



Education Politics

Journal of the Socialist Educational Association

June 2015, N° 124

Free to members

£1 non-members



Could any of these
lead the way to a
socialist education
system?



INSIDE:
the leadership
candidates speak
for themselves

Editorial

This edition contains no articles on what went wrong for Labour on 7th May. The Party is conducting an investigation. The research into who voted for whom, where, and why, will have to be high quality to circumvent the lack of candour on the part of many respondents to pre-election pollsters. The propensity of commentators to profess to know the answers before the investigation is to be deprecated.

Amongst those taking precipitate action, strongly influenced by 24 hour news outlets desperate for the new, was the Party Leader. It was not always axiomatic that losing an election meant losing that job, and it is arguable that the Leader should have stayed to lead the investigation and subsequent debate on policy direction. Was Ed a big negative during the campaign? Don't answer that question, wait for the investigation to tell us.

Whatever the outcome, the results will require considered interpretation, not an instant reaction. We must avoid a descent into the populism of adopting a policy portfolio merely of items mentioned by the electorate in 2015, because Labour has no *raison-d'être* without standing for change, change away from unjust economic and social structures, and change needs arguing for. As we approach the 70th anniversary of our greatest ever election victory, we have to admit that the 2015 electorate does not share the hunger to make a new society felt by its 1945 counterpart. Labour must present the case for change, but in a way which appeals to those who fear that change means worse. A judicious mix between following and leading public opinion.

The British left has to make the case explicitly that 'no man is an island'. *Everybody* would be better off, emotionally and psychologically, in a fairer society where communal sentiment had a much larger place, and stress on individual consumption was reduced. This is what should set Labour leaders apart from Ministers who continue to preach the creed of greed.

What would an education system built on communal values look like? Those who aspire to lead the Party set out their ideas on education in this edition. Kevin Brennan, who will lead opposition in the Commons to the Education Bill, sets out his views about the challenges that could trip up the government. It already looks as if the government

is intent on policies that will provide easy targets: inadequate action on the priority issues, the provision of sufficient school places and teachers; unfairer and inadequate funding for schools and a disastrous neglect of FE; and a continuing lack of transparent accountability for academies.

But as well as these day-to-day issues, at this stage we need national figures to argue from first principles about the purposes of education in a fairer society. One key principle must be that education is a social experience as well as an individual journey, a preparation not only for FHE and work but also for roles in family, community, and polity. School is where children learn what it is to be social. To see, and to understand, the variety of humanity, to learn the importance and the mechanics of getting on together, the necessity of interdependence. School is where children develop their sense of fairness. School should be where young people learn that economic and social arrangements are not fixed, but created and changed by people, and that there is another way; that greed is an example of a characteristic which is not human nature, but created by some societies. All of these things should be on the curriculum and be assessed.

We must begin a popular debate about the nuts and bolts of upper secondary curriculum and assessment. Yes, of course academic study must have a place, but so must craft skills, physical abilities and the arts. Underlying that debate will be the continuing conflict between those who believe that all learners deserve access to high status academic knowledge and qualifications, and those who would create radically different qualifications, producing new hierarchies of status. The supporters of the status quo will not lie down, but we need a government prepared to use its power to be radical. After all, if the Labour Party has the aim to reduce inequality, it will need to form a government with all kinds of radical plans.

And this is where the progressives can meet the populists. Dissatisfaction about many aspects of education is felt not only by the CBI, but many parents for various reasons, and by children and young people who cannot access the learning and qualifications they need. Labour's challenge over the next five years is to listen, really listen, to these voices, and then to travel beyond well-worn paths towards radical solutions which will persuade the dissatisfied.

The leadership candidates speak out

Education Politics invited each of the declared candidates for Leader of the Labour Party to present their views on education. Their contributions are published in alphabetical order. Mary Creagh's piece is included despite her withdrawal so readers can see what they are missing!

Andy Burnham

This is an edited version of the speech delivered in Crewe on 15 June 2015.

It is much harder for many of today's generation to make their way in the world than it was for us 30 years ago. As traditional industries have declined, so too have the ladders-up they once provided. University is open to more but creates a major financial burden. Jobs are far less secure than they once were. And there are too few skilled jobs, so many young people end up doing jobs that do not reflect their qualifications.

I am the lad who went to a Merseyside comprehensive and from there to Cambridge, the first in my family to go to University. When I saw how the other half lived, I realised how easier it was for some to make their way in this world than others. It made me understand why the best university places and the best jobs were dominated by people from certain backgrounds. And they still are, possibly even more so.

Interesting research from Alan Milburn's Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission shows that more than two-thirds of the job vacancies in elite legal and City firms are filled by university graduates who have been through private or grammar schools. Yet we know that nearly 90 per cent of schoolchildren had a comprehensive education, compared to just 7 per cent attending fee-paying schools and 4 per cent going to selective grammar schools. I sometimes wonder if there is a 'poshness test' in Westminster and Whitehall. I have seen in my own life how an accent can hold you back. If I believe in anything, I believe in changing that.

I was at Cambridge when the first student loans were introduced and I was part of the group organising the demonstrations against them. I asked my younger brother John to join us on the march. He surprised me by saying there was no chance he would be

marching round Cambridge with a bunch of privileged students when I had been at school with were paying to put themselves through college to get the technical skills they needed. I have never forgotten this discussion and it has shaped my thinking about education policy ever since.

One of the greatest failures of post-war public policy in this country has been its lack of focus on technical education. Young people who don't want to go to university and instead want a high-quality technical education have been neglected by successive governments. This is the 'Westminster bubble' at its worst. It is full of people who went to University and, consequently, like to make what they know the focus of Parliamentary debate and education policy. Its blind spot on technical education has left it as a low status, second-class option, where funding is patchy and there is no clarity for young people about the routes they can take into quality training and highly-skilled jobs. Is it therefore any wonder that so many people feel disconnected from politics when it appears to be dominated by an elite which has little understanding

of what matters to them and fails to provide the answers they are looking for? The truth is that better technical education has been a long-standing issue for many voters. As traditional industry has declined, they have become more and more worried about how their children or grand-children will get the technical training they need and what jobs they will do in future.

The Labour Party I lead will build a school system that helps every young person get on in life, by basing it on one simple principle: true parity between academic and technical education. If we want to value quality apprenticeships, let's call them what they are: a technical education. We need to take on the idea that the A-grade students are destined to



The leadership candidates speak out

Andy Burnham (cont)

take degrees. The best technical courses have high academic content and are highly demanding. We need to have our brightest and our best as comfortable in the design shop as they are in the debating hall. Let's make sure that technical qualifications carry the same prestige as degrees: leading to a professional status, letters after your name and a graded qualification (rather than pass/fail as many are at present).

Our schools system, and the way it is inspected, is today geared towards the academic, University route. Schools judged on the five GCSE measure have an in-built incentive to focus on some children over others. Young people who aspire to go on the University route have clear goals to aim for and know exactly what is expected of them, but young women and men who want to head towards work or an apprenticeship are left to fend for themselves. If the path towards an apprenticeship was as clear as the path towards university, more young people would see the relevance of their education.

We will need good quality apprenticeships in much more plentiful supply than there are today, much clearer information about opportunities across the country, and a proper structure for how to access them. I want a national UCAS-style system for apprenticeships, raising sights, rewarding those who work hardest, giving all children hope and a goal in life. That could do a huge amount to lift aspirations in this country. And why shouldn't young people who want a technical education be given help to travel across the country, and relocate there like university students, to get access to the best courses? If the same kind of financial support for students was available to apprentices, then they would be able to move to a different part of the country to complete the training best suited to them. The average student will now graduate with £44,000 of debt. It's bad for them and the taxpayer. Almost three quarters of students will never pay their loan back in full, meaning the cost of writing it off has to be met by the government. Let's look at how we can make tuition fees fairer to students and taxpayers.

Aspiration isn't the preserve of certain voters; it is felt by everyone, but, in this modern and insecure world, the light of hope is going out for far too many. Under my leadership Labour will turn it back on.

Yvette Cooper

This is an edited version of the speech delivered on 15 June 2015.

I'm standing to be leader because I hate the widening divisions in our country – the widening gap between rich and poor, the fracturing communities, the turning inwards, the politics of division and blame. I hate the fact that people are working really hard but not getting a fair deal; that more children will be growing up in poverty that holds them back; that our precious NHS is struggling; that families feel so stretched; that so many people feel worried or pessimistic about the future; that Britain just isn't seizing the brilliant opportunities that the future could bring.

So our challenge now is to refresh and to renew. We won't deliver a Labour Government by swallowing the Tory manifesto, Tory plans, or Tory myths. Nor will we win just by trying to splice together a shopping list of retail policies targeted at different slices of the electorate. If you believe in a fairer Britain, if you want to be part of a more prosperous, stronger, more optimistic country, I want your home to be with Labour. The world is changing fast. And people want to feel ambitious for their future not fearful about what tomorrow will bring.

Technology is changing at an exponential pace. Global science, invention and innovation are accelerating. Creating amazing new opportunities, but also new threats. Our economy is changing in the face of global competition, jobs are polarising, with many jobs in the middle disappearing, and a growing problem with low skills, low productivity, and people trapped in low paid work.

Social mobility risks falling as old ladders of opportunity fall down, and hard work no longer pays. More children are being held back growing up in poverty, more young families unable to buy a home, and more middle class parents worried their children will be worse off than themselves.

Family life is changing – as more women work and we care now for older relatives as well as our children. Communities are changing. Cities are getting stronger, but many towns are being left behind.

The leadership candidates speak out

Yvette Cooper (cont)

Higher levels of migration are affecting communities and local economies. Community cohesion is being challenged by rising extremism, anti-Semitism, islamophobia and hate crimes. People want more from public services just at a time when money is tight. Political identities are changing – with the rise of nationalism, the new questioning of what we share in common, and a creaking political structure that struggles to cope. Our role in the world is changing, with deep uncertainty over our relationship with Europe, and new global challenges to face including climate change and the rise of ISIL.



In the 2015 election, I don't believe most people felt any party was facing up to those future challenges, or showing how we can earn prosperity and security in that changing world.

We should start by championing the digital and science revolution. That's how we will get the jobs of the future, the productivity growth, the new opportunities for everyone. That is a world of opportunity for tech start-ups, entrepreneurs, people wanting to run an online business from their home in a rural community, the young people doing their A-Level exams who want a place on hi-tech course at university. We need to encourage the start-ups. Invest in science, technology and innovation. Make investment available to the entrepreneurs who are willing to take a risk. And make sure everyone has the chance to get into new and high tech jobs.

It's not just about digital. Despite our brilliant scientific history, and the great academic and research breakthroughs we still enjoy, we just aren't cutting it in the modern world. Look what other countries are doing. Germany, Scandinavia, Korea and Japan are now investing 3% of their GDP in science, technology and innovation – through businesses, Universities, the public sector and charities. Britain is being left too far behind. That's not good enough. We should set our ambition to increase our collective investment in our high tech future to 3% too. Using Government support to set incentives to boost private sector, universities and charitable investment in science and technology too.

And we need to champion social mobility too. And here's three examples of how to do so for the future of the next generation:

- Leading the revolution in vocational education so everyone can get the skills for the new jobs we need.
- Tackling the disadvantage which is holding children back. Nearly 5 million children will be in absolute poverty, many of them in working families, as inequality widens. It's time to increase childcare, increase the minimum wage, bring in a living wage - help parents give every child the very best chance in life. We should recommit to ending child poverty in Britain within a generation.
- And we need a revolution in housebuilding – not the 200,000 homes a year we promised at the election, but 300,000 homes a year.

Turning their backs on rising inequality and child poverty, won't deliver stronger, fairer communities or the talented future workforce our country needs. Shrinking public services driven by ideology won't help us care for a growing elderly population.

Turning inwards towards Little England, not Great Britain in Europe, won't help us get the international investment, the jobs, or influence the global debates.

In each of these areas we have big choices to make as a country. Get those choices wrong and we become a narrower, fractured, more unequal, inward looking country. Get those choices right and we can build the stronger fairer country we should all of us want to be part of.

The leadership candidates speak out

Jeremy Corbyn

A public education service throughout our lives – that's my vision for education.

In a fast-changing world where new technology is making new jobs and breaking old ones, and information of every kind is instantly available, we need an education system that opens minds and imagination. The Conservative government is sending us in precisely the wrong direction – with savage cuts to further education courses, especially for adult learners but also narrowing the opportunities of those just finishing their GCSEs.

Since 2010 for example, the adult skills budget has been cut by a staggering 40% - staggering not just in its scale, but in its stupidity and gross irresponsibility too. The UK already lags behind similar countries on productivity. How can we build and expand the sectors of the future, and the skilled workforce we need, if we cut back on opportunities for lifelong learning? A small tax, perhaps just an extra 1% or 2% on corporation tax (still leaving us with comfortably the lowest rate in the G7), could enable us to reverse those cuts and start developing a proper strategy to deliver better jobs and empower working people to skill up as new opportunities arise.

We all benefit from those who went to university, the teachers who educated us, the doctors who have helped us, the lawyers we've campaigned alongside and so the list goes on. There is something perverse about watching parliamentarians deciding to chain today's generation to a lifetime of debt. That debt depresses their incomes and leaves it even harder for young people to save for a deposit on their first home, or anything else in their lives.

It is a limited and individualist mind that sees education as a source of personal advancement. It is a collective good that helps us all, our society and our economy. That's why tuition fees should be abolished.

Some have argued that we are wrong to put extra money into higher education and should focus on early years. It is an entirely false dichotomy to pit toddlers against teenagers, or adult education for that matter.

The case for investing in early years education and universal free childcare is overwhelming. A study by PriceWaterhouseCoopers a decade ago told us that in the long-term universal childcare would more than pay for itself – due to extra tax revenues from those in work and productivity gains.



Politicians like to dress up in hard hats and hi-vis jackets on their pet construction projects, but where is the same gusto for investment in the social infrastructure that both creates jobs and enables others to have the opportunity to work too?

Compulsory education received large scale and much need investment under the last Labour government – after decades of neglect. But, as

The leadership candidates speak out

Liz Kendall

elsewhere in the public sector, New Labour's investment was compromised by PFI deals and the imposition of free market models. We are wasting tens of millions of pounds on legal, accountancy, consultancy and property support for academies and free schools that should be spent on educating our children. This wasteful competition must end.

Why was it that we believed the ability to run a business, to sell cars or carpets might make you best-placed to run a school? It insults the skills and professionalism of the education sector to see schools handed over in a stepping stone to privatisation. Schools must be accountable to parents and communities, not to boardrooms or appointed governors. Free schools and academies need to be brought back into the orbit of public education and local authorities.

Teachers have also been demoralised by years of pay restraint and it is time that our dedicated teachers got a pay rise, and a national pay system restored. They have been disrespected too by the implicit assertion that teaching itself is not a specialist skill. It is, and the fact that in free schools 1 in 7 teachers are unqualified concerns me greatly for those children's and our collective future.

It is clear that teachers need the flexibility to teach and tailor their lessons to their communities and their students. The obsession with testing means teaching a rigid curriculum that stifles teachers' and students creativity.

We want schools that co-operate through education authorities and a reformed or refounded Ofsted, acting to advise schools and share best practice.

Co-operative, creative and lifelong – a service there for you whenever you need it throughout your life. If we build that we will all share in the rewards of a more productive economy and a more prosperous future.

As Labour people, we understand the complex problems that face children and families in some of our most deprived communities. To those problems now we must add the challenges of the fast changing global economy. In Government, we were determined to seize the opportunities globalisation brings - and rightly so. But we didn't realise that the scale and pace of change was creating a profound sense of loss in many communities.

New Labour was too cavalier about the problems caused by globalisation. I am not. But showing leadership on this issue is about more than empathy. We must be the champion of every child and passionate about ensuring they get the chances in life they deserve. Getting a great education is too important to allow low expectations. Education is fundamental to our profound belief that everyone should have the chance to fulfill their potential and live their hopes and dreams. We must be the champions of a chance not a grievance. We mustn't shy away from change but instead make it our mission to equip people with the skills, knowledge, character and confidence to make the most of it whatever their background.

We have to start early. Children in my constituency start school 15 months behind children in wealthier parts of England. These early inequalities emerge in the home, not the classroom. Children growing up in professional homes hear three times as many words as children in the most disadvantaged homes. The amount parents read to their children and the number of books at home makes a huge difference to later success. I believe our youngest children shouldn't start school playing catch up. These early skills affect how well children do at school and in the world of work - and even if they work at all. There's nothing economically credible about paying for unemployment and benefits that could have been prevented.

With me as Leader, the foundation years – 0 to 5 – will be equal in importance and status with primary and secondary schools. That means far more than increasing the amount of affordable childcare that's available to help parents with young children. We must draw on the wealth of experience that many

cont p8

The leadership candidates speak out

Liz Kendall (cont)

voluntary organisations have of working with parents in the most disadvantaged areas. We must transform the status and quality of the entire early years workforce. Labour made a huge difference to these issues when we were in Government through Sure Start - one of our proudest achievements.

Now Sure Start Children's Centres need to change to ensure an even more radical shift towards early intervention, to tackle the root causes of problems. Cities like Manchester are already delivering big results even within tight resources. Under my leadership, early years will be a top priority, but what works best will be determined locally, not from Westminster.

I've said that re-establishing our reputation for economic credibility is a fundamental part of Labour being seen as fit to govern our country again. But there is no economic credibility for our country if we don't equip people for the 21st century. That's not just about what children learn in traditional lessons but how we open their eyes and minds and their broaden horizons in schools. One of the best days I've had since I became an MP was in Parks Primary in my constituency. The Head, Mrs Evans, and her team had brought in people with all different types of jobs and careers into the school. They call it 'Aspirations week'. At Parks Primary, 'aspiration' really means something. It means a woman engineer telling an enthralled group of 10 and 11 year olds about building tunnels in Australia, with her plans, pictures and hard hat. And it means a young girl telling me that if she wants to be an engineer herself, she'd better work harder at maths. Mrs Evans and her teachers know that if they don't show all their pupils what's possible, the same way some parents do, the chance is they'll get left behind. Innovations in schools like Parks Primary teach girls and boys – particularly from white working class communities who are doing worse at school than any other ethnic or social class combination - about chances in life they may not even know exist.

This is an inspiring vision of what our schools can do. It shows why schools need strong leadership and great teachers, particularly in severely deprived areas. So while we must ask even more of our teachers, we must never forget the amazing contribution they make - and never denigrate them for a cheap headline, as David Cameron shamefully allowed Michael Gove to do for years.



Success can come from many sources. I'll never forget the debt that I owe my parents, the teachers who guided me, and university lecturers who inspired me. I also know that I owe so much to the opportunities Labour governments like the state school that taught me success was about what was in your head not in your wallet. Labour has always understood your potential should never depend on where you're born, what your parents did, your gender, sexuality or the colour of skin. To achieve that aim we must end the scourge of illiteracy and innumeracy, broaden the horizons of our young people and give everyone a better chance in life. A Labour Party that isn't talking about education and social mobility has forgotten why it exists. The Labour Party I lead will always remember its purpose. And we will act on it. Starting from day one.

The leadership candidates speak out

Mary Creagh

Einstein said, "The true sign of intelligence is not knowledge but imagination". He was right. A 2020 education system has to teach young people how to think not what to think if they are to have the ideas to invent the breakthroughs and businesses of tomorrow. Labour is full of education experts in the SEA and elsewhere, and I want to listen to them.

The jobs that our children will do have not yet been invented. We need to make sure that we have the right toolkit, the education and skills and innovation infrastructure - so that everybody can get on. How do we make the UK a world leader in STEM subjects as well as the creative arts? How do we close the educational attainment gap between rich and poor children which is growing for the first time ever? Why are 1000 infants in Wakefield taught in classes of more than 30 pupils? Why do we not value the role and status of qualified teachers? How do we train more young people with specialist technical skills in transport, engineering, computing and data?



My Mum was a primary school teacher and taught me the importance of working hard at school from an early age. I would not have got to Oxford without the extra classes from Mr Avery who taught me French, Spanish and Italian at Bishop Ullathorne Comprehensive in Coventry in the eighties. World Teachers Day on 5th October is celebrated all over the world, yet in the UK it is almost unheard of. A Labour government led by me will do all it can to ensure that respect for teachers is the norm, not the exception.

As progressives, we know that education is the key to social mobility. Investing in Sure start, and a bus

pass for 16-19 year olds will be my priorities for educational and social mobility, not reducing tuition fees. As Labour leader, I will insist on qualified teachers in our schools, high quality in-service training for teachers, more freedoms for all schools with strong local oversight, and excellent vocational qualifications for the 16-18s. I support our 2015 manifesto proposals for new Leadership Partnerships between businesses and Heads. Creating 'Master Teacher' status to improve motivation of teachers would have improved teacher retention. A School Leadership Institute with the power to accredit headship qualifications, attract the next generation of Heads and encourage more BAME heads should be in our 2020 manifesto. Children do not get a second chance at education so we must move swiftly to tackle underperforming schools. Rolling out the London Challenge programme across the country will create a country where no child is left behind.

I am proud that my Children's Food Bill, introduced when I was a new backbench MP in 2005 was accepted by our Labour government. It set out minimum nutritional standards for all school meals, took fizzy drinks and junk food out of school vending machines and taught children the basics of cooking and growing their own food. It also took junk food adverts aimed solely at children off the TV.

Before Parliament, I spent 7 happy years in Higher Education, teaching entrepreneurship to MBA students and fast growth companies at Cranfield Business School. I had the privilege, with my colleagues, of redesigning our MBA course to focus it on experiential learning, rather than the traditional chalk and talk model that went before. The redesign team asked ourselves, if we wanted our students to understand international business - well - didn't we have to send them outside Bedfordshire? Of course we did. We changed the course. And they came back bursting with excitement and knowledge, enlivened by their visits to companies across the world, sharing their experiences and teaching each other. I also reshaped our MBA into a modular system, digitising the content onto CD roms (remember those?) so the owner manager of a Russian spice business had the same opportunity to study our MBA programme as European business people. Going digital opened up our MBA to the wider world. And it opened the wider world to our MBA.

cont p10

Mary Creagh (cont)

Creating growth for UK plc through excellence in Higher Education is something this country has always done well, but it will need a government with pro-active policies to maintain this international prowess in the future. Nottingham University was the first UK university to set up a campus in Ningbo, China, 10 years ago, and now also has a campus in Malaysia. Birmingham University has an outpost in Guangzhou, but I want this globally excellent education for young people in Wakefield. Sadly, Leeds University closed both its Bretton Arts campus outside Wakefield and its city centre outreach hub several years ago. Global expansion and excellence must go alongside better access to Higher Education for UK students.

In successful economies, governments actively create education policy. Michael Gove's micro managing of the curriculum has set things back. Government ministers should not decide whether or not 'To kill a mockingbird' or 'Of mice and men' are on the syllabus. That meddling means that technical qualifications will be squeezed out of schools in favour of traditional "academic" subjects. Don't get me wrong - I'm a big fan of Latin A level. Catullus certainly taught me some very rude words which weren't normally bandied around in a Catholic school's 6th form! But Cantonese or Mandarin might be more useful today.

The Tory government's education policies have ignored the many for the benefit of the few. They have closed Sure start centres, scrapped Education Maintenance Allowances and have wasted hundreds of millions on free schools in areas where there is no need, while schools around the country crumble. One in 3 free schools inspected so far are rated inadequate or requiring improvement by Ofsted. Why would we continue a failing programme?

The public trusts Labour locally to run their schools, their councils and their care services. But they do not trust us on the economy. To win in 2020 we must have a clear and distinctive offer for educational excellence, which is forward-looking and fair. We must explain how a digital education and skills system is an essential part of the toolkit that will allow everybody to get on.

ARK and the revolution of state education in England

Carolina Junemann & Stephen J. Ball

This is an extended extract from a paper published in 2013. The government's policy of supporting chain sponsors makes its analysis even more relevant today, although some details have changed. Thanks to the authors for permission to re-publish.

The landscape of state education in England (not Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland – at least to the same extent), is being fundamentally transformed and increasingly more areas of state activity in relation to education are being contracted out to or run in partnership with private and/or charitable providers (see Ball and Junemann 2012). One of the new policy organisations that has considerably expanded its involvement in state education in England (and in the USA, India and Uganda, see below), taking up public sector responsibilities previously reserved for the state itself and increasingly involved in the new Coalition policy developments, is the charity ARK. The charity has been supported and funded by the Coalition government to continue growing and developing to such an extent that it is quickly becoming one of the larger of organisations running chains of state schools as Academies as well as providing several other services to education.

ARK is a charity founded in 2002 by a group of hedge fund managers "pooling their skills and resources to improve the life chances of children" (ARK website). ARK operates in the areas of health (in Sub-Saharan Africa), child protection (Eastern Europe) and education (India, Uganda, the USA and the UK). In the UK, ARK's activities focus on educational disadvantage and underachievement...

ARK claims to apply innovative methods and "find new solutions" to persisting public policy problems. Its approach to philanthropy draws from business methods, in particular those of the hedge fund industry. Business methods are regarded as able to provide novel and effective answers to challenging social problems of inequality and disadvantage. As Paul Marshall, a founding trustee, explained in an interview, ARK's founders aspired for the charity to be "a proper hedge fund charity, which demonstrated the commitment of the hedge fund industry to giving something back and which also used our combined financial and business

ARK and the revolution of state education in England

Carolina Junemann & Stephen J. Ball

experience to try and make a difference, apply some of the principles of our business to charitable giving”.

At the same time as business methods are presented as effective solutions to educational underachievement and its associated inequities, those very same methods are involved in re-working the modes and techniques of philanthropy itself (see Ball and Junemann 2011):

“We wanted to apply the same robust measurement and accountability to philanthropy as we do to business, in order to deliver programmes that transform the lives of the most disadvantaged children.

ARK applies the same principles to its charitable activities as it would to running a business, with a focus on rigorous piloting, meticulous evaluation, measurable results, impact and social returns on investments, and quick scale-up if effective”.

It is also claimed that charities like ARK can be, as Amanda Spielman, the research and development director of ARK schools put it, *“more flexible than governments about modifying and developing what they do ... start small and expand gradually and change what they're doing in response to early stage feedback – a different sort of developmental model”.*

The ARK Board is made up of representatives of finance capital yet their multiple affiliations and involvement in business, third sector and policy roles and across party divides illustrates the current blurring of boundaries between sectors and the increasing convergence of methods, values and forms of operation and organisation across them (see Ball and Junemann 2012 for a detailed discussion). For example and among others, Paul Myners, (appointed in November 2010) who, having had a successful career in the investment management business (as chief executive and then chairman of pension fund manager Gartmore and as independent director of hedge fund GLG) was appointed as Financial Services Secretary to the Treasury (City Minister) under Gordon Brown (2008–2010), led government reviews under the last Labour government and was chairman of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Corporate Governance. Stanley Fink, Director and Trustee of ARK, Conservative Party Treasurer, made a Lord in 2011, Chief Executive Officer of International Standard Asset Management (ISAM), previously of the Man Group and ARK Chairman since 2009 replacing

founding chairman Arpad Busson. Paul Marshall is co-founder and Chairman of Marshall Wace LLP, a \$15bn hedge fund whose other founding partner Ian Wace is also an ARK Schools Chairman. Paul Marshall also funds the LibDem think thank CentreForum.

... ARK has been considerably extending its involvement in education in England since its establishment in 2002 and is ambitious and keen to continue growing its ‘business’ and diversifying. ARK's schools division is becoming one of the largest sponsors of Academies. *We are also creating ‘virtual all-through schools’. By bringing primary schools near our existing secondary academies into the ARK network, we give local communities access to an ARK education from nursery to A level* (ARK Annual Report 2012).

The Academies programme in general has been a policy space for experimentation with new policy ideas and methods and ARK in particular is playing a significant role within that terrain. ARK Academies are being praised by the Coalition government for “driving up standards in the poorest areas” and Michael Gove (the Coalition's Secretary of State for Education) is a strong admirer who has claimed to share their philosophy and methods and has frequently celebrated their success...

The recognition is so strong that Gove has been accused of “becoming far too close to a ‘cosy cartel’ and that ARK was wielding influence out of all proportion to its size” when, following his recommendation, Amanda Spielman, the research and development director of ARK schools, was appointed as chairwoman of Ofqual, the qualifications regulator. The designation of Spielman followed the appointment of two other ARK people to top positions within government, Sir Michael Wilshaw, a previous director of education of ARK and head of ARK's Mossbourne Academy and hailed a “hero” by Michael Gove, as head of Ofsted, the UK regulatory body for schools inspection, and Baroness Morgan of Huyton (Sally Morgan), adviser to ARK's board, as Ofsted's chairman. The Daily Mail cites a senior source at the Department for Education responding to the critics: “We are just trying to get the best people into the best jobs. Ark is a fantastic organisation which has transformed schools and driven up standards. It is not surprising that their top

ARK and the revolution of state education in England

Carolina Junemann is a Research Officer and Stephen J. Ball is Karl Mannheim Professor of Sociology of Education at UCL Institute of Education

people are getting these jobs” (Daily Mail, 4 December 2011).

A significant contributing element to the success of ARK schools is attributed to innovations with teaching methods and curriculum, although in this respect ARK is also aiming to ‘export’ these beyond their sponsored schools (e.g. see Mathematics Mastery below). ARK’s methods and philosophy draw heavily from US charter schools, particularly from the model of the Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP)... KIPP is a national operator of free, open-enrolment, college-preparatory public schools (Charter Schools) in under-resourced communities in the USA that currently runs a network of 99 schools across the country. KIPP schools have a strong emphasis on discipline and behaviour management that is replicated within ARK Academies. One of ARK’s co-founders and trustees, Paul Marshall, said in an interview that the only way for headteachers to reverse underperforming schools is if they “first of all sort behaviour” (Evening Standard, 7 March 2011). In 2005 ARK hired Jay Altman, a “pioneer of US charter schools” and current Chief Executive of First Line Schools (another Charter Schools operator in New Orleans) as director for education. Altman is a co-founder of ARK’s Future Leaders programme (see below) and has been promoting the deployment of non-traditional methods and actors in closing “the attainment gap”. Charter Schools more generally are being used as points of reference for the Coalition’s Academies and Free Schools initiatives (Ball and Junemann 2012) and are portrayed as an effective and rapid market-based solution to entrenched under-performance and inequalities in education.

A further innovation in pedagogy and curriculum is ARK’s Mathematics Mastery programme, a new bespoke curriculum, pedagogy and training programme for teaching Maths based on the curriculum in Singapore “and tailored to UK schools” that is currently being used across ARK’s Academies as well as 40 other primary and secondary schools. As part of ARK’s attempt to “continue to act as a seedbed for innovation beyond ARK schools”, the charity aims to develop Mathematics Mastery to sustainability and has already received a £600,000 grant from the Education Endowment Foundation to expand the programme to over 100 schools in 2013.

ARK is also forging new partnerships with businesses to develop a series of initiatives to provide pupils with higher education and career skills. In 2012 the charity organised taster trips to leading universities for 300 pupils from year 7 (aged 11) onwards and, in partnership with Bloomberg, J.P. Morgan and Actis, run workplace visits, mentoring and coaching sessions on career skills (ARK Annual report 2012). A new corporate mentoring partnership with Bloomberg is planned for 2013.

...One of ARK’s most significant and growing programmes that has garnered attention and support from successive governments since its inception is Future Leaders, a three-year leadership development programme for current ‘talented’ teachers who have the potential to become senior leaders or headteachers of challenging schools through an accelerated training programme... This programme also draws on the leadership model of US charter schools and draws explicitly on business methods. In particular, the scheme offers new expedited routes into headship with a slighter and speeded up experience of classroom and school life.

Again the Future Leaders programme has received the support of...Michael Gove... Gove has also encouraged Future Leaders to look into setting up Free Schools. This again reflects Michael Gove’s and the government’s commitment to strip away bureaucracy and reduce red-tape in English education. Indeed, Future Leaders now has plans to extend its work to involve Future Leaders in the setting up of new schools therefore creating the possibility of a network of Future Leaders schools.

Underlying the Coalition government’s move to giving school leaders increasingly more freedoms is the belief that, as Michael Gove put it, “The best schools share certain characteristics. They have a strong head and good discipline” (The Telegraph, 2 September 2010), a conception that resonates with Future Leaders’ portrayal of leadership as “the most determinative factor on pupil outcomes”. Huge expectations are therefore vested in the role of school leaders who are seen as gifted with the powers to save failing schools by bringing their vision and charisma to bear to raise standards...

ARK and the revolution of state education in England

Junemann, C & Ball, S 2013, 'ARK and the revolution of state education in England' *Education Inquiry*, vol 4, no. 3

As indicated above, ARK also runs the Teaching Leaders programme in partnership with other third sector organisations (the National College, Teach First and Future Leaders) and partly funded by the Department for Education, to “train and develop middle leaders working in schools in the most challenging contexts”... The scheme is a two-year programme of formal training, coaching and support to provide leadership and management skills for talented teachers to become middle leaders in challenging urban schools. Started in 2008 with a first cohort of 30 participants in London, the programme secured funding of £8.9 million from the Department for Education in July 2011 that enabled it to expand nationally and access 90% of challenging schools in England. Schools Minister David Laws told the third cohort of Teaching Leaders’ graduates in December 2012 that “Teaching Leaders’ ability to identify today’s outstanding middle leaders and develop them into the influential headteachers of tomorrow is truly impressive”.

The scheme has also developed Teaching Leaders on Demand which provides customised leadership courses for groups of teachers within one school, another initiative that is quickly growing with plans to reach 175 schools in 2013. Further, ARK seems to be aiming to benefit from the Coalition government’s general shake-up of teacher training provision with an increase in school-based schemes such as School Direct and other alternative routes of initial teacher training that replace traditional university courses. According to the Teaching Leaders’ website:

Teaching Leaders also envisage a role in the Government’s reorganisation of teacher training. Six of our partner schools have so far been awarded the new Teaching School status, which means they will become local hubs for training new teachers and for the professional development of more experienced staff.

All in all, ARK’s Academies designated Teaching Schools and the Future Leaders and Teaching Leaders programmes span all the way from initial teacher training through to leadership and headship development and further indicate the increasing involvement of ARK in significant areas of traditional

state activity in education. ARK has also launched, in partnership with The Foundation of Prince William and Prince Harry, Expanding Horizons, a programme to provide training of schools’ staff, equipment grants and subsidies to provide school children with low-cost outdoor trips. The programme has supported trips for children from 15 secondary schools and from 2013 onwards will look into signing up schools nationwide for the programme, as well as including primary schools.

ARK is also actively growing its education involvements globally. In the USA, ARK is funding Leading Educators, a programme similar to the UK’s Teaching Leaders. In Uganda, in 2012 ARK opened the first two of a future network of secondary schools and is working with the Ugandan government to help develop public-private partnerships for privately-run, state-funded secondary schools. ARK “hope to demonstrate a scalable, cost-efficient model for secondary education with our partners”. In India, ARK ran for a time a two-year leadership training programme (School Leaders for India) based on the Future Leaders model, training 25 headteachers in Mumbai and Pune between 2008 and 2009.

ARK India is now involved in two further programmes, one to extend the use of synthetic phonics in the teaching of English in primary schools through a four-year phonics-based English teaching programme in government and low-cost private schools across nine states; ARK is also piloting a voucher scheme intended to improve access of the poorest families to private schools in Delhi where 635 children have already completed their first academic year across 69 schools.

Finally, in 2012 ARK became, together with the British Council and a private company TSL Education, a founding partner of STIR Education (Schools and Teachers Innovating for Results), “a global venture in promoting grassroots innovation by dynamic teachers and schools to transform educational outcomes for the world’s poorest children” (ARK Annual report 2012). STIR identifies and supports grassroots “micro-innovations” that can

cont p14

ARK and the revolution of state education in England

improve the quality of education in schools in major developing world cities. STIR is starting its activities in Delhi, India, working with 25 STIR Innovators “who have demonstrated outstanding initiative and enterprise in developing micro-innovations that have the potential to make a significant impact at scale”.

Conclusion

What we see here is ARK, as one example among many other similar organisations now active in the education system and other fields of social policy, as an agent and beneficiary of education reform. This is a co-reform which is changing both the landscape of provision and the landscape of the state. ARK is now a policy actor in network governance bringing new practices and methods to bear upon education problems, changing the way in which these problems are addressed. This is a complex configuration of power and knowledge, practices and discourses that is both strategic and technical. ARK representatives are taking up key positions within the infrastructure of policy, that is to say, policy is being re-peopled. Policy entrepreneurs and boundary spanners (Williams 2002) are establishing new links and relationships between government, philanthropy and business. They are moral and ethical subjects – enterprising, innovative and responsible. ARK is ambitious in a dual sense. On one hand, it seeks to influence the direction of policy and, on the other, it is committed to a business model of growth, of vertical and horizontal, national and international expansion. ARK also exemplifies the international movement of innovative ideas and innovation – “borrowing”, and the way in which new governance ideas and initiatives cluster – as “discursive ensembles”, producing a convergence of methods, sensibilities, values and forms of organisation in relation to a “foundational epistemology” (Shamir 2008, 14) – “pragmatic entrepreneurialism”. This is one aspect of what Shamir (2008, 6) calls the “economization of the social”, within which government becomes a facilitator of a “market of authorities”. The policy networks, and networks of provision within which ARK is active, are also networks of discourse – legitimating, disseminating, persuading and recruiting. They are bringing school management and leadership, pedagogy and curriculum and teacher training within a single discursive logic of practice. They also draw up and encourage a moral

commitment to change and to practices of a particular kind.

The shifts and moves involved here are made up of and driven by a complex set of political and economic processes involving advocacy, business interests, ‘new’ philanthropy, and changes in the form and modalities of the state – that is, a transition from government to governance; from bureaucracy to networks, from hierarchy to heterarchy. Each of these elements needs to be attended to in the analysis of the new philanthropy and new forms of education policy. Further, as we have suggested, the incursions of philanthropy into the heartland of state education may also be establishing a framework and structure of legitimacy for direct for-profit participation in the delivery of mainstream education services.

What we are trying to capture and convey here is the increasingly complex and opaque crossings, blurrings, interweavings or hybridities that constitute and animate the current landscape of English education policy and governance. Traditional lines and demarcations, public and private, market and state, are being breached and blended in all of this and in many ways those categories are no longer useful analytically. As researchers we need a new analytic language and new research techniques if we are to keep up with the shifts to polycentrism in education governance, with the new ways in which education policy and educational solutions are being generated. Policy is being done in new ways, in different places, by a diverse range of new actors, and concomitantly the methods and practices of policy are also changing. Organisational forms and relationships from business are now being deployed. The methods of venture philanthropy and the measurement of social ‘returns’ on philanthropic investments; the opportunities for profit from public service delivery; the writing of contracts and application of performance management techniques – all of this requires policy analysts to develop a new research skill set – including an understanding of accounting procedures, of investment decision-making and of due diligence and the ability to read stock market reports and company accounts. We also need to think and research policy beyond the limits of the nation-state and ‘follow the money’ and the flows of policy by engaging with social media. Our research methods must be appropriate to the form and modalities of the object of our interest.

Early Intervention Policy in Wales

Bryn Hollywell

The 2015 Welsh Labour Conference in Swansea debated a motion from Caerphilly CLP on Early Intervention. It read as follows:

This conference believes that the cornerstone of reducing the inequality of educating pupils in our most deprived areas is the Early Intervention initiatives adopted by the Welsh Assembly Government. Conference wishes to build on this initiative by the creation by the Wales Labour Party of a Commission of experts in the field of Education, Health and Social Services to conduct a Feasibility Study on implementing the experiment outlined in the book "The Spirit Level: Why More Equal Societies Almost Always Do Better" written by Richard Wilson and Kate Pickett, recommended by our Labour Leader, Ed Milliband as a must read to all his Shadow Cabinet members.

The Wales Labour Party wrote a detailed report on its support for the concept and how many of the Welsh Government policies on tackling poverty were based on the principles outlined in the Caerphilly motion. The Report was unanimously agreed by Conference. The thrust is for education, health and social services to provide wrap around care for low income families and children in deprived areas of Wales. The Wales Government is looking for initiatives to reduce inequality and poverty by creating conditions for a more equal society. One of the main thrusts is the extension of the Flying Start policy. The Government is already committed to doubling the number of children benefitting (from 18,000 to 36,000) and has made an additional commitment to spend £55million over the next three years. This is in sharp contrast to the last coalition government's significant cuts to Sure Start centres in England. As the NSPCC commented "A shift towards prevention and early support will avoid later expensive crisis interventions will optimise the development of children and adults which will result in thriving communities and create a stronger, resilient and more equal Wales".

The Welsh Foundation Phase is very different from the English policy of phonetics for toddlers. Children are given opportunities to explore the world around them and take part in activities relevant to their developmental stage. This initiative has been warmly welcomed by teachers and judged by the Welsh HMI (Estyn) to have made a good start. "Where these good features of early years provision are in place – as they are in many non-maintained settings, maintained nursery schools and primary schools – they can help children to make rapid progress. They can also be significant in mitigating the impact of social and economic disadvantage on early learning" (Annual Report of the Chief Inspector 2014).

Wales Labour quoted approvingly from SEA Cymru: "The Welsh Foundation Phase is informed by teaching experience and promotes experimentation, curiosity and play. It is much closer to European approaches to education which usually result in less unequal systems than in England"

Not all issues relevant to inequality and poverty are devolved. But the policy report again quotes SEA Cymru: "Welsh Government policy is in tune with an equality agenda in contrast to the Coalition Government's axe wielded against the poor." This was written before the election, but things are hardly likely to improve in Tory led England. Or in Wales against a background of £50million of extra cuts indicated in the Tory budget

The Report and ongoing contributions (up to September 30th 2015) will be published and presented by Wales Labour as the next crucial phase of reducing the inequality of education in Wales.

Bryn Hollywell is the Secretary of Caerphilly CLP

An unintended lesson from Finland

A review of 'Real Finnish Lessons' by Gabriel Heller Sahlgren

As Research Director at the Centre for the Study of Market Reform of Education (CMRE) Gabriel Heller Sahlgren is well-known within a section of the Westminster bubble for his enthusiastic support for a market in schools. He argues with great persistence that competition raises school performance. A Swede, he has often cited Sweden's free schools as a 'how to do it', including being run for profit.

Given that background, Sahlgren's latest offering comes as a bit of a bombshell. His 'monograph' 'Real Finnish Lessons' for the Centre for Policy Studies, another right-wing think tank, contains hardly any mention of the power of the market. Instead, it attempts to rebut the rather better known text, 'Finnish Lessons 2.0', the work of the rather better known Pasi Sahlberg. To call his arguments a mixed bag would be an understatement. They combine historical economic, social and cultural analysis, rudimentary pedagogical arguments, and a few chats in Helsinki schools into a somewhat indigestible meal. But at its heart lies an implicit proposition which is of the greatest importance for education policy.

Sahlgren starts from two places. One is a potted history of aspects of Finland's school system. He describes how, contrary to what is often assumed, until comparatively recently it has been highly centralised and that schools have been highly controlled – *'until the 1990s...teachers had to... record what was taught hour by hour in class diaries to ensure they delivered the mandatory content'*. The second is a description of Finnish pupils' performance in international and internal tests over time. Using TIMSS, PISA, and test scores of military conscripts, he shows that lower secondary pupils' performance improved consistently between 1965 and 2000, plateaued until 2005, and has been in steep decline for the past decade. Raising but not answering the question of the length of a lag between a school reform and consequential pupil outcomes, he nevertheless concludes that Finland was number one internationally prior to the decentralisation reforms and has declined since their full implementation. No doubt experts could wrangle for some time about the timelines of reform and performance, but Sahlgren certainly raises a question.

Buried in this section, however, is a small gem. Sahlgren joins the growing band of commentators who question the work of PISA. The most telling criticism of PISA is not its test methodology, but its interpretation of results. Like too many other education researchers, PISA notes correlations between national test results and the features of those nations' education systems. Without any discussion, it then produces numerous detailed analyses of the features of 'successful' education systems. PISA avoids all consideration of causation – the question of whether the test outcomes are really due to those features, or something else entirely. We return to the something else later. Here, Sahlgren suggests that no causal link has been established between generally quoted features of Finnish schools and their PISA scores. He is right as well as right.

What follows is fascinating. An exposition of market theory? None. A critique of a system flabby through lack of competition? Never mentioned. The piece might have been titled 'Finnish History Lessons' because it bases its explanation for the performance of Finnish pupils on the nation's history, economic, sociological, and cultural. An agrarian economy squeezed between Sweden and Russia, Finland gained independence only in 1917, but in the nineteenth century a nationalist movement saw the importance of creating and transmitting a Finnish culture – and the importance of the teacher as a major agent, not only in schools but within villages. Sahlgren quotes an academic: 'Teachers were called "candles of the nation"...' and ascribes the high status of teachers to their nation-building role which continued after independence, as school attendance gradually increased. Teacher training explicitly prepared teachers for this role. He frequently contrasts the Finnish majority with the Swedish speaking minority, still an élite 5% of the population. This group is descended from a ruling élite with a strong culture, and teaching is a lower-status occupation. Interestingly, its educational performance is lower than the majority despite its class advantages.

Sahlgren then moves on to a discussion of Finnish cultural values: *sisu*, which loosely translated means tenacity or perseverance in adversity – something Finns suffered a lot in the first half of the 20th century; authoritarianism; and taciturnity. He suggests that schools have been hierarchical



Gabriel Heller Sahlgren

institutions, reflecting the culture. He notes an evaluation of comprehensive schools carried out in 1996 by a team from the University of East Anglia: *'Whole classes following line by line what is written in the textbook, at a pace determined by the teacher. Rows and rows of children all doing the same thing whether it be art, mathematics or geography. We have moved from school to school and seen almost identical lessons, you could have swapped the teachers over and the children would never have noticed the difference...'* Small scale studies in the mid-2000s found similarly teacher-led pedagogy.

This leads to the apogee (for Sahlgren) or nadir (for this reviewer) of the argument. His theory of pedagogy appears to consist solely of a pair of opposing concepts, the traditional and the constructivist. The former relies on teacher instruction, the latter on knowledge creation by pupils. Simple, eh? Apparently all was well in

Finnish schools, as the early PISA-winning scores reflect, until the explicitly constructivist National Curriculum of 1994 and a decline of obedience in society due to rising prosperity led to more pupil-led methods. The only weaknesses in this argument are the crassly simplistic versions of the complex arts of teaching and learning and the lack of any evidence, apart from anecdotes, of changes in practice during this century.

Sahlgren's short conclusion is essentially that we need authoritative schools and lessons for high cognitive performance. If this argument is ill-informed speculation, in line with some of the young turk English commentators he references, what is the value in this text? It lies in the real meaning of his account, to which he appears to be oblivious. It is a meaning uncovered by early British sociologists of education, but buried by the education establishment's enthusiasm for the school improvement bandwagon of the past quarter century.

Children are not empty vessels who attend school to be filled up. They bring to school knowledge, understanding, beliefs and attitudes derived from their families and, increasingly as they pass through school, wider social contacts. These cultures are much stronger determinants of their capacity and inclination for school learning than what happens for a few hours a day in schools. Sahlgren inadvertently shows the impact of Finnish culture on pupil performance. Britain has a far more complex cultural map than Finland and our class, regional, gender, ethnic and other cultures play out powerfully in our schools in all kinds of ways.

Of course schools make a difference. The question for policy is, how much difference relative to the power of factors outside the school? We must move on from arguing about whether Finland's schools are wonderful, or trying to replicate Singaporean classrooms, and back to a perspective in which our school performance can be improved as a consequence of wider social policy interventions.

MJ

While Labour regroups it's vitally important that we don't forget to hold this Government to account

Kevin Brennan MP

Both my parents left school at 14, which may be why they were so passionate about their children getting an education. A belief in the power of education to transform opportunity and create a fairer society is at the heart of my beliefs and has always been central to the mission of the Labour Party.

The Conservatives have wasted no time since the General Election in introducing the Education and Adoption Bill in the Commons. What is so disappointing about the Bill is the sheer poverty of its ambition for schools with an illiberal reheated version of its coalition education recipe, now to be shoved down parents throats whether they like it or not. Without the adoption clauses, which are less controversial, the Bill might be called the Forced Academisation on Stilts Bill given its insistence on only one approach to school improvement and the removal of a parent's right to object to their local school being turned into an Academy. The Bill also introduces a new category of "coasting" schools which can be taken over but fails to define what "coasting" means. It will also place a legal requirement upon governing bodies and local authorities to facilitate the conversion of these schools, leaving no opportunity for a local discussion of what would be best for the schools and pupils in question.

The lack of real educational content in the Bill will come as no surprise to those who have followed Government education policy these past five years. It continues the Tories' obsession with making wholesale changes to school structures the ultimate aim of which must be privatisation for profit. A great deal of Parliamentary time and other resources are about to be wasted on an Education Bill that entirely misses the point. Of the sponsored academies that are currently open, 50% were rated requires improvement or inadequate at their first inspection. Forced academy conversion is not the silver bullet the Secretary of State claims it to be.

The biggest threats to our education system are the growing attainment gap between lower income children and their wealthier peers, the crisis in teacher and school leadership recruitment, and the implication for standards of the growing number of unqualified teachers. These are serious issues that

have been side-lined by the obsession with structures and chaotic curriculum exam and assessment reform.

Growing attainment gap

In February of this year the think tank Demos released analysis that found that the attainment gap between children on free school meals and their better-off peers is actually widening. It now stands at 27 percentage points, which is an increase of 0.3% from the previous year. This is despite the Government's investment of nearly £2.5billion in the pupil premium last year. 51.3% of local authorities experienced an increase in their attainment gap.



Statistics from the last Government show that one child in every four leaves primary school unable to read well, which means that each year 130,000 children are already behind when they start secondary school. Of those children, a disproportionately large number are from disadvantaged backgrounds. The proportion who leave primary school unable to read well rises to 40% for children on free school meals. Being behind in reading at age 11 has a huge impact on an individual's life chances.

The pupil premium was not actually a premium, but it did at least raise the importance of extra resources for the education of the least well off. We support allocating extra resources to children from lower-income backgrounds but if the Government is

serious about closing the attainment gap between, it has to ensure that the money really is additional money, and that it is targeted correctly.

We welcomed the setting up of the Education Endowment Foundation, and believe very strongly that the way forward is for long-term evidence-based policy to be adopted. A quiet revolution in policy based on sound educational principles has a greater chance of lasting and succeeding than politicians' pet projects.

We should not simply rely on the idea that changing the sign at the front of the school and introducing academies and free schools will close the attainment gap. It is easy for Ministers to generate yet another vacuous headline about schools, but the real business of school improvement involves great teaching and leadership not egotistical publicity seeking Ministers.

Teacher and School Leadership Recruitment

The Bill does nothing about teacher recruitment. Recent analysis from Teach First has found that demand for teachers is more than double what it was this time last year, and with the number of people applying for teacher training courses dropping by 12% in 2014 that is hardly surprising. There is a serious problem looming in teacher recruitment that the Government is ignoring. It has been warned about this on numerous occasions by Labour, and most recently by Ofsted last year. We know from surveys that many applicants have been put off by the now numerous routes into teaching which are causing confusion. In addition the constant attacks on the profession by Ministers and the failure to tackle workload issues is having the inevitable effect on the attractiveness of teaching as a career. Offering bursaries to high level graduates in certain subjects is welcome, but we need a wider approach to tackle this crisis, as it is in all schools and subject areas that the numbers are falling.

In addition to teacher recruitment, another issue on the horizon which the new Bill ignores completely is the recruitment and retention of headteachers and senior leadership teams. In the academy sector 1 in

4 schools saw their headteachers depart last year, with secondary headteachers faring even worse with 1 in 3 leaving. This is a problem which the new Bill only exacerbates with its rigid prescription on school improvement making school leadership even less attractive. Children deserve the best, but we must be honest about the processes required to turn a failing school around. It is not difficult to imagine why a talented teacher with leadership potential would be unwilling to risk their career while valiantly working hard for their students. So far we have seen nothing from this Government that demonstrates their awareness of this or how they will make school leadership more attractive as a career.

Unqualified Teachers

It is not clear why, when we hear so much rhetoric from the Conservatives about 'rigour' and 'high standards', that they believe the way to do this is by permitting more and more unqualified teachers in schools. There are currently about 17,000 unqualified teachers in England's schools, with a large increase in Academies.

Teaching quality is essential, and we should expect the same rigour and standards from our teachers as we do from our pupils. This is what the Government is getting wrong in their message about unqualified teachers. All teachers should be willing to become qualified so that the profession can be valued, so that they are up to date with the best pedagogical methods, and so that they understand child development properly. Over time as teacher qualification is not required there will be a fall in quality which will ultimately affect school standards.

We will argue that the Education and Adoption Bill as drafted does not deserve to pass because it fails to address the real ways in which schools improve i.e. high quality teaching and leadership with strong collaboration between schools, and because it rides roughshod over any local objections to an approach for which there is little or no evidence that it will succeed.

Kevin Brennan is the Shadow Minister for Schools

How would you like your Education Politics delivered?



or



SEA members increasingly communicate by email rather than post.

So SEA Executive has decided to offer members a choice of ways to receive 'Education Politics', starting with the next edition in September 2015.

The advantages of email are:

- You receive a full-colour pdf copy, easy to store or print as you wish;
- Our print and postage costs are reduced.

Most members have provided us with email addresses. If so, you will be contacted in September to ask to confirm your preference for receiving the magazine. If you don't get emails from SEA, we may not have your email address. Please email our Membership Secretary, Paul Martin, pauljmartin@clara.co.uk so that we can update our records and can let you know about SEA events and activities.

If you do not wish to be contacted by email, you will receive 'Education Politics' by post as usual in the future. You don't need to do anything.

Forthcoming events

27th June 10 am, London, SEA AGM and Annual Conference

28th June 11 am, London, SEA NEC

12th August noon, last date to join Labour Party to participate in leader elections

14th August - 10th September, leader elections ballot

Education Politics (issn 1354-2028) is the journal of the Socialist Educational Association. The articles reflect the views of their authors and not the SEA unless indicated otherwise. Editor: Martin Johnson (anothermartinjohnson@gmail.com) SEA General Secretary: John Bolt. email: socialisteducation@virginmedia.com Join the Labour affiliated Socialist Education Association. Details from the General Secretary – membership £20 per year