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**The Development of British State Secondary  
Education from 1945 to the Present**

**Eva Vlčková**

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**Bakalářská práce**

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

The bachelor thesis deals with the development of state secondary education in Great Britain from the end of World War II to the present day. The main purpose of the present thesis is to describe the most important government education policies of this time period and to explain their consequent impact on British society, including a brief description of historical background. Some topics of interest have been further analyzed in order to provide different views on particular problems.

The thesis topic was selected because of personal interest and it contributes to the interdisciplinary academic field of Cultural Studies, which offers different perspectives on specific issues by means of the combination of knowledge from various disciplines, such as sociology, anthropology, history or geography [1].

The bachelor thesis comprises eight chapters. The second chapter represents the theoretical part, while the remaining chapters constitute the practical part of the thesis.

The theoretical part is focused particularly on factual information about the British education system and it briefly outlines the topic. It deals with the organization of education, the instruction and the school term dates. This part also includes a summary of the existing types of schools in Great Britain and provides some information about different types of exams and qualifications.

Chapter three describes the situation in Britain after World War II. This part mainly concerns the tripartite system of education established by the 1944 Education Act and comprises a brief description of grammar, secondary modern and secondary technical schools.

Chapter four deals with the very beginnings of comprehensive schools in Britain and describes some educational experiments, which preceded their introduction, such as the establishment of middle schools. The end of this chapter is devoted to the introduction of the "Certificate of Secondary Education" (CSE).

The fifth chapter of the thesis outlines the recession of the 1970s, which was accompanied by power restrictions and frequent strikes. This part contains an analysis of the famous speech on education delivered at Ruskin College by Prime Minister, Jim Callaghan and describes Margaret Thatcher's early interventions in education as well. In addition, chapter five comprises a topic devoted to the so-called "Black Papers", which represented the right-wing criticism of the British education system.

Chapter six deals with the radical policies of the "Iron Lady", Margaret Thatcher, who was an advocate of privatization. Her reforms touched not only the school curriculum but also local education authorities and teachers. This part also provides some information about the introduction of the "General Certificate of Secondary Education" (GCSE).

Chapter seven is devoted to the 1990s. It describes the educational situation in Britain under John Major who, like Thatcher, sought to limit the power of LEAs and supported the system of selection in education. This chapter also describes the decline of middle schools.

The eighth chapter deals with the education policies of Tony Blair, whose government introduced specialist schools, trust schools but also the controversial city academies in order to promote greater choice and diversity in education. Furthermore, this part of the bachelor thesis is dedicated to the religious organizations engagement in education, which was followed by an increase in the number of faith schools in Britain.

The last chapter is focused on the present situation in Great Britain. It concerns especially city academies and faith schools, including some information about the introduction of specialist diplomas. Chapter nine is also devoted to pupil behaviour, which remains a serious problem in most of the British schools.

Sources used for the purpose of the present bachelor thesis consist of printed monographs, such as the post-war history book *Never Had It So Good* written by historian Dominic Sandbrook, the monograph on current British education *All must have prizes* by British journalist Melanie Phillips or *It's your time you're wasting*, an authentic account of personal teaching

experience written by British teacher Frank Chalk. The electronic sources used in the present thesis comprise in particular articles from the Internet editions of British newspapers (for example Guardian.co.uk) but also an amount of another electronic sources, including legislative documents.

Furthermore, the bachelor thesis includes a short interview with Mr Richard Pealling, an English teacher who personally experienced the British post-war educational situation, since he grew up in Great Britain. Mr Pealling's answers are enclosed in Appendix 3.

## **2 BRITISH EDUCATION SYSTEM OVERVIEW**

Education in Great Britain is compulsory for all children from the age of five to the age of sixteen and there exist two main types of schools: non-fee paying schools funded by the government, known as “state schools” and private fee-paying schools, referred to as “public schools” or “independent schools”. Most of the British children attend state schools, only about 8 % are educated at public schools. The majority of schools in Britain are mixed-sex.

The education system is divided into three main stages: primary education (from the age of five to the age of eleven), secondary education (from the age of eleven to the age of sixteen or eighteen) and further education (represented by universities and colleges) [2].

### **2.1 Organization of Education**

The Department for Education (DfE) is responsible for the provision of education in England (Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland have their own education policies and departments) and determines overall educational goals. However, the organization of education in particular areas is the duty of local education authorities (LEAs) funded by the central government. Each school has a headteacher who is responsible for school administration and budget. A large amount of schools also have the so called “school governing body”, which is composed of local residents. These usually participate in school decision-making processes and provide assistance as regards the school organisation including the appointment of teachers and head teachers [3].

### **2.2 Types of Secondary Schools**

By September 2011, the total number of state secondary schools in England was 3,446. The majority of children attend comprehensive schools, which make up around 2,950 of all schools. The remaining schools are represented for example by grammar schools, secondary

modern schools, academies, specialist schools, faith schools etc [4]. The comprehensive school model predominates also in Scotland, while schools in Northern Ireland are usually selective [5].

### **2.3 School Routine**

The school year begins in September and comprises three terms, referred to as autumn, spring and summer term. School terms are divided by Christmas, Easter and summer holidays (approximately 6 weeks). The school day usually starts at nine and finishes at four o'clock including a lunch break, which takes about an hour [6].

The British secondary education includes six classes, also known as "forms", which are often numbered from seven to eleven. The so called "sixth form" represents two more years of study intended for the most able pupils in order to prepare them for an A-level examination [7].

### **2.4 Instruction**

In Britain, children are usually divided into ability groups for certain subjects. As regards the teaching style, it has traditionally focused rather on understanding and personal development than on the knowledge of facts itself [8]. As James O'Driscoll says: "In comparison with most other countries, a relatively strong emphasis has been put on the quality of person that education produces (as opposed to the qualities of abilities that it produces)" [9].

### **2.5 Exams and Qualifications**

Chosen by schools or LEAs, independent examining boards assume responsibility for various types of exams in Great Britain. They have their own syllabuses for different subjects and the exams they produce may vary. In most cases, students take exams in English, maths and science (quite often in a foreign language as well) and have the possibility to choose an amount of additional subjects [10].

The secondary education offers different types of qualifications:

- ❖ The General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) exams are usually taken at the age of sixteen and comprise various subjects. Each subject is evaluated by marks from A to G.
- ❖ Advanced Subsidiary (AS) exams are taken during the first year of sixth form and represent the first part of A-levels.
- ❖ The General Certificate of Education at Advanced Level (GCE A-level) exams are focused especially on academic subjects and are generally associated with the most able students. They are taken at the age of eighteen after two years of preparation within sixth form [11].
- ❖ General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) is related to vocational education and include five different levels. GNVQ exams are usually taken between the age of sixteen and nineteen.
- ❖ National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) is founded on work-based exams and provides vocational preparation [12].
- ❖ Specialised Diploma unify academic and vocational qualification and is available in different subject areas. This new type of qualification is designed for students between fourteen and nineteen years old and comprises three levels: foundation, higher and advanced [13].

## **3 EDUCATION AFTER WORLD WAR II**

### **3.1 Political Situation during the War**

During World War II, the situation on the British political scene was slowly changing. The current Conservative Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain, was trusted neither by the people nor by his own political party. In 1940 after Chamberlain's resignation, Tory Winston Churchill (see Appendix 1, picture 1) became the new prime minister. Churchill along with a war cabinet put together a coalition government.

In October 1940 the Board of Education headed by President Herwald Ramsbotham decided to make some crucial changes in the present education system in the United Kingdom. According to Board's resolutions, the system of elementary and secondary education should no longer exist. It was decided the old system should be replaced by three new levels of education, known as primary, secondary and further. Secondary education should be free and compulsory for all children up to the age of fifteen and potential benefits and advantages should be accessible to everyone, regardless their family background or possibilities. The main aim was to ensure equality in education, including the size of classes, equipment or accommodation for students, and to give more opportunities to poorer children whose parents could not afford to pay school fees and other costs related to education. The suggestions of the Board of Education were specified in "Education after the War" (Green Book) and laid down the foundation stone of the 1944 Education Act (see 3.2) [14].

#### **3.1.1 Richard Austen Butler**

In 1941 Winston Churchill appointed Conservative Richard Austen "Rab" Butler (see Appendix 1, picture 2) President of the Board of Education. Butler, who became Minister of Education in 1944, was one of the most important politicians who figured in government plans for social reconstruction. It was on his own initiative that the Education Act of 1944, also known as the "Butler Act", passed through Parliament [15].

### **3.2 1944 Education Act**

Built on the 1943 white paper “Educational Reconstruction”, the 1944 Education Act played one of the key roles in the government post-war reconstruction programme [16].

Under the Act, the state education became free and compulsory from the age of five to the age of fifteen, with the fact that the school leaving age should be increased to sixteen, as soon as possible. The education system was divided into three stages, referred to as primary, secondary and further education. Moreover, the Act established two types of schools funded by the state, known as “county schools” and “voluntary schools”. County schools were, except nursery and special schools, administrated by LEAs, while voluntary schools (including controlled, aided and special agreement schools) were provided by religious or other institutions. Both types of schools were managed by a body of governors. Regarding independent schools, they were to be registrated with the “Registrar of Independent Schools”.

The 1944 Act also established the Ministry of Education, which was to replace the Board of Education, and laid down a number of provisions concerning the education minister’s responsibilities. According to the Act, the minister of education should particularly “promote the education of the people of England” [17], supervise the activities of LEAs and appoint the staff members of the Ministry.

As regards LEAs, they should be responsible for the organization of an efficient secondary education in their areas, including an adequate number of well-equipped schools, accomodation for pupils where needed, as well as the provision of special education for children suffering from some kind of disability. LEAs were also in charge of the preparation of “a development plan” for their schools and had the possibility to appoint or dismiss teachers. Furthermore, they were allowed to determine the beginning and the end of the school sessions along with the school terms and school holidays [18].



### **3.3 Tripartite System of Education**

The tripartite system of education was the result of the implementation of the 1944 Education Act, although in the Act itself, there had been no reference to the system of selection or 11+ examination. The new education system contained three types of state-funded schools (grammar schools, secondary modern and secondary technical schools) and was founded on a process of selection at the age of eleven, referred to as the 11+ examination. For the children who failed the exam, there existed two possibilities: a secondary modern or secondary technical school. The most gifted pupils, usually attending a grammar school or an independent school, had the possibility to obtain the “General Certificate of Education” (GCE) established in 1951 (see 4.4.2). It consisted of two levels: the Ordinary Level (O Level), which was taken at the age of sixteen, and the Advanced Level (A level) taken at the age of eighteen.

Political beliefs relating to this matter were considerably different. The Labour Party strived for a comprehensive school system, while the Conservatives sought to preserve the current system of selection at the age of eleven [19].

#### **3.3.1 Grammar Schools**

Grammar schools generally had excellent teachers and were linked with the most talented and bright pupils who, in most cases, intended to continue their studies at the university. The instruction at grammar schools was founded mostly on academic subjects. To gain the access to a grammar school, children had to undergo the 11+ examination but only a minority, often consisting of the middle-class pupils, passed. The exam was usually based on the knowledge of English and arithmetic, and included tests of intelligence as well (read more in Appendix 3) [20].

### **3.3.2 Secondary Modern Schools**

The majority of children attended secondary modern schools, where they were given the opportunity to go through a four year course and to obtain the “School Leaving Certificate” at the end. The instruction was commonly based on general subjects, such as English, mathematics, history or geography, and it was focused on practical teaching as well. At the end of the course, there was no examination and pupils were offered the chance to continue their education one more year to gain the “General Certificate of Education” [21].

Children who finished their studies at a secondary modern school usually did not go to the university and “were considered to have no future in higher education” [22]. Despite the fact grammar schools and secondary modern schools were to be equivalent, the reality was quite different. The truth was secondary modern schools could never reach the prestige, popularity or even the equipment of grammar schools [23].

### **3.3.3 Secondary Technical Schools**

Secondary technical schools were mostly oriented on matters related to commerce or industry and the instruction was aimed particularly at vocational subjects. The major problem of this type of schools was the shortage of qualified teachers and lack of prestige. As a result, technical schools were seen as the worst possible option for children [24].

## **3.4 Private schools**

Very few children attended private schools, because it involved large amounts of money for tuition and boarding fees. These schools usually received a large proportion of the middle-class pupils who had not passed the 11+ examination and whose parents did not want them to continue their studies at less prestigious secondary modern schools [25].

### 3.5 Victory of the Labour Party

World War II was over by the capitulation of Nazi Germany. In July 1945 the general election was called by Winston Churchill, the current Prime Minister. Churchill intended to initiate an extensive social reform for Britain. He sincerely believed people would have confidence in his plans and support him again but he was very mistaken in his assumption. In fact, British people wanted a radical change. They wished to have better living conditions, no austerity measures, and they also did not want to find themselves in the pitiable economic situation they had had to face before the war broke out. The result of the election was a shock to everyone. The Labour Party headed by Clement Attlee, the deputy of former Prime Minister Winston Churchill, became the winner of the election with 47.7 % of the vote, while the Tories ended up with 39.7 %.

Labour promised to the voters to ensure “full employment”, “secure jobs”, “an end to wartime rationing” and “decent homes for all” [26]. Soon, they began implementing their plans. A statement “The Labour Party is a Socialist Party, and proud of it.” [27] appeared in their election manifesto “Let Us Face the Future”, and outlined the Party’s intentions to manage the economy by means of nationalization. Owing to this decision, most industries, including iron and steel industry, gas, electricity and coal along with interior transport got under control of the new government. The nationalization of the Bank of England played a part in the process as well.

Nationalization was widely welcomed by the public; however, people’s enthusiasm was soon replaced by concern, since the British post-war economic situation was very bad. Because of the war, the country was heavily indebted and it was evident that some of the pledges the Labour Party made to its voters are almost impossible to deliver. Great Britain changed a lot during this time [28].

### **3.5.1 Ellen Wilkinson**

In August 1945 Clement Attlee appointed Ellen Wilkinson Minister of Education, which made her responsible for the implementation of the 1944 Education Act (see 3.2). She sought to increase the school leaving age to sixteen and to ensure free meals for all pupils at school. She did not manage to carry out all her intentions; nevertheless, she eventually succeeded in providing free milk to schoolchildren [29].

### **3.6 Return of the Conservative Party**

In February 1950 the general election took place and Labour, despite a slight decrease in the vote, won the election again. However, they did not remain in power for a long time. After the withdrawal of many Labour cabinet ministers, the election held in October 1951 decided that the Tories led by Winston Churchill would take the power again. The Conservative Party intended to finish what Labour started, and they run the government for thirteen years [30].

During this period, the quality of education in Britain was progressively rising due to government considerable investment. New well-equipped schools were being built and there was a greater curriculum diversity [31].

## **4 DISSATISFACTION WITH INEQUALITY**

### **4.1 Fundamental Errors in the Education System**

The tripartite system of secondary education had a large number of shortcomings. The main problem was that only a few children were lucky enough to attend a comprehensive school (about 20 %) and despite the fact this number was slowly rising, the public, particularly the middle class, was increasingly dissatisfied with the current education system, which was considered to be unfair and elitism-based. The middle class became predominant at grammar schools, since rich parents often paid private teachers to prepare their children, who were constantly under pressure, for the examination at the age of eleven. The major fault of the system was the imbalance between grammar schools and secondary modern schools, which took the rest of the children who had failed the 11+ exams [32]. Moreover, the process of selection contained many other flaws, for example:

- ❖ A large number of children finished their studies and started working very soon despite their great potential.
- ❖ The number of places at grammar schools was limited and thus the talent of many bright pupils was wasted.
- ❖ Boys were usually offered more places at grammar schools than girls.

Even though the increasing popularity of comprehensive schools all around the world was remarkable, the Tories expressed their concerns about this type of “mass education”. They wanted to make no fundamental changes in the current system of education and sought to preserve the process of selection. They claimed people had to choose between the equality, represented by comprehensive schools, and justice, which was based on selection [33].

### **4.2 Educational Experiments**

A series of experiments concerning comprehensive schools began in the 1950s, usually in the areas of Labour-controlled local authorities. The

year 1957 saw the “Leicestershire experiment”, which was based on the transfer of eleven-year-old pupils to a junior high school where they were to stay for three years. At the age of fourteen, the most gifted pupils continued their studies at a grammar school, while the others stayed at the junior high school one more year before entering the working world.

The “Beloe Report - Secondary School Examinations other than the GCE” was created in 1960 by the Secondary School Examinations Council and published by Education Minister David Eccles. It introduced a new type of exams that should give more opportunities to 16-year-old pupils who were “considered incapable of coping with the demands of the GCE” [34]. This report contributed in 1965 to the creation of the “Certificate of Secondary Education” (see 4.4.2) [35].

### **4.3 Establishment of Middle Schools**

When the comprehensive school experiment began, it became apparent there would be a problem with the size of school buildings. The grammar school, secondary modern or technical school buildings proved not to be large enough to meet the needs of comprehensive schools, which should be considerably bigger. Despite this inconvenience, the Ministry of Education decided the existing buildings would be used. There existed two solutions for LEAs: either the establishment of “split-site schools” or the separation of secondary schools on the basis of age [36].

In 1963 the West Riding of Yorkshire County Council headed by Chief Education Officer Sir Alec Clegg suggested the introduction of “middle schools”. They claimed that the present two-tier school system, comprising primary and secondary schools, should be transformed into a three-tier system consisting of “first schools” for children between five and nine years old, “middle schools” for pupils from nine to thirteen, and “high schools” for those between thirteen and eighteen years old [37].

The current Education Minister and Conservative, Sir Edward Boyle agreed with Clegg’s proposal, despite the need to amend the existing law, since he generally supported the testing of comprehensive schools. This

change enabled the existing school buildings to be used again and middle schools quickly developed.

Until 1964 children under twelve years old were considered to be primary school pupils, and transfer at any age different than the age of eleven was seen as illicit. “Transfer at age 11 was determined by both convention and law” [38]; nevertheless, this stereotype was modified by the Education Act of 1964 [39].

#### **4.3.1 1964 Education Act**

The widely supported 1964 Education Act enabled the introduction of middle schools and thus gave children the possibility of transfer at ages other than eleven. The Act was created by Education Minister Sir Edward Boyle and steered through the Parliament by his successor Quintin Hogg, who became, in 1964, the first Secretary of State for Education and Science [40].

#### **4.4 Labour’s Comprehensive Education Plans**

Due to the growing popularity of experimental comprehensive schools, Labour decided to focus on this matter in its election campaign. The party promised to the voters to implement a fully comprehensive school system and to abolish the 11+ examination. These pledges eventually helped the Labour Party led by Harold Wilson to become the winner of the general election in October 1964. This period saw an overall economic prosperity and employment growth and also the transformation of the Ministry of Education into the Department of Education and Science (DES) headed by the Secretary of State for Education and Science [41].

##### **4.4.1 Circular 10/65 - The organisation of secondary education**

The new government started implementing their plans by means of the Circular 10/65, which outlined six forms of comprehensive organisation. It was issued by Secretary for State Anthony Crosland in July 1965 and

addressed to all LEAs and governors of direct grant schools, voluntary aided schools and special agreement schools.

The main goal was to revoke the existing process of selection at the age of eleven and to avoid the separation of pupils receiving secondary education. LEAs were required to “reorganise secondary education on comprehensive lines which will preserve all that is valuable in grammar school education for those children who now receive it” [42]. Each LEA ought to work out a reorganization plan for all schools in the area it was responsible for, and to deliver these proposals to the Education Secretary.

In Scotland, where the introduction of comprehensive schools was highly welcomed, the Circular 600 represented the equivalent of the Circular 10/65 in England.

One of the controversial decisions Labour made was undoubtedly the attempt to preserve grammar schools, which would exist together with comprehensive schools. In fact, there was no explanation how to put such intention into practice. Another problem was that LEAs had only been advised what they should do but they had not been obliged to do so.

Labour won the general election again in 1966 but even then they did not manage to establish a fully comprehensive school system in Britain. They lost people’s confidence along with the general election of 1970 [43].

#### **4.4.2 Certificate of Secondary Education**

The year 1965 saw the establishment of a new school-leaving certificate different from the GCE, known as the “Certificate of Secondary Education” (CSE), which replaced the old school certificate “matriculation”.

The CSE grade 1 was considered to be equivalent to O Level grade C and was introduced in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland. The main aim of CSE was to give more opportunities to less academic children who, from now, were offered the chance to gain a certificate of qualification as well. The CSE introduction caused an increase in the use of academic ability grouping, which was typical for comprehensive and secondary modern schools [44].



## 5 BAD TIMES FOR BRITAIN

### 5.1 Overall Recession

In June 1970 the Conservative Party led by Edward Heath won the general election and Margaret Thatcher was appointed Secretary of State for Education. This period saw a financial crash, mass strikes and power cuts. Thatcher suggested to revoke the provision of school milk free of charge, because the government was compelled to limit the public expenditure. In 1971 Thatcher's proposal resulted in the Education (Milk) Act. The public response to the abolition of free milk for pupils was tempestuous and Thatcher earned the nickname "milk snatcher". The only achievement of the Conservative party was the integration of the United Kingdom into the European Community in 1973.

The general election was held in 1974. It had proved inconclusive and Edward Heath decided to resign. Former Prime Minister Harold Wilson thus took the power again and formed a minority Labour government.

Wilson was replaced by Jim Callaghan in 1976, when Shirley Williams became Education Secretary. In his Ruskin College speech, Callaghan focused on education and pointed out its growing importance (see 5.2). Nevertheless, profound financial problems continued along with strikes and expenditure restraint, which only aggravated the already high unemployment in Great Britain. In 1979 Labour lost the general election and the Conservatives headed by Margaret Thatcher seized the power.

The 1970s were generally marked by a sense of disappointment. It was a time of rising inflation, currency devaluation, high unemployment and industrial disputes. During this period, the Tories sought to lower the school leaving age to fifteen again and they also intended to dissolve Schools Council. Labour, on the other hand, through the 1976 "Yellow Book" promoted the introduction of a new syllabus; nevertheless, their policy contributed particularly to a contrived transformation of the British education system [45].

## 5.2 Ruskin College Speech

Jim Callaghan (see Appendix 1, picture 3) was the first British Prime Minister who openly expressed his concern about the existing situation in the British education system. In his famous speech, given at Ruskin College, Oxford on 18 October 1976, Callaghan raised many important questions and launched the so-called “Great Debate” on education, since he wanted to know the public opinion on current issues. Through his speech, the Prime Minister put education in the centre of Labour Party’s political agenda [46].

Callaghan expressed his uneasiness particularly over the fact that only a small proportion of young people wished to work in industry after finishing their studies. He also pointed out very few young people were interested in studying science and engineering, as compared with a large amount of students choosing the humanities. Furthermore, he emphasized the need for better school-industry co-operation:

I have been concerned to find out that many of our best trained students who have completed the higher levels of education at university or polytechnic have no desire to join industry. Their preferences are to stay in academic life or to find their way into the civil service. There seems to be a need for more technological bias in science teaching that will lead towards practical applications in industry rather than towards academic studies. ... Then there is the concern about the standards of numeracy of school-leavers. Is there not a case for a professional review of the mathematics needed by industry at different levels? To what extent are these deficiencies the result of insufficient co-operation between schools and industry? Indeed, how much of the criticism about basic skills and attitudes is due to industry's own shortcomings rather than to the educational system? Why is it that 30,000 vacancies for students in science and engineering in our universities and polytechnics were not taken up last year while the humanities courses were full? [47]

The Prime Minister also commented on informal teaching techniques, which became relatively widely used: “Informal methods of teaching ... seem to produce excellent results when they are in well-qualified hands but are much more dubious when they are not.” [48]. In addition, he stressed the importance of basic literacy and numeracy and mentioned he was in favour of the introduction of the National Curriculum. In his speech, Jim Callaghan also focused on the current examination system

and suggested it should be reviewed, especially as regards vocational education [49].

Moreover, he pointed out education should prepare young people for their future life and provide them with the skills and knowledge necessary for their profession: “The goals of our education ... are to equip children to the best of their ability for a lively, constructive, place in society, and also to fit them to do a job of work.” [50].

At the end of his speech, the Prime Minister declared he did not see the current state of affairs in British education as a decline. Instead he claimed people only had higher requirements on education, since public expectations had generally risen:

In today’s world, higher standards are demanded than were required yesterday and there are simply fewer jobs for those without skill. Therefore we demand more from our schools than did our grandparents. [51]

The Ruskin College speech gave a boost to greater testing by LEAs, initiated debates related to the so-called “core curriculum” but above all, it encouraged the central government’s intervention in education [52].

Thirty years after Tony Blair’s education adviser, Andrew Adonis (see 8.1.1) commented on Callaghan’s speech delivered at Ruskin College:

Callaghan argued not only for more education, but better education. ... He suggested radical changes to raise standards, moving decisively beyond the ... argument about comprehensivisation.” [53]

### **5.3 Circular 10/70**

Education Secretary Margaret Thatcher along with the Conservative government created the Circular 10/70 which was to abolish the provisions laid down under the Circular 10/65. According to Thatcher, the main aim of the new circular was to “remove a restricting influence on the local authorities” [54]. She argued LEAs were free to develop new plans for comprehensive education and they were welcomed to continue with the establishment of the comprehensive school system in their areas. Moreover, she expressed her consent that at the age of eleven, a child was too young to decide about its own future.

Despite the fact Margaret Thatcher claimed she had not been against the introduction of comprehensive schools in Britain, the new circular was often perceived as controversial. Thatcher was suspected of supporting selection, as well as the LEAs that were against comprehensivisation, which she denied [55].

#### **5.4 1976 Education Act**

The 1976 Act was created in order to encourage the implementation of the comprehensive school system in Great Britain. It determined that the decision of any school concerning the admission of pupils could not be dependent on child's abilities. There should be no selection and no conditions for a child to be accepted and every individual should be given a chance to show his/her potential.

The Education Act, however, contained no explicit regulation to abolish the selection procedure and since it contained many imprecisions, the Conservative Party decided, in 1979, that it should be annulled [56].

#### **5.5 Right-Wing Criticism**

Right-wing politicians and educationalists decided to express their opinion on the existing situation in education by means of the "Black Papers", which were being issued from 1969 to 1977.

The authors were especially opposed to the comprehensive school system. They argued the equality in education had resulted in its lower quality and claimed at comprehensive schools bright pupils could not develop their abilities and potential as well as they could at grammar schools. Moreover, they criticized Labour's policy of forced conversion into the comprehensive system and took aim at the progressive teaching methods in primary education as well.

In addition, the authors suggested to introduce the so-called "school vouchers" in order to enable greater control and participation of parents in their child's education. Their plan was based on vouchers in the value of the average education cost in a particular area. These would be given to

parents, who would have the possibility to freely decide on which school their voucher would be spent [57].

## **5.6 1978 Waddell Report - School Examinations**

Secretary of State Shirley Williams appointed the “Steering Committee” whose main task was to create a draft for the introduction of a common examination system in Great Britain. The new system would comprise the “General Certificate of Education” (O Level) and the “Certificate of Secondary Education” examinations, which would be unified into a single exam taken at the age of sixteen.

According to committee’s assumption, the new curriculum should come into effect in 1983, with the hope that the year 1985 might see the first common examination. Nevertheless, the introduction of a single examination system had to be postponed, since the Conservative Party had to face many other serious problems when they came to power in 1979. The first common examination, known as the “General Certificate of Secondary Education” (GCSE) exams (see 6.5) were taken in 1988 [58].

## **6 THATCHERISM**

The “Iron Lady”, Margaret Thatcher (see Appendix 1, picture 4.) was the Conservative Party leader for fifteen years and acted as Prime Minister for almost twelve years. In a television interview for BBC1 Panorama in 1987 Thatcher herself explained what her ideology meant:

It stands for sound finance and Government running the affairs of the nation in a sound financial way. It stands for honest money - not inflation. It stands for living within your means. It stands for incentives because we know full well that the growth, the economic strength of the nation comes from the efforts of its people. ... It stands for the wider and wider spread of ownership of property, of houses, of shares, of savings. It stands for being strong in defence - a reliable ally and a trusted friend. [59]

### **6.1 Conservative Party's policies**

Since 1979 when the Conservatives won the general election and Margaret Thatcher became Prime Minister, Britain underwent several changes. Thatcher supported neoliberalism, which strengthened market principles and broadened the power of the central government. Her term in office was particularly marked by the privatization of industries administered by the state, limiting the power of trade unions, social spending control and tax cuts. She managed to bring down inflation; however, the unemployment rate even rose. Moreover, Thatcher sought to transform the education system so that it would no longer fall under the public sector. Instead, it would represent a part of the marketplace.

The Conservative government was highly criticized by the public. The only reason for their convincing general election victory in 1983 was the outbreak of the 1982 Falklands War with Argentina, which Great Britain won. Thatcher pursued her reforms even after 1987, when she won a third term in office. Nevertheless, the introduction of the poll tax and her resistance to European integration proved fatal and in 1990 she decided to resign [60].

### **6.1.1 1979 Education Act**

The Conservatives did not succeed to get rid of elitism in secondary education. By means of the 1979 Act, which removed the provisions laid down under the 1976 Education Act (see 5.4), Thatcher tried to reintroduce the possibility of pupil selection at the age of eleven. Her intentions, however, could not be put into practice, since the system of selection was highly unpopular. The public supported comprehensive schools, which became generally the most sought after [61].

### **6.1.2 1980 Education Act**

The 1980 Education Act reflected Thatcher's intentions to give more opportunities to parents to get involved in the process of their child's education. This Act focused in particular on the composition of school governing bodies. From now, there had to be at least two parents in each of them. In addition, parents were given the possibility to choose between schools in their area and if their child was not admitted to the school they had selected, they might file an appeal.

Furthermore, the Act amended several regulations concerning the provision of free milk or meals at school. As a result, LEAs might, but did not have to, provide some refreshment for pupils during the school day.

This piece of legislation also included some provisions regarding the establishment of new schools, or alternatively the school closures [62].

## **6.2 Educational Reforms under the "Iron Lady"**

The successor of Marc Carlisle, Sir Keith Joseph, became Secretary of State in 1981. Joseph claimed state should not intervene in education and he was convinced schools were to be independent from the state. In addition, he supported the free market system, the idea of school vouchers (see 5.5) and the parent participation in education.

Joseph together with current Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher started implementing their education reform plans which concerned in particular the syllabus, school staff and LEAs [63].

### **6.2.1 School Curriculum Reform**

The curriculum reform issue was finally opened in 1981 through the publication “The School Curriculum” edited by Education Secretaries Marc Carlisle and Nicholas Edwards (for Wales). They outlined the future shape and structure of the British school curriculum and made a number of suggestions about how to improve the existing syllabus as well.

LEAs along with school governors and teachers were required to reconsider their approach as regards the school curriculum and to seek its further progress. Moreover, LEAs were ordered to submit a report on their curriculum policies, as well as to sum up the whole process of the new syllabus implementation in their areas [64].

### **6.2.2 Teaching staff**

Thatcher’s reforms concerned teachers as well. The main aim was to push teachers away, so that they could not interfere into the central government policies; especially those regarding curriculum. This resulted in the dissolution of the Schools Council in 1984. The same year saw the foundation of the “Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education”, which was to lay down standards related to training courses for teachers.

In 1985 Secretary of State Keith Joseph suggested teacher salaries should be proportional to their performance, which resulted in a large number of industrial actions [65].

### **6.2.3 Limiting LEA Powers**

The power of LEAs was to be limited as well, since they were seen as an obstacle to the central government decision-making processes concerning education. Thatcher managed to gain the support of tabloids,



while she sought to weaken the LEAs' control and enable parents to participate in the formation of local schools.

The position of LEAs had already undergone several changes in 1974 when a large amount of them had been restructured or abolished [66].

### **6.3 1986 Education (No. 2) Act**

The 1986 Education (No. 2) Act was edited by Kenneth Baker, the new Secretary of State, and based on the white paper "Better Schools" issued in 1985. This Act even more weakened the already fading LEA powers in favour of school governors.

It determined that every school was obliged to establish its governing body consisting of two governors appointed by LEA, two parents, one teacher and one headteacher, whose role was the most important. The head teacher was responsible for curriculum, discipline and he/she was also the only one who could expel pupils from school.

According to the Act, LEAs were required to submit written statements of their policies regarding curriculum, as well as to inform parents about the curriculum content. Once a year, they were expected to provide school governors with a financial advice as well. Moreover, LEAs in cooperation with school governing bodies were given the possibility to appoint or dismiss teachers. On the other hand, school governors were required to prepare a report for parents, referred to as the "governors' report" and to organize an annual parents' meeting.

The 1986 Act also contained another provisions related for example to the abolition of corporal punishment or to the teacher performance appraisal [67].

### **6.4 1988 Education Reform Act**

The 1988 Education Reform Act, also known as the "Baker Act", represented the next crucial step for British education. It was created by Secretary of State Kenneth Baker and its main objectives were the implementation of the National Curriculum, the establishment of grant-

maintained schools financed by the central government and the transfer of powers from LEAs to the Education Secretary, or possibly to schools themselves. Moreover, the Act delegated almost the whole responsibility for the school budget from LEAs to school governing bodies.

According to the 1988 Act, the curriculum of every school should include the “basic curriculum” consisting of the religious education and the “National Curriculum”. The Act designated English, mathematics and science as the “core subjects” taught to all pupils. History, geography, technology, music, art, physical education and alternatively one foreign language were specified as the “other foundation subjects”.

The Act laid down certain provisions related to the admission and evaluation of pupils. Moreover, it established four “Key Stages” based on the age of pupils. The first stage was defined from the compulsory school age to the age of seven, the second from the age of eight to the age of eleven, the third stage from the age of twelve to fourteen and the fourth key stage was designated for pupils between fifteen and sixteen years old. By the end of each key stage, children were required to take a test, known as “SAT” (Standard Assessment Task).

In addition, the Education Reform Act founded three councils, known as the “National Curriculum Council”, the “Curriculum Council for Wales” and the “School Examinations and Assessment Council” [68].

#### **6.4.1 Review of the National Curriculum**

One of the most important personalities associated with the creation of the National Curriculum was undoubtedly Education Secretary Kenneth Baker. The main objective of the new curriculum was to raise education standards. As Thatcher said: “All I asked for was the Three Rs!” [69].

Baker believed the only possibility how to improve the existing standards in British education was the introduction of greater competition between schools. One of the driving forces of Baker’s plan was the establishment of “league tables” that provided more information about schools but also assured greater transparency [70]. In such circumstances

schools were forced to raise their standards and teachers were obliged to transmit the basic knowledge determined by the government to their pupils. Many traditional teachers opposed these changes, since they could not teach as they used to and according to their convictions [71].

#### **6.4.2 Outcome of 1988 Education Reform Act**

The Education Reform Act, however, had many flaws. The National Curriculum was formed exclusively by the government, while the opinions or suggestions of teachers were not taken into consideration. Moreover, the government had to make some changes in its content, especially to cut back some irrelevant details, since the new curriculum was too extensive and complicated.

The assessment system laid down under the Act was also unsuitable. The excessive pupil testing caused stress but above all it increased the tendency to compare secondary schools on the basis of their test results published in league tables. On the other hand, parents had the possibility of choice at last.

Furthermore, school governing bodies had to face a new provision concerning their budgets, which were, from now, limited by the number of pupils. Consequently, schools were forced to take as many children as they could, as well as to avoid accepting any children suffering of some learning disability, since their overall test scores could drop [72].

#### **6.5 General Certificate of Secondary Education**

The year 1988 saw the introduction of the “General Certificate of Secondary Education” (GCSE). This idea was generally connected with Sir Keith Joseph, who was appointed Education Secretary by Margaret Thatcher in 1981 (see 6.2). However, the GCSE examination had already been approved by former Secretary of State Mark Carlisle.

Joseph was dissatisfied with low standards of achievement in British education and was persuaded the current education system was at fault. He welcomed the idea of GCSEs, since it represented something between

the GCE (O Level) and the less academic CSE (see 4.4.2). The GCSE was to be an exam, which would not make any differences between pupils and which most of them would be able to pass [73]. In other words: “It was the philosophy that no child could be allowed to fail.” [74].

The establishment of GCSE examination should give an opportunity to everyone; nevertheless, its outcome was slightly different from what had been expected. Every child was given the chance to attain the highest level of achievement and almost everyone managed to do it, since the requirements for pupils were generally being reduced. The government’s attempt to rise education standards thus had an opposite effect [75].

## **7 NO CHANGE FOR THE BETTER**

### **7.1 John Major's Policy**

In November 1990 after Thatcher's resignation, John Major (see Appendix 2, picture 5) became leader of the Conservative Party and Kenneth Clarke held the position of Education Secretary. During his term in office, Major did not make any substantial changes as regards education. Like Thatcher, he supported the system of selection and sought to curb the LEAs' influence. The next election took place in April 1992 and the Conservatives needed to launch a persuasive campaign. Secretary of State Clarke decided to focus on the traditional teaching strategies in primary schools and the Tories eventually won the election; perhaps thanks to this campaign, perhaps not.

The year 1992 also saw the transformation of the Department of Education and Science into the Department for Education [76].

#### **7.1.1 John Patten**

After the general election of 1992, John Patten, the successor of Kenneth Clarke, became Education Secretary. Even Patten strived to limit the power of LEAs and he was also in favour of the system of selection. However, he was aware that comprehensive schools were very popular and knew the return to the selection process was almost impossible. Therefore, he decided to promote greater "specialization" instead of "selection" arguing that greater choice and diversity of schools would help to raise education standards. Patten claimed the abilities of pupils were different and every child excelled at different things. It follows that children should be graded on the basis of their skills.

The 1992 white paper "Choice and Diversity: A New Framework for Schools" laid down such provisions, which considerably undermined the comprehensive school system, as well as the rest of LEAs' powers. According to the white paper, children had different needs and therefore, there should exist different types of schools for them to choose.

Nevertheless, the National Commission on Education was strongly opposed not only to Patten's suggestions, but to the whole government. In their 1993 report "Learning to Succeed: a Radical Look at Education Today and a Strategy for the Future", they expressed their concern over the combining of high-quality education for all with a greater variety of schools. They also warned against a wider parental choice of schools and claimed this could result in pupil selection by schools themselves [77].

## **7.2 Middle-School Demise**

The late 1980s saw a considerable decrease in the number of middle schools despite the fact they had become very popular since their foundation in 1964 (see 4.3). In the course of 1990s, a large amount of middle schools were being abolished. One of the fundamental problems was undoubtedly the introduction of the National Curriculum, since middle schools straddled its key stages. Moreover, they had to face certain financial problems, because their number of pupils was not high enough, which resulted in more expensive school operations. The closure of middle schools faced strong opposition by teachers and parents [78].

## **7.3 1992 Education (Schools) Act**

The 1992 Education (Schools) Act laid down provisions concerning the foundation of the "Office for Standards in Education" (Ofsted) whose main task was to make regular school inspections and to write reports of their findings. Afterwards, the information obtained would be available to the public. The Ofsted was to be composed of the chief inspector of schools and his inspection team, including private contractors [79].

Inspections became widely unpopular, especially among teachers, since they included lengthy paperwork and caused stress. Moreover, the content of Ofsted reports was often called into question, as the private contractors were considered to have no idea about the current educational situation in Britain [80].

#### **7.4 1993 Education Act**

The 1993 Education Act was founded on the 1992 white paper “Choice and Diversity: A New Framework for Schools” and on the 1993 Dearing Report “The National Curriculum and Its Assessment“. These publications proposed several amendments to the National Curriculum, which was defined as unsuitable and unrealizable [81].

The Act laid down a number of provisions concerning the duties of the Education Secretary and “funding authorities“. It determined certain conditions for schools to gain the grant-maintained status and other regulations related to funding. Furthermore, the Act focused on special education for pupils with learning disabilities, school attendance and parental choice. It included also an amount of miscellaneous provisions concerning for example the foundation of new schools, the punishment or exclusion of pupils, local management funds and others.

The 1993 Act abolished the “National Curriculum Council” and the “School Examinations and Assessment Council“, which were replaced by a single authority, referred to as the “School Curriculum and Assessment Authority” [82].

#### **7.5 1997 Education Act**

The 1997 Education Act dealt especially with school discipline and pupil behaviour (see 9.2). As regards discipline, the governing bodies and head teachers were given a number of new responsibilities. LEAs were required to focus on children with some behavioural disorders and teaching staff was allowed to use an adequate force to restrain pupils when needed. In addition, schools were given the possibility not to accept a pupil who had been expelled from two or more schools.

The Act abolished the “School Curriculum and Assessment Authority” along with the “National Council for Vocational Qualifications“. They were replaced by the “Qualifications and Curriculum Authority” [83].

## **8 COMPETITION, CHOICE AND DIVERSITY**

### **8.1 New Labour's Policies**

The 1990s were marked by frequent protests against the policies of the Conservative government. In their general election campaign of 1997, the Tories pledged to support selection in education, which eventually proved fatal, because the general public was, in most cases, in favour of comprehensive education.

In May 1997 the “New Labour” Party led by Tony Blair (see Appendix 2, picture 6) won the general election. David Blunkett was appointed Education Secretary and the public sincerely believed the new government would finally abolish selection, league tables and Ofsted. Nevertheless, this did not happen and it was evident there would be no big difference between Labour's policies and those of the Conservative Party [84].

As Blair said the main priority of the new government was “education, education, education”, which also required a considerable investment. By the end of 1998 the basic spending per pupil had risen by 55 %, while teacher salaries grew by 18 %. Many school buildings were being refurbished and well-equipped as regards information technologies [85].

In addition, Labour established new publicly-funded schools, which did not fall under the control of LEAs. These schools, called “city academies”, had their own sponsors covering 10 % of the initial costs [86].

The new government also decided to put emphasis on literacy and numeracy in primary education, which eventually helped to rise the pupil achievements in GCSEs. The quality of education generally improved; however, big contrasts in the achievements of children from different backgrounds remained. Furthermore, Labour intended to take measures against truancy and bad behaviour of pupils; unfortunately, to no avail.

New Labour's policies, besides other things, contributed significantly to the gradual vanishing of comprehensive schools in Great Britain [87].



### **8.1.1 Andrew Adonis**

Andrew Adonis, a big reformist, was a close adviser of Tony Blair as regards education matters. He was also a prominent personality of the “Academies Programme” and was known for his frequent interventions into the work of Education Secretaries, who felt their powers were constantly being restricted by his proposals [88].

## **8.2 1997 White Paper: Excellence in Schools**

The white paper “Excellence in Schools” was issued in July 1997 and its proposals concerned particularly the transformation of secondary schools into the so-called “specialist schools”, which would be allowed to choose a small number of pupils. The white paper also suggested to use mixed ability teaching; the ability grouping was recommended only for certain subjects.

The government also pledged their support to socially disadvantaged areas by means of the “Education Action Zones” composed of schools in deprived areas cooperating together [89].

### **8.2.1 1998 School Standards and Framework Act**

The 1997 white paper’s proposals, including the possibility for schools to choose some of their pupils (however, no more than 10 %), were implemented in the 1998 School Standards and Framework Act, which initially provoked a strong opposition, particularly among teaching staff.

The Act also made provisions for the conversion of “county schools” into “community schools” and “grant-maintained schools” into selfgoverning “foundation schools” [90].

### **8.2.2 Specialist Schools**

The government claimed the introduction of comprehensive schools caused a sort of uniformity in education; nevertheless, children’s abilities

were significantly different. The establishment of specialist schools was then seen as a solution to this problem.

In 2000 Prime Minister Tony Blair declared over the course of the next three years, most of the comprehensive schools would become specialist. To gain the specialist school status, it was required to raise £50,000 in private sector sponsorship. In return, schools would be offered a grant of £100,000. Furthermore, each school had to set a number of targets concerning its development [91].

### **8.3 City Academies**

The “Academies Programme” was announced by David Blunkett, the Education Secretary, in 2000. A city academy was defined as a “type of school which is publicly funded, supported by one or more sponsors, and operates independently of the local authority” [92]. Sponsors were allowed to make some changes as regards curriculum, school buildings or the composition of school governing bodies.

City academies were established particularly in order to raise education standards in deprived areas but also to broaden the school choice and to ensure greater diversity. The main objective was to replace unsuccessful schools or, alternatively, to create new school places for children by means of newly built schools. First academies were opened in 2002 [93].

#### **8.3.1 Contradictory Views on Academies**

The introduction of city academies had its supporters, as well as many opponents. One of the most enthusiastic advocates of city academies was Blair’s education adviser Andrew Adonis (see 8.1.1). Adonis assimilated academies to “a ladder ... for less advantaged children to ... gain the very best education and qualifications, irrespective of wealth and family background” [94]. He claimed academies would become as prestigious as grammar schools but without selection [95].

The Academies Programme was also supported by Ed Balls, the next Education Secretary (see 9.1.2). Balls commented on academies at

the Labour spring conference in 2008: “Academies are turning round low-performing schools in disadvantaged communities; with fair and comprehensive admissions ... ; delivering faster-rising results than other schools.” [96].

City academies were encouraged not only by Labour, but also by the Conservative Party. They both claimed academies were “the future of education” [97] in Britain. However, despite these optimistic statements, some doubts about city academies soon began to emerge. In fact, they were very expensive and relatively low-achieving. Moreover, their pupil exclusion rates were among the highest in Britain [98].

The strongest opposition to academies came from teacher unions, particularly from the NUT (National Union of Teachers) and the NASUWT (National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers). Their main concerns consisted in the fact that academies were privately sponsored and they thus basically did not belong to the mainstream education anymore. Teachers were worried especially about their pay and working conditions but also about the maintenance of education standards. Their dissatisfaction resulted in an amount of strikes and industrial actions [99].

NUT regional secretary, Ms. Collins, told the BBC about academies: “In effect they are taken outside local authority control and there are concerns over how this will affect pay and conditions such as working hours and holidays.” [100]. Chris Keates, NASUWT general secretary, remarked for a change: “Establishing an academy school means handing over previously public assets to private sponsors, removing the school from the democratic accountability all state schools should have.” [101].

Moreover, academies faced resistance from parents and some local authorities. Dissatisfied parents signed a number of petitions against the conversion of schools in their areas to academies. The main reason was parents, as well as their children, did not have any idea about what to expect from city academies [102].

One of those worried parents said to the Guardian:

My daughter will be going into year 11 in September, her most important year at school. But we still don't know who is going to be teaching her. Every parent, now, is saying that the anxiety is building up among their children, because they just do not know what is going to happen. [103]

Not long ago, even the Labour Party itself has dished out criticism to academies, despite the fact the Academies Programme originally came from the Left. In fact, when the programme was launched academies were aimed to replace unsuccessful schools, especially those in socially disadvantaged areas. The current coalition government, however, decided to enable even the best schools in Britain to gain academy status without the need for a sponsorship. This plan included selective schools as well, which has aroused widespread criticism [104].

In a recent research, the Institute for Public Policy Research warned against social division caused by a growing number of academies. They argued "schools have no reason to be their own admissions authorities, other than to select students by ability or socio-economic background." [105].

#### **8.4 New Labour's Second Term**

The New Labour headed by Tony Blair was given the opportunity to pursue its education policy in June 2001, when it won the general election again. The Department for Education and Employment was renamed the Department for Education and Skills and Estelle Morris became Education Secretary.

The main goal of the Labour's second term in office was the promotion of the religious organizations engagement in education along with the establishment of faith schools, which became increasingly controversial.

During this period, the government's efforts to abolish comprehensive schools did not slacken; however, schools were not allowed to select on the basis of aptitude more than 10 % of their intake. The New Labour constantly claimed "ability" and "aptitude" were not the same [106].

#### **8.4.1 2005 White Paper: 14 - 19 Education and Skills**

The white paper 14 - 19 Education and Skills was drawn up by Ruth Kelly, the new Education Secretary, and issued in February 2005. It was partially based on the proposals of the working group led by former chief inspector Mike Tomlinson, which were summarized in the 2004 report "14 - 19 Curriculum and Qualifications Reform" [107].

The main objective of the 2005 white paper was to create an education system, which would be more tailored to talents of pupils and which would create more options for children as regards what and where to study. It stressed the importance of the basic knowledge of English and maths but also the need for an effective work-based learning.

The New Labour decided to preserve the GCSE examination, as well as A levels and suggested to introduce a general (GCSE) Diploma for pupils achieving five A\* - C grade GCSEs including English and Maths together with new specialised Diplomas.

The white paper also aimed to challenge the most gifted pupils by means of more demanding optional questions, which were put at the end of A Levels [108].

### **8.5 New Labour's Third Term**

In May 2005 the Labour Party became the winner of the general election for the third time; however, a large number of people did not vote at all, since they condemned Prime Minister Tony Blair for his decision to support the war in Iraq.

During his last term in office, Tony Blair decided to appoint Andrew Adonis Junior Education Minister and he pursued his education reforms as well. Even the controversial academies programme continued in spite of strong opposition from head teachers. The main reasons were they were expensive and also the lowest-achieving schools in Britain.

In 2007 the last Education Secretary of Blair's government, Alan Johnson, suggested the school leaving age should increase even more;

precisely, to the age of eighteen. Johnson's proposal was expected to come into effect in 2013 [109].

### **8.5.1 2006 Education and Inspections Act**

The Education and Inspections Act was published in November 2006 and its highly controversial provisions were particularly based on the 2005 white paper "Higher Standards, Better Schools for All: More Choice for Parents and Pupils" [110].

The white paper proposed that:

- ❖ New independent schools supported by one or more sponsors, known as "Trust schools" should be established and every school should have the possibility to gain the new status. These schools would be allowed, like academies, to hire their staff, choose their governing body members, manage their property or tailor their curriculum.
- ❖ „Failing“ schools should have one year to raise their standards. If they failed to improve, they would be offered to several new sponsors and would become either trust schools or academies. On the other hand, successful schools should be given greater discretion, as well as the opportunity to enlarge or merge with other schools in the area.
- ❖ Parents should get more involved in decision-making processes concerning for example behaviour problems or food provision at school. "Parent councils" would be compulsory for Trust schools.
- ❖ Children from less well-off families were to be offered free transport to schools located not farer than six miles.
- ❖ LEAs should provide support to children and parents and encourage greater choice and diversity; in other words, their role would be even more weakened [111].

Even though the white paper was sharply criticised and opposed, it was eventually approved and its suggestions were laid down in the 2006 Education and Inspections Act. Under the Act Ofsted was renamed to the "Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills" [112].

## **8.6 Blair's Policy Outcome**

The Blair's decade was marked by a large government investment in education in order to raise standards; however, pupil achievements in English and maths showed no noticeable change. Furthermore, the amount of young people who were "not in education, employment or training" [113], known as "Neets", was constantly rising [114]. On the other hand, this period saw a slight improvement in the overall exam results.

Under the New Labour, the situation in British education did not change very much, as its policies encouraged in particular the privatization in education, LEAs' power reduction but also a sort of discreet selection through the establishment of specialist schools. In addition, Blair decided to encourage faith schools by means of an expensive programme, which only led to public disagreement [115].

## **9 EDUCATION UNDER GORDON BROWN**

### **9.1 Gordon Brown as Prime Minister**

Former chancellor of the exchequer Gordon Brown (see Appendix 2, picture 7) succeeded Tony Blair as Labour Party leader and, in June 2007, Labour became the winner of the general election [116].

In his speech, Brown emphasized the need to tackle illiteracy and said unsuccessful schools would have to improve their exam scores within five years; if no change for the better was made, they might be abolished. In addition, Brown promoted the expansion of work-based learning.

On the other hand, the Conservative Party led by David Cameron supported the establishment of a special type of parent-owned schools funded by LEAs, called “cooperative schools”, and claimed they would focus on traditional teaching methods [117].

Between 2008 and 2009, Brown’s government had to deal with a global financial crisis, which resulted in a number of serious problems for Great Britain. The budget deficit rose and the government’s popularity even plunged. In May 2010 the Labour party lost the general election and Brown decided to resign [118].

#### **9.1.1 Education Department Split**

The Prime Minister decided to divide the department of education into two new departments, known as the Department for Children, Schools and Families and the Department of Innovation, Universities and Skills.

Ed Balls, the new Secretary of State, assumed responsibility for the DCSF, which was in charge of school supervision and focused especially on young people up to the age of nineteen. Moreover, it cooperated with other departments related somehow to children and their welfare.

The DIUS fell under the responsibility of John Denham and took care of higher education, including certain part of students, in particular apprentices, between sixteen and nineteen years old, which should by their age come under the DSCF. The DIUS was abolished in 2009 [119].



### **9.1.2 Ed Balls**

When Ed Balls (see Appendix 2, picture 8) became Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families, he pledged his support for pupils from less well-off families. Moreover, he sought to increase the school leaving age to eighteen, as well as to improve school discipline (see 9.2).

Ed Balls was an advocate of the controversial plans related to city academies, which gained support from the Conservative Party as well. The programme was, however, condemned by parents and teacher unions who claimed many average or pretty good schools were forced to become academies against their wishes. Nevertheless, the Education Secretary was determined to realize his plans and in 2008 launched the so called “National Challenge” in order to improve “failing” schools, which were, in most cases, completely average.

Under Balls, the number of faith schools in Britain increased as well. They represented one-third of all schools funded by the state, which resulted in growing public concern. The main problem was faith schools usually chose their teachers, as well as pupils according to their belief and were often accused of covert selection.

Balls also contributed to the establishment of “specialist diplomas”. The first of them were put into practice in 2008, with the hope they might replace the GCSEs and A Leves in the future. Another were expected to be introduced until 2011. Nevertheless, the creation of new diplomas caused unease as well, since neither students nor schools knew exactly what to expect [120].

## **9.2 School Behaviour Problems**

Despite government’s promises to deal with poor behaviour and deteriorating discipline in schools, a recent survey showed the situation in some of the British schools was truly alarming. Pupil behaviour has significantly worsened and insults or even attacks on teachers have been increasingly frequent.

Eight hundred British teachers participating in the survey were asked if they had ever been assaulted or injured by pupils. One in ten admitted they had experienced such situation, while three in ten confided to have encountered physically aggressive children. Moreover, three thirds declared discipline in schools had been deteriorating. Almost all respondents said they had often faced minor classroom disruptions and explained pupils were naughty mainly because they knew teachers did not have enough powers to restrain them [121].

Mary Bousted, the general secretary of the Association of Teachers and Lecturers that organized the survey, commented on the impact of insufficient discipline on teaching staff and other, well-behaved, pupils:

Not only is poor behaviour driving teaching staff away at an alarming rate - 65 % have considered leaving the profession as a consequence - it is also damaging the chances of other pupils during lessons by causing major disruption. [122]

Frank Chalk, one of those struggling teachers, summarized his negative experience of school life in a book written under the above-mentioned pseudonym. He criticized not only naughty pupils. He put the blame especially on parents along with the management of schools for their excessive indulgence as regards bad behaviour in school children.

The teacher explains:

Discipline, manners and respect are almost unheard of. There are a variety of reasons for this - poor home life, poor schooling in early years and a collective and creeping failure of will to impose rules and standards by teachers in schools for the last 30 years or so. [123]

Mr Chalk continues his narration:

When our pupils arrive at the age of eleven ... many, perhaps most, are unable to sit still and keep quiet for more than a few seconds at a time when these are basic prerequisites surely, of successful learning. ... This inability is not the fault of our pupils: it's simply that nobody, at home or in their early schooling, has ever bothered to insist they behave in this way. [124]

The teacher clarifies many of those misbehaved children come from the so-called "underclass", a social group largely living on welfare benefits. Their family life conditions are often adversely affected as a

result. Nevertheless, Mr Chalk adds that the standard of living of the majority of these families is relative high as compared to the poverty seen in other countries. Thus their deprivation has other causes than purely material ones [125].

### **9.3 Reports on the National Curriculum and Testing**

The Children, Schools and Families Committee created two reports; the “Report on Testing and Assessment”, which was published in May 2008 and the “Report on the National Curriculum” released in April 2009.

As regards testing, the CSFC recommended to make radical changes in the current testing system based on SATs tests, since they had already caused many serious problems. Moreover, they claimed excessive testing had a harmful effect on the way pupils were being taught, since teachers focused rather on test preparations than on an effective learning and quality itself. The report thus suggested to reduce the number of pupils tested, as well as the total volume of tests and it also proposed to review the assessment system. Secretary of State Ed Balls finally decided SATs tests would no longer be required for the Key Stage 3; however, the Key Stage 2 testing continued, which provoked strong opposition and boycott by teacher unions.

The second CSFC publication concerned the National Curriculum. It proposed to initiate an effective reform in order to make the syllabus less complicated and less prescriptive. Furthermore, the report recommended to review the existing curriculum content, particularly at primary level. The CSFC argued schools along with teachers should be given greater freedom and their decisions should reflect the children’s point of view as well. The second report also proposed to introduce the so called “Single Level Tests” together with a new diploma which was to replace different types qualifications [126].

#### **9.4 2008 Education and Skills Act**

The Education and Skills Act was published in November 2008 and its main aim was to encourage young people to pursue their education or training at least up to the age of eighteen.

The Act determined that by 2013 young people would be required to stay in some form of education or training until seventeen and by 2015 up to the age of eighteen. Teenagers would have three options: full-time education or training, part-time education or training or apprenticeship.

Moreover, it laid down certain provisions regarding the development of careers education provided for young people between eleven and sixteen. In addition, LEAs would be required to support young people by means of the so called “Connexions Service”.

As regards admissions, LEAs would be responsible for an annual report related to the admission systems in particular areas. Furthermore, students would be given the chance to express themselves as to where they would like to continue their sixth-form studies [127].

#### **9.5 2009 Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act**

Issued in November 2009, the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act created an amount of new provisions relating especially to apprenticeships for young people aged between sixteen and eighteen years. In addition to that, LEAs were given some new responsibilities concerning in particular the funding and provision of education and training to teenagers between sixteen and eighteen years old. The 2009 Act also focused on young offenders and behavioural problems and it established a “parental complaints service”.

Under this Act, the “Learning and Skills Council” was abolished; on the contrary, a number of new agencies, such as the “Young Person’s Learning Agency” or the “Skills Funding Agency”, was created [128].

## **9.6 2009 White Paper: Your Child, Your Schools, Our Future**

The white paper *Your Child, Your Schools, Our Future* was released in June 2009 and, besides other things, it proposed that:

- ❖ Pupil and Parent Guarantees should be introduced in order to inform children and parents about their rights and responsibilities regarding education.
- ❖ The “School Report Card” informing about child’s achievement and development should be created.
- ❖ A new licensing system for teachers should be established; licences would be renewable and valid for five years.
- ❖ Schools should be encouraged to create partnerships with other schools in order to improve provided services. Moreover, they should be given greater innovation opportunities.
- ❖ LEAs should provide assistance to unsuccessful schools and the role of the “School Improvement Partners” should be enhanced.
- ❖ The powers of school governing bodies should be consolidated [129].

### **9.6.1 2009 (2010) Children, Schools and Families Act**

The Children, Schools and Families Act was published in November 2009 and most of its regulations were based on the 2009 white paper. However, a considerable part of its provisions, such as the introduction of compulsory sex education from the age of five, school report cards or teaching licenses, was finally amended or abolished [130].

The most contradictory issue of the 2009 (2010) Act was undoubtedly sex education, which was intended to become a mandatory part of the National Curriculum. Nevertheless, this idea was strictly opposed by faith schools, so the government finally retreated [131].

## **9.7 Review of the Labour Party’s Policies**

The period between 2007 and 2010 was marked especially by a large amount of reforms, such as the introduction of new diplomas, curriculum

modifications or changes related to the education leaving age. The new secondary curriculum came into force in September 2008.

Ed Balls as Secretary of State undoubtedly did his best to support children, especially those struggling with poverty. Moreover, he took measures against covert selection and school bullying.

The government, however, did not manage to close the achievement gap between children from affluent and low-income families, which remained a serious problem for the education system. Furthermore, it preserved the ubiquitous testing along with league tables, and insisted on creating new city academies and trust schools despite growing public dissatisfaction [132].

## 10 CONCLUSION

As already mentioned in the introduction, the main objective of the present bachelor thesis is to describe the most important events with respect to the development of secondary education in Great Britain from the post-war years to the present. The thesis topic is outlined in the theoretical part, which precedes the practical part. The research itself is supported by an interesting interview with contemporary observer, Richard Pealling, who willingly shared his memories and experiences related to British education (see Appendix 3).

The post-war period brought many significant changes to the British education system. The 1944 Education Act created by Conservative R. A. Butler established the tripartite system of grammar, secondary modern and technical schools (described in 3.3), which formed the basis for British secondary education over the next few decades. Under the Act, the state education became free and compulsory from the age of five to the age of fifteen.

The main problem of the post-war school system was selection. Many pupils failed the examination at the age of eleven and were considered to have no preconditions for further successful learning. As a consequence, a large number of children finished their education at secondary modern or technical schools, which could never reach the prestige of grammar schools. Such students usually entered the working world at the age of fifteen or sixteen. During the 1950s the public dissatisfaction with grammar school selection grew stronger and the introduction of a fully comprehensive school system thus seemed like a reasonable solution.

The so-called “middle schools” established in the 1960s represented the first step towards state comprehensives, since they gave pupils the possibility to transfer at ages other than eleven (see 4.3). However, in the course of 1990s middle schools in Britain almost disappeared.

Comprehensive schools were introduced by Labour in the mid 1960s and their main task was to provide equal educational opportunities to all

children. State comprehensives have often faced behaviour problems. Moreover, they have been criticized for their one-size-fits-all approach to education. The reason is clear - when a smart child receives an education, which is not tailored to his/her needs, his/her potential can be wasted. Comprehensive schools have, however, remained the most numerous of all British secondary schools.

The 1970s were marked by an overall recession accompanied by frequent strikes and power cuts. When the “Iron Lady” Margaret Thatcher came to power in 1979, British education underwent further changes. Thatcher was an advocate of privatization and supported the private sector involvement in children’s education (this phenomenon was later followed by the introduction of privately supported schools, such as city academies or trust schools). Moreover, Thatcher’s government offered more opportunities to parents as regards school choice, and contributed to the introduction of the National Curriculum (detailed in 6.4) along with GCSE examinations (see 6.5) in Britain. The 1980s also saw a gradual transfer of power from local education authorities to the central government and schools themselves.

The initial idea of “specialization”, whose main aim was to promote greater choice and diversity in British education, came in the early 1990s and heralded the introduction of the so-called “specialist schools”, which have been allowed to choose some of their pupils (see 8.2.2). During the late 1990s, the New Labour led by Tony Blair made large investments in education in order to raise standards; unfortunately, pupil achievements showed no noticeable change.

During the 2000s, the Blair’s government policies encouraged the establishment of faith schools, trust schools and initiated the controversial “Academies Programme” as well (analyzed in 8.3). The main objective of privately sponsored academies was to replace unsuccessful secondary schools; nevertheless, they have soon started to face criticism, especially for their socially divisive admissions policy. Through the introduction of



academies, the government undermined the comprehensive education in Great Britain even more.

The 2000s were marked by a large number of reforms including the establishment of new qualifications unifying academic and vocational qualifications, known as “specialist diplomas”, curriculum modifications or changes concerning the education leaving age, which should increase to eighteen by 2015.

The present bachelor thesis does not describe all factors contributing to the development of British secondary education, since the topic is very extensive. The analysis of certain issues thus may be further elaborated. It may be interesting to compare the quality of British schools in different areas or to focus on different types of exam questions, which may appear in GCSE examinations, for instance. Moreover, the analysis of primary or further education development may provide different perspectives on the British education system as a whole.

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## **13 ABSTRACT**

The main objective of the present bachelor thesis is to describe the most significant British government education policies and to examine their consequent impact on the overall development of state secondary education in Great Britain from the post-war years to the present day, with a special focus on the educational situation in England.

The thesis is divided into eight chapters. The theoretical part, which follows the introduction, provides some factual information about the British education system. The practical part consists of the remaining chapters and is devoted to the description and analysis of the most important events with regard to British secondary education. Moreover, each chapter of the thesis includes a brief information about historical background relating to discussed topics and the research itself is livened up by personal narration of English teacher Richard Pealling.

The sources used for the purpose of the bachelor thesis comprise particularly printed monographs along with various electronic sources, including articles from the Internet editions of British newspapers.

## 14 RESUMÉ

Hlavním cílem této bakalářské práce je vystihnout nejvýznamější vzdělávací politiky britské vlády a dále analyzovat jejich následný dopad na celkový vývoj státního středoškolského vzdělání ve Velké Británii od poválečeného období po současnost, se zvláštním zaměřením na stav školství v Anglii.

Práce je rozdělena do osmi kapitol. Teoretická část, která následuje za úvodní kapitolou, poskytuje řadu věcných informací týkajících se britského školství. Zbývající kapitoly tvoří praktickou část práce, která je věnována popisu a rozboru nejdůležitějších událostí souvisejících se středoškolským vzděláním v Británii. Každá z uvedených kapitol navíc obsahuje stručný popis historického kontextu v souvislosti s rozebíranými tématy. Samotný výzkum je oživen autentickým vyprávěním v podání anglického učitele Richarda Peallina.

Zdroje využívané při psaní této bakalářské práce sestávají zejména z tištěných publikací spolu se širokou škálou internetových zdrojů, včetně internetových vydání britských novinových článků.

## 15 APPENDICES

### Appendix 1

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### Appendix 2

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### Appendix 3

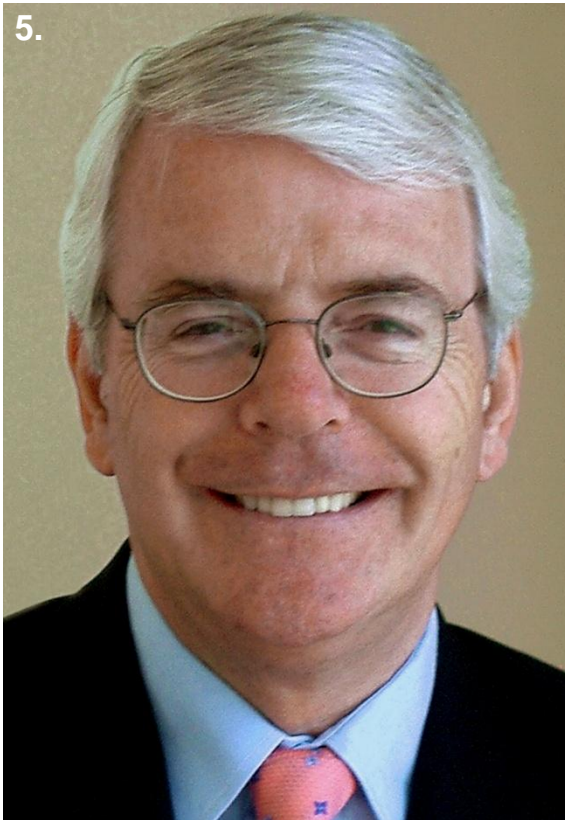
PEALLING, R. *Personal Experience with the British System of Education*; Interview. Message from: <ceskykaleidoskop@seznam.cz>; Message to: <ewiess@students.zcu.cz>. [25 March 2013].

# Appendix 1





## Appendix 2



## Appendix 3

### Interview with Mr Richard Pealling:

#### Personal Experience with the British System of Education

*In the 1960s the public dissatisfaction with the grammar school selection procedures resulted in the establishment of comprehensive schools in Britain. Do you have any memories either of comprehensive schools, grammar schools, secondary modern or technical schools? Did you attend any of them?*

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Public dissatisfaction with the 11 plus system of selection was rife by the mid 1950's. The theory was that the exam would separate the sheep from the goats though I have yet to work out what I was. An offensive term anyway. Criticism was based on the following. Most students took the exam before they were 11, I was 10 years 7 months old. To seek to categorise somebody as fit or unfit for a job on the basis of a single exam at this early age was clearly wrong.

The marking of the exams was open to criticism, particularly general intelligence tests. Often clever students do badly since they think of more complicated answers. Students from the private sector or richer parents often had an unfair advantage since they could receive special coaching so it was not an even playing field. If it was a fair test then why were the names of the students on the papers?

In the 1950's the children were asked in the 11 plus paper what the word "conviction" meant. The correct answer was "a strong belief". The academics, who wrote the paper and, one assumes lived on cloud nine, forgot that the word also meant "to be found guilty in a court", so this answer was marked as wrong. I am told that this is a true story. In East London the children were in closer touch with reality and many gave the second, correct, but marked incorrect, answers. There was a culture bias in the system.

What is the odd one out? Birmingham, Dublin, London, Bristol. An English child might say Dublin because it is foreign whereas a child from an Irish background could say Birmingham because it is not on a river. This is my example but there were numerous problems with IQ tests.

The argument that you did not fail the 11 plus it just meant you went to a different school might have fooled some politicians but we ten year olds knew exactly what the score was. You were written off as a failure by the age of 11.

Many of the Secondary Moderns were simply old elementary schools with buildings and facilities too much. They simply changed the name. Very few ALLOWED students to stay past 15 so you had no chance to do GCE's. If you could stay on there was no proper teaching or classes.



Most damning of all there was no national pass mark so in Essex your chance of passing was 1 in 10, in Middlesex 1 in 3 ½ [now North West London] and in Wales 1 in 2. The year I took the 11 plus things were so bad they had to buy places in East London to reach an acceptable minimum number of passes. Where the population was expanding no new grammar schools had been built so that was why Essex was short of places. It seems that the balance between sheep and goats varied regionally and by counties.

In addition to grammar schools and secondary modern schools a few new technical schools were established. These were later seen as educational failures and having been to one I know why. The idea was that more technically minded but possibly border line students would do better than in a grammar school. They were bright but more technical than academic. By the late 1950's Labour was pushing comprehensive schools and the Conservatives were keen to say that they were not against comprehensives because so many were unhappy about the system.

One counter was to introduce the 13 plus a second chance and this is when I passed. The problem with that was changing schools at 11 and then at 13. The Sec Moderns were therefore losing many of their better students at 13 further confirming that those remaining were failures.

On the advice of a teacher I gave my first choice as the technical school since I was no good at PE and this was important in a grammar school. One of my ex colleagues was so unhappy at grammar school because most of the students and teachers were middle class and he was not. Oh your parents DO NOT GO abroad for their holidays...

People relate the breakdown in discipline and worse behaviour to the change to comprehensives but the basic problem is that teachers have no power and in 1997 Labour made it virtually impossible to exclude a student. All the onus is on the school and not the student and this is not to do with the type of school. One boy tried to burn a school down but excluding him would damage his education so he was readmitted. He killed another student the first day back. Now students are being excluded but it is the teacher who is to blame. So teachers damage their careers if they seek to impose discipline. This is a general attitude and a long way from grammar schools when every teacher had their own method of discipline be it stick, slipper, strap, rubber hose or piece of wood.

I was thinking of a very clever boy Frances, at Sec Modern whose parents would not let him take the 11 or 13 plus. They did not want him to aspire to a higher position.

By the way I almost missed the 13 plus exam. The bus was late. There was no special bus this was the usual London Transport bus. The exam was a few miles away and no provision had been made for us to get there. What a shambles.

As a result of the 11 plus, all of our little group, Andrew, Barry David and I failed. However the other three went to Dury Falls and I went

to Bush Elms. I lived in a slightly different area. I have to say that the teachers were often good and also there were many clubs and societies, photography, esperanto, chess... The school holiday to Wales was largely a fiasco of bad organisation but I did get to see the Liverpool Overhead Railway on a trip.

The Maths teacher was very good as was the Technical Drawing teacher, well ahead of the Technical School teacher. It might have been better to have had a fifth year at that school and stayed there but you had this problem that the focus was on passing the 13 plus since a Sec Modern education was seen to mark you down as non academic. There would be no chance of getting a job in a bank, for example.

Of course in those days it was virtually unknown to stay past 16 and as for going to university, well a very few did but only from grammar schools. There was an idea to try for a GCE stream and Spanish could have been offered but those that left in 1956 would have been the basis of that.

To give you an idea of the teachers it was a lady teacher who saw I was struggling and held up glasses for me and said I probably needed glasses. So this was spotted there. The problem was not the teachers or the teaching but the perception people had of the schools. You were typecast. When we went to the technical school we did go back to say thanks and told them that their teaching was good. I have never gone back to the technical school and never will. Next Problems with the technical school - generally the teachers were crap. Perhaps they were from industry and not natural teachers or negative. The one exception was Mr Winter the PE master who recognised I had the coordination of an elephant and did not make my life a misery.

I wanted to do French so I had to do German. I liked Chemistry but we had to give that up after one year. You could not do Geography and History only one. There seemed to be no strategy and every student failed German every year. The idea was that you could not achieve a GCE in three years but some could have but they were not gifted teachers, except for one mentioned and the Maths teacher.

I made a big effort on Technical Drawing in the mock GCE but still was not allowed to do the proper exam which meant I was only doing two subjects so instead of revising I was obliged to attend school and wasted lessons. The result was I failed Geography and only passed Maths.

The recovery started after I left the school, passing Geography in the winter of 1959. By 1962 I had finished the first part of the banking degree [five subjects].

This is not an unusual story. Few of my now very successful friends have a good word to say about their schools so forget the romantic image of the good old days.

*In your opinion, which of the British education systems was the most effective and why? Which school would you choose for your child - a selective grammar school, a "one-size-fits-all" comprehensive school or one of the contemporary schools (a specialist school, a trust school or an academy)?*

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The best advice today would be to seek out a religious school, probably Roman Catholic but perhaps Church of England. Many parents suddenly find a religious streak when they see the problem. Now in Kent there is still an 11 plus. You put down your choice of school but here is the problem. You can opt for the Grammar School or for the Catholic school but the Catholic school must be your first choice.

Between Comprehensive and Grammar it just depends on the school. However like football teams schools go up and down so the information must be up to date. Southmoor was a comprehensive school in Sunderland but was still like an old selective school. So like wines there are comprehensives and comprehensives. House prices are often distorted since being in the catchment area of a good school is worth a lot of money. You can apply for your child to go anywhere but clearly if you live in Canterbury you are in the natural catchment area of a Canterbury school but if you live in Dover you are not [ie for Canterbury].

We have the myth of parental choice but in reality the school does the choosing. John M has had to spend 30,000 pound fighting to get his autistic grandson statemented for special needs while John D's son was being sent to a sink Sec Modern due to close in a few years, in 1979. He told them point blank his son would not go there as he then went to a good comprehensive. He has worked for the Foreign Office since 1990 and is in a good position. In both cases the parent's fighting was critical.

Grammar schools mention their successes but not their failures. When we passed at 13 we were told that half who passed at 11 were now considered failures.

The new academies... well it depends on the school. The trouble with the business ethics is that you focus on the most gifted and push out the rest. The college in Folkestone got the best A level results in Kent. Based on 10 students. Schools push you out at 16 unless you can do 3 A levels. Pity a latter day Rembrandt who could only do Art and Renoir another failure no doubt.

What about the private sector? The problem is that when you run a school today you are running a business. I do not see five students but 200,000 in fees. Keep the parents happy and say what they want to hear. Ken's sons both went to good public schools and failed every subject at GCSE level. Why the fees were coming in the school did not care...

Richard Pealling