial intention to place vocational education at the heart of the *school* curriculum, and the publication of the Swann Report.

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### Education for employment: the embedding of ‘new vocationalism’

The various debates and innovations in vocational education that emerged in this period inspired a body of educational research that is still growing today. This “14–19” literature, in which researchers such as Ann Hodgson, Richard Pring, David Raffe, Ken Spours and Alison Wolf have figured prominently, has subsequently spanned the long-standing divides between academic and vocational education, between education and training, and between curriculum and qualifications. This literature now sits at the heart of policy and practice debates in the upper secondary and Further Education phases. It has been influential in many of the interventions and reforms delivered in vocational education across the UK over the past thirty years while remaining almost unremittingly critical of these reforms (Pring et.al., 2009; Wolf 2011), not least for the way in which they have tended to separate academic and non-academic learners, with the vocational curriculum remaining something that less successful learners *fall onto* rather than one that potential engineers *choose*.

Taking its lead from James Callaghan's 1976 “Great Debate” speech (although he never actually used the phrase), the new vocationalism was effectively a response to the longstanding employer critique that the education system was failing to generate the labour market candidates that employers demanded. As such, the suggestion was that the high levels of youth unemployment at the time were at least in part a product of the failure of schools and colleges to ‘produce’ the ‘right’ young people, those equipped for the world of employment, or more pointedly, the so-called *real* world.

Chief amongst these reforms in schools was the Technical and Vocational Educational Initiative (TVEI) introduced in 1985. This was complemented beyond school boundaries by the formation of the National Council for Vocational Qualifications (NCVQ) in 1986, which was later to merge with the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority (SCAA),

the successor to the School Examination and Assessment Council (SEAC), to form the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA). The extension of the Youth Training Scheme from 12 to 24 months the same year, following a 1985 Green Paper, *Education and Training for Young People* (DES-DfE, 1985) underlined the government's concern with youth unemployment and the preparation of young people for the workplace. By the close of this period in BERA's history, secondary schools would be able to offer vocational programmes such as those within the Business and Training Education Council Certificate (BTEC) framework to 14 year olds, a Certificate of Pre-vocational Education (CPVE) had been developed, new suites of General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs) and National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) were emerging, and work was underway to create a unifying structure for all academic and vocational qualifications.

TVEI had pressed the trigger for many of these changes towards the close of BERA's first decade and, as noted earlier, it was greeted with suspicion for a range of reasons, chief amongst these its origins in, and governance by, the Manpower Services Commission. However, it heralded an, at the time, unprecedented investment in new technology in schools. It also did much to introduce a language to curriculum delivery and access that progressives were belatedly to welcome – a language of equality of opportunity, even if access to the vocational programmes that TVEI gave rise to was sometimes restricted to those who were deemed less able, successful or compliant. As the Swann Report was to reveal from a different juncture, this concern for curriculum access was timely.

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### Swann and beyond: the experience of black and Asian children in English schools

Lord Swann, in a report entitled *Education for All* (DES, 1985b), shone a strong, critical and uncompromising light on the education of minority ethnic children in English schools. At the time one prominent writer in the field described

what became known as the Swann Report as “a landmark in pluralism” (Verma, 1989) while a well-regarded former Secretary of State for Education claimed it amounted to “the boldest, most comprehensive statement on the subject of multicultural education so far produced in Britain” (Williams, 1989). Swann argued that majority communities, and the largely white professional community, had to think again about the way in which black and Asian children were educated, and they had to bring a new empathy to the challenges that these children faced: racism, poverty, language difficulties, cultural difference. In particular, the experience of black and Asian children in the education system had to serve as an antidote to the racism and racial stereotyping that they faced beyond the school gates. If this was to be the case, a new rigour would need to be brought to recording the experiences of, and outcomes for, pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds, to tracking recruitment into the teaching profession from minority ethnic communities and promoting the profession as a career option within these groups, and to the teaching of the English language. If the aspirations set out in the Swann Report were to be realized, all pupils would need to be taught by teachers from minority backgrounds and the education system would need to present Britain as a diverse, multi-cultural society.

This concern for the achievement and experience of minority ethnic pupils and students was reflected in the work of two educational researchers who were to come to prominence during this period, David Gillborn and Heidi Mirza. Gillborn's *'Race', Ethnicity and Education* (1990) is a landmark study in anti-racist education and provides a rich account of how patterns of teaching and learning produce outcomes disadvantageous to black students.

In *Young, Female and Black*, Mirza (1992) was particularly interested in the levels of achievement of black female students. A great deal of quantitative data had been gathered in the 1980s that confirmed the underachievement of black boys but the educational world of black girls remained largely unexplored. Mirza raised questions about the validity of the notion that

black girls were disproportionately likely to underachieve. In so doing, she began to render more complex the traditional analysis of 'race' in the classroom through an approach that looked at multiple differentiation and stratification – notably the interplay between ethnicity, gender and class – an approach which remains influential to this day.

These issues around identity and the interplay between agency and structure were subsequently to find expression in a new generation of researchers focused on the experience and identity of children and young people, amongst them Mairtin Mac an Ghaill who was to publish a series of important studies towards the close of this period and at the start of BERA's third decade. Amongst these is his classic study of young men's identity, *The Making of Men: masculinities, sexuality and schooling*, a classic piece of critical ethnography in which Mac an Ghaill relates the formation of masculinity and sexuality to elements of the school system and the labour market. He focuses on heterosexual subcultures in Year 11 in a West Midlands comprehensive school and the schooling experiences of young gay men in the local area (Mac an Ghaill, 1994).

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### **The Baker years: from GCSE to LMS and the National Curriculum**

In May 1986 Kenneth Baker, ahead of the following year's General Election, was appointed Secretary of State for Education. For many his tenure is seen as a benchmark in recent educational history. The General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) examination that replaced the GCE 'O' Level and CSE examinations that September had been the brainchild of one of his predecessors, Sir Keith Joseph, but beyond this Baker blazed a policymaking trail that began with the 1986 Education Act, which, among other things, placed a new focus on the role of school governors, and concluded, after the Conservative Party's return to power in 1987, with the 1988 Education Reform Act and several Committees of Inquiry.

The changes introduced by the 1988 Act were so many and varied that they came with the introduction of a set of five training days, taken from teachers' holiday entitlement at the time. These are still known amongst older members of the professional, somewhat begrudgingly, as "Baker Days".

The 1986 Act decreed that Local Education Authorities introduce governor training programmes, required governing bodies to publish annual reports, gave governors a new level of responsibility with regard to school finances and demanded that they should broaden their composition to include, for instance, representatives from the business community. At one level, the Act might be viewed as providing for a long overdue strengthening of school governance. With hindsight, many would argue that it laid the foundations for the new school management structures that were to be introduced towards the close of the period under discussion here. Effectively, through the Local Management of Schools (LMS) model, these were to establish schools as independent business units, with pupils and parents as their 'clients' or 'customers'.

The 1988 Education Reform Act was to outline the kind of marketplace in which these business units would perform, one characterized by a new diversity of institutional forms, an increased focus on 'parental choice' and a newly standardized National Curriculum, first set out in a Department for Education and Science document in 1987, *The National Curriculum 5–16* (DES, 1987). The curriculum proposed (and introduced) was a subject-based one with long-established academic disciplines at its core. Notably, it was oddly devoid of the kind of innovative curricular thinking that, perhaps unexpectedly, TVEI was beginning to encourage, and which HMI had proposed just three years earlier. Mirroring the conservative curriculum thinking that was prevalent at the DES at the time, the proposals of the 1988 Higginson Report – which proposed post-16 students switch to a broader programme of study involving five 'leaner and fitter' Advanced Level courses – was famously dismissed by Margaret Thatcher, apparently on the *Today* programme,

on the morning of its publication (DES-Welsh Office, 1988; Baker, 1985).

In the same reactionary spirit, and against a backdrop of widespread protest from the profession and elsewhere, Section 28 of the 1988 Local Government Act sought “to prohibit the promotion of homosexuality by Local Authorities” and banned LEAs from promoting “teaching (that implied or advocated) the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship”, dealing a blow both to the status of LEAs and to the gay rights lobby in the process.

The reforms to schooling structures ushered in by the 1988 Act were as profound as those relating to the introduction of the National Curriculum (which brought with it Standard Attainment Tests at 7, 11 and 14 and Key Stages), and when coupled with the emphasis on parental choice and ‘parent power’, through the abolition of “catchment areas” and the introduction of “open enrolment”, amounted to the confirmation of the end for the non-selective comprehensive system constructed over the previous two decades. The Act established the Local Management of Schools model referred to earlier, entitled secondary schools to ‘opt out’ of Local Education Authority ‘control’ in favour of “Grant Maintained Status” (GMS), and established City Technology Colleges (CTCs), an initially small cadre of business backed, vocationally-orientated schools sited in urban areas of longstanding educational underachievement. CTCs were to become the forerunners both of the specialist schools introduced a decade later by the then New Labour administration and the Academy model subsequently introduced by Labour and endorsed and expanded enthusiastically by the 2010–15 Conservative-led Coalition Government. The 1988 Education Reform Act did more than provoke the concerns of long established educational thinkers such as Denis Lawton and Geoff Whitty; it provided multiple starting points for a new generation of education researchers and a range of educational literatures.

### From diversity to standards: the emergence of Ofsted and the rise of ‘league’ tables

If the National Curriculum was to be one mechanism by which teachers and school leaders would be kept on-message and in-check in this newly diverse schools marketplace, others were soon to emerge, most notably the launch of the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) and the emergence of performance (or ‘league’) tables. The 1992 Education (Schools) Act had established Ofsted and the principle of regular inspections and, critically, publicly published inspection reports. A year earlier, as part of John Major’s *Citizen’s Charter* initiative, performance tables, also publicly published and based on schools’ examination scores, were introduced UK-wide. Interestingly, though, as a correspondent in the *Times Educational Supplement* (TES) noted fifteen years later, policymakers across the UK have not been consistent in their support for such a practice:

England is the only UK country to have consistently published centralised performance tables. Northern Ireland broke rank in 2001, scrapping tables and requiring schools to publish results in their prospectus instead. Later that year, Wales also abandoned tables, deciding results should appear in prospectuses and governors’ reports. In 2003, the Scottish Executive changed the way secondary school data was presented, making it available on a school-by-school basis on its Parentzone website. Primary results, meanwhile, were designated for internal use only.

Steven Hastings, *TES*, 11 May 2008

The educational research community also had reservations about the validity and reliability of performance tables *and* about the value and ethics of the testing on which the tables were based. Claims and counter-claims about the accuracy of the results and their reporting led to vigorous exchanges between politicians and researchers. In her 1992 Presidential Address Caroline Gipps responded to inaccurate



reporting of the first set of Standard Attainment Test results – both by the Secretary of State and the BBC – and the findings of an independent University of Leeds evaluation that the tests were unreliable (DES, 1991) by observing that:

As with the reading SATs, the delay over publication (of the Leeds evaluation) meant that (the) information about unreliability came too late for the LEAs at the bottom of the league tables and had a profound effect on public opinion.

Gipps, 1992

In the period leading up to, and immediately after, the establishment of Ofsted and the introduction of performance tables, there had been no let up in the plethora of reports and legislation. As well as the 'Baker' Act, 1988 had seen the publication of the Higginson Report into A level reform discussed earlier and the Kingman Report, arising from a Committee of Inquiry appointed by the Secretary of State, *The Teaching of English Language* (DES, 1988). Some of the thinking that was to inform subsequent "language across the curriculum" approaches and the National Literacy Strategy established by the New Labour government that was elected during BERA's third decade arguably find their origins in this report. The following year saw the publication of the Cox Report, *English for Ages 5–16: the report of the National Curriculum English Working Group* (DES, 1989), which set out attainment targets and programmes of study for National Curriculum English. Critically, the Group's Chair, Professor Brian Cox, had been, as Gillard (2011) points out, "one of the principal writers of the right-wing *Black Papers* in the 1970s".

In 1989 another Baker appointed Committee of Inquiry, led by Conservative Peer Lord Elton, published its report, *Discipline in Schools* (DES-Welsh Office, 1989). The report offered a wider ranging analysis than its title suggested and included calls for a strengthened social curriculum, a greater focus on classroom management in teachers' initial and continuing education, better pastoral systems in schools

and, following Swann the previous year, a focus in schools on fairness and equality of opportunity.

In July 1989 John McGregor replaced Baker as Secretary of State for Education and although he was to remain in post only until Margaret Thatcher's demise as Conservative leader and Prime Minister in November 1990, his tenure was to oversee the abolition of the Inner London Education Authority in April 1990 and the publication of the Rumbold Report, *Starting with Quality*, commissioned by his predecessor, which focused on the education of 3–4 year olds, again the report of a Committee of Inquiry established by Kenneth Baker (DES, 1990).

Angela Rumbold's report was important for its Early Years focus, for its recognition of the importance of play and informal learning in the education of young children and for advocating the kind of extension of nursery education, especially to support working parents, that has become a hallmark of Early Years policy over the past two decades. Educational researchers during this period had also focused on the informality of primary learning, or as Andrew Pollard puts it in the title of his classic 1985 ethnography of the education of younger children, "The Social World of the Primary School" (Pollard, 1985); Rumbold's report was perhaps evidence of this kind of understanding seeping into policy thinking, even if its author was a political and educational conservative, and a Conservative MP.

With John Major installed as Conservative leader and Prime Minister towards the close of 1990, Kenneth Clarke became Secretary of State for Education. Clarke set up the School Teachers' Pay Review Body and presided over a range of fine-tuning measures to the National Curriculum and the wider school curriculum, overseeing the publication of National Curriculum Council papers on curricular arrangements for Religious Education (NCC, 1991) and the introduction of a set of non-statutory Cross-curricular Themes, addressing the kind of areas that Her Majesty's Inspectorate had expressed concern about in their 1985 paper, *The Curriculum from 5–16*.

With a General Election on the horizon, the early months of 1992 saw the publication of *Curriculum Organisation and Classroom Practice in Primary Schools* (DES, 1992). Kenneth Clarke had commissioned Robin Alexander, Jim Rose and Chris Woodhead (who at the time led the National Curriculum Council) in the hope that they would produce a report that called for a return to traditional methods, including streaming, in the primary classroom. As Derek Gillard has observed, the outcome, the so-called “Three Wise Men Report”, was not what Major and Clarke had hoped for, i.e. “a resounding endorsement of traditionalist views” (Gillard, 2011).

Major secured a second term of office in April 1992 with a much-reduced majority, appointing John Patten as Secretary of State. Patten’s time in office is generally seen as unremarkable. Amongst some he will primarily be remembered for his 1993 attack on Tim Brighouse, weeks after Brighouse had taken up the post of Chief Education Officer in Birmingham. Speaking at a fringe meeting at the Conservative Party Conference, Patten exclaimed “I fear for Birmingham, with this madman let loose, wandering the streets, frightening the children”. Brighouse sued, winning a substantial out-of-court settlement. The money went to educational charities such as the Birmingham-based University of the First Age, which was to grow into a significant national body focused on out of school hours curriculum enrichment, while Brighouse’s nine year term as CEO proved to be a great success, as did a subsequent five year term as London Schools Commissioner, embarked upon in 2002. However, Patten ought also to be remembered for extolling the virtues of a “mum’s army” of classroom helpers, a controversial move which arguably helped to lay the political ground for the workforce remodelling that was to gain traction under New Labour and usher an ‘army’ of Learning Support Assistants into classrooms, especially primary classrooms. The wider schools workforce was an area that educational researchers would retain an interest in through to the present day (Blatchford et.al. 2009).

In other ways Patten continued the work of his predecessors, notably making it easier for schools to achieve Grant Maintained Status through the 1993 Education Act and enabling these schools to select elements of their intake. The shift towards selection was gathering pace, with Major having entered the previous year’s election campaign, offering the prospect of “a grammar school in every town”.

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### Beyond schooling: the changing face of Further and Higher Education

That this period was one of great change for the schooling system is beyond question, but the changes to Further and Higher Education were as profound. Amongst the flurry of school-focused reforms introduced by the 1988 “Baker” Act were others relating to Higher Education. One of the lesser-noticed changes was one of the most important for the educational research and wider academic community, the abolition of ‘tenure’, the system through which academics were granted job security, and with this independence. The cultural shift epitomised by the end of tenure, and set in motion by the arrival two years earlier of the Research Assessment Exercise, had formed the centrepiece of Patricia Broadfoot’s Presidential Address in 1998 (Broadfoot, 1988) and remained a prime concern of her successor, Jack Whitehead, twelve months later. In his Presidential Address (Whitehead, 1989), he argued for closer collaboration between the teaching and educational research communities, anticipated the subsequent emergence a decade later of the General Teaching Council for England in his call for a General Education Council, and argued for the kind of research-informed teaching-practice to which BERA has, in its 40th year, restated its commitment (BERA-RSA, 2014).

Later, in 1992, the so-called ‘new’ universities were born and a standardised funding formula introduced, as polytechnics were granted university status, and took on university titles; whether this attempt to bridge the

academic-vocational divide and to raise the status of the newest Higher Education institutions worked is at best questionable, but in widening access to HE, it was to play an important role.

In the often forgotten field of Further Education 1993 saw the incorporation of Further Education colleges, setting these hitherto locally funded institutions free from Local Education Authority control. As such, the move reflected – but went further than – the LMS arrangements in schools; FE colleges were now free standing corporations supported by a single central funding agency, much as Academy schools would be twenty years later. Moreover, college incorporation made the strategic planning of post-16 education provision across localities a much more challenging task.

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### **Pointing towards the future: Dearing and the National Commission on Education**

BERA's second decade closed with many of the elements of what might be described as the post-Thatcher settlement on education in place: schools competing in a market place in which information was provided through performance tables and published inspection reports, FE colleges established as independent corporations, tenure no longer the hallmark of academics' contracts of employment, a new prominence for testing and a stronger role for employers across the system, and a prevailing belief that the coupling of standardised curricula, testing and inspection coupled with competition, an increasing diversity of provision and 'choice' would drive up standards. Where there was the option to do so, Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland had not always adopted these largely English reforms, but the tone set by the Thatcher and Major administrations was UK wide, even if the period closed with Ron Dearing's interim report, *The National Curriculum and its Assessment*, the findings of which concurred with many of the concerns raised by researchers and practitioners, and which we reflect on in our review of the third decade of BERA's existence (SEAC, 1993).

The National Commission on Education, an independent initiative funded by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation and led by Sir Claus Moser, which published its report, *Learning to Succeed: a radical look at education today and a strategy for the future*, in 1993 (Paul Hamlyn Foundation, 1993), cast a critical and wide-ranging eye across this new landscape and, like Dearing, it concurred with the kind of concerns emerging in classrooms and in the educational research community at the time. Chief amongst these was the widening gap between successful and unsuccessful schools, and between the constituencies attending these schools, or as Gipps had put it in her 1992 Presidential Address, "a growing underclass of families disconnected from the system and out of reach of (the) normal ladders". As Stephen Ball's then emergent work on parental 'choice' and the allocation of school places (Ball, 1993), and Tony Edwards and his colleagues in their study of the Assisted Places Scheme (Edwards, Fitz and Whitty, 1989) demonstrated, middle class parents were adept at 'gaming' the new choice-based, consumer-focused system to the advantage of their children, even when the policy target was those from less advantaged backgrounds. The result was to lift the ladders to which Gipps had referred even further out of reach of the poorest young people.

This phenomenon, the enduring gap between the most and least advantaged young people, was in many ways accentuated by the reforms of the 1984–1993 period, and continues to exercise the minds of practitioners, policymakers and researchers, including BERA members, to the present day.

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# The third decade

(1994–2004)

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### Education policy: towards a new evidence-based dawn or more of the same?

BERA's third decade would see educational researchers working against a cultural and political backdrop which encompassed the continued ascendancy of neo-liberalism in domestic politics, the emergence of post modern theory across the social sciences, the thawing of the 'Cold War', and the emergence – and subsequent election – of *New Labour*. This period also saw the birth of the Scottish Parliament and the Welsh Assembly, the signing of the "Good Friday Agreement" in Northern Ireland, the death of Princess Diana, the 2003 invasion of Iraq, and the 9.11 attacks in New York. The development of mobile 'phones, the spread of Internet usage and the 'dotcom bubble' all grabbed headlines, as did Dolly the cloned sheep, about whom we read in 1997.

The Association's second decade had seen a profound change in the culture and assumptions that underpinned education policy, one that by 1994 was beginning to become embedded at an operational level across all educational phases and settings. Central to this cultural shift was the placing of the school or college firmly at the heart of a competitive marketplace, one that it would survive and thrive in through a combination of shrewd business management – for schools, under the Local Management of Schools (LMS) framework – and local popularity, the latter initially informed and increasingly defined by 'league' table position and Ofsted judgement. Against this background, Roger Murphy warned in his 1995 BERA Presidential Address that "drawing conclusions from an indicator such as the examination results of different cohorts of pupils is not straightforward" (Murphy, 1995).

This period was also to see a youthful Tony Blair elected initially as Labour Leader and then as Prime Minister in a campaign framed famously by his three political priorities: "Education, education, education", and the emergence of a public service culture of 'targets, tests and tables', one heavily influenced by a former

University of London Institute of Education academic and National Union of Teachers policy officer, Michael Barber. During this period, Barber rose to become Head of the Standards and Effectiveness Unit at the DfEE, and worked alongside another key Blair adviser, Andrew Adonis, based in the Number 10 Policy Unit, who was later to become a Peer and Minister. In England, the 'managerialist' focus with which both were associated was underlined by the emergence of Business Managers as key post holders in schools and colleges, by the emergence of the National Professional Qualification for Headship, and by the "Fresh Start" programme under which 'failing' schools were rebranded, re-launched and led by another creature of the age, the "Super Head", although with three Super Heads resigning in one tumultuous week in March 2000, questions soon emerged about the concept (Mansell, 2000).

If at times during this period the focus on data, and notably *performance* data, seemed to confound longstanding wisdom derived from generations of educational research and practice, it was not entirely a negative. The new political interest in evidence and impact was matched by the growth of large-scale impact analysis and quantitative enquiry amongst educational researchers. It was during this decade that the mantra of "evidence-based policymaking" came to the fore, a development that was to see the emergence of three major research initiatives in which BERA members were prominent. Established in 1993 at the Institute of Education, the EPPI-Centre works with a range of funding partners to carry out systematic evidence reviews across a range of areas that now stretch beyond education into other areas of public policy, notably into areas such as health, social care and well-being (IOE/EPPI-Centre, 2014).

In 1999, with significant input from BERA, the DFEE-sponsored National Educational Research Forum (NERF) was established to develop a national strategy for educational research and to "improve the quality and impact of research for the educational sector". Although it was wound up in 2006, it leaves a legacy of

reports that remain accessible to researchers on-line (NERF, 2014). In 2000 the Teaching and Learning Research Programme (TLRP) was established with the overt aim to “improve outcomes for learners... explore synergies between different research approaches... (and) commit to the application of findings to policy” (TLRP, 2014). Directed by Andrew Pollard, the programme – which concluded its generic phase in 2009 – involved over 100 investments and over 700 researchers UK-wide. Together, this community of researchers and their funding partners generated a body of research that remains influential across a range of educational themes and contexts, although critics might contend that it is insufficiently drawn on by those currently prominent in the educational policymaking community.

In England, BERA's third decade also saw the embedding of the recently launched inspectorate, Ofsted, in the educational landscape and the emergence of a new cluster of educational agencies, amongst them the Teacher Training Agency (TTA) in 1994, the Qualifications and Curriculum Agency (QCA) in 1997, the General Teaching Council for England (GTC) in 1998, the Connexions Service in 1999, the National College for School Leadership (NCSL) in 2000, and the Learning and Skills Council for England and Wales in 2001. The formation of QCA had resulted from a merger of the Schools Curriculum and Assessment Authority (SCAA) and the National Council for Vocational Qualifications (NCVQ) recommended by Sir Ron Dearing, and was mirrored by a range of examination board mergers that saw the GCSE and Advanced level boards coming together and these academically-focused bodies joining up with their vocational equivalents to form three examining giants: the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA), Edexcel Foundation and Oxford, Cambridge and Royal Society of Arts Examinations (OCR). In Scotland, the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) became examiner and regulator, a strategy that was to be questioned when a crisis over the standard of the English Higher examination paper emerged in summer 2003.

Reflecting these and other changes the Department for Education and Science was to undergo two name changes during this period, becoming the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) under the Conservatives in 1995 (following its merger with the Department for Employment) and the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) under Labour in 2001. The period also saw three Chief Inspectors: Chris Woodhead was appointed in 1994 and served until 2000. He was replaced by Mike Tomlinson who held the position for two years. David Bell succeeded Tomlinson in 2002.

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### From four nations to four education systems

This was also the decade in which many of the seeds of the increasingly distinctive approaches to education now seen across each of the UK's four jurisdictions were sown. While Scotland maintained its own curriculum and qualifications structure and although the post-16 Curriculum 2000 reforms applied to the qualifications structure in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, devolution pointed to divergence ahead and ultimately, in the case of Scotland, the independence referendum of September 2014. This saw the people of Scotland vote narrowly in favour of remaining within the UK, but with a promise of greater devolution secured in the final days of the campaign. BERA's founding President, John Nisbet, captures the differences between the Scottish and wider-UK educational research communities in *Pipers and Tunes*, his analysis of a decade of educational research in Scotland (Nisbet, 1995), as they existed over twenty years ago, differences that have continued to grow since then in areas such as the curriculum, initial teacher education and teachers' continuing professional development (BERA-RSA, 2014). They will now surely continue to do so.

The differences in practice between England and Wales have arguably been less dramatic but they remain important. In the second half of the 20th century, Welsh policy had largely been determined by Westminster through the Welsh

Office. However, parliamentary devolution in 1998 saw Wales being given complete autonomy for its education system and the emergence of a different approach based largely on social democratic rather than market-based principals. As such, we begin to see what the Welsh First Minister referred to as ‘clear red water’ between England and Wales, even if questions about the performance of the Welsh schooling system have subsequently been raised (OECD, 2014).

Subsequently, Northern Ireland was to cut a similar distinctive path, one that would see the prominent republican Martin McGuinness emerge as a particular advocate of progressive approaches. Post-conflict related work in Northern Ireland such as that relating to *Education for Mutual Understanding* (EMU), while emerging from a very specific context (Smith and Robinson, 1996), was subsequently to do much to inform innovations in building community cohesion through schools and in areas such as Citizenship Education and Personal, Social and Health Education across the UK, not least through the long-running series of annual *Five Nations* conferences that were to be staged by the Institute for Global Ethics and, latterly, the Association for Citizenship Teaching and which were initiated towards the close of this period.

The UK-wide constitutional settlement promised in the wake of the fiercely contested Scottish referendum points to further distinctiveness between the UK’s four education systems as BERA moves into its fifth decade. As such, it may encourage a renewed and extended interest in comparative educational research across the UK.

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### **The arrival of New Labour: education, education, education?**

Although the election of New Labour in 1997 was undoubtedly a landmark for education and for educational researchers, if only because of its public prioritisation of education, the continuities between the outgoing Conservative administration and the incoming Labour one were at least as marked as the differences.

Indeed, in a speech at Ruskin towards the close of 1996, marking the twentieth anniversary of Callaghan’s earlier Ruskin address, Tony Blair spoke of a “new consensus on education policy” (Blair, 1996) that would be “practical not ideological” and focus on:

**Rigorous assessment of pupil and school performance, and action based upon it; improved training and qualifications for teachers, especially Heads; early intervention when things go wrong.**

Tony Blair, speech at Ruskin College, Oxford, 16th December 1996

Thus, amongst these continuities it was no surprise to find a sustained focus on school standards and notably on literacy and numeracy, the extension of the specialist schools programme, and the continued employment of Chris Woodhead, the former lead at the National Curriculum Council, as Chief Inspector of Schools. Woodhead, who had been appointed by Gillian Shephard, had been highly critical of the profession, many felt unfairly so. When delegates and platform speakers at the National Union of Teachers annual conference in April 1997 demanded his removal by an in-coming Labour Government, they arguably guaranteed his continued employment in the role. This was subsequently confirmed by Shephard’s Labour successor, David Blunkett, who was, like Estelle Morris who succeeded him in 2001, a qualified teacher. One of the new government’s first acts was to “name and shame” a group of eighteen underperforming schools identified as ‘failing’ by Ofsted, who junior Education Minister Stephen Byers claimed were failing to improve with sufficient speed. Whether or not the identification of the schools aided their revival or made it more difficult is hard to prove; that it signalled a continuation of relations between government and the teaching profession that were less than ‘cosy’ was beyond doubt.

As a reflection of all of this, teacher education, and the profession itself, found itself in flux. In *Teacher Education in Transition: re-forming*

*professionalism?* John Furlong (Furlong et. al. 2000) and his colleagues provide a detailed and critical account of the changing terrain of teacher education during the period, and in particular the diminished role for university departments of education in a context where the delivery of teacher education was increasingly devolved to schools, but through a centralised system under the auspices of what was then the newly established Teacher Training Agency.

This was also the period that saw the emergence of the introduction of the Performance Threshold for teachers in 2000, a decade after more hostile debates about teacher appraisal had produced industrial action under the Conservatives, and the emergence of “workforce remodelling”, a move that saw John Patten’s “mum’s army” of classroom helpers morph into Estelle Morris’s recasting of the school workforce, epitomised in what is now – at least in primary schools – the almost ubiquitous “Learning Support” or “Teaching” Assistant. For some qualified teachers and some educational academics, the combination of devolved teacher education *and* the growth of a quasi-professional cluster of colleagues in the staff room, amounted to an attack on teachers’ professionalism; for others, notably senior leaders, it opened up new flexibilities and the possibility of the staffroom as a “multi-professional community” (Breslin, 2001).

These flexibilities combined with the increasing focus on school standards, school improvement and school effectiveness across the period began to generate a substantial ‘self-help’ literature, for which practitioners, and especially school leaders, were the key audience. *The Intelligent School* (MacGilchrist et.al, 1997) provides an example of this literature, combining the distinct activities of academic analysis and practical application, while drawing on the notion of “multiple intelligences” (Gardner, 1983) to articulate what the *intelligent* school might look like.

### **From Major to Blair: the rise of PFI and the end of the “bog standard” comprehensive**

Much had been made of John Major’s status as a former “Grammar School Boy” and, as noted earlier, he had made the promise of “a grammar school in every town” an important part of his 1992 election campaign, a promise he was to repeat in 1997. The 1993 Education Act had made it easier for schools in England and Wales to convert to “Grant Maintained” status and for existing Grant Maintained Schools to select elements of their intake. In the immediate aftermath of the 1992 election, John Patten was to champion Major’s aspiration to establish more grammar schools; relatively few were to be established in this period but the effect of the public debate was to place the comprehensive ‘brand’ under the microscope and to damage it significantly in the process. Although comprehensive secondary education had seen a very significant rise in educational achievement at both GCSE and Advanced Level and a substantial rise in the numbers both staying on to post-16 study and progressing to university, the comprehensive movement struggled to bring its successes to public attention. This was in spite of the support of figures such as David Hargreaves who, back in 1982, had set out what he termed “the challenge for the comprehensive school” (Hargreaves, 1982) and Tim Brighouse, who in 2002 took up the post of London Schools Commissioner, leading the new London Challenge. Rather, the pursuance of strategies based on the need to “raise standards” and “improve schools” had, as Peter Mortimore noted in his 1999 BERA Presidential Address, contributed “to the impression that standards have been falling – a view which is *not* supported by the available evidence” (Mortimore, 1999).

Whatever, where Major and Patten had utilised the Grant Maintained Status (GMS) model and called for a return to traditional selection, the Blair government elected in 1997 built upon a model introduced by Patten’s successor, Shephard. Shephard had extended



the number of City Technology Colleges by enabling Local Education Authority schools to take on Technology College status; she also introduced a second specialist college status, Languages. By 1996, there were 186 schools with specialist status, most of which were Technology Colleges. Using an approach that championed the distinctiveness of individual schools, rather than the commonalities between them, appealed to Blair and Blunkett, in part prompting Caroline Benn and Clyde Chitty to pose the question “Is comprehensive education alive and well or struggling to survive?” in their survey based study, *Thirty Years On* (Benn and Chitty, 1997). Shortly after Labour’s election, the new government published a White Paper, *Excellence in Schools* (DES, 1997) that provided its response; this was broadly supportive of comprehensive principles but did enable selection by ‘aptitude’ in specified areas such as sport or music.

Against this background, informed by Baker’s City Technology College model and Shephard’s notion of ‘specialism’, and working in tandem with the former’s champion, Sir Cyril Taylor, New Labour used Specialist School Status as a vehicle for enhancing differences between schools. Thus, following the 1998 School Standards and Frameworks Act, schools across England began to declare themselves as “specialists” across a range of areas: art, technology, sport, and languages. The 2001 Green Paper, *Schools: Building on Success* (DfES, 2001), added four additional specialisms: business and enterprise, engineering, mathematics and computing, and science. Two additional specialisms were subsequently added: music and humanities.

Under Labour’s model, schools had to bid to the Department for Education and Skills to gain specialist status and to demonstrate that they had plans in place to raise £50,000 from local and business sources, and to work with other schools locally after securing their new identity. Although David Blunkett had been a robust defender of comprehensive ideals in opposition, inviting delegates to the 1995 Labour Party Conference to: “Read my lips (under Labour,

there will be) no selection by examination or interview”, some viewed the increasing focus on specialism as amounting to a ‘slow boat’ to selection by another route. Indeed, Labour’s first piece of legislation, the 1997 Education (Schools) Act conveyed these tensions and ambiguities, on the one hand abolishing the Assisted Places Scheme and on the other endorsing the kind of “parent power” model that had helped to bring that programme into disrepute, as outlined towards the close of our discussion of BERA’s second decade.

In 2001, Tony Blair announced an extension of the specialist schools programme in England and, with it, the dawn of “the post comprehensive era”, urging comprehensives to develop “a distinctive mission, ethos and purpose”; he also used argued, controversially, for an extension in the number of faith schools, adding that diversity would be “not the exception but the hallmark of secondary education”. As a *Guardian* journalist has subsequently noted, “his spokesman, Alastair Campbell, put it more bluntly: the days of the ‘bog-standard comprehensive’ were over” (Northen, 2011). The previous year Blunkett had announced plans to open a number of “City Academies” in areas of low educational achievement and high social need, part funded by private benefactors; the seeds of the modern Academies programme were sown. The first three Academies opened in 2002 with a further nine opening the following year. Subsequently, they were to be supported by the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust (SSAT), formed early in BERA’s fourth decade, a direct descendent of the former City Technology Colleges Trust and chaired by the latter’s founder, educational conservative Sir Cyril Taylor.

Alongside academies and specialist schools, the New Labour era ushered in a third conduit through which the private sector would enhance its foothold in the educational infrastructure: the *Private Finance Initiative* (PFI). When Tony Blair launched Labour’s campaign for re-election in May 2001, he did so through an education-focused speech at the recently opened Highlands School in Enfield, North London. Highlands was the first entirely new secondary

school to be funded through PFI; as such it set the template for a generation of new schools, notably through the biggest school building and re-building programme in several generations to be launched early in BERA's fourth decade: *Building Schools for the Future* (BSF). Under the PFI framework, developers built and maintained schools, leasing them to Local Education Authorities and, later, Academy chains. Now used in a range of variants across the public sector to fund schools, hospitals, roads and railways, PFI remains a controversial tool, either providing the facilities required quickly at a reasonable cost, as supporters would have it, or lining the pockets of private contractors as critics continue to claim. Less than six years after Highlands opened, its founding head teacher, Monica Cross, was to quit attacking ministers for, in the words of a report in the *Daily Telegraph*, "using 'ineffective, bureaucratic and money wasting' firms to run classrooms" (Martin, 2006).

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### **New beginnings: Sure Start, the National Strategies and smaller classes**

For many in education, New Labour's first term was most distinctively marked by its focus on the primary classroom and on early years provision. It withdrew a short-lived voucher scheme for nursery education introduced by the Conservatives and embarked on a flurry of activity. In particular, three policy initiatives are notable: Sure Start, the commitment to reduce class sizes for infants to 30 or less, and the National Strategies for Literacy and Numeracy.

Launched in 1998, Sure Start focused on early years provision, child welfare, parental education and family wellbeing. Delivered through locally-based programmes, initially in the poorest communities, it subsequently led to the creation of a national network of Sure Start Centres in England, many of them based in, or adjacent to, primary schools. The thinking behind this kind of approach owed much to research into the impact of 'early intervention' and family learning and was informed by work

such as that carried out by Leon Feinstein in his seminal study *Inequality in the Early Cognitive Development of British Children in the 1970 Cohort*, which revealed close correlations between social class, parental engagement and educational attainment (Feinstein, 2003).

On election Labour drew, as noted in our discussion of BERA's second decade, on a piece of educational research carried out the best part of a decade before on the impact of the Assisted Places Scheme to justify the scheme's abolition – the programme had enabled 'bright' state school pupils to secure places in independent schools. Tony Edwards and his colleagues revealed that although the scheme was intended to open up the advantages offered by private education to 'bright' children from 'disadvantaged' backgrounds, many of the 6,000 pupils who benefitted from the programme annually did not emerge from the poorest corners of society, but from relatively advantaged middle class homes, with less than 10% of those taking up places having fathers in manual occupations. The expenditure saved by the abolition of the scheme was used to fund Labour's commitment to reduce class sizes for five to seven year olds within its first term.

At classroom level, the National Literacy Strategy, which owed much to the Michael Barber-led Literacy Task Force set up by David Blunkett as Shadow Education Secretary in 1996, found expression through the Literacy Hour (from September 1998) while the National Numeracy Strategy was embodied in the Numeracy Hour (from September 1999) and the related Leading Mathematics Teacher programme. These important initiatives were designed to ensure that no pupil completed primary schooling unable to tackle, because of poor basic skills, the secondary National Curriculum that lay ahead of them, and had a profound effect on the primary classroom, the shape of the primary school day and the wider life of primary schools. Allied to the system of Standard Attainment Tests already in place, they combined to significantly reshape practice in primary schools, some felt to the cost of creativity, the humanities and less formal

play-based learning and creating a “teaching to the test” culture that remains strong today. In the research community, studies such as Robin Alexander’s *Culture and Pedagogy: international comparisons in primary education* (Alexander, 2001) began to open up (but not resolve) debates about these reforms and to raise questions about their bases in evidence.

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### **From Dearing to Curriculum 2000: re-engineering qualifications and curriculum**

In 1993 Sir Ron Dearing, who had formerly led the Post Office, had been asked to lead a review of the National Curriculum by Gillian Shephard. In fact, amidst a flurry of jokes about “*delivering the curriculum*”, Dearing was to become an influential figure across the period, leading three distinct reviews in which various prominent members of the educational research community featured: the first of the National Curriculum, which reported in 1994, the second on the reform of the 16–19 qualifications structure, which reported in 1996, and the third on higher education, which reported in 1997. Dearing’s work was to lead to a significant re-engineering of each of these areas and helped to mould the educational landscape across secondary, further and higher education for the ensuing twenty years.

As noted the Interim Report from Dearing’s first review was published the previous year, towards the close of BERA’s second decade. The Final Report was published in 1994 and was clear in its criticism of the first iteration of the National Curriculum. Dearing (SEAC, 1994) reported on a framework that, as Derek Gillard (2011) puts it “...had become an unwieldy structure which was virtually impossible to implement” and that “time spent on paperwork and testing was damaging good teaching and learning”. Dearing called for a reduction in the content of the curriculum, the amount of time spent on testing, and the level of subject prescription, especially at Key Stage 4. He also called for the merger of the National Curriculum Council (NCC) and the

Schools Examination and Assessment Council (SEAC) to form the Schools Curriculum and Assessment Authority (SCAA). The government accepted his recommendations and, as Gillard acerbically notes, “spent £744m amending the National Curriculum”.

1994 also saw the publication of a second report critical of the National Curriculum, National Curriculum English in particular. It was produced by a group of educational researchers based at the University of Warwick who had been commissioned by the National Curriculum Council shortly after the curriculum’s launch (SCAA, 1994). Their document, *Evaluation of the Implementation of English in the National Curriculum at Key Stages 1, 2 and 3 (1991–1993)* echoed Dearing’s criticisms at a subject level. Such were the concerns about National Curriculum English, that the curriculum had already been amended by the time that the Warwick report was published, causing the authors to temper their calls for further change – especially about the impact of Standard Attainment Tests and the need for clearer guidance for primary practitioners – with a recommendation that:

**The pace of change needs to be slowed down, allowing time for a period of stability during which teachers can make professional decisions about the best ways of planning and teaching English in the National Curriculum.**

*Evaluation of the Implementation of English in the National Curriculum at Key Stages 1, 2 and 3 (1991–1993)*, SCAA, 1994, p.126–7

The recommendation might have related to any subject or area of practice and come from any classroom teacher or school leader during the period under discussion, and, indeed, over the periods that had preceded and would follow it.

Dearing’s second report, *Review of Qualifications for 16–19 Year Olds* (SCAA, 1996), was to have as great an effect on post-16 education as his first had on pre-16 arrangements. Although commissioned by the Conservative Secretary of State Gillian

Shephard, it was to have its greatest impact after the 1997 General Election in which Labour swept to power. Dearing's report led to the creation of the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) in England – as a result of a merger of the National Council for Vocational Qualifications (NCVQ) and the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority (SCAA) – the development of the first National Qualifications Framework (NQF), which was to draw academic and vocational qualifications into a shared framework for the first time, and, ultimately, the construction of the Curriculum 2000 model. QCA, with educational academic David Hargreaves appointed as its founding Chief Executive, was to lead on the implementation of Curriculum 2000, which, in its various evolutions, was to dominate the post-16 landscape all the way through to the set of Advanced level reforms introduced by Michael Gove, the Conservative Secretary of State for Education, on behalf of the Coalition Government a generation later and embodied in a series of Green and White Papers and pieces of legislation that we shall deal with subsequently.

The Curriculum 2000 model, introduced in England, Wales and Northern Ireland in Autumn 2000, had three defining characteristics. First, it led to the replacement of the unpopular Advanced *Supplementary* Level (which covered half the content of an A level but retained the A level standard) with the Advanced *Subsidiary* Level (which also covered half the content of an A level but which was pitched at a lower level, that of the notional 17 year old, rather than, as had been the case with its predecessor qualification, the notional 18 year old). Critically, a candidate's AS grade formed 50% of the assessment for the full A level. Second, it introduced a common unitized framework across Advanced Level programmes and their vocational equivalent, the Advanced General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ), which was in due course to be recast as a series of "Vocational A Levels". Third, it introduced a new Key Skills Qualification in an attempt to ensure that post-16 learners would reach Foundation, Intermediate or Advanced standard in literacy,

the application of number and the use of information technology.

The unitized framework offered students the opportunity to sit and re-sit different AS and A level units at various points across the two years of A level studies, with the AS level units typically sat at the close of the first year of study, and often re-sat six months or a year later, alongside the A level units, so as to boost the student's final grade. Unsurprisingly, with the 'easier' AS level units contributing to the full A level grade, the outcome was significant 'grade inflation' (Breslin 2009) and a series of marking crises, one of which was seen as contributing to the resignation of David Blunkett's successor as Education Secretary, Estelle Morris, in 2002 and her replacement by Charles Clark.

The debate about AS and A level standards, and about the merits of modularisation in particular, has continued to the present day. Behind this debate lies two broader questions: the first relates to whether A Level remains a device for the selection of a group of elite learners to progress to Higher Education, and notably to a group of elite universities, or whether it is a mass qualification designed for a much wider cohort, and much higher levels of educational participation, post-16 and post-18; the second is concerned with whether assessment ought to be a purely *summative* exercise at the close of a *linear* course of learning (guided by the didactic mantra, "you learn, we test") or whether it ought to be a *formative* exercise that contributes to a student's *on-going* learning, not just through traditional written tests but through coursework and day-to-day classroom activities.

In this regard, and across the primary and secondary fields, the work of Paul Black and Dylan Wiliam during this period did much to influence practice. *Inside the Black Box: raising standards through classroom assessment*, in particular, is seen as setting out the principles that would influence "assessment for learning" or "formative assessment" strategies for years to come (Black and Wiliam, 1998). Their focus on student self-assessment, peer-to-peer assessment, smarter 'marking' strategies that

opened up better information flows between teachers and students, and approaches to teacher questioning challenged the ascendancy of testing that continued throughout BERA's third decade.

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### **The price of widening participation: Dearing and the rise (and rise) of tuition fees**

Beyond the school agenda, the New Labour years were marked, at least initially, by a new interest in Further and Higher Education and the emergence of the so-called 'lifelong learning' movement. They saw the launch of the Educational Maintenance Allowance for 16–19 year olds in 1999 and a significant focus on adult literacy that was crystalized in the report, *Improving Literacy and Numeracy: a fresh start* from a Secretary of State appointed Working Group chaired by Sir Claus Moser, Chair of the Basic Skills Agency (DfES, 1999) which led to the launch of the Skills for Life strategy in 2001. The interest in broadening access to FE and HE led to a series of 'widening participation' strategies designed to attract students from 'non-traditional' backgrounds into Further and Higher Education. In *Learning Works: Widening Participation in Further Education*, Helena Kennedy QC and her colleagues argued, "the case for widening participation is irresistible" (FEFC, 1997), even if some in the educational research community were critical of the simple assumption that educational endeavour was always the partner of economic growth, one such critic posing the question "Does Education Matter?" (Wolf, 2002). Again, this interest in widening participation was to both draw on and inspire considerable activity amongst the educational research community, activity that continues to the present day.

And as universities began to refine their efforts to attract students from non-traditional backgrounds they periodically found themselves in receipt of intense media scrutiny, notably during the Laura Spence affair in 2000. Despite holding ten A\* grades at GCSE and being predicted straight A grades in her A levels, Spence

was not offered a place to study Medicine at Magdalen College, Oxford, a decision that Blair's Chancellor of the Exchequer described as "absolute scandal". It was during this period that Tony Blair identified the aspiration that 50% of young people should progress to university, an aspiration that sat well with the more accessible A Level framework that Curriculum 2000 had introduced. Dearing's third report, which had been published within weeks of Labour's election in 1997 was to buy into the principle of widening participation, but, quite literally, at a price.

The report, *Higher Education in the Learning Society* (NCIHE, 1997), came to be regarded as the most important report in the Higher Education field since that of the Robbins Committee in the early 1960s (DES, 1963), Dearing's wide-ranging paper included ninety-three recommendations, addressed the differing needs of learners in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, called for Higher Education funding to rise in line with the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and embraced the principles of lifelong learning and widening participation as critical to the development of the UK as a "learning society". Much of this was lost, though, behind a single recommendation on the funding of undergraduate degree programmes. Dearing, who was Chancellor at the University of Nottingham at the time, argued for a shift in the funding of undergraduate tuition from the public purse to a mixed system in which tuition fees, supported by low interest government loans, were charged to students; the new Blair government accepted the recommendation. Undergraduates had been able to augment maintenance grants with low interest loans since 1990 when the Student Loans Company was established. The 1998 Teaching and Higher Education Act abolished maintenance grants for the majority of students and introduced annual tuition fees of £1,000. The total loans provided by the SLC increased from £941 million in the 1997–98 academic year, to £1.23 billion in 1998–99, when the new tuition fees took effect (Student Loans Company Limited, 2005).

Many had seen widening participation in *post-16* learning as being at the core of Dearing's

second report, something that had been supported by the national roll-out of the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) in 2002. While much of the rhetoric of his third report continued this theme, the proposal to charge tuition fees initiated a public debate about access to *Higher Education* that engages students, teachers and educational researchers to this day. Against this background it is telling that, as with school performance tables, the subsequently devolved governments in Scotland and Wales have not maintained the tuition fee model that has since developed in England. Nor have they abolished the EMA, as happened in England after the election of the Coalition Government in 2010.

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### Education for Citizenship and the growth of student voice

During his studies as a mature student at the University of Sheffield, David Blunkett was tutored by Bernard Crick, a leading light in the development and promotion of political education in the UK since the 1960s. Crick was author of the classic *In Defence of Politics* (1962), a key player in the Politics Association, the subject association for teachers of the subject at Advanced Level, the Political Studies Association, which focuses its work on Higher Education, and the journal *Political Quarterly*, through which he established *The Orwell Prize*. During Blunkett's time in opposition, Crick had lobbied him about the dearth of political education in schools. Blunkett's response on election was to set up an independent advisory committee, chaired by Crick, on the issue. The result was the publication of *Education for Citizenship and the Teaching of Democracy in Schools* (QCA, 1998), the outcome of which was to see Citizenship established as a statutory subject of the National Curriculum in English secondary schools from 2002. It remains so to the present day, in spite of scepticism that it would survive Michael Gove's recent review of the National Curriculum.

As with Dearing, Crick was to chair three committees and produce three reports. The second

focused on the educational needs of those aged 16–19 in Further Education, *Citizenship for 16–19 Year Olds in Education and Training: Report of the Advisory Group to the Secretary of State for Education and Employment*, (FEFC, 2000). The third was concerned with the educational needs and wider 'integration' of newcomers to Britain, *The New and the Old: the report of the "Life in the UK" advisory group*, (Home Office, 2003), commissioned by David Blunkett following his appointment as Home Secretary after Labour's re-election in 2001. All three advisory groups featured educationalists strongly, with Tim Brighouse, John Keast, David Kerr and Tom Schuller amongst those represented on the different committees.

Over this period, the Citizenship Education community developed a considerable literature, both in academia through the *CitizEd* network convened by James Arthur at the University of Canterbury and the DfEE commissioned *Citizenship Education Longitudinal Study*, led by David Kerr over the course of a decade at the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER, 2010), and amongst practitioners, through organisations like the Association for Citizenship Teaching (established by Crick in 2001) and the Citizenship Foundation, which had been established by the Liberal Democrat Peer Andrew Phillips twelve years earlier. This literature included work on the developing Citizenship curriculum by writers such as Don Rowe and Ted Huddleston at the Citizenship Foundation (Rowe, 2006; Huddleston and Kerr, 2006), on young peoples' legal rights (Thorpe, 2006) on issues around human rights (Osler and Starkey, 2005), on community engagement, service learning and active citizenship (Annette, 2006), on student governors (Hallgarten et. al., 2004), on student voice (Whitty and Wisby, 2007; Kidd and Czerniawski, 2011), on curriculum planning (Whitty, Rowe and Aggleton, 1996; Breslin, 2006), on the broader concept of the "Citizenship-rich School" (Breslin and Dufour, 2006) and schools as communities (Davies, 2014), and on Citizenship Education in comparative settings (Kerr, 1999).

It is a literature that continues to exert considerable influence on classroom practice and policy development but most of these authors would concur that the delivery of National Curriculum Citizenship remains “patchy”, as indicated by a Select Committee Report published early in BERA’s fourth decade (House of Commons, 2007). However, the growth of student voice and youth engagement more broadly is rightly credited as being, in part, a result of the new interest in Citizenship Education that Crick’s reports produced. When Margaret Thatcher introduced the idea of the market place to education, she probably didn’t have pupils and students in mind as the consumers; during this period student voice began to change all that.

The move to introduce Citizenship to the National Curriculum in 2002 by Blunkett and Crick had primarily emerged from a concern about young people’s lack of knowledge about, and engagement in, domestic politics. In BERA’s fourth decade these concerns were to be augmented by broader ones about community well-being and the role of schools and colleges in promoting “community cohesion” following disturbances in a number of towns in the North of England early in the new millennium (Cantle, 2001), the London bombings in 2005, the rise of the British National Party, concerns about national identity (DfES, 2007; Goldsmith, 2008), and the so-called “Trojan Horse” affair a decade later (Phipps, 2014).

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### **Towards Labour’s third term, BERA’s fourth decade, and the Every Child Matters era**

Since its election in 1997 the Labour government had allied a general drive to raise standards – for instance through reducing class sizes, launching the National Strategies and supporting the regime of ‘league’ tables and inspections introduced by the Major government earlier in this period – with a range of specific interventions targeted at young people with Special Educational Needs or perceived abilities

and at local areas where deprivation was persistent and longstanding.

Thus, within its first term Labour had introduced Sure Start, in England committed to a national programme based on family learning, sponsored a range of extended schools projects, and allied its commitment to the specialist schools model with the establishment of seventy-three commercially sponsored Education Action Zones (EAZs). Twenty-five of these were set up within a year of Labour coming to office but the initiative was replaced within two years by the LEA focused Excellence in Cities programme. Labour also established a network of Beacon Schools and introduced the designation of Advanced Skills Teacher, examples of a series of moves to share ‘best practice’ across what many commentators saw as an increasingly atomised and competitive system.

In terms of supporting young people with Special Educational Needs, the new government published a Green Paper, *Education for all children: meeting special educational needs* (DES, 1997) within months of coming to office in which it set out a five year plan for Special Education in England. Early in its second term it launched the Gifted and Talented programme, overseen and coordinated by a Department for Education and Skills funded National Academy for Gifted and Talented Youth established for this purpose at the University of Warwick, although whether this was an attempt to address the claim that the comprehensive system had failed to stretch the brightest children and young people, or a further undermining of this system is open to question. Either way, these initiatives and others – for instance, those focused around supporting the educational needs of young people in care, young carers and those with disabilities set out respectively in the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 and the Carers and Disabled Children’s Act 2000 – were laying the foundations for a more holistic policy framework, outlined in the White Paper, *Every Child Matters* (DfES, 2003), which would come to prominence in BERA’s fourth decade.

In some senses *Every Child Matters* began to acknowledge a range of persistent educational

challenges generated by the policy landscape that had ensued since 1979. Across all educational phases and settings, these tensions – between raising attainment and building inclusion, between providing choice and ensuring a common entitlement, between promoting excellence while ensuring a baseline of success for all, between competition and collaboration amongst institutions – had been seeded in BERA's first decade, glimpsed in its second and embedded in its third. They were to dominate its fourth. Across BERA's third decade Stephen Ball and Geoff Whitty, amongst many

others (Ball, 1993; Whitty et. al., 1998), had warned of the dangers that this new educational marketplace posed. This analysis was affirmed in a 2003 report published jointly by Ofsted and the Audit Commission, *School Place Planning* (Audit Commission-Ofsted, 2003), which warned that the growing focus on “parental choice” was in danger of widening the gap between “weak” and “strong” schools; no surprise, then, that “Closing the Gap” – this gap – was to prove the greatest challenge for practitioners, policymakers and educational researchers in the ten years that followed.



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# The fourth decade

(2004–present)

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### Education, austerity and political change

BERA's third decade had seen the further marketisation of state education in England unchecked by an in-coming *New Labour* government. Its fourth would open against the backdrop of the Iraq war and the Hutton Inquiry into the death of David Kelly, a government scientist. It was a decade that would see the 2005 London bombings, the worst economic and banking crisis of modern times, 'boom and bust' in the property market, the closure of the tabloid icon *The News of the World* following claims that its journalists had hacked the 'phones of celebrities and crime victims in pursuit of stories, the MPs' expenses scandal, attacks on public sector pensions (including those of teachers), the emergence of "off-shoring" as an increasingly common business strategy, the tragic death of Peter Connolly (or "Baby P" as he was initially known to us), the rise of austerity, the formation of the Conservative-led Coalition Government after thirteen years of Labour rule, increasing concerns about inequality of opportunity and income, protests over student tuition fees, the summer riots of 2011, the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, and, in summer 2013, the death of Margaret Thatcher.

During these ten years the UK would see three Prime Ministers: Tony Blair, Gordon Brown and David Cameron; six Education Secretaries: Charles Clarke, Alan Johnson, Ruth Kelly, Ed Balls, Michael Gove and Nicky Morgan; and three Chief Inspectors: David Bell, Christine Gilbert and Sir Michael Wilshaw. Some educational initiatives, such as Every Child Matters, the London Challenge and School Sports Partnerships were to emerge and flourish under Labour only to disappear under the Coalition government formed after the 2010 General Election. Other Labour initiatives were to be embraced and developed by the new administration, notably the Academies programme, tuition fees for those in Higher Education, ever-tougher inspection and examination regimes, and the decision to raise what had, in an earlier age, been called the *school*

leaving age to 18. Themes, terms and titles to enter the educational lexicon during this period included Free Schools, Floor Targets (minimum levels of examination performance that students at all schools were expected to reach), System Leadership (the body of thinking that envisages an educational system that generates its own leadership without the need of support from external bodies such as national Quangos, university education departments or Local Authorities) and, at the end of the period, the Research Excellence Framework. Those to leave the lexicon included Connexions, the National Strategies and the Research Assessment Exercise. Ted Wragg, whose weekly column in the *Times Educational Supplement* had provided an incisive commentary on educational reform, the often-ignored lessons from research and teachers' resultant frustrations, passed away in 2005 at the age of 67. For many practitioners the former BERA President's voice had provided a powerful connection between academia and the classroom.

On a global level this period witnessed the death of Ronald Regan and Nelson Mandela, the Obama presidency, Angela Merkel's election as the first female Chancellor of Germany, civil war in Syria and the Arab Spring. This was also the era in which TVs went flat and e-mail and the web went mobile, with flat-screens, the smart-phone and the iPad beginning (or stepping-up) their relentless march towards home and workplace domination. The decade closed, as has been noted earlier, with a fiercely contested referendum on Scottish independence. Although Scotland remains a part of the UK, the referendum's campaign and its outcome has set in place a UK-wide devolution and constitutional reform programme that will impact as much on the world of education as on any other area of public policy.

Tony Blair won his third election as Labour leader in 2005 but Britain's role in the invasion of Iraq would cast a long shadow over the years that he was to remain in power and Blair stood aside in favour of his Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown, in June 2007. Although the longstanding enmity between Blair

and Brown is well recorded, it does not seem that their differences extended to education policy. Brown was the author of the Private Finance Initiative (PFI) that had facilitated much of Labour's investment in public service infrastructure projects, including the English *Building Schools for the Future* (BSF) programme that the Blair government launched immediately after its re-election in 2005, a national project with the aspiration of replacing the crumbling school estate inherited from the Conservatives, one which Michael Gove was to abandon immediately after the 2010 General Election.

During this period the former Department for Education and Skills (DfES) went through further reorganizations and rebranding exercises. In 2007, under Gordon Brown's premiership, it was split into two departments, the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), led by Ed Balls and responsible for schools and the wider children's agenda, and the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS), led by John Denham and responsible for colleges, universities and training, which in 2009 became the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS). The split may have provided two public budgets for education where there had been one but arguably it drove a cart and horse through New Labour's earlier aspirations for a society rich in lifelong learning, a project (to use a favoured New Labour term) that would seem to require an integrated education ministry to deliver it. In 2010, Michael Gove recast DCSF as the Department for Education (DfE), although the re-branded department retained responsibility for the broader child wellbeing remit that DCSF had taken on.

Perhaps, given these multiple rebrands of the department (or departments) responsible for educational provision, in England we should not be surprised that Ian Menter, in his 2013 BERA Presidential Address (BERA, 2013) should observe that:

**We are now having education branded. The obvious US example is No Child Left Behind. In Scotland we have Curriculum for Excellence. And in England we have had Sure Start and**

**Every Child Matters. And the current catchphrase is, of course, Closing the Gap. These are all phrases that you cannot argue with – they all aspire to improve education, especially for the most disadvantaged. And yet, they are all phrases – metaphors indeed – that have conceptual difficulties, if not flaws.**

During the election campaign, and in the run up to it, David Cameron had promised a “bonfire of the Quangos” and, within three months of the new government coming to power one hundred and six of these organizations had been abolished or had lost their status as Non-departmental Public Bodies (NDPBs). More were to do so subsequently. The Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency (QCDA), the British Educational, Communications and Technology Agency (BECTA), The General Teaching Council for England (GTCE) and Teachers TV were among the notable bodies to disappear from the educational landscape, while the School Food Trust was to lose its status as an NDPB. ‘Celebrity Chef’ Jamie Oliver may have put the quality of school dinners on the educational map, but that couldn't save the independent public body that had lead responsibility for this area.

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### **From Every Child Matters to Education for All: Building a school system for the future?**

Labour's final term was dominated by six major themes or events: the launch of the *Every Child Matters* agenda in England that emerged from the 2003 White Paper carrying that title, the publication of the Tomlinson Report in 2004 which followed a comprehensive review of 14–19 provision, the *Building Schools for the Future* (BSF) programme announced in 2005, the acceleration of the academies programme under Andrew (now Lord) Adonis, a further review of the National Curriculum in primary schools, initiated in 2008 and led by respected educationalist Sir Jim Rose (QCDA, 2010), and the embedding of the tuition fee culture for students in Higher Education.

In England, the renaming of what had been the Department for Education and Skills (DfE) as the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) in 2007 had reflected both the wider Every Child Matters agenda and the re-organisation of Children's Services in Local Authorities. The latter represented an attempt to 'join-up' child support and development across agency and service providers locally (including education, youth services, child wellbeing, social services and children's health), after poor inter-agency collaboration had been cited in a range of child abuse or neglect cases with tragic outcomes stretching back over a twenty year period.

Moreover, during Labour's third term, the Every Child Matters (ECM) agenda, enshrined in the Children's Act (2004), extended its influence across a range of areas of education policy nationally, regionally and locally, for instance, setting the parameters of the Ofsted framework at the time, creating the Office of the Children's Commissioner, and leading to the production of integrated local Children and Young People's Plans to be delivered locally. The subsequent publication of *Every Child Matters: Change for Children* (HM Government, 2004), a national strategy signed by no fewer than sixteen ministers across government underlined the holistic ambition of the ECM project, and this was reinforced by the publication of *The Children's Plan: Building Brighter Futures* (DCSF, 2007), which committed the government, now led by Gordon Brown with Ed Balls installed as Education Secretary, to eradicate child poverty by 2020, to reduce illiteracy and anti-social behaviour, and to make Britain "the best place in the world for our young people to grow up" (Gillard, 2011).

In the interim, the Every Child Matters theme exerted its influence on a range of related areas. Labour Education Secretaries had commissioned two reports from experienced head teacher Sir Alan Steer focused on managing behaviour, *Learning Behaviour* (DfES, 2005) and *Learning Behaviour: Lessons Learned* (DCSF, 2009), supported the strengthening of the Citizenship curriculum (DfES, 2007), created the *Early Years Foundation Stage* so as to

bring coherence to childcare and educational arrangements for children aged 1 to 5 (DCSF, 2008), supported the elevation of Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education to statutory status (DCSF, 2009b), and published statutory guidance on supporting the health and well-being of looked after children (DCSF, 2009c). While critics were still concerned that a curriculum driven by high-stakes testing and attainment targets did not provide the best environment in which to nurture the needs of every child (Ed Balls had withdrawn Standard Attainment Tests at 14 shortly after his appointment, the Welsh government had scrapped SATs at 11 and 14 in 2004, and a series of critics continued to question the testing culture throughout the period), ECM did provide a unifying theme for child-focused policy innovations during Labour's third term.

Educational research played a key part, both in developing the detail of the Every Child Matters agenda and in building the body of knowledge that sat behind it. For example, the *Effective Provision of Pre-School Education* (EPPE) project, which grew into the EPPSE project embracing primary and secondary education, was influential in inspiring or shaping various Labour education policies, especially those relating to Early Years provision, and established the case for high quality pre-school education, operationalized through initiatives such as Sure Start and the ECM framework.

If Every Child Matters had sought to bring coherence across government to children's policy, the Tomlinson Review of 14–19 Education, led by former Chief Inspector Mike Tomlinson and which reported in November 2004, arguably had an equally complex task, bringing coherence to an unwieldy 14–19 curriculum and qualifications structure in England. As the National Archives summary of the review puts it, Tomlinson sought to:

...Address issues within the 14–19 education system including: low post-16 participation and achievement, an over-burdensome curriculum and assessment system, a fragmented system of vocational qualifications, and con-

cerns regarding the extent to which students develop generic skills, knowledge, and personal attributes.

[www.nationalarchives.gov.uk](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk)  
National Archives, 2014

Tomlinson (DfES, 2004) was to propose an integrated qualifications framework that would see young people exit the 14–19 phase with a Diploma that would reflect their achievement across a range of academic, vocational and applied qualifications, accrediting their performance at four levels: Entry, Foundation, Intermediate and Advanced. Tomlinson conducted an extensive consultation exercise and was supported by an advisory group in which a number of leading educational researchers featured alongside other stakeholders, including teachers and employers. His final report argued that it was vital to adopt the Diploma framework across the full suite of academic, vocational and applied qualifications, and that to do otherwise would be to reinforce rather than challenge the very divide between academic and vocational learning with which Tomlinson and his colleagues had been concerned. Ruth Kelly, the Secretary of State at the time, and perhaps concerned about an up-coming General Election, was forced to respond to what some had erroneously (or mischievously) presented as the “end of A levels”. To the dismay of many established educationalists, Kelly rejected the ‘Diploma for All’ model and, in a new White Paper, *14–19 Education and Skills* (DfES, 2005), introduced a Diploma framework for vocational areas of study while promising to protect the “gold standard” of A level. Ed Balls, in his term as Education Secretary was to reverse Kelly’s decision and introduce a series of ‘academic’ Diplomas to run alongside their vocational counterparts, but the moment had passed. In 2010 Michael Gove, on assuming the helm at the traditionally renamed “Department for Education”, abolished the Diploma programme in all forms.

In their rejection of Tomlinson, Kelly and Gove had ignored an extensive literature on

14–19 provision and on vocational education in particular. For many, including a range of academics involved in the partly concurrent Nuffield Foundation Review of 14–19 Education and Training, a once in a generation opportunity to conclusively reframe 14–19 education, and to genuinely bridge the academic-vocational divide, had (again) been missed. The UK, and England in particular, was to continue with a series of curricular structures that accorded a higher status to traditional academic qualifications while offering a vocational ‘track’ to those students who had not performed, or who were thought unlikely to perform, in the academic sphere. In effect, the vocational sphere was something that ‘weaker’ students would ‘fall’ onto, rather than one ‘able’ students would choose. Against this background, two educational researchers long active in the 14–19 field, Anne Hodgson and Ken Spours, observed that:

**The (Kelly) White Paper is ... fundamentally elitist. It emphasises “stretch” and “acceleration” while neglecting inclusion.**

Hodgson and Spours, 2005; cited in Gillard, 2011

The Nuffield Foundation Review, which was led by Professor Richard Pring and had been established in October 2003, published its final report in 2009, *Education for all: the future of education and training for 14–19 year olds* (Pring et.al., 2009). Pring and his colleagues argued, as Tomlinson had, for an educational system based on an agreed national focus across the 14–19 continuum, and for a range of reforms that would produce a more integrated and comprehensive entitlement for all learners, such that every student was exposed to a broad and balanced curriculum and a holistic education that gave as much weight, for instance, to the arts and humanities as to the development of employability skills. Traditionally, the authors contended, too many students were offered one kind of curriculum in *preference* to the other on the basis of perceived ability, intended career destination or whatever else. *Education for All* is notable for posing questions that, in the rush to

reform, policymakers across BERA's forty years have too often failed to ask: 'what do we want the educated 19 year old (of any ability) to look like?' and 'what abilities, qualities and values do we want them to have?'

Announced by Tony Blair in 2004, *Building Schools for the Future* (BSF) represented another key strand in Labour's approach to education in England across this period, with BBC News describing it as "Labour's £55 billion plan to rebuild every secondary school in England" (BBC News, 2011). It married a long-held aspiration amongst Labour supporters to rebuild an ageing national secondary schools' estate with an approach less popular among those supporters – partnership with the private sector. Funded through the Private Finance Initiative, whereby private sector investors would build and maintain the new schools, BSF led to the re-construction or significant refurbishment of secondary schools in identified Local Authority areas. An equivalent programme, the *Primary Capital Programme*, launched in 2008 benefited primary schools.

The BSF initiative was criticized on three fronts: first, the process was expensive, bureaucratic and consultant-driven and failed to involve end-users – students, teachers and the community – sufficiently; second, through its basis on the PFI model, it was effectively mortgaging future provision and making school communities tenants in what traditionally have been their own buildings; third, the new schools had been designed on the same pedagogical template as their Victorian and post-war predecessors. In short, the buildings produced assumed models of learning and teaching that were anything but twenty-first century (Breslin, 2009). In any case, with 178 BSF projects completed and others still in construction, the abolition of the scheme was one of the first moves of the Coalition government's new Education Secretary: 715 BSF reconstruction or refurbishment schemes were scrapped and 123 new academy schemes were to be reviewed on a case-by-case basis; although some of the scrapped projects were later revived, Michael Gove had announced his arrival.

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### **The Gove Years: new curriculum; new freedoms and new constraints**

The 2010 General Election produced no definitive outcome but, after six days of negotiations, led to the formation of a Coalition Government involving the Conservatives – who had secured the most seats at the election – and the Liberal Democrats. Michael Gove, who like David Blunkett in 1997 had held the education brief in opposition, became Education Secretary, with Nick Gibb as Schools Minister, and Tim Loughton and Liberal Democrat Sarah Teather responsible for other policies relating to children and young people, such as adoption and youth services. Gove was to hold the post until summer 2014, when he was replaced by Nicky Morgan. News reports suggest that one of Morgan's first moves was to ban Gove's favoured title for the educational research community within the DfE offices; no longer were BERA members to sit at the heart of the "blob".

Gove set out his stall expansively in *The Importance of Teaching: The Schools White Paper 2010* (DfE, 2010). In an introduction signed by Prime Minister David Cameron and his Liberal Democrat Deputy, Nick Clegg, the new Education Secretary committed his government to "devolve as much power as possible to the front line", to boost the status of teachers and their "authority in the classroom", to "re-focus Ofsted inspections on their original purpose – teaching and learning". Gove also promised to extend the Academies programme initiated by Labour and to enable "teachers, parents and charities ... to open new ('Free') schools where there is a clear demand for something not offered at the moment", and to introduce a new "Pupil Premium", so as to ensure that children from poorer families do not "fail as a matter of course".

Prior to the election, Cameron and Gove had already given an indication of their curricular preferences. To the genuine surprise of many in education, David Cameron had singled out QCDA for abolition in a 2009 speech in which he promised a "bonfire of the Quangos";

Michael Gove confirmed its close-down within weeks of the formation of the new government. The agency had taken on QCA's curriculum development work when its predecessor organisation was split into two separate bodies – QCA and Ofqual – by Gordon Brown's government in 2008. In late 2009 and early 2010, QCDA began distributing a range of new National Curriculum materials to primary schools. The new curriculum was set to be introduced in September 2011 and had been informed by Sir Jim Rose's Independent Review of the Primary Curriculum (QCDA, 2009). Although Rose's initial remit had been a conservative one which some had seen as an attempt to undermine the near-contemporaneously published, more expansive and longer-running Cambridge Review being led by Robin Alexander and his colleagues (Gillard, 2011; Alexander, 2009), Rose had opted for a thematic curriculum model, which featured statutory Citizenship Education and Sex and Relationship Education at this level for the first time, moves that were widely welcomed by educational progressives.

However, the Children, Schools and Families Bill (2010), was stripped back in the legislative bartering that preceded the 2010 election and the new curriculum was lost in the Act that subsequently entered the statute book. This will have pleased Michael Gove who planned, and rapidly launched, his own review of the curriculum. Gove saw Rose's thematic learning as indicative of all that was wrong with progressive pedagogy. Although the new QCDA-free National Curriculum to arise from his officials' endeavours was not as 'slimmed down' as had been promised, it did focus on traditional subjects, subjects that he intended would be more traditionally taught in both the primary and secondary phases. Therefore, unsurprisingly, the new curriculum proposals were accompanied by initiatives that were, for instance, focused on the "development of teachers' subject Knowledge" (DfE-Mayor of London, 2013) and on the re-assertion of long-standing subject hierarchies, epitomized at secondary level by the establishment of the English Baccalaureate (DfE, 2010; DfE, 2014). That Alison Wolf's *Review of*

*Vocational Qualifications* (DfE, 2011), commissioned by Gove, was so critical of existing vocational provision must only have confirmed the latter's view that high quality academic study and traditional subject knowledge constituted *real* learning.

Ofqual, the so-called 'exam standards watchdog' for England was to play a vital role in Gove's reform of GCSE and A level examinations throughout his time as Education Secretary. Ofqual was in the firing line in 2014 after a restructuring of the GCSE English examination, with one *conservative* broadsheet running the headline "Schools in uproar as English grades drop" (Paton, 2014). It had earlier been a key player in the dispute about GCSE English grades in summer 2012, where it was claimed the regulator had "moved the goalposts" during the marking process, and it was to be the architect of one of Gove's key legacies: the GCSE and A level reforms set to be introduced from September 2015. At the time of going to press these promise the end of modularity, a return to linear examinations, the withdrawal – in all but a handful of subjects – of 'coursework', the curbing of re-sit opportunities, and a focus on "subject knowledge".

If the new curriculum and proposed qualification reforms stand as evidence of Gove's approach to content and pedagogy, his appointment of an experienced inner-city Academy head teacher, Sir Michael Wilshaw, in place of Christine Gilbert as Chief Inspector in January 2012 was taken as a signal of his approach to school inspection and to the state of schools standards as he saw them more broadly – 'tough love' might be one contentious description; "requires improvement" was the one settled for in the new Ofsted framework, and it was one in which the work of a prominent educational researcher and BERA member played a key role. Becky Francis' 2011 study *(Un)Satisfactory? Enhancing life chances by improving 'satisfactory' schools* (Francis, 2011), conducted at the RSA in partnership with Ofsted, led to a report and set of recommendations that underpinned the decision to change the inspectorate's designation of the category

'Satisfactory' to 'Requires Improvement'. On the report's publication, Becky Francis was invited to a roundtable session at Downing Street on "Coasting Schools" chaired by Prime Minister David Cameron (and addressed by Sir Michael Wilshaw), to a meeting with Cameron's advisor at No 10 to discuss the research, and to a second roundtable on "School Reforms", chaired by Michael Gove. The revised Ofsted framework introduced in schools in September 2012, reflected the thinking that Francis' endeavours had stimulated and replaced the designation "Satisfactory" with "Requires Improvement". The journey from initial research to policy implementation is often a long one; Francis' findings went from research conclusions to policy implementation inside twelve months.

The Academies Act 2010 opened up a third front in Michael Gove's project to recalibrate the education system in England, one built on by the subsequent Education Act 2011. These Acts may have had their ancestry in the introduction of the Local Management of Schools (LMS), City Technology College (CTC) and Grant Maintained Status (GMS) initiatives of the Baker era a generation before but they are seen more directly as a child of the Labour Academies programme conceived, and subsequently led, by Andrew Adonis. Labour had given an indication of the increased role that it envisaged for Academies in the Adonis-inspired *Five Year Plan for Children and Learners* (DfES, 2004b), sounding according to *The Guardian*, "the death-knell of the comprehensive system" (Gillard, 2011), but it retained for Academies a particular purpose: addressing low attainment in areas of high deprivation. Thus, Labour's Academies continued to be established either as new schools in areas of acute educational disadvantage or as successors to schools, usually in such areas, that had been deemed to have failed, either by Ofsted or through persistently poor performance in their students' examination performance. The impact of 'academisation' on such performance, at least in the early years was, at best, questionable. As early as 2004, performance tables had revealed low levels of attainment in the seventeen Academies

established at that point, forcing the Education Secretary at the time, Charles Clarke, to concede that the initiative was expensive and untested. Indeed, the Education and Skills Select Committee was sufficiently concerned by the lack of evidence about impact to urge that the projected £5 billion budget for setting up 200 (further) academies be withheld until they were proved to be cost-effective (*The Guardian* 17 March 2005, cited in Gillard, 2011). More cuttingly for the educational research community, as Geoff Whitty notes in his 2005 BERA Presidential Address, the committee observed that:

**Despite the government's proclaimed attachment to evidence-based policy, expensive schemes seem to be rolled out before being adequately tested and evaluated compared to other less expensive alternatives.**

*Education and Skills Select Committee, 2005, in Whitty, 2005*

None of this curbed the Labour leadership's commitment to the Academies model, as the 2005 White Paper, *Higher Standards: Better Schools for All* (DfES, 2005c) and the subsequent Education and Inspections Act 2007 made clear. Nor did it curb the enthusiasm of the incoming Coalition government enthusiasm for the concept, even if many in Labour's ranks were, at least by now, concerned about mass-academisation. In effect, the Coalition government's 2010 and 2011 Acts turned the Academies concept from a niche intervention in areas of educational disadvantage into a driver for changing practice, system-wide. Now, any successful school that wanted to become an Academy could do so, subject to entering the relevant process; further, these successful 'converts' were not required to use the arguably tainted *academy* term in their title. "Any Town Girls' Grammar School" could now enjoy all the freedoms of Academy status – from the Local Authority, from the National Curriculum, from national staffing agreements – while retaining its brand-leading identity amongst local parents.



Meanwhile, the 2010 Act enabled the DfE to ‘force’ schools that were persistently under performing or judged as failing by Ofsted to become Academies; whatever the route, as BERA reaches its 40th anniversary it does so with over half of English secondary schools, and a growing number of primary schools, now holding Academy status, whether or not the sign at the gate declares this.

And, of course, there was another route to ‘freedom’: the Free School, first announced by Michael Gove in 2008. These were to be schools essentially developed on the Academy model but initiated by parents, teachers or others. In September 2014 there were just under 300 Free Schools in England, a relatively small proportion of the 24,372 schools in the country but their totemic importance to what might be called the ‘Gove Project’ should not be understated. Moreover, taken together, as groups such as the Anti-Academies Alliance and the Local Schools Network have argued, the emergence of Free Schools and Academies poses real questions about the role of Local Authorities and their ability and capacity to provide advisory or other support services to the diminishing number of schools that remain in their ‘control’, about the interplay between democratic control and local educational provision, about the coherence of provision within local areas, about the potential for inter-school collaboration when different schools belong to different Academy chains or none, and about the implications for governance in a much more fragmented system.

For many, these concerns crystallised in the so-called “Trojan Horse” affair, involving the alleged ‘take-over’ of the governing bodies of a group of secular state schools in Birmingham by those with a specific religious agenda, that came to light towards the close of this period. For others, apparently including Sir Michael Wilshaw, the freedom from inspection afforded to Academy chains, one denied to Local Authorities, is seen as a further sign that key arbiters in the new educational landscape are not open to the levels of scrutiny that are otherwise viewed as normal and necessary in the system.

Michael Gove’s term as Education Secretary came to an abrupt end in David Cameron’s Cabinet reshuffle of summer 2014 but his reforms will continue to attract interest from educational researchers. For instance, his focus on the importance of teachers’ subject knowledge and traditional teaching methods had called into question the role and value of teaching assistants. In this, he was able to draw on evidence collated by a team led by Peter Blatchford (Blatchford et.al. 2009). In the DCSF supported *Deployment and Impact of Support Staff (DISS)* project, Blatchford and his colleagues assessed the impact of the huge expansion in the use of support staff in schools in England and Wales since 2005 under Labour’s “workforce remodeling” initiative. They did so by studying 153 schools, surveying 20,000 teachers and analysing the help received by more than 8,000 pupils in both 2005–6 and 2007–8. Their research called into question prevailing wisdom about the value of such support and suggested the need for a rethink on the deployment and engagement of such staff. As such, the study opened up a critical narrative about the use of teaching assistants that still resonates, one on which Gove and his advisers, usually so critical of the “blob”, were able to draw.

Several of the changes outlined here – especially those relating to the curriculum, to the tightening of the inspection framework and to the further freeing of the schooling system from Local Authority influence – might have been expected from a Conservative-led government; One arguably was not. It is to the Pupil Premium that we now turn.

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### **The Pupil Premium and the extension of Free School Meals: a more *liberal* influence?**

If there is one persistent debate that has sat unresolved at the heart of educational research, policy and practice throughout BERA’s 40 years, it is the respective influences of “the home and the school”, as Douglas put it fifty years ago in the title of his landmark study on educational outcomes (Douglas, 1964).

The data would seem clear enough: children from poorer backgrounds underachieve by comparison with their middle class peers, a factor that has proved resilient to a range of policy interventions. Policymakers have long been concerned though that, for practitioners, this can become an excuse for low expectations, that what might be termed the “excuse of poverty” lets practitioners off the hook for the persistent underachievement of disadvantaged students, not least those from minority ethnic backgrounds.

A feature of the Liberal Democrat's election manifesto in 2010, the Pupil Premium was introduced in England in September 2011 by the Coalition government to ensure that pupils and students from poorer backgrounds flourish in exactly the same way as their more privileged peers. By September 2014 the Pupil Premium had risen to £1,300 per primary school pupil and £935 per secondary school student. Politically and sociologically it is interesting because it implicitly acknowledges that, as educational researchers have long argued, poverty *does* impact on educational outcomes. Critically, schools are expected to demonstrate how Pupil Premium funding has been used and the inspectorate has been tasked with identifying how successful schools have been in “closing the gap”.

The extension of Free School Meals to all English primary school children up to the age of seven in September 2014 also resulted directly from Liberal Democrat influence within the Coalition. Although criticized from various standpoints – not least that it offers an unnecessary subsidy to middle class families who already fund their children's meals – proponents of the policy argue that poorer children, especially those not quite eligible for or reluctant to claim, Free School Meals under previous arrangements, will be its greatest beneficiaries. Either way, one can expect both of these Liberal (and arguably more ‘liberal’) contributions to education policy to be the cause of educational researchers' investigations at the start of BERA's fifth decade; it may be that the outcomes of these endeavours will take

us closer to understanding the precise interplay between in-school and out-of-school factors in helping to frame, and sometimes constrain, educational opportunity.

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### **Completing the marketisation of HE and cutting the EMA, while *widening access***

If the Academies programme was one New Labour initiative that the Conservatives had embraced and developed, a second was the marketisation of Higher Education. Indeed, shortly after the election of the Coalition government, a former New Labour Cabinet Minister, Alan Milburn, was appointed as the new administration's “Mobility Czar”, precisely to address social mobility and, in particular, the participation of students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Whatever the exemptions that the various ‘fees’ frameworks introduced during this period for poorer students, Milburn was aware that the ‘noise’ created by the reforms risked ‘scaring off’ precisely those learners that were already under-represented in Higher Education (Milburn, 2009).

And changes to the fees frameworks and the associated student loan arrangements there were. The Higher Education Act (2004) had permitted universities to charge “top-up” fees of up to £3,000 per annum while removing the need for students to pay for their studies up front, replacing this burden with the offer of a loan, to be repaid once their post graduation earnings had crossed a certain threshold. It scraped through its first reading with a majority of five and a large Labour rebellion. In due course, following the report of the Labour government commissioned Browne Review (Browne, 2010), the Coalition government outlined its arrangements to raise fees to £9,000, leading to widespread student protests. Prior to the election, Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg had committed the Liberal Democrats to abolishing tuition fees, attracting student support during the campaign, and significant ridicule thereafter. In the interim Labour had steered the Sale of Student Loans

Act (2008) through Parliament, enabling the government to sell its growing student loan portfolio to the private sector. Labour had tempered the initial moves towards a loans and fees based system with the introduction of the Educational Maintenance Allowance for 16–19 year olds, but one of Coalition government's early moves was to remove the EMA in England, as it pursued efforts to reign in public spending and “cut the deficit”.

For educational researchers these developments, allied to the large expansion in the number of young people who had entered Higher Education since the 1980s, provided a fertile and important ground for investigation, and their endeavours have had policy impact. For example, work led by Sonia Jackson on young people progressing to university from backgrounds in the care system (Jackson et.al. 2005) identified the very particular challenges facing young people who go, or seek to go, to university after growing up in care. Jackson's study, *Going to University from Care*, triggered the introduction of a £2,000 bursary for care-leavers and encouraged many UK universities and local authorities to improve the support that they offer care leavers. ‘*Strangers in Paradise*’? *Working class students in elite universities*, a study led by Diane Reay focuses on the way in which students from working class backgrounds negotiate their way through the unfamiliar culture of elite universities, displaying “dispositions of self-scrutiny and self-improvement” and engaging in “an almost constant fashioning and re-fashioning of the self”, while retaining “key valued aspects” of working-class identity. As such, Reay's work offers a range of lessons for all of those involved in the so-called ‘widening participation’ agenda.

“research and teacher education”, chaired by John Furlong, who had served as BERA President in 2003–4. The resultant report, *Research and the Teaching Profession: Building the capacity for a self-improving education system* was published in March 2014 (BERA-RSA, 2014). Spanning early years, primary, secondary and further education and taking a UK-wide perspective, it makes the argument for a *research literate* profession, *research rich* teaching environments, and a stronger partnership between teacher-researchers and the wider research community based, for instance, in university schools of education.

The policy story narrated in these pages suggests that educational reform and teachers' practice might have benefitted had such a culture been established at an earlier point in the UK's educational history, or in those places where it had existed, had it been better nurtured during forty years of predominantly top-down reform. Playing a central part in the building of such a culture – across the four increasingly distinctive education systems within the UK and across all phases – might be an appropriate role for BERA as it enters its fifth decade and heads for its fiftieth anniversary.

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### **Looking forward: the teacher as researcher and the school as a research community**

As part of its 40th Anniversary celebrations BERA commissioned, in partnership with the Royal Society for the Arts (RSA), a new investigation into the relationship between

# About the authors

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Between September 2001 and August 2010, Tony was Chief Executive at the Citizenship Foundation, the leading education and participation charity. Prior to this, he was General Adviser, 14–19 Education, in Enfield, North London, where he led on vocational education and cross-borough sixth form arrangements, and produced the council's first lifelong learning strategy. A teacher by profession, he has taught and held management and leadership roles, including Head of Department and Director of Sixth Form Studies, at schools in Haringey and Hertfordshire.

Tony has published and spoken widely in the UK and overseas on education, participation, poverty and inclusion, and is credited, in particular, with the development of the concept of the citizenship-rich school. He is the co-editor, with Barry Dufour, of *Developing Citizens*, published by Hodder Education (2006) and co-author (with Ian Davies and a team based at the University of York) of *Creating Citizenship Communities: education, young people and the role of schools*, published by Palgrave Macmillan (2014).

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Mike was, for many years, a Vice-president of the Association for the Teaching of the Social Sciences (ATSS) and runs a consultancy that stages conferences for teachers of Sociology and Politics. For many years he organised the ATSS Annual Conference and has served as the warden of a Teachers' Centre.

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**Breslin Public Policy Limited** was established in September 2010; focused on education, participation and the third sector, it works at the interface between public policy and professional practice. Current and recent clients include Adoption UK, Beyond Philanthropy, the Bridge Group, the British Educational Research Association, the British Olympic Foundation, the British Paralympic Association, Cambridge University Press, Character Scotland, CCE England, the Diana Award, East Sussex County Council, Keynote Educational, the London Organising Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games (LOCOG), Marriotts School Stevenage, Navigation Learning, Oasis Academy Enfield, the Office of the Children's Commissioner, Ofqual, the Orwell Youth Prize, the RSA, Stevenage Sixth, the University of York Department of Education, and vInspired.

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