THE FEPG REVIEW

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EDITORIAL:

A Happy New Year and welcome everyone to our very first FEPG Review.

The FEPG Review will provide a forum for our guest speakers, and FEPG members to write longer articles than our established blog on key topics and submit reviews of educational books. The Review is closely integrated into the work of FEPG. So, we are exploring all phases and aspects of education; we are publishing material from well established, key high profile figures, as well as being open to the voices of all those (within and beyond the UK) who have things to say that are relevant to a Labour government and Labour party. We are interested in exploring matters raised by researchers, policy makers, teachers, lecturers, community activists, parents/carers, students and learners of all ages and interests.

In this edition we start with our bi-annual newsletter which details all our many activities from July to December of 2024.This keeps all FEPG members updated about our: activities, speakers, zoom meetings, blog, social media and face to face events over the previous six months

The articles we are publishing in our first edition are varied and excellent. We are proud that we start in our first edition with former Secretary of the Department of Education ,Sir David Bell exploring four decades of education: the good, the bad, the ugly. Then Headteacher and National Leader in Education, Jonathan Cooper, explains Brighton and Hove's innovative progressive environment and sustainability curriculum 'Our City, Our World.' Brian Hudson and Deborah Outhwaite address the crisis in teacher education and we present our recent report on our Aims and Values of the Curriculum House of Commons seminar.

We are delighted, too, to include four book reviews in this edition: Tony Breslin's review of About our schools by Tim Brighouse and Mick Waters; Mark Evans' review of Social Justice Education in Canada by Ali Abdi; Edda Sant's review of A theory of refusal by Bonnie Honig and Ian Davies' review of Jon Cruddas' A century of Labour.

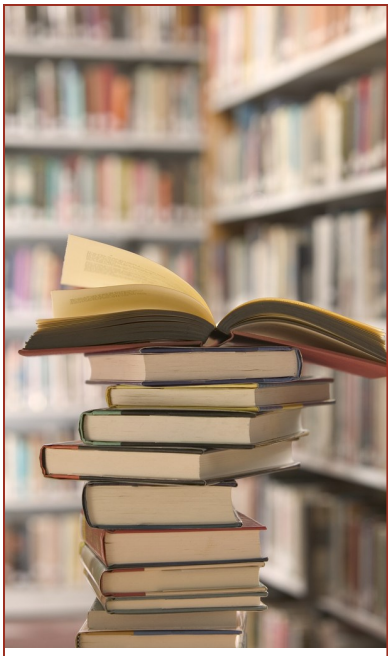
These reviews reflect our interests in education for all within and beyond the UK and help us to think more clearly about and become better at creating, through education, a fairer, more inclusive diverse society.

We hope you enjoy our first edition of the Fabian Education Policy Group Review.

Chris Harris, Editor

IN THIS EDITION:

- Our seminar on the Curriculum at the House of Commons with Mick Waters.
- Inspiring Keynote speakers at our monthly Zoom Meetings
- Articles by: Sir David Bell, David Cooper, and Brian Hudson and Deb Outhwaite.
- Reviews by: Tony Breslin, Mark Evans,Edda Sant and Ian Davies.



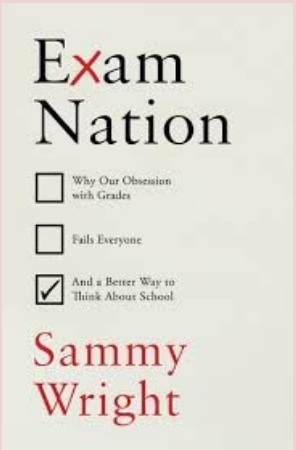
FEPG NEWSLETTER JULY-DECEMBER

Welcome colleagues old and new to this New Year 2025 Fabian Education Policy Group newsletter. This edition gathers news and notices that we are sure you will find interesting and useful.

As well as our round up of recent activities, the 'dates for your diary' and highlights section gives a flavour of exciting events that are coming up in the remainder of 2025
This newsletter also contains our regular reminders about how you can share your ideas- whether it's writing a short essay or a blog piece or producing something longer for our new Fabian Education Policy Group Review publication. We really do want to hear from you and can provide a platform for your work.

Here's hoping you had a great Christmas and Happy New Year!

Exam Nation– Sammy Wright



THE ROUND-UP OVER THE LAST SIX MONTHS

We held Zoom meetings in September, October and December.

In **September Sammy Wright** spoke about his recent book 'Exam Nation Why our obsession with grades fails everyone-and a better way to think about school' Sammy explained he had taught for 23 years in London and Sunderland. He has served on the Government's Social Mobility commission and dealt with government at a ministerial level.

Sammy visited schools across the country and talked at length with pupils and parents with unexpected results, from which the book emerged. It is clear that it is necessary to find a new language to discuss education. Pupils were asked 'What is school for?' and a typical reply was 'to get a job. If you do well at school it leads to success' Very few students spoke about the intrinsic values, happiness or enjoyment.

An excellent discussion ensued with colleagues particularly reflecting the dearth of Arts subjects available for students to choose, assessment models and school systems being perhaps a product of the society they exist in, and points regarding the importance of schools being close to the communities they serve.

After Sammy's input we discussed the upcoming Curriculum and Assessment Review and the format of our meetings going forward.

Educational reform– the good, the bad, the ugly– Sir David Bell

In October Sir David Bell Vice chancellor and chief executive of the University of Sunderland joined us for a talk entitled 'The Good the Bad the Ugly' of the last forty years of education policy history.

He reflected first on the 'ugly' and referenced over selection and section 28 the law passed in 1988 by a conservative government that stopped councils and schools 'promoting the teaching of the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship.

Sir David referenced a series of overcentralized and overprescriptive policies that led to a greater focus on processes in schools rather than outcomes.

Within the 'good' Sir David mentioned the creation of the National Curriculum, greater accountability and institutional autonomy.

Sir David's full analysis appears in his article later in this review.

NEU's Manifesto for Education– Daniel Kebede

In **December** Daniel Kebede ,NEU General Secretary addressed us. Daniel explained Education is in crisis and cannot continue with historic underfunding that harms the whole of our society. There is now the chance to change this and make education a priority with the election of a Labour government. It has already shown a will to change: e.g. a 5% pay award and abolition of OFSTED one-word judgments. Polls show that 75% of the public agree that education should be a top priority. The most vulnerable are suffering most e.g. there is a huge shortage of educational psychologists. One in four teachers leave within three years of entering the profession. Daniel explored other areas of urgent need and discussion with members ensued.

FEPG's Meetings scheduled for 2025

Monday 27th January with **Melissa Benn**

Monday 24th February: **Richard Pountney and Andy Sprakes**– The Power of Activism in the curriculum.

Monday March 31st: **Ian Davies** Re-energising Political Education.

Monday April 28th: Curriculum Review feedback with guest.

Monday May 19th: **Graham Donaldson–** The improvement Trap.

Monday 23rd June: **Deborah Outhwaite-** Sustainability and climate action plans in schools.

Monday 29th September**: Mary Bousted-**The Teaching Commission.

Monday 27th October**: Stephen Gorard** - Addressing disadvantage at school: evidence from a range of studies

Monday 24th November: **Marilyn Leask** –The Mapping Educational Specialist knowHow (MESH) initiative; its origins under Labour and the emerging use of AI to create research summaries for teachers.

House of Commons seminar:

Tuesday 11th November.

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PICTURES FROM THIS YEAR'S LABOUR CONFERENCE

SOCIAL MEDIA AND PROMOTION

We continue to post promotional material for our Seminars and zoom meetings on X. However like many progressive groups we are mindful of the way this social media company is promoting values that are at odds with our core principles.

We have therefore set up a Bluesky social media account where we are migrating posts apart from essential information. Our handles are detailed on the back page of the review.

WEBSITE

Our website continues to have good analytics and updated content. Please log onto the members' area with your email for recent minutes, policy documents and other key responses. Home | Fabian Education Pol

LABOUR PARTY CONFERENCE

Three FEPG colleagues attended this year's Labour Conference in Liverpool in September. It was the first one since the election victory in June of course and despite some early pitfalls and political squalls the mood was upbeat and enthusiastic.

Between us we attended the main conference programme, the exhibition, events on the fringe (including a seminar with Bridget Phillipson and Inclusion charity Mission 44 and the Fabian programme in St Albert's Dock.)

The weather was cold! But the company was warm and friendly. Pictures from the conference appear to the left (sic).

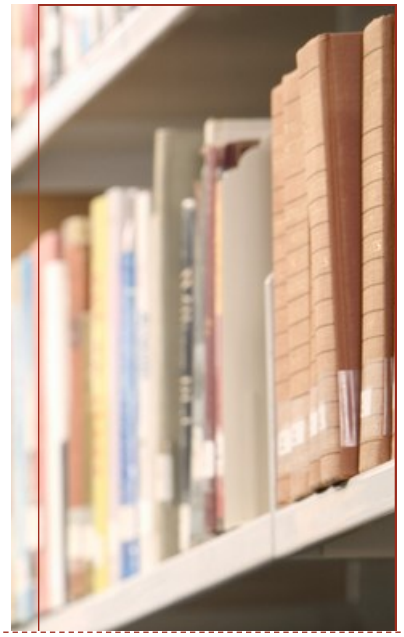
OUR BLOGSITE

Our blogsite created in 2018 continues to have excellent content thanks to the contribution of our members.

Recent posts include: *Addressing the crisis in the professional education and development of teachers in England*: Brian Hudson and Deborah Outhwaite Addressing the crisis in the professional education and development of teachers in England: Brian Hudson and Deborah Outhwaite. – Fabians Education Policy Group UK and *Making our schools inclu*sive: Mel Ainscow, April, 2024. Making our schools inclusive: Mel Ainscow, April, 2024 – Fabians Education Policy Group UK

You can access our blogsite from our website. Fabians Education Policy Group UK

Please send blogs on educational topics to the FEPG editorial team.



CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT REVIEW

FEPG Curriculum working group leader Professor Brian Hudson and colleagues responded to the call for evidence in relation to the recent government review of the existing national curriculum and statutory assessment system in England. This to ensure they are fit for purpose and meeting the needs of children and young people.

The team produced a very detailed, carefully argued and reasoned response that convincingly explains the fact that the language currently used to describe the English National Curriculum is too narrowly focused on knowledge. By contrast, learning is about the acquisition of knowledge, skills and understanding. The NC should be an enabler of learning in this wider interpretation including opportunities to embed critical thinking skills

The full submission from FEPG can be found on the Members area of our website.Curriculum and assessment consultation | Fabian Education Pol

There was a lovely feeling to the seminar which was lively and positive

HOUSE OF COMMONS SEMINAR

Organising Committee: Marilyn Leask, Chris Harris; Brian Hudson (Chair for the meeting); Brian Matthews. The meeting was hosted by Catherine Atkinson MP

In attendance: joining in the discussion and making written comments were about 80 people.

There was a lovely feeling to the meeting which was lively and positive. There was a buzz in the room where it was evident participants were engaged and thinking about the issues. The structure of the session was for brief talks by the panel, followed by time of the participants to discuss their ideas and to write in comments for the final report. This structure was very popular with the participants.

Key points from speakers and the floor: The speakers and contributions from the floor addressed the question from a wide variety of perspectives. There was, however, considerable agreement although the terminology varied.

1) The present National Curriculum of England is content-led with an emphasises on discrete subjects. Along with norm-based assessment it was leading to a significant proportion of pupil feeling an increased anxiety and fear of failure.

2) It is important that the National Curriculum has a clear set of aims. Ultimately, we need a curriculum that engenders and develops democracy and compassion. Recognise all aptitudes and abilities. Assessment should be in line with the aims and be more criterion referenced.

An initial report of this event can be read later in this edition and on our website Curriculum and assessment consultation | Fabian Education Pol

Left to right– Professor Sarah Younie, Dr Tony Breslin, Professor Brian Hudson, Professor Mick Waters, Brian Matthews, Valerie Bossman Quarshie

FOUR DECADES OF EDUCATION REFORM; THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UGLY.

DAVID BELL

VICE-CHANCELLOR AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE, UNIVERSITY OF SUNDERLAND

(d.r.bell@sunderland.ac.uk)

ABSTRACT

In 'The Good, Bad and the Ugly', the author reviews the past four decades of educational reform and seeks to identify the best and worst of policy change. He suggests that 'doing' good policy is difficult given the size and scale of the education system but highlights overarching themes that he argues have shaped education for the better.

The author discusses the tension between more devolution to individual institutions and the desire for greater control centrally. He suggests that both are legitimate and that creating good policy is an iterative process that needs to draw more upon 'front-line' perspectives.

The four decades from the mid-1980s to the present day are a useful frame of reference when thinking about education reform. But there could be good reason to go back even further given that last year marked the 80th anniversary of RA – 'RAB' – Butler's famous 1944 Education Act.

Indeed, when I was Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools in 2004, I marked the 60th anniversary of the Butler Act by visiting the RA Butler Junior School in Saffron Walden with the then local MP and Deputy Speaker of the House of Commons, Sir Alan Hazlehurst. Butler was the MP for the constituency between 1929 and 1965 and his present-day successor is the current Leader of the Opposition.

The period between the 1940s and the mid-1980s can too easily be characterised – or mischaracterised – as a time of stability and little change. It probably didn't feel like that in the 1960s with the expansion of higher education on the back of the Robbins report, or the roll-out of comprehensivisation, or the now largely forgotten Plowden report which reshaped primary education (and both 'Plowden' and comprehensive schools were to provoke the ire of educational 'traditionalists' for years to follow).

The 1970s saw more attention paid to the role of education in underpinning economic development and the beginnings of a backlash against the direction of the previous decade, with the so-called 'Great Debate' initiated by then Prime Minister, James Callaghan in his Ruskin College speech of 1975. That, in turn, had been partly fuelled by controversies such as those that surrounded the progressive William Tynedale Junior School in London.

But the 1980s began an era which continues through today of almost constant national policy making that directly impinges on the day-to-day life of virtually every educational institution in the country. Now that, in itself, might be good, bad, or ugly but it is a fact of life.

It is one though that is tinged with great irony in that it began under Margaret Thatcher and, arguably, reached its apotheosis under Michael Gove with a blizzard of changes that had a profound effect on the education system, many of which are still being felt today. So much for 'small state' Conservativism.

At a personal level, I came of age professionally in the mid-1980s, moving to work in England in 1985 and have been here ever since in a wide variety of roles locally and nationally. The constant has been 'reform' which, in this context, I take to mean the legitimate and well-intentioned desire to improve the education system to ensure that more students achieve well and succeed, and that standards, however measured, remain high against international benchmarks.

So, what of the 'Good, the Bad and the Ugly'? As an eternal optimist, I am going to do them in reverse offer so that I can end on an optimistic(ish) note.

That means beginning with the 'Ugly'? Without being naïve, I think we have largely avoided the ugliest features of other systems, whether extreme segregation, over-selection, or the more recent phenomenon of bringing the culture wars to education (despite some Ministers in the latter years of the last Conservative government doing their best to stoke them).

Depending on your point of view, some of what I characterise below as 'bad', may be thought of as 'ugly', given the visceral response – particularly on the Left – that many education policies from recent decades have provoked.

I would prefer to remain more measured and reserve 'ugly' for any policies that had – either by design or by accident – highly deleterious impacts, educationally, economically, or socially.

The one ugly 'stand-out' is Section 28 which effectively banned teachers from discussing same-sex relationships in schools. Even in retrospect, that was a gratuitous piece of legislation which came from a place of deep prejudice and, unsurprisingly, few would seek to defend it now. So, I would argue little if anything else, from the past four decades would fall into my albeit narrowly defined category of 'ugly' policy.

As for 'bad' changes/reforms, my hit-list would include, in no particular order:

- the neutering of the local authority role in education with no serious thinking ever being done about the requirements for, and shape of, an intermediate tier between central government and individual institutions – a failure of every government since the late 1980s and one which has left our schooling system in a fragmented state today;
- Individual Learning Accounts (finally abolished in the early 2000s after massive fraud emerged);
- the abolition of education maintenance grants (an early act of the Coalition government);
- the creation of a children's database (correctly, in my view, abolished by the Conservatives);
- the abolition of Building Schools for the Future in 2010 (yes, needed reforming but the overall effects of abolition are still being felt today with an education estate in disrepair); and
- the 'How many of your pupils go onto study at Russell Group universities?' metric for secondary schools (finally disappearing it seems)

plus a myriad of tiny 'policies', most of which went through a cycle of 'announced, reannounced, renounced'. They include Chess in Schools, Troops to Teachers (announced at least four times), and hostels for pregnant teenagers, although I don't think that one ever progressed beyond the Labour Party conference at which it was announced.

However, there has been an overarching approach in recent decades that I am not sure has served us well, and it has been a pervasive theme across governments. It is what I would call the Ghandian approach to education reform – 'A small body of determined spirits fired by an unquenchable faith in their mission can alter the course of history'. We saw it in the late 1980s, again after 1997 and again,

, in spades, after 2010.

I agree that you need determined politicians and others to initiate change, and it is no surprise that some of the most profound educational change is associated with individual Secretaries of State such as Baker, Blunkett, and Gove.

However, that has led to excessive centralisation, even if the policy intent was ostensibly the opposite. It also can lead to a breakdown in trust and is fundamentally unsustainable if the change imperative is confined to the 'small body of determined spirits'.

In turn, it raises a fundamental conundrum at the heart of successive governments' education policy; are teachers the problem or are they the solution?

My sense is that when in opposition, politicians talk up the autonomy of teachers and the need for professionals to have greater say in day-to-day decision making in classrooms and schools. But when the same politicians come to power, they exhibit – often quite rapidly – a frustration that change is not happening quickly enough, and they attribute that to the recalcitrance of the profession. Sometimes that is true but other times it is simply that the pace of change at the school level can feel bewildering and overwhelming, coupled with a sense that governments fail to appreciate that announcement isn't implementation.

Now, the 'determined spirits' might counter that political will can, too easily, be sabotaged by professional vested interests and what can begin as unpopular can then become embedded and accepted. But I wonder if we could have saved ourselves an awful lot of time, effort, and money if we didn't begin reform with the assumption – sometimes implied, sometimes explicit – that Whitehall must be right?

Over-centralisation often leads to over-prescription – think of the original iteration of the National Curriculum – and an over-concentration on process rather than outcomes – think the emphasis on phonics in early reading. I actually think, in broad terms, a national curriculum and an emphasis on phonics *are* correct but, in both cases, it took a while for the views of informed front-line professionals to moderate national prescription.

– While 'delivery' in the Blairite sense seemed, for a while, to be unfashionable (although it looks as if it might be making a return in the Starmer government under the ever-present Michael Barber), it did moderate some of the early centralising – over-centralising? – tendencies of the 1997 Labour government.

There was an attempt to think through how a national policy imperative was going to be translated locally in a way that built in ground-up feedback to inform further iterations of policy. At its best, it helped to bring about a substantial reduction in teenage pregnancies and had a profound impact on the capital's schools under the London Challenge initiative, led by Tim Brighouse – more of whom below.

Interestingly, and quite openly, Michael Gove eschewed any interest in – to use that ghastly jargon – 'delivery chains' preferring, as the rhetoric had it, to 'let schools decide'. Of course, that led to the irony of greater centralisation as more and more decisions for so-called autonomous schools were made in Whitehall.

It might be too grand to think that this was because the Gove approach lacked a 'theory of change', but I think that had quite a lot to do with it. Perhaps there is an interesting test here for the new government when it comes to education reform.

So, what about the good? Interestingly, these can be characterised as themes which have reflected wider societal changes – such as consumer choice, access to better information and wider equality and inclusion concerns. They have also proved durable across governments of different parties and, in time, have embedded themselves in the professional and public consciousness.
First, a recognition that early education and childcare providers, schools, colleges, universities, and the like are not – to quote a phrase from the 1970s – a 'secret garden' and the preserve exclusively of the professionals.

Hence, my support – from the outset – for a national curriculum and, later, more systematic approaches to learning and teaching through national strategies in areas such as literacy and numeracy – with an attempt to capture 'what works' through the Education Endowment Foundation .

Second, and related, greater accountability through the use of a wide range of data and external inspection to evaluate performance and provide information to parents and taxpayers.

***Third*,** decision making moving closer to the front-line, with much greater emphasis on institutional autonomy and local decision making, as evidenced in policies as diverse as local management of schools in the 1980s, the incorporation of further education colleges in the 1990s, and greater diversity in school type and governance in the 2000s.

Fourth, early years education and childcare becoming a serious policy concern, with successive governments devoting significant time and attention to the area.

Fifth, a continuing belief that – to quote a phrase – every child matters. While 'ECM' might have largely disappeared as a term of art, the impulse strongly remains (and, indeed, I always thought that it was one of Michael Gove's animating principles, even if he eschewed the terminology).

There is, of course, a category of reforms where we have never quite cracked the problem or fully addressed the issue, despite our best efforts. We can argue how much that has been due to poor policy or a lack of political will, but think post-16 education for those that choose not to follow the 'traditional' A-levels' route and the related point of how good the education system has been in meeting national skills' needs (not as good as it might have been, if the new government's focus on this issue is anything to go by).

I would also highlight special educational needs in schools which has not been short of policy attention and, indeed, has also benefited from liberal and far-sighted reforms. Yet, in the eyes of many, it seems like a looming catastrophe and one of the most significant 'in the moment' issues that the new government will be addressing.

Another example is social mobility and what we know about what drives and impedes it. While we have not achieved all that we might have wanted, it is now mainstream thinking in English education and underpins policy development from early years to higher education – and in my own bailiwick of higher education, I still think that the mass expansion has been one of the most positive, if relatively understated and underappreciated, social changes in British society over the past four to six decades.

It is easy, of course, to point to some of the deleterious effects of the policy approaches that I have lauded here. The more negative effects of accountability systems and parental and student choice come to mind, as does the intent of greater devolution being subsumed by the political desire for centrally-directed change.

And, of course, there is always the law of unintended consequences as we saw in primary schools when the rest of the curriculum appeared to have been crowded out when the literacy and numeracy strategies took hold – a similar criticism made of the EBacc measure in secondary schools introduced during the Coalition years.

I suspect the truth about the good, bad and the ugly is more prosaic in that no approach or policy is all good, or all bad or even all ugly. Good policy is hard to craft when dealing with hundreds or thousands of institutions, tens of thousands of educators and millions of pupils and students.

So are we doomed to the Goldilocks approach on policy – it will neither be too good or too bad, and if we are lucky, we might just avoid it being downright ugly? Possibly – probably – but it doesn't mean we should simply give up on educational change and its capacity to be a force for good. And even ideas that might appear to have lost favour can be reenergised in the light of a second look – in the best Fabian gradualist and reformist tradition.

I made precisely that point in a book of recently published essays on Tim Brighouse, one of the finest educationalists of the late 20th and early 21st centuries.

My chapter was entitled *Policy into Practice: The Brighouse Way*. I concluded with some optimistic words about the direction of policy, and I will do likewise here:

Although Tim has gone, his approach to policy and his ideas seems more relevant than ever, as much of the orthodoxy of the past 15 years is reassessed with increased scepticism.

Tim's work is now being looked at with fresh and sympathetic eyes, whether it is in rebuilding a sense of community among schools in a locality where everyone takes their share of burdens, or in bringing back joy to the curriculum and revalidating the central role of the arts, or in ensuring that

school accountability, while maintaining its rigour, is done in a proportionate, sympathetic and supportive manner.

So, reasons to be cheerful and now over to you Secretary of State!

SIR DAVID BELL KCB DL

Sir David is Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive of the University of Sunderland.

Previously, he was Vice-Chancellor at the University of Reading and, before that, Permanent Secretary at the Department for Education and Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools. He is also Chair of Karbon Homes, a social housing provider.

It is time for us to educate ourselves out of the climate crisis. How the Our City, Our World programme reveals a possible pathway

Jonathan Cooper

Abstract

For the first time, global warming has exceeded 1.5C across an entire year according to the EU's climate service and the world's sea surface is at its highest ever recorded average temperature. Against this backdrop, this article seeks to evaluate the response of the English education system to this rapidly changing world and the resultant future challenges we will be facing. Is it preparing young people adequately or is it failing to acknowledge the severity of the situation and, in so doing, leaving our young people ill-equipped for the climate emergency? The work of the climate change and environmental education programme Our City, Our World may provide some answers as to how our schools can be supported in responding appropriately.

In this article, I will discuss the current state of climate change and environmental education in England drawing on research, national surveys and the findings of our work in Brighton and Hove and beyond as part of the Our City, Our World programme. I will emphasize its vital importance and outline a possible pathway for schools to a more holistic and comprehensive approach to climate change and sustainability education; an approach which enables schools to not only radically transform their curriculum and children's learning and skills but also to significantly improve staff competency, active community engagement, school operations and a culture of sustainability.

I have been in education for over 30 years. Most recently as a headteacher, National Leader in Education and Ofsted inspector. Despite the complexities of the world in which we live, identifying our moral duty and purpose as educators has always seemed relatively straightforward – to ensure children are given the values, skills and knowledge to flourish in the present and in the future as caring, positive, creative and engaged citizens. Agreeing these values, skills and knowledge, however, beyond the limited nature of the National Curriculum, has always been a point of contention. Often events in the world can make our potential choices clearer but this does not seem to be the case in terms of climate change and sustainability; these are just two headlines from December 2024:

We need dramatic social and technological changes': is societal collapse inevitable? Academic Danilo Brozović says studies of failed civilisations all point in one direction – today's society

needs radical transformation to survive (Guardian 28th December)

The destruction of nature is harming us all. Studies show the benefits of the natural world to health, happiness and very survival yet the devastation continues (Times 23rd December)

This type of apocalyptic headline has been commonplace for the last few years. Therefore, it would seem reasonable to assume our education system would have responded in a rapid and comprehensive way to this existential danger. It would have recognised our moral duty to educate our children for this uncertain future and our responsibility to educate ourselves out of this crisis. In fact, should we not regard it as a safeguarding issue? Our understandable strong commitment to drug and alcohol education, RSE, and internet safety should be matched by a drive to teach our children and young people the behaviours and choices they should adopt in order to live in a sustainable way; caring for the planet, ourselves and others now and for the future.

So, in reality, how has our education system responded to what is recognised by most scientists as a climate emergency? At present, climate change is not mentioned at Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, and it is only mentioned a handful of times at KS3 and KS4 in geography and science. Where schools do cover climate change and sustainability more widely, it is generally down to the passion of an individual teacher and the work of a small eco-committee meeting sporadically and briefly in breaktimes. However, this work is generally recognised by schools to have minimal impact in terms of embedded and sustained learning and behaviour change.

The DfE's Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy (April 2022) was a key opportunity to apply, in Greta Thunberg's words, 'cathedral thinking'. Unfortunately, it failed to address many of the concerns and barriers raised by teachers through BERA's 2022 survey:

- The marginalisation of climate change and sustainability in the national curriculum, examination specifications and inspection frameworks.
- Teacher confidence, and access to training and support.
- Capacity to take on additional workload in an accountability context that does not value sustainability.
- Limited funds for advancing sustainability initiatives in schools.

Attention in the DfE strategy to decarbonisation is significant but proposed curriculum change is minimal e.g. a potential, but as yet unrealised, optional GCSE in natural science, more teaching around nature at KS2 and packages of optional, free, adaptable digital curriculum resources and video lessons; this led BERA to make the following critical evaluation of the strategy.

'...it is at risk of becoming a 'placebo for policy', leaving teachers and young people no better equipped to deal with the climate crisis. Placebo policies offer government an escape route from a policy trap where there is an urgent, visible, complex problem (climate change and education) and an expectation that the government will act. The placebo gives government the control over the agenda, protecting their longer-term governing and ideological trajectory, and in this case shifts responsibility (and therefore potential blame) to schools, teachers and even young people.' (BERJ 2022).

At the same time, a range of organisations have carried out extensive surveys of students and teachers, providing a clear picture of the state of climate change and sustainability education in schools; their findings are shocking.

4 out of 5 secondary teachers say they are not teaching about the ecological crisis in a meaningful and relevant way (Teach the Future 2021).

Only 5% of teachers say climate change is integral to many different aspects of the curriculum (Teach the Future 2021).

"70% of UK teachers don't feel that they're adequately equipped to teach climate and sustainability." (TSL – ITN Business 4th December 2023)

85% of teachers in England doubt the current education system is adequately preparing pupils for the future. (Reboot the future/Cambridge University Press and Assessment 2023)

It does not come as a surprise, therefore, that only 1% of teachers in England believe the Department of Education's vision of the UK being "a world leader in sustainable education by 2030" is achievable if we carry on as we are. (Reboot the future/Cambridge University Press and Assessment 2023).

So ultimately, what impact has our present curriculum and teaching had on our children's skills and knowledge of climate change? Teach the future found that only 4% of students feel they know a lot about climate change (Teach the Future 2021). Imagine Ofsted's response if they arrived in a school and found only 4% of children knew a lot about safe behaviours around drugs and alcohol, sexual health or internet safety. These stark findings should be a call for action from the government, educators and wider society. Fortunately, Brighton & Hove Council has responded to this call.

Many councils across the UK, including Brighton and Hove, declared a climate emergency in 2019. Unlike many of these councils, however, Brighton & Hove had the commitment and vision to see that education is the key to us finding the solutions to address this emergency

They funded the development with and by local schools of the Our City, Our World programme; a framework which enables schools to place learning about climate change, climate justice and sustainability at the heart of their curriculum and at the same time guides them in developing sustainable organisational and systems' sustainability. It is now running in 90% of the schools in the authority. Through additional funding from Let's Go Zero and under the new name of Our Schools, Our World, it is now being introduced to an additional five diverse areas – Leicester, Brent, Bedfordshire, North Devon and Suffolk.

Taking on board the opinions and concerns of our pupils, families, our school communities, academic research and many of the recommendations of the Public First report 'Teaching about climate change' (2022) , the Our City, Our World framework seeks whole school transformation and is based on the following key principles

Aspiration, vision and strategy must be driven by all school leadership and must be founded upon collective voice and engagement. This programme is about hearts and minds. It's about doing the right thing regardless of whether it has been recognised centrally as a priority. We know that for it to succeed it must be led by the passion of the head and the leadership team. The head must commit to establishing a working group to oversee the programme made up of a range of key stakeholders. Where the programme succeeds best it is given the space and time in the school timetable for training and its implementation. We train up the head, senior programme lead and governors in Leadership for Sustainability and Climate Science. We train up the senior programme lead in curriculum development and outdoor learning. Training in supporting eco-anxiety is led by ThoughtBox. Finally, with the support of Let's Go Zero, we train up the School Business Manager and Site Manager in decarbonisation, adaptation, mitigation and climate action planning. Elements of this training are then rolled out systematically across the school. Ongoing support to headteachers, governors, senior project leads and other school staff is also provided alongside easily adapted strategy documents, audits, surveys, research, curriculum resources and local contacts all collated in a programme website.

Young people must be deeply involved in planning, decision making and regular action. Research shows pupil voice is key to the success of climate work in schools. The school focuses for one whole term on one of the six sustainability themes (Biodiversity, Consumption and Waste, Energy, Water, Transport and Food) so everyone is working in the same direction. Fortnightly assemblies support pupil education and voice. Pupils decide on many of the school actions as well as family pledges. This two-year rolling timetable ensures pupils and the school keep coming back to themes systematically for sustained improvement.

The programme should be issues led but solution focussed. It is a programme and curriculum of hope. Under each theme, children and young people should be regularly involved in significant positive action. They must develop self-belief as changemakers. Through becoming changemakers, children's anxiety and care is channelled into positive action. Children are also introduced to inspirational local, national and global environmental changemakers to ensure they recognise all the positive work being done in this area alongside the power of collective action.

Schools should walk the walk as well as talk the talk with clear and significant carbon reduction targets and actions. Schools should live their life through a green lens and embrace a circular economy. Schools should engage in effective systems thinking. The emphasis is on sustainable whole school and community system change as opposed to one-off projects. The leadership team are clear everyone in the school and school community has responsibility for developing sustainable behaviours, in fully supporting or leading school curriculum and school operational improvements. This is no longer the sole reserve of a teacher and an eco-committee. All the necessary audits are provided by the programme, so schools become very self-aware of their strengths and weaknesses. They are aided in their self-evaluation and planning by close links to Climate Action Advisors and Climate Ambassadors.

Climate change and sustainability is integrated into the school's curriculum. The present curriculum allows no real space for additional modules; nor would it be pedagogically effective to teach climate change in isolation. Climate change and sustainability runs as a thread through all subjects based on a clear progression framework. Opportunities are also extensively taken to 'green' learning; to teach key skills and knowledge in a meaningful and comprehensive way within an environmental context.

- **Pedagogical approaches should be based on research into emergent best practice for climate change** e.g. an integrated, enquiry-based and hands-on approach with collective

with collective problem solving and all parties working in partnership.

The programme should be founded on the power of collectivism. The programme empowers all member of the school community to come together in action. Being a part of the programme also means the school is part of a network of schools carrying out actions, communicating across classrooms, sharing resources and initiatives and inspiring each other.

- **Work should be underpinned by a much stronger emphasis on environmental and outdoor education**. Many young people feel a disconnect from nature. As David Attenborough said, 'No one will protect what they don't care about; and no one will care about what they have never experienced'. Schools commit to integrating outdoor learning much more regularly and systematically into planning. ThoughtBox Education talks about a crisis of disconnect affecting our society. Disconnect from ourselves caused by the stresses of modern life leading to a mental health crisis, disconnect from others leading to social inequality and injustice and disconnect from the planet leading to a climate crisis. These three areas are mutually dependent and potentially mutually supportive of well-being. We need to work simultaneously across all three areas to ensure healthy connection – self-care, people care and planet care.

Sustainability becomes woven into the existing improvement structures and culture of the school i.e. the school improvement plan, performance management, school values etc.

There is a commitment to climate justice and to addressing inequalities in access to opportunities to participate in climate and environmental education for those with protected characteristics. This relates to those feeling the greatest impact of climate change, both those in the global south often with the lowest emissions, and also those in our society knowing that climate change impacts those experiencing economic, health and gender inequalities.

Schools are significant moral and social influencers within their community. Whilst the curriculum is at the heart of the project, it sits within whole school commitment to, and development of, sustainable practice as a community, especially amongst families. Family members are encouraged to directly enhance work in school and, through termly pledging, to improve own behaviours at home.

There should be significant engagement with local environmental groups and professionals working in the region. There is so much expertise and quality work taking place locally. Schools should actively bring them into school to support the themes.

- **For older pupils there will be a strong focus on the Green Skills agenda**. This isn't just specific technical skills related to future careers but on skills enabling young people to meet future challenges confidently i.e. opportunities for leadership, project planning, teamwork, problem solving, creativity and imagining.

After a year of following the programme approximately 80-90% of schools have trained all their staff, integrated conceptual milestones into the curriculum, systematically greened the curriculum and developed an assembly programme. They have drawn up challenging climate action plans and they have also begun to establish a culture which ensures all members of the community develop a commitment to sustainable behaviours within their own specific roles and responsibilities. We therefore believe the Our City, Our World programme provides a proven framework for curriculum and operational transformation in schools.

Following an extensive consultation, an interim report on proposals for changes to the national curriculum is due in early 2025. Bridgit Phillipson has said 'this government, alongside leading education experts, leaders and staff on the frontline, will breathe new life into our outdated curriculum and assessment system'. For this updated curriculum to be relevant and effective in giving pupils the skills and knowledge to proactively and creatively face the challenges of the future , a core element should be a commitment to a comprehensive programme of study for climate change and sustainability education woven into all subjects and extending from EY/Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 5. The DfE Climate Change and Sustainability Strategy states 'All new school buildings delivered by DfE (not already contracted) will be net zero in operation. They will be designed for a 2oC rise in average global temperatures and future-proofed for a 4oC rise.' (DfE 2022). A global mean temperature difference of 4°C is close to that between the temperatures of the present day and those of the last ice age, when much of central Europe and the northern United States were covered with kilometres of ice, and the current change—human induced—is occurring over a century, not millennia. With the DfE imagining the possibility of such a future scenario, surely, we should be future-proofing the curriculum, empowering young people as changemakers, giving them hope and enabling them to breathe life back into an ailing planet.

Our City, Our World is continuing to expand its programme nationally. If you would like to find out more, please contact the OCOW programme manager, Katie Eberstein – Katie.Eberstein@brighton-hove.gov.uk. In the meantime, you can find information about the programme at ourcityourworld.co.uk.

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Biography

Jonathan Cooper has been in education for over 30 years. He has been a primary head for 25 years as well as taking on roles as a National Leader in Education and Ofsted inspector. His school in Brighton was twice judged as outstanding by Ofsted. He is now co-leading the Brighton and Hove Our City, Our World programme and the wider Let's Go Zero funded Our Schools, Our World programme. Both programmes aim to transform the curriculum and operations of schools in terms of sustainability learning and practice

Email: jonathancooper637@gmail.com

Addressing the crisis in the professional education and development of teachers in England

Brian Hudson and Deborah Outhwaite

Abstract

This article addresses the crisis in the professional education and development of teachers in England. In doing so it traces the roots of this crisis to a clash of conceptions about the quality of teaching and the nature of professionalism. This arises from a clash of mindsets on a spectrum that ranges from a "restricted" technicist view to an "extended" professional view of the nature of teaching. We call for a full review of the underlying principles and the evidence base associated with the recent development of the ITT Early Career Framework as a matter of urgency.

The commitment of the new government in its manifesto to introduce a new entitlement for teachers to continuing professional development is to be welcomed. Likewise, is its commitment to the importance of an early career framework for beginning teachers. However, the pledge to simply "update the Early Career Framework" and to "maintaining its grounding in evidence" does not go far enough. A full review of the underlying principles and the associated evidence base is necessary to address the current crisis in the professional education and development of teachers as encapsulated in *Teacher Education in Crisis: The State, the Market and the Universities in England* by Viv Ellis and colleagues (Ellis, 2024).

This crisis arises from the Conservative-led reforms from 2010 onwards because of a clash of conceptions about the of quality of teaching and the nature of professionalism Mutton et al. (2017). The roots of this clash can be traced back to the speech by Michael Gove in 2010 as the Secretary of State for Education in which he asserted that that teaching is merely "a craft that is best learnt as an apprentice observing a master craftsman or woman". He also declared that "watching others, and being rigorously observed yourself as you develop, is the best route to acquiring mastery in the classroom".

This clash of mindsets can be seen in the terms used by Hoyle (1974) on a spectrum that ranges from a "restricted" technicist view to an "extended" professional view of the nature of

.teaching as highlighted in the report from Graham Donaldson (Donaldson, 2011) to the Scottish Government in 2010. The restricted view is based on a conception of an effective teacher that is narrowly defined in terms of technical skills only. In contrast a teacher at the extended end of the spectrum is the kind of professional who is not only highly proficient in the classroom but is also reflective and enquiring not only about teaching and learning, but also about those wider issues which set the context for what should be taught and why.

Central to this clash of conceptions has been a clash of values concerning the nature of professional knowledge and the role of higher education in the professional education and development of teachers. The view of teaching as merely a craft ignores the complex nature of professional knowledge and the ways that it is developed both in practice and through higher education. In relation to the teaching of school subjects, such knowledge is developed through collaboration in communities of inquiry and dialogic spaces with accomplished academic specialists in the scholarship of subject-specific education (Hudson, 2024a).

In the process of consultation about the new framework strong criticism was made by subject associations regarding its neglect of subject-specific education. For example, in the written evidence from The Historical Association the framework is described as “not fit for purpose” and the generic nature of the framework is seen to discourage subject-specific teacher education. Similar criticism is made by the Council for Subject Associations (CfSA) which also points out that it draws on a narrow research evidence base that misses out important research in subject pedagogy.

In its response to the consultation, the Department for Education (DfE, 2024) combined the early career framework with the existing Core Content Framework to create the ITT Early Career Framework (ITTECF). However, in its response to the criticisms by the subject associations, it demonstrated a lack of understanding of their nature and a ‘blind spot’

by placing an emphasis on the development of subject-specific content rather than in addressing the shortcomings of the underpinning evidence base in relation to subject-specific pedagogical research. For example, in its response the DfE states that "ECT training lead providers will develop enhanced subject-specific materials" and that Oak National Academy "will work with ITT and ECT training providers to support them to enhance their existing provision with more subject-specific content." This has left subject-specific education and its associated research marginalised and England as an outlier in an international context in which the study of subject-specific education is recognised as an academic discipline in its own right (Hudson, 2024b).

The way in which the ITTECF was used to carry out a "market review" of provision in 2022 was highly controversial. This led to the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Greenwich issuing a press release in which ongoing and serious concerns were raised about the rigor, reliability and validity of the desk-based ITT accreditation process. As a result of the review process, the university lost its accreditation, along with several other providers, to deliver teacher training/education which it had provided for 120 years. In its response, the University of Greenwich requested a review of the accreditation process and the chance to reapply or be reinstated at the earliest opportunity.

In addition, the press release highlights that the removal of accreditation will create more barriers to getting the "best and brightest students into teaching at a time where the country is struggling to recruit and retain educators." Further barriers have been created by the unrealistic pressures on experienced mentors to engage in 20 hours of training in generic "instructional coaching". This pressure has led to existing accredited providers withdrawing provision as is the case outlined by Sarah Steadman at Kings College London.

This call and expression of dissatisfaction with the process was echoed by other leading voices in the field. In addressing the question "Does the new ITT and Early Career framework hit the mark?" Clare Brooks (Brooks, 2024) from the University of Cambridge speaks on behalf of the sector when she writes that there is a need for a more engaged conversation about what teacher education and professional development might become. Furthermore, she adds that a better

better framework is desperately needed and that it does not look like this.

In summary, firstly there is a major difference between the previous government and what is widely regarded as good practice in relation to the nature of professional knowledge and professionalism. Secondly, there are inadequate processes that have led to highly questionable judgements about who is best suited to provide teacher education. Thirdly, there are practical and costly implications for both institutions and schools in trying to implement an ill-conceived centralised intervention that is directed towards an inappropriate characterization of teacher educator's work. Accordingly, a fundamental review of both the framework and the accreditation process is now required as a matter of urgency. This should include representation from subject associations, university-led partnerships with schools and school-centred ITT (SCITT) partnerships with universities together with the Universities' Council for the Education of Teachers (UCET).

Postscript

This article was first published as a blog post in August 2024. Subsequently in November 2024, it was reported that the Department for Education had announced that the 'excessive' 20 hours of mentor training requirement had been 'scrapped' (Cumiskey, 2024) which we welcome.

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Authors

Brian Hudson is emeritus professor at the University of Sussex and guest professor at Karlstad University, Sweden. He was Co-I for the KOSS project: "Knowledge and Quality across School Subjects and Teacher Education" funded by the Swedish Research Council (2019-24).

Deb Outhwaite has been working in education for 30 years, she is currently a Visiting Senior Fellow at LSE, Chair of British Educational Leadership, Management and Administration Society (BELMAS), and Vice Chair of the Fabian Education Policy Group.

Aims, Values and the Curriculum:

Initial Report on the meeting held at the House of Commons on 19th November 2024

Fabian Education Policy Group

Abstract

This is an initial report on the meeting held at the House of Commons to discuss the aims and values that should underpin a revised curriculum for young people in England. It focuses on the outcomes of the discussion and debate on the evening of the event. The meeting was hosted by Catherine Atkinson MP and organised by the Fabian Education Policy Group. A full report that includes a summary of the inputs of the panel members will be included in Volume 1, Issue 2 of the FEPG Review.

The session was chaired by Professor Brian Hudson and the panel was made up of the following speakers**:** Mick Waters, Former Director of Curriculum at the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA); Valerie Bossman-Quarshie, Vice-chair of Islington's Children's Scrutiny Committee and teacher; Dr. Tony Breslin, Director of Breslin Public Policy; Brian Matthews, teacher and lecturer at Goldsmiths and Kings College and Professor Sarah Younie, Chair of the International Council for the Education of Teachers (ICET) and MESHGuides representative on the UNESCO International Teacher Task Force panel.

There were over 150 attendees who applied to join the meeting and with written comments being received by around 80 people. There was a very positive feeling to the meeting which was lively and inclusive. There was a buzz in the room where it was evident participants were engaged in and thinking about the issues. The structure of the session involved brief presentations from the panel, followed by time for the participants to discuss their ideas and to record comments and feedback for the final report. This approach was very well received by the participants.

Key points from speakers and the floor: The speakers and contributions from the floor addressed the issues from a wide variety of perspectives. There was considerable agreement although the terminology varied.

1)The present National Curriculum of England is content led with an emphasis on discrete subjects and norm-based assessment. It is leading to a significant proportion of pupils feeling an increased level of anxiety and fear of failure.

2)It is important that the National Curriculum has a clear set of aims. Ultimately, we need a curriculum that engenders and develops democracy and compassion. It should recognise all aptitudes and abilities. Assessment should

2)It is important that the National Curriculum has a clear set of aims. Ultimately, we need a curriculum that engenders and develops democracy and compassion. It should recognise all aptitudes and abilities. Assessment should be in line with the aims and involve more criteria referenced approaches.

3)Pupils should have a richer personal and social development programme including the development of the skills of collaboration, communication, critical thinking and creativity (the 4Cs). Also, ITE is hamstrung by Ofsted and can do little to address such learning. Pupil voice is important and should be valued more.

4)There should be a breadth of learning that values the arts and vocational learning with appropriate value placed on cognition and understanding rather than on just learning 'about'.

5)There is a lack of women's representation in elements of the current National Curriculum.

6)All pupils should engage with aspects of vocational, technical and professional learning.

7)The role of Local Education Authorities (LEAs) is important, but they are finding it difficult to help schools because of funding and the structure of education provision, especially for SEND. *The involvement of LEAs is imperative in creating a cohesive and locally responsive education system with a curriculum that also reflects local concerns and needs.*

8)There is a need to focus on the needs of Afro-Caribbean and White working-class boys with a curriculum that is relevant for them. The workforce needs to reflect the diverse nature of UK society with greater inclusion of black and ethnic minorities and genders.

9)Education is political because the National Curriculum does not support pupils developing the social skills necessary for a democracy, while reinforcing right-wing values.

10)Parents' partnerships are needed with school connectedness and a sense of belonging.

Recommendations:

1) Move to an aims-based curriculum with pupil-development and democracy at its heart. Look at the Labour NC of 2010 as a model. The curriculum should educate learners to become empathetic citizens.

2)Relationship building should be at the centre of the aims for the curriculum and be integral, not bolt-on. Include compassion and acceptance of diversity.

3)Learning to be based on social cognitive/constructivist learning theory, incorporating activities such as problem solving and investigations.

4)Introduce a curriculum that includes Arts and vocational aspects. Cross-curricular lessons, which would also include some Maths and English.

5)Wide range of types of assessment, including criterion referenced, to be used. All abilities and aptitudes need to be recognised.

6)Set up a *Qualifications and Curriculum Authority* type organisation.

7)Change ITE to prepare professional teachers, not deliverers, be reflective practitioners, critical reflectors, be evidence -based. Consider making teaching a Masters profession as in other countries and in line with Labour values under the previous Labour administration.

8)Trust teachers and educators to develop their practice so they are not denied the chance to use their professional judgement, their knowledge of their learners and their context to inspire learners rather than instruct using a prescribed set of lessons.

9)Introduce a Sure Start type intervention that works with pupils and parents

10)Redesign accountability models to allow for positive reform and development of Ofsted and the promotion of creativity. Schools need to be bastions of democratic thinking

11)Understand all the elements that support ideas to introduce policies, processes, structures and curricula that defend democracy.

12)It is vital that there is large-scale change under Labour over a period time.

See Appendix for the views of the Fabian Education Policy Group.

Please contact any members of the organising team to share ideas and expertise.

Appendix

The Fabian Education Policy Group recommend that the principles and purpose of the curriculum can be clearly stated in relation to four areas:

Firstly, a clear statement of what our country sees as a good childhood and youth is vital. Within this statement we would expect there to be a strong commitment to well-being in the context of secure, free, responsible, happy individuals and communities.

Secondly, we recommend that the seven principles emphasized by Education Scotland in 2016 (https://education.gov.scot/media/m1nlboum/cfe-statement.pdf) should provide an overarching commitment to what the curriculum should be characterized by: i.e., challenge and enjoyment; breadth; progression; depth; personalization and choice; coherence; and, relevance

Thirdly, we recommend that there should be an acceptance of the importance of the three main drivers of curriculum (i.e., the development of understanding across areas of knowledge; an objective led approach which allows for matters to do with citizenship, social justice, the economy and other matters to be fulfilled; and a commitment to child development which allows for personal growth).

Fourthly, we recommend establishing a curriculum that will enhance for all cognitive, affective, creative and practical knowledge, understanding, skills and dispositions. It will be vital to embrace the valuable approaches taken by others including the OECD who have called for an emphasis to be placed on the 4 Cs (i.e., critical thinking; collaboration; creativity and communication).

Finally, we recommend the establishment of a representative and authoritative body to oversee these developments in the future with a stature that is comparable with the former Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA).

Reviews

Brighouse, T. and Waters, M. (2022). *About Our Schools: Improving On Previous Best***.** Carmarthen: Crown House Publishing. 680 pages. ISBN 9781785835865. P/bk, £24.99

Reviewed by Dr Tony Breslin, Director, Transform Education tony.breslin@breslinpublicpolicy.com

One more chance to have the great debate that never was?

At the warmly supported memorial celebration of the work of Sir Tim Brighouse held at the UCL Institute of Education in June 2024, touching presentations were offered by colleagues who had worked with the great educator in various locations: Oxford, Keele, Birmingham and London among others. One of the most heartfelt contributions came from his co-author on *About Our Schools: Improving on Previous Best* (Crown House, 2022) and his long-term colleague and friend, Mick Waters, and the depth of their professional and personal relationship shines through what might yet be viewed as their most influential collaboration.

At the outset, let me say this: *About Our Schools* is a vitally important text, one that should be read and digested by all with an interest in education policy and practice, not least Bridget Philipson's team at the Department for Education as they embark on laying the foundations for what Brighouse and Waters insist can be a new age of "hope, ambition and collaborative partnerships". Such a transformation is necessary to move us beyond an era, dating from the mid-1970s, that they frame as having been dominated by "markets, centralisation and managerialism". Their rationale for this is straightforward: "We think there is now widespread agreement among educationalists that partnerships of schools working collaboratively are better than a series of nearly 25,000 autonomous schools competing with one another" (p.573).

that partnerships of schools working collaboratively are better than a series of nearly 25,000 autonomous schools competing with one another" (p.573).

How might a busy ministerial support team digest the messages from such an expansive text while attending to the needs of a brutally neglected and underfunded profession and education system? How about each minister, senior civil servant or SPAD (Special Advisor) reading a single chapter – these span pedagogy, curriculum, assessment, inclusion, inspection, governance and just about every other facet of schooling – and every member of the team reading the closing chapter – the authors' recommendations. These are set out as six cornerstones and thirty-nine further proposals; the staff of a school might approach the text in a similar way in what could be a valuable CPD exercise. Given its size and its thematic layout, this is a book made as much for a time-poor reading group, as it is for a time-rich individual reader.

About Our Schools is not simply a professional co-biography from two of this era's most influential educators. It is an important, indeed landmark, piece of educational research. The authors do draw on their own experience and their chiselled wisdom about so many aspects of schooling shines through just about every page, holding the reader's attention leaf after leaf, but this is also an extensively and rigorously researched text and deserves to be viewed as such. The authors interview (as 'witnesses' to their 'enquiry') virtually every surviving Secretary of State for Education, Children's Commissioner and Chief Inspector and a plethora of other system leaders and school leaders, over one hundred in all.

Throughout, their questions are searching and empathetic; they call out, in their analysis, right from wrong, but never question the integrity or commitment of those who speak with them, whatever their political or pedagogical persuasion. Thus, although they identify themselves as unashamedly progressive and liberal educators, there will be surprise about some who emerge with credit. Thus, Amanda Spielman, Michael Wilshaw, Kenneth Baker and Gillian Shepherd are among these, alongside others that we might typically expect them to 'like': David Blunkett, Estelle Morris, Ed Balls and Anne Longfield.

What of their recommendations? To work through their thirty-nine additional proposals would be too much of a spoiler but it is worth listing their six cornerstones for change

the establishment of a *Schooling Framework Commission*

The creation of virtually enabled national *Open School*

The launch of a *Seeking Talent and Extending Participation Scheme (STEPS*)

Provision for *Extraordinary Learners with Exceptional Creative Talent (ELECT)*

The creation of a cadre of *Expert Consultant Teachers*

The introduction of a *Curriculum for Childhood* and a *Curriculum for Adolescence*

The first of these is worth particular attention as it seeks to fill a gap at the hub of Brighouse and Waters' critique of education policy over the past thirty years: the failure to address the issue of educational purpose as we move forward in a fast-changing world, the urgency of hosting a debate about what this purpose might be and the need to engage in the conversation - as the authors do - voices from across the political and pedagogical spectrum, just as they have done in what amounts to a pre-cursor for this debate.

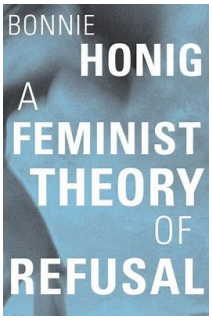
Two further observations are pertinent.

The first, their proposal for a Schooling Framework Commission, is about the urgency of establishing some kind of agreement on educational purpose. The period under-discussion starts with Callaghan's call for a debate on the purpose of education and schooling in his famous Ruskin College speech of 1976. In late 1997, in the wake of New Labour's election victory and Tony Blair's commitment to prioritise "education, education, education", the late Denis Lawton brought together a group of educators in a seminar at the UCL Institute of Education to discuss how the new government might face the educational challenges ahead. As the then Chair of the Association for the Teaching of the Social Sciences, I was privileged to be invited. The result was a booklet, *Take Care, Mr Blunkett*, edited by Sheila Dainton at the Association of Teachers and Lecturers, to which we each contributed a chapter. Mine was entitled, *Twenty Years on: the great debate that never was*, the first contribution to an edited collection that I had made. Brighouse and Waters might have used a variation on the same title – and say as much – now, almost fifty years on. The great debate has yet to happen. It is now more urgently needed than ever.

The second is about the accessible style of the text. Two decades ago, when Barry Dufour and I were seeking a publisher for our then proposed edited collection, *Developing Citizens*, an educational publisher of note (and an editor who was a titan in the field) advised us that they had two lists – one for the educational research community and one that amounted to "tips for teachers", and nudged us towards the second. We argued for the need to straddle *both* of these domains, for a literature that was both academically rigorous and practically accessible for working educators in classrooms and staffrooms, for a literature that is 'pracademic'. Our text was subsequently published (albeit by a different publisher, Hodder Education) and this pracademic style has continued to inform my own writing, as I hope is evident in, for instance, my recent studies of the educational impact of lockdown. Brighouse and Waters write in just this style, absolutely demonstrating its value in the process.

Not everybody will agree with all of the authors' proposals or judgments (for instance, their willingness to embrace MATs (Multi Academy Trusts) as the template for the facilitation of inter-school collaboration), or for the elevated status that they grant to particular organisations (such as the Education Endowment Foundation and the Chartered College) or their appraisal of the impact of particular parts of the system (for example, their willingness to discard the input of school-based governance to school improvement) but that is to miss the point. As Prime Minister James Callaghan had sought to half a century ago, Brighouse and Water are seeking to spark a great debate on the future of education. We ought to take up the invitation this time, as should Bridget Philipson and her team.

Dr Tony Breslin is Director at *Transform Education*, Trustee at *Agora Learning Partnership*, Chair at *West Herts College Group* and a member of the *Fabian Education Policy Group*. He is the author of *Lessons From Lockdown* (Routledge, 2021) and *Bubble Schools and the Long Road From Lockdown* (Routledge,2023). The final book in the trilogy, *Reschooling Society After Lockdown*, will be published by Routledge in 2025.



Honig, B. (2021). *A feminist theory of refusal*. Cambridge, USA: Harvard University Press. 194 pages. ISBN 978-0674248496. H/bk, £21.95

Reviewed by Dr Edda Sant, edda.sant@manchester.ac.uk, The University of Manchester, UK, orcid.org/0000-0002-7907-5907

In recent years, some on the left have argued that there is no realistic possibility for democratic education in schools. Their main argument is that schools are eminently anti-democratic institutions, in which the curriculum is decided often in a top-down manner, children's participation tends to be tokenistic and ultimately assessments reinforce rather than redress existing inequalities. As such, claims have been made to move the education of democratic citizens outside schools.

Bonnie Honig's new book *'A feminist theory of refusal'* does not explicitly discuss these specific claims but much about education can be inferred from her arguments. As a political theorist, Honig examines how three contemporary academics have conceptualised refusal as an alternative to democratic politics. She does this by discussing Euripides' play, The Bacchae, which she positions as a metaphorical example of the type of feminist refusal she advocates.

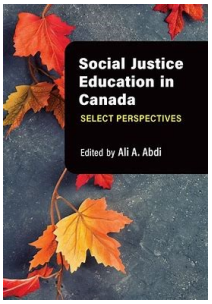
In the first chapter, she examines the work of the Italian philosopher, Giorgio Agamben who suggested a form of refusal as inoperativity. Agamben uses the example of Bartleby, the Scrivener from Melville's short story, who refused to work, by saying he "preferred not to". In Honig's analysis, whilst important, this form of refusal was limited in its effectiveness in generating change. Compared to The Bacchae, Bartleby's actions were too individualistic, and they did not open alternatives.

In the second chapter, Honig examines the work of another feminist theory of refusal. She focuses here on the way Adriana Cavarero draws upon one of Leonardo da Vinci's paintings (i.e., The Virgin and Child with Saint Anne) to develop a form of refusal as inclination. Caverero's inclination suggests a form of refusal that offers altruistic and pacifist alternatives to the current status quo. In contrast, drawing upon The Bacchae, Honig argues that, in order to bring change, the conflictive dimension of reality and the need to generate alliances with and against others need to be acknowledged. According to Honig, both inoperativity and inclination are "vulnerable to reabsorption into the dominant frames" (p. 102).

In the third chapter, Honig analyses the book 'Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments' by Saidiya Hartman, by using what she describes as a fabulation approach to refusal. Drawing upon archival research, Hartman reports the lives of enslaved women and their descendants. In Honig's analysis, these stories signal acts of refusal where women flee from antidemocratic situations. For Honig, in contrast, it is not enough to flee the polis, but rather one might claim it back, as did the women in The Bacchae. She explains, "You have the right to leave, the right to build elsewhere, but you also have an obligation to return because we are all depending on each other" (p. 104).

Honig's book is not an easy read. As mentioned, this is not a book explicitly focused on education, nor a book of 'what works' alternatives. Further, her writing style, mixing deep theoretical analysis with examples from popular culture, might seem unnecessarily obscure and confusing to many readers. Yet, her book offers good food for thought as we consider how to approach the education of democratic citizens. For instance, what alternatives for democratic education are there, beyond mere critiques? How can we generate alliances between these alternatives? And how can these alternatives be brought back to schools, so everybody can benefit? Ultimately, if we are convinced about Honig's argument, we might need to consider 'refusing', not as an act of leaving democratic education in schools behind, but as an act of reclaiming it back.

Edda Sant is a Senior Lecturer in education at The University of Manchester. A former social science and citizenship education teacher, Edda has published more than 40 book, chapters, and journal articles particularly on citizenship and democratic education. Her more recent monograph, 'Political Education in Times of Populism' was published in 2021. She currently acts as an academic advisor for the UK's All-Party Parliamentary Group on Political Literacy, and the Council of Europe's European Space for Citizenship Education.



Abdi, Ali A. (Ed), (2023). *Social justice education in Canada: Select perspectives*. Toronto: Canadian Scholars Press. 240 pages. ISBN 978-1773383071. P/bk £49.95.

Reviewed by Professor Emeritus Mark Evans, University of Toronto, mark.evans@utoronto.ca

Formal education in Canada is highly decentralised. Provinces and territories have somewhat distinct systems of education with curricula and education programs developed and administered by provincial/territorial governments. The federal government plays a minor role. Education is mostly public in orientation and is organised at four levels, pre-elementary, elementary, secondary, and post-secondary. Universal publicly funded schooling is available from grades 1 through 12. The primary languages of instruction are English and French although this varies depending on the province or territory where the population warrants it.

In certain regions, conditions have been established for denominational minorities to run separate school systems, the majority of which are Roman Catholic. In addition, there are a number of independent (private) schools, attended by a small fraction of students, as well as schools operating under the jurisdiction of Indigenous bands across the provinces and territories. Canada spends just over 6% of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) on elementary and secondary education (Statistics Canada, 2017/18), a little higher than the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) average. By most accounts, Canada's education system is highly regarded internationally (e.g., OECD, PISA).

Students in Canadian schools have become notably more diverse in terms of culture, race and language, reflective of the deepening multicultural character of Canadian society. Many students are from either first- or

or second- generation immigrant or recent refugee families, many with 'visible minority' status. Linguistically, there is a widening number of students who speak another language at home beyond at least one of Canada's two official languages (over 200 languages were reported as a mother tongue in the 2021 Census, Statistics Canada). Ongoing efforts to preserve and promote Indigenous languages adds to this diversity, and complexity.

Not surprisingly, issues of equity and social justice in relation in response to student diversity have gained increased attention and consideration in Canada's shifting educational landscape, placing critical demands on systems, programs, and the teaching profession. A number of equity- and inclusion- oriented policies, program initiatives, and school-based practices have been introduced in response.

Social justice education in Canada: Select perspectives (2023) explores current developments, discussions, perspectives, and challenges associated with social justice education in Canada. The text, edited by University of British Columbia professor Ali Abdi, includes fourteen chapters and an epilogue, prepared by a variety of leading scholars working mostly in Canadian universities. The text offers the reader not only the opportunity to better understand social justice education's shifting landscape in the Canadian context, but also glimpses into some of the substantive groundwork undertaken to encourage more equitable and just learning experiences for all learners in general and for marginalised students in particular.

Abdi's introductory chapter offers a brief discussion of the struggles that systems of education in Canada have been contending with in meeting the needed accommodation of "multi-background, multi-economic means and differentiated social background student populations." An overview of historical and more recent understandings of social justice and social justice education is then provided with particular attention to a critical shift in focus "from the mainly equality driven, to the more historico-culturally tolerant (sic) possibilities of equity in being, learning, and advancing for self and community actualisation." Throughout, limitations of earlier educational program initiatives and interventions aimed to encourage more equitable and just learning outcomes are highlighted. Lastly, Abdi considers the importance of attending to the complexities of context(s) and the value of exploring practical applications derived from more recent works of "post conventional, selectively anti colonial, and critical pedagogy" perspectives and practices. A rationale for the critical role of schooling and education "in assuring the just and viable integration, as opposed to assimilation, of hundreds of thousands of learners" underpins this introductory chapter.

Themes addressed in the subsequent chapters of the text tend to focus on a range of current and emerging discussions and debates about specific aspects of social justice education in relation to culture, race and language in the Canadian context. Ratna Ghosh's chapter, 'Critical multicultural education as a platform for social justice education in Canada,' for example, explores the value of 'critical multicultural education' in attending to the multiple aspects of diversity and issues of inequity in schools, with a particular focus on the important role of teacher education. Anna-Leah King's chapter, 'Social justice through Indigenization and anti-oppressive teaching,' traces historical injustices experienced by Indigenous people (Anishnaabe, in particular) since early European settler encroachment and more recent Indigenizing and ant-racist education efforts in institutions of higher learning to infuse Indigenous ways of knowing and being, many prompted through the 'Calls to Action' of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report (2015). Neda Asadi's chapter, 'Education for refugee learners under the framework of social justice and racial equity' explores a variety of challenges faced by refugee children and youth, resulting from displacement, resettlement, sporadic and delayed policy assistance, and unsupportive schooling contexts. She offers an educational framework that aims to decolonise education by responding to various inequities and valuing all learners and their full inclusion in the learning process. In doing so, Asadi probes the various and multiple societal and educational factors to be considered, in particular the socioeconomic.

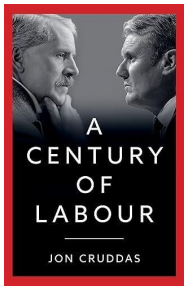
Remaining chapters include deep interrogations into such specific themes as: educating against anti-black/anti-African Canadian racism, decolonial thought and writing black life, supporting Muslim children youth and their families in Canadian schools, the Islamic call to prayer as public pedagogy, persisting challenges facing postsecondary institutions, disrupting deficit thinking of immigrant students in teacher education, cultural capital re/constructions, challenging normalised ableism in/through teacher education, teaching global citizenship in Canada with a critical ethic of care, and interrogating equity issues on inclusive postsecondary education for refugees and new immigrants in Canada. The book concludes with a brief epilogue which provides a summary of the text's key themes and issues and considers ways forward. Related historical considerations, perspectives, policies, programs, and practices, multi-dimensional readings and current research, emergent questions and issues, practical ways to deconstruct and reconstruct unequitable conditions, future considerations, and references for future inquiry are interwoven into each chapter. The complexities of working on this educational front are apparent throughout.

That being said, I am left wishing to hear more. I would have been interested in more about the challenges of practice and implementation. More about effective practice (e.g., anti-racist, anti-oppressive culturally relevant and responsive education pedagogies) and workable curriculum frameworks would be instructive. Further inquiry into the complex and multi-factorial nature of education change within multi-level schooling and diverse societal contexts could provide helpful guidance. I would appreciate more fulsome analyses of the ways in which these chaptered-themes intersect with each

and their implications for moving forward. In particular, I would be most interested in hearing more about the relationship between and among specific chapter themes and socioeconomic inequities experienced by student populations. Significant work exploring and integrating new understandings of social justice education is underway worldwide. I would be interested in hearing more about how social justice education work being undertaken internationally, and any helpful guidance they may provide in enhancing our understandings of the intricacies of social justice education's shifting landscape more broadly. Perhaps these areas of further interest could be given more consideration in a future volume in this series.

Nonetheless, the work is timely, relevant and provocative and I suspect that those engaged in this larger education project worldwide - educational researchers, policy makers, teachers, school administrators, teacher educators, teacher candidates, graduate students - will find this text informative and constructive. Social justice education literature in Canada in recent decades has managed to develop and sustain a research agenda that has attempted to explicitly connect theory, policy, structure, practice, and context. Abdi et al. provide a rich overview of many of the central themes currently being explored under the umbrella of social justice education in the Canadian educational milieu, each themed-chapter revealing its own intricacies, emergent issues and tensions, and multiple value-added possibilities moving forward. It quickly becomes apparent that social justice education in Canada remains very much 'a work in progress.'

Mark Evans is Professor Emeritus, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto, Canada.



Cruddas, J. (2024), A Century of Labour, Cambridge: Polity, pp.xi+295, ISBN 9781509558346, h/bk, £25.

Reviewed by Ian Davies, ian.davies@york.ac.uk, orcid.org/0000-0003-4434-9581

This is a thoughtful and important book that reviews the 100 years since the first Labour government took power by discussing three key traditions: "the first, the ethical socialist tradition, seeks to nurture human virtue; the second attempts to expand human welfare; the third aims to promote liberty and human rights" (p. x). Following a preface, the first three chapters allow for things to be contextualized: 'history', 'justice' and 'origins'. The final chapter – 'purpose' - pulls things together prior to valuable appendices, notes, further reading and a useful index. The main body of the book is made up of nine chronologically organized chapters: minorities 1924-1931; thirties 1931-1939; Jerusalem 1939-1951; waste 1951-1964; strife 1964-1979; wilderness 1979-1987; revival 1987-1997; landslides 1997-2010; isolation 2010-2024.

Cruddas is a very good guide to the fundamental ideas and issues, the ups and downs of Labour. He discusses with great insight the three traditions referred to above, explaining: welfare relates to labourism, welfarism and statism; freedom relates to legal equality, human rights and constitutional and electoral reform; and virtue relates to ethical socialism, associationalism and human flourishing. "Labour succeeds", he argues, "when it can draw together these three traditions, as happened under Attlee and Blair. It tends to fail, however, when just one tradition, most often the centralizing utilitarian tradition [which, incidentally, he connects with the Fabians] dominates the party" (p.29). He is sharp in his judgments (for example, not giving Starmer unqualified approval and regretting the mere 33 years that Labour has held power).

On the basis of his very long commitment to the party (including being an MP for 25 years) and strong intellectual credentials, he provides a well-organized, clearly written, thoughtful and thought provoking read. That said, my very positive view of the book should be balanced by mentioning that it has been criticised by at least one reviewer for failing to include more about vote share, the first past the post system and what the Tories were doing at key points which helped shaped Labour's approach (Edgerton, 2024).

Cruddas is strongly connected to education (e.g., at Birmingham University where he is an Honorary Professor at the Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues, and with roles at Oxford and Leicester universities). But, unfortunately, little has been included about Labour's record on education (I could see only passing references on p.127, p.188 and p.191). There is much more that could have been written about, for example, the Open University, the development of comprehensive schools, Every Child Matters and much more. In general terms, arguably, a political party is educative and all education is political and, in this way, this is a book centrally about education (insofar it identifies key ideas, discusses attempts to inform and persuade and explains how outcomes are or could be achieved). But it is not a book on the detail of Labour's schooling or wider educational ambitions, disappointments and achievements.

This is a very good, intelligently written book on Labour ideas and parliamentary actions (and that is vital for all involved in creating a better world through education).

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Ian Davies is Professor Emeritus, University of York, UK. He has worked as an 'expert on education for democratic citizenship' for the Council of Europe and as a consultant for governments and other bodies in many parts of the world. He is a Fellow of the Society of Educational Studies and Fellow of the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science.

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