

Comprehensive schooling and social inequality in London: past, present and possible future

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Abstract

This chapter assesses the impact of new forms of schooling in London. It debates whether London education is currently in an unsettled phase which may be an early indication of a future post-competition era for education in England. The chapter opens by outlining the social and political history of comprehensive secondary education in the capital. The chapter goes on to consider recent Select Committee evidence on social and academic segregation in the context of school choice, selection and achievement in London. The tension between the standards/inclusion agenda and tackling disadvantage is explored. The chapter concludes with an examination of trusts, federations and extended schools, followed by an assessment of the impact which new governance arrangements might have on social inequalities among London schools.

Introduction

This chapter examines the introduction of different types of schooling since the 1944 and 1988 Education Acts in the light of changes in the capital's education system, and latterly the introduction of competitive markets within it. It considers how far new forms of schooling address issues of social inequality in London, in terms of school choice and academic segregation trends. By focusing on the roles of federations, trusts and extended schools, the chapter then analyses whether these are in fact early indications of a possible post-competition era in education. If this is an emerging and increasingly important trend, it will mean in the future that schools are quicker to collaborate than to compete, in terms of admissions procedures and raising standards across their local area, rather than just those in a particular locality or school. This differs in some senses to the movement towards comprehensive schooling in the 1970s, as the aim there was to ensure equality of access via banding pupils for admissions purposes, but without the same emphasis on raising standards. However despite recent developments, true collaboration may be some way in the future, as the current educational landscape in London suggests that this is in fact a period of transition, with no foregone conclusions in terms of improved social equality and better educational outcomes.

London as an educational problem

As Lupton and Sullivan have argued earlier in this book, London has undergone a dramatic transformation in the last twenty years. The figures speak for themselves. Approximately 15% of the population of England now lives in London, and the city is growing faster than the population of England as a whole. Over the last 25 years it has

grown 5.4% as opposed to 5% for England as a whole (ONS, 2006). It is the largest city in Europe, with around 7.5 million inhabitants, 29% of whom are members of an ethnic minority. There is great disparity of wealth. While the average weekly household income in London in 2003/4 was £740 as opposed to a national average of £554, 20% of wards in London are amongst the 10% most deprived in England. (*ibid.*) In 2005, 39% of pupils in inner London secondary schools were reported as being eligible for free school meals, and 18% in outer London, as compared to 14% nationally (Pennell, West and Hind, 2006). At the other end of the social scale, while 7% of pupils attend independent schools nationally, it rises to 14% of pupils in inner London (*ibid.*). As a large international city with a complex educational history, London presents a particular problem for policymakers in terms of educational transformation, particularly in terms of contemporary social, political and educational change, as well as equality of opportunity.

One explanation for the ongoing problems surrounding education might be the fact that significant tensions exist as different and possibly conflicting aims within any educational transformational process, and in any geographical area. Historically the purpose of education has been seen variously: as transmitting knowledge, as providing opportunities for growth, as removing ‘hampering influences’ (Russell, 1932, p29) alternatively phrased as ‘broadening horizons’ (Miliband, 2006, p16), as developing the capacities of the individual, as giving culture to the individual, or as training future citizens. This is by no means an exhaustive list, but it does give some indication of the main dilemmas for policymakers.

Urban education provides a territory where these aims are contested more hotly than in other educational arenas; as London is a particularly large urban conurbation, the effect is exaggerated. A further issue is that Parliament itself is based in London. This seems to further influence the debate, resulting in a situation in which education policy in England is in many senses London-centric, and therefore essentially urban in nature. As the concentration of numbers of schools is greater in the capital, this has particularly been the case since the 1944 Education Act, with its focus on addressing issues of social deprivation and inequality, and the 1988 Education Act, with its emphasis on introducing markets in education. However the big question now is whether we are in fact gradually moving towards a post-competition era in maintained secondary education, and whether the pattern of schooling in London is the first indication of such a development. To establish whether this is the case, we need to start by examining the recent history of secondary education in the capital.

A brief history of state-funded secondary schooling in London

The 1944 Education Act was the first act to use the term ‘secondary education’ and it did not include references to different types of school for older children. There was a significant reorganization of education at this time, and it was brought under state control, with secondary education becoming free rather than fee-paying. These changes reflected the national mood from the inter-war period, demonstrating a desire to move away from elementary provision until the age of 14, towards the provision of secondary education for all pupils aged between 11 and 14, allowing for greater equality of

opportunity and social mobility. (Fogelman, 2006). However there was still scope for further reform.

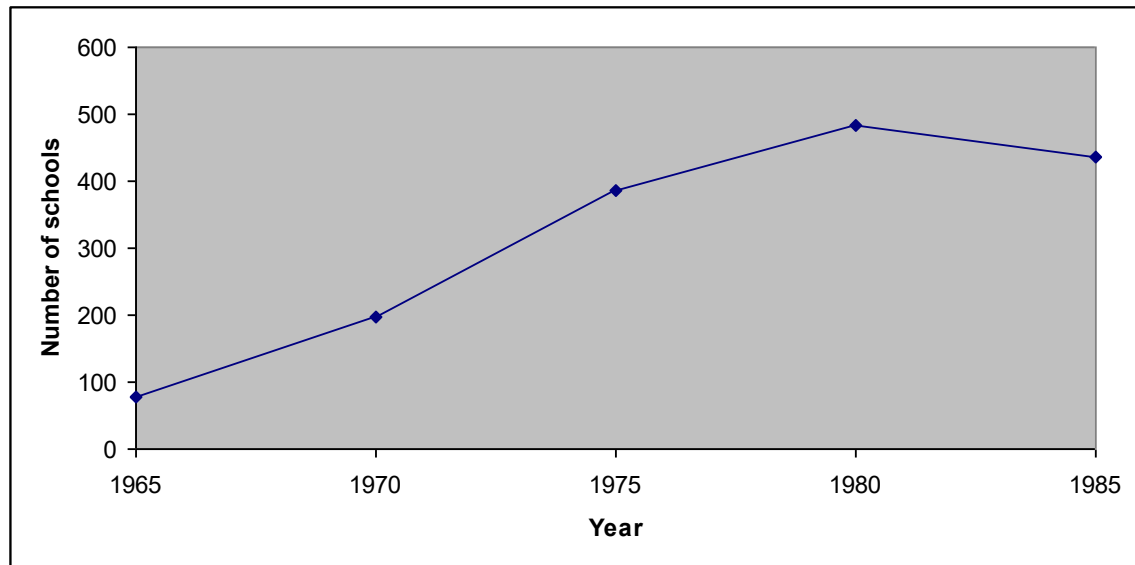
The 1944 reorganization was based on the Hadow Report (1926), Spens Report (1938) and the Norwood report (1943), which argued that schools should be selective, and that the school leaving age should be raised. This provided the basis for a tripartite system of education, in which children were tested at the age of eleven to determine whether they should attend a grammar school, a technical school, or a secondary modern school. This supposedly meritocratic system reflected Labour Party Policy at the time, endorsed by Atlee, although some Labour party members preferred alternative systems.

Middlesex paved the way by adopting multilateral education policies in 1945 (multilateral being a kind of streamed comprehensive), albeit somewhat different to those proposed for London as a whole, in that the schools in this county were to be half the size originally suggested. The term ‘comprehensive’ as a term to describe schools dated from Circular 144/47, although many advocates would have preferred the term ‘common’ or ‘single’ schools (Morris, 2004). By the 1960s, there was a reduction in resistance to the growth of comprehensive education in Britain, which meant that numbers increased. Table 1 below demonstrates the numbers of different types of schools in the Greater London area between 1965 and 1985, and figure 1 demonstrates the overall rise in the number of comprehensive schools between 1965 and 1985.

Table 1 Number of different types of school in Greater London area, 1965 to 1985

Year	Comprehensive	Grammar	Secondary Modern	Technical and other	All maintained secondary schools	Direct grant	Independent
1965	77	141	202	57	477	11	331
1970	197	155	244	79	675	22	414
1975	387	89	74	39	589	21	350
1980	483	19	30	28	560	19	350
1985	436	15	22	18	505	Reclassified as independent schools	Data unavailable

Figure 1 Comprehensive schools in Greater London, 1965-1985



Sources: Department of Education and Science (1965) *Statistics of Education Part One* (London, HMSO)
Department of Education and Science (1970) *Statistics of Education Vol One – Schools* (London, HMSO)
Department of Education and Science (1975) *Statistics of Education Vol One – Schools* (London, HMSO)
Department of Education and Science (1980) *Statistics of Schools* (Photocopy supplied by DES)
Department of Education and Science (1985) *Statistics of Education – Schools* (London, HMSO)

In 1965, as a result of local government reorganization, the London and Middlesex County Councils were brought together with parts of Surrey, Essex and Kent to form the Greater London Council. The twenty outer London boroughs became Local Education Authorities in their own right, and created the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA) was founded from the remaining boroughs, which gave it the same form as the original London County Council.

There was some resistance to the introduction of comprehensive education, for example the case of St Marylebone Grammar School, which fought to maintain its grammar school status. It eventually won Voluntary Controlled status, but was closed down by ILEA in 1981. By 1974 the pace of change had increased, and 62% of children nationally attended comprehensive schools. In 1974, Margaret Thatcher as Conservative Education Minister repealed Circular 10/65, which had required local authorities to submit plans for the reorganization of secondary education in their areas, although there was no legislative requirement to implement these changes. This had the effect of ‘diluting the comprehensive ideal’ (Fogelman, *op. cit.*) and this dilution may partly have been triggered by the major world recession of 1974-5, which undermined the more optimistic, expansionist mood that had prevailed in the 1960s (Chitty, 1987). The Black Papers, published in the 1970s, were highly critical of failures within the comprehensive school movement (Cox and Dyson, 1969a, 1969b, 1970; Cox and Boyson, 1975, 1977). This also undermined the movement, as did James Callaghan’s Ruskin College speech of

1976, which expressed concern for standards and promoted greater collaboration between education and industry, criticizing what were called ‘progressive’ methods.

After the Conservative party came to power in 1979, their first change to education was the introduction of the Assisted Places Scheme in 1980. This allowed bright children to opt out of the state system and attend independent schools, paying means-tested fees in order to do so. However this scheme was dominated by middle class parents of limited financial means, shown by the fact that many of the mothers of children accessing places had been educated privately or in selective schools themselves. It was difficult for gifted children from working class families to access this type of education, as there was little if any support during the application process (Power, Edwards, Whitty and Wigfall, 2003). (The difficulties working class families had in relation to school admissions was a theme that would recur during the Grant Maintained and specialist schools era, as we will see later on in the chapter).

Immediately after the 1988 Education Reform Act, the Conservative government was able to introduce measures such as Grant Maintained schools and City Technology Colleges, which were to be funded directly by the Government as opposed to via the mediating arm of the Local Education Authority. The specialist schools initiative started in 1994 with technology colleges. These schools had autonomous admissions processes and were allowed to select a proportion of their pupils, in the region of 10%. The new trend towards selection was built upon by the Labour government after 1997, after it pledged to support and expand specialist schools provision.

The movement towards schools having autonomous admissions policies was further strengthened after the abolition of ILEA in 1990. Beforehand, ILEA was able to band children on an authority-wide basis, which meant that there was good scope to allocate children relatively fairly to local schools. However when admissions processes were left to individual Local Education Authorities, this meant that there was more limited scope for children to find places in their local schools, as admissions were not banded across the whole area. Open enrolment made some schools more popular and consequently oversubscribed. Children from more affluent households were able to travel to popular schools located further away from their homes, and were therefore in a better position to benefit from open enrolment than children from deprived households. This problem with allocating local pupils to local schools was made worse by the Greenwich Judgement of 1989, which established that maintained schools may not give priority to children simply because they live within the LEA’s administrative boundaries.

From an organizational and logistical point of view, this jostling of parents in their attempt to secure places in popular schools has caused substantial problems for many London Local Education Authorities in placing children. The combination of a degree of selection combined with self-selection on the part of some of the more affluent parents has made the situation very complicated. Whether a lottery system based on a combination of geography and feeder primary schools is the answer (as recently introduced in Brighton and Hove), time will only tell. However the chances are that such competition for school places is unlikely to diminish, as it represents a whole host of

contemporary societal concerns currently being experienced by parents. In the words of John Beck,

Heaping blame upon middle class parents as a whole because they have a set of complex concerns for their children – concerns which do of course include anxieties about future economic security and social position but in most cases are not reducible to that – is, to say the least, an unpromising approach. (Beck, 2007, p50)

As it is highly probable that most parents will continue feeling concerned about their children's future, and it would certainly be odd if they didn't, we need to ensure that this is accommodated within the schooling system. Simultaneously we also have to ensure that all children are given the opportunity to make the most of their life chances by making any system as equitable as possible.

In ensuring equity within schools admissions processes, it is important to seek balance, sometimes academic and sometimes social (Whitty, 2004). However in a highly diverse and competitive schooling system, such as that in London, it is difficult to see how this balance will be achieved. Yet despite its social and democratic complexity and its high concentration of schools, both of which are atypical, the capital has been used as a kind of educational bellwether, allowing policymakers to determine whether particular initiatives are likely to be successful if rolled out nationally. This does not take into account the urban context of London schooling, which is problematic in itself, but it does mean that London acts as a policy barometer for England as a whole.

Admissions, admissions, admissions

We have argued that one of the key issues relating to London schooling and social inequality is the problem of obtaining a secondary school place. Policy makers continually claim that there has never been more choice in secondary schooling for parents, and that diversity leads to school improvement and consequently greater social equality, although the evidence for this is contentious and inconclusive. Undermining the claim that open enrolment is working in practice, in London 32% of eleven year old children are rejected from their first choice of secondary school – as opposed to 15% in the rest of the country (LSE Centre for Educational Research, Evidence to the Education and Skills Select Committee Inquiry into the Schools White Paper, 2006). It is important to look behind these figures to establish exactly why this situation has arisen.

One answer is that there has indeed been a change in school diversity in London, as described in Lupton and Sullivan's chapter, with an associated imbalance between schools that have autonomous admissions processes, and those for which the Local Education Authority remains the admissions authority (Greater London Authority, *op. cit.*). Consequently there is a distinct regional variation in the number of appeals as a proportion of total admissions. There is also a difference between the likelihood of success in London as opposed to England as a whole. Therefore in London, parents are more likely to appeal secondary school places, and if they do appeal, they are significantly less likely to win than in the rest of England, as can be seen in Table 4,

confirming the arguments made by Pennell, West and Hinde (*op. cit.*) and the Greater London Authority (*op.cit.*). It is clear that entry to London schools is more competitive than elsewhere in England.

Table 4
Comparison of secondary school admissions appeals in London and England

	London – appeals as a % of total admissions	England – appeals as a % of total admissions	London - % likelihood of success of appeals	England - % likelihood of success of appeals
2002-2003	Data not available	9.9%	16%	34%
2003-2004	10%	6.7%	15.5%	35.2%
2004-2005	13%	9.3%	16.9%	35.7%

Source: DfES Admission Appeals for Maintained Primary and Secondary Schools in England, 2002/2003 to 2004/2005

The main reason behind this increased selectivity in London in particular, and associated competitive entry, may be the rapid increase in the number of specialist schools, which are more attractive to parents. From its beginnings in 1994, when the first specialist technology colleges were established in the wake of City Technology Colleges, the specialist schools programme has grown from 42 technology colleges to a movement encompassing 75% of maintained secondary schools by 2006, giving a total of 2380 schools. In London there are 322 specialist schools and Academies out of 401 at the time of writing, which represents 80% of the total.

An understanding of the nature of specialist schools is useful at this point. Specialist status can be obtained the following areas: technology, science, engineering, maths and computing, business and enterprise, humanities, language, arts, music, combined subjects, sport and special educational needs. The selection of the specialist subject is largely arbitrary and can be contingent on the prior choices of other maintained schools in the area (Gorard and Taylor, 2001). Specialist schools are currently required to raise £20,000 to £50,000, depending on the size of the school, in sponsorship from local businesses, charities or other private sector sponsors. In return, specialist schools receive preferential funding from the DfES and an enhanced per capita allowance for each pupil, which currently stands at £123. Specialist school status in itself arguably no longer confers status within a notional hierarchy of schools, although additional foundation or voluntary aided status does provide advantages (Castle and Evans, 2006; Tomlinson, 2001).

The concept of forming a hierarchy of schools is useful in trying to understand the nature of competitive entry, and it is well represented in Sir Peter Newsam’s historic categorization of English secondary schools, which is listed below.

1. *Super-selective (independent or state grammar) schools*
2. *Selective (independent or state grammar) schools*

3. *Comprehensive (plus) schools*
4. *Comprehensive schools*
5. *Comprehensive (minus) schools*
6. *Secondary modern schools*
7. *Secondary modern (minus) schools*
8. *'Other' secondary or sub-secondary modern schools*

(as cited in Chitty, 2002)

If we were to revise the list based on today's structure in London, we might end up with something along the lines of the recent DfES document *Families of Schools* (DfES, 2005), which groups institutions into 27 'families' according to various indicators, including prior levels of attainment, the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals and ethnicity of pupils. An alternative conceptualization might be Braswell's model (2006) in which independent schools are at the top of a pyramid, with fully selective grammar schools immediately underneath, followed by partially selective schools (voluntary, specialist, single sex, foundation) and finally all ability schools, such as comprehensives and secondary modern schools at the bottom of the pyramid. Using this model, specialist schools could fit in the bottom two categories, along with Academies, depending on their intake and educational outcomes.

The difficulty in placing specialist schools consistently within such hierarchies is an indication of the degree of variation amongst them, which suggests that they are not some sort of magical formula for success. Until now, there has been a corresponding variation in their admissions and selection procedures, due to historic freedoms allowing them to develop their own policies, which was a distinctive feature of specialist schools. However control over admissions arrangements is now subject to the Schools Adjudicator (The Education Network, Evidence to the Education and Skills Select Committee Inquiry into the Schools White Paper, 2006) and the new School Admissions Code (DfES, 2007), which came into force on 28 February 2007. Correspondingly this diversity in provision was described not as a hierarchy, but as a "Spectrum of Diversity" by Bruce Liddington, Schools Commissioner, at the Trust Schools conference in February 2007 (Liddington, 2007).

In this view of schooling, all types of school are considered equal, but include the following types of school:

- Community School,
- Voluntary Controlled School
- Voluntary Aided School
- Foundation School
- Trust School
- Academy
- City Technology College

Whether parents perceive them as being equal is quite another question. Some schools are consistently perceived as being more popular than others, and oversubscribed, and this is

not necessarily related to the quality of teaching. It may be as result of a more homogeneous or higher ability pupil intake, for example, which is why Value Added (VA) and Contextual Value Added (CVA) measures have risen in importance, as statisticians attempt to judge the social context of a particular school, as well as the impact of the teaching within it. This use of such data makes it harder for specialist schools (and others) to manipulate their position in the league tables, for example by encouraging 'pro-school' children to apply for places, and processing them through courses leading to vocational qualifications that are equivalent to multiple GCSE passes.

Prior to the introduction of the new School Admissions Code, schools regularly engaged in various kinds of admissions manipulation along these lines, both overt and covert. For example, specialist schools are currently permitted to select up to 10% of their intake according to pupils' aptitude for the subject, although they don't always carry this out. Aptitude is not strictly defined in the new Admissions Code, but is it classified as having the ability to benefit from teaching in a particular subject, or demonstrating capacity to succeed in that subject (DfES, 2007, p.35). In addition to this form of selection, covert selection has been taking place in faith and specialist schools, leading to what Dunford (2006) has described as 'semi-selectivity'. This means that specialist schools have been finding ways of attracting and admitting pupils who are inherently more likely to perform at higher levels, for intellectual or social reasons, such as being 'pro-school' children, as described in the previous paragraph. Techniques used might have included drawing the 'catchment area' boundaries in a particular way so as to exclude large areas of public housing, or taking account of pupils' primary school reports when deciding whether to admit them, for example. They might also have omitted specific references to admissions criteria involving medical or social needs, such as looked after children, or pupils with statements of special educational needs, even though these categories are legally required to be the first criteria in oversubscribed schools. There is evidence that these practices result in social polarization where there is competition amongst secondary schools (Gibbons, Machin and Silva, 2006). Consequently the new School Admissions code has strengthened the legal position of disadvantaged pupils in relation to specialist schools. This could have the effect of promoting social inclusion within schools, particularly if schools start to work together to ensure the best possible academic outcomes for all the children in their neighbourhood, rather than a select few. How this could be achieved will be examined in more detail later in the chapter.

Dunford argues that the comprehensive sector has suffered as a result of competition being introduced, and that this is an indicator of the relatively wealthy colonizing parts of state education to make it 'safe' for their own children (*ibid.*). Likewise, it has been suggested that more affluent parents may view the situation of their children's schooling in terms of the entire capital being a potential market, rather than just their local area (Butler and Robson, 2003). As we have seen, the situation in London is such that parents are only 68% likely to be offered a place for their child in their first choice school, as opposed to 85% in the rest of the country (LSE Centre for Educational Research, *op.cit.*). The geographical location of a school is not always an indication of its intake (Gorard and Taylor, *op.cit.*). This has led to calls for a pan London admissions system (London Governors' Network, Evidence to the Education and Skills Select Committee Inquiry into

the Schools White Paper, 2006), also taking into account high levels of mobility in the capital and the likelihood of school rolls rising by 8% by 2016, as opposed to a 10% fall in the rest of the country (Greater London Authority, *op. cit.*).

The Code is also a reflection of the fact that since 2002, admissions processes have become increasingly more complex, with the addition of Beacon schools (now replaced by a more limited number of Leading Edge schools), and schools in special measures, resulting in a multi-tier system, providing different kinds of state education to pupils within the same Local Education Authority. Further, as almost all secondary schools now have a declared specialism, the effect of any 'semi-selectivity' is being diminished somewhat. The addition of faith schools and single sex schools to the educational *smörgåsbord* further complicates admissions processes and the equitable distribution of funding. However the admissions reform has not been mirrored by reform of the appeals system, which may limit its effectiveness.

In trying to judge the relative effect of open enrolment on standards, we are hampered by the fact that it is not proven that improvements in pupil outcomes cannot be attributed to preferential funding of pupils, or favourable selection procedures. There are also different levels of attainment for different genders and ethnic groups which need to be taken into account in relation to London. For example, Pakistani pupils perform better in London than elsewhere, with 57% achieving 5 or more GCSEs at grades A-C, which is 11% above the national figure for Pakistani pupils nationally and 3% over the national average for all pupils nationally. However black Caribbean boys are nearly half as likely as pupils nationally to achieve 5 or more GCSE grades A-C (Greater London Authority, *op.cit.*).

The admissions problem in London is also exacerbated by greater variation in the different types of schools available within daily travelling distance for pupils, compared to some other parts of the country (see Lupton and Sullivan, p. xx). Within the state sector, it is still possible for schools to select pupils on the grounds of faith or gender, or for schools to become Academies, a more recent innovation. Becoming an Academy involves a school becoming independent, but not charging fees. Officially, there are three aims underpinning the Academies programme. The first aim is that they should have a positive effect on standards locally, raising achievement levels. Secondly, the introduction of Academies should increase choice and diversity locally. Finally, 200 Academies should be open or in development by 2010 (National Audit Office, 2007). As far as funding is concerned, Academies are partly sponsored by business or private philanthropists, with between 0 and 5% of the overall capital costs of the academy being met via sponsorship. (In future, however, contributions will go towards endowments for the schools). In this way, they are related to the existing City Technology College model, which also involved private sponsorship from business. In return for a relatively small overall investment, sponsors are permitted unprecedented control over staffing arrangements, curriculum planning and admissions processes.

To some extent, this formula is successful in terms of academic outcomes. Academies are usually situated in areas of deprivation, but generally do seem to have made greater improvements than schools nationally. In a study undertaken on behalf of the DfES, a

sample of 11 Academies improved at an average rate of 5% between 2002-2004, whereas nationally schools improved at a rate of 3%. Schools in the same Local Education Authorities as the Academies only improved at a rate of 2% during this time. (PriceWaterhouseCoopers, 2005). Compared to their predecessor schools they have improved more rapidly, and at Key Stage 3 level (age 14), the results of Academies are comparable with Fresh Start schools (National Audit Office, *op.cit.*). [A school is given a "Fresh Start" when it is experiencing serious difficulties. It is closed and reopened on the same site under the normal school reorganisation procedures].

Official statistics show that there is considerable variation amongst Academies nationally, which is similar to the situation of specialist schools, seen by the difficulty in placing them consistently within hierarchies, as discussed above. Haberdashers Aske Hatcham College in New Cross had a 94% success rate at GCSE level in 2006, for example. On the other hand, some Academies have performed poorly, for example Capital City Academy in Willesden, where just 17 per cent of pupils were awarded 5 GCSEs at grade A to C in 2005, compared with 29 per cent in 2004, and a national average of 54.7%.

This variability in educational outcomes continues to be a cause of significant concern, although it is claimed that the achievement gap between the best performing and the worst performing Academies is starting to narrow (*ibid.*). This is a particularly good outcome as all Academies are recognised as accepting high numbers of pupils with Special Educational Needs and in receipt of Free School Meals. However while academic standards might appear to have been raised for disadvantaged pupils in some schools, this may have been at the expense of excluded pupils. There have been reports that the number of exclusions in Academies has been higher than in similar schools within the same Local Education Authority. For example, during the academic year 2004-5 the West London Academy in Ealing excluded 1.95% of its pupils, as opposed to 0.49% for similar schools within the same LEA. The City of London Academy in Southwark excluded 0.83% of pupils as opposed to 0.27% for similar schools in the same LEA (Garner, 2007). As a consequence of this, academies have been accused of disrupting local school systems (Hatcher and Jones, 2006). Overall the situation is a complicated one, and it seems to be hard to strike a balance between variable admissions policies and equality of opportunity for all pupils, as we explained earlier in the chapter.

Additionally there have been recent criticisms by the National Audit Office that Academies have not succeeded in improving English and Maths results, on account of a strong reliance on vocational qualifications. 22% of pupils in Academies achieve 5 A-C grades at GCSE including Maths and English, whereas the national average is 45%. This has been attributed to the particular characteristics of pupils attending Academies, as most are located in areas of extreme social deprivation. Sixth form results in Academies are also considerably below the national average, and this is reported as being due to a lack of focus (National Audit Office, *op.cit.*)

The idea of allowing specialist schools and Academies a greater degree of autonomy in determining their admissions policies and teaching approaches was that this would

encourage standards to be raised overall, whilst promoting diversity in the maintained sector. This was indicated in the 2001 White Paper *Schools Achieving Success*. A superficial glance at the data might suggest that this is the case (Schagen *et al*, 2002). However this is only part of a much more complex picture. Whilst there may have been a decline in the stratification of schools, a study of 23 LEAs showed that between-school stratification remains high (Fitz, Taylor and Gorard, 2002). Overall, the affluent have colonized certain parts of the state system, or even opted out completely, choosing independent schools for their children, whilst invoking narratives of ‘choice’ (Riddell, 2003). Meanwhile disadvantaged children have sometimes remained the wrong side of a literacy divide, and more recently a digital divide, with little sustained commitment on the part of government and society (Grace, 2006). This has serious implications for educational and social equity. Variable admissions and exclusion policies might be exacerbating this trend, with the consequence that some children continue to be overlooked by the system, and therefore underachieve at school. The question is how far is it possible for teachers and head teachers to engage in an altruistic role, in which they as professionals mediate between the public sector and society as a whole to offer a solution to this problem?(Leaton Gray, 2006)?

New forms of schooling

As part of its own commitment to finding an answer, the Government has now turned to new structures as a means to generate further improvement. Yet other initiatives generated within its reform agenda have had more limited success, as Blair recently admitted in a speech to the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust:

At first, we put a lot of faith in centrally driven improvements in performance and undoubtedly without that, we would never have got some of the immediate uplift in results. But over time, I shifted from saying ‘it’s standards not structures’ to realizing that school structures could affect standards.
(Blair, 2006).

Whether this will be successful remains to be seen. However there are several new developments in terms of school structures, all of which have the potential to move the emphasis away from competitive markets, and towards collaborative, post-competitive co-operation amongst schools. This might prove to be the missing link that enables improvements in education to reach all pupils, rather than just pupils in a limited range of secondary schools.

Trusts

A more recent development reflecting Tony Blair’s mindset has been the introduction of Trust schools. Trusts are felt by the Government to be one way in which schools can achieve sufficient flexibility and freedom to transform standards, for example by having more autonomy in managing buildings and resources. It is also possible within the Trust model for schools to work together, for example in setting up extended schools provision. Another possibility is for schools to work with outside organisations, such as charities,

businesses and universities, as a way of extending collaboration. For example, at a recent Trust Schools conference in February 2007, Barnardos, Dyslexia Action, New College Durham, City College Plymouth, the Universities of Sunderland and Northumbria and the Tribal Group were all announced as having put themselves forward as potential partners.

In September 2006 Alan Johnson announced the establishment of 28 school Trust 'Pathfinder' projects, through which the government aims to develop a better understanding of how Trusts might work in practice. There are also inducements of £10,000 available to encourage schools to become involved. There are currently two 'Pathfinder' Trust schools in London, but whether establishing Trusts is likely to make a significant difference to educational standards in London remains to be seen.

There are four types of trusts (DfES, 2006).

1. A single school Trust. A typical example of this would be current faith schools, and this type of Trust resembles the former Grant Maintained or Foundation School model.
2. A Trust founded to transform an underachieving school. This would typically be a primary school, and any activity would be focused on school improvement, by relaunching the governing body, and recruiting a high standard of leadership.
3. A collaboration between a secondary and a local primary school, giving an 'all-through' model of education that minimizes the difficulties of secondary transfer, amongst other things.
4. A National Trust, such as the United Learning Trust, which was created to manage a number of faith-based Academies throughout the country.

Within these types, the latter two show the most potential for collaboration amongst schools. Therefore there is some scope to address social inclusion issues through formalized collaboration arrangements. However there is also a risk that the first two types of Trust may result in the relative isolation of individual schools from local provision. This is a good example of the unsettled nature of policy at present, and the tensions that exist within it.

Federations

One other development is the introduction of Federations. These are an example of collaboration rather than competition amongst schools. At the most formal end of the spectrum, a hard governance federation is a pair or group of schools with a formal (i.e. written) agreement to work together to raise standards, promote inclusion, find new ways of approaching teaching and learning, and build capacity between schools in a coherent manner, according to the DfES (DfES, 2006). Schools in a hard governance federation would share a governing body. A soft governance federation would involve schools having separate governing bodies, but there would be a joint governance/strategy committee with delegated powers. In a soft federation any joint governance/strategy committee would not have delegated powers. Finally, it is possible for schools to form an informal, loose collaboration in which they meet on an ad hoc basis.

This type of collaboration is confined to schools within the maintained sector, with a very limited number of exceptions. One example of a federation is Haberdashers Aske Hatcham College in New Cross and Haberdashers Aske Knights Academy in Bromley. These schools are part of the Haberdasher's Aske Foundation, which also includes Haberdashers Aske Boys' School in Elstree and Haberdashers Aske School for Girls in Elstree. The first two schools in the list are Academies, and therefore not fee paying, whereas the latter two are independent schools which charge fees. However the federation is formed between the two maintained schools.

The Haberdashers Aske trustees have stated that one aim of the Federation is to increase the availability of an Aske's education to more students and make a wider use of the strengths that Aske's has to offer (<http://www.haaf.org.uk/f/fHaberdashers.htm>, accessed 14 March 2007). It may be that the introduction of federations seeks to once again "remove hampering influences" in the sense of Russell's educational theory, as described earlier in the chapter. It would do this by seeking to remedy shortcomings in school administration and consequently the ability of pupils to profit from their schooling. It would seem that this idea goes some way towards ameliorating the admissions problems experienced within London, but only partially, via organic growth. It does not go very far toward achieving the pan-London admissions system that so many groups have argued for, and which would seem to have the most useful effect on overall improvement in pupil outcomes across all groups. However there may be scope for using London as a kind of educational 'test bed' for improving social equality through the use of federations in inner city contexts, by encouraging schools in more affluent areas to link with those in areas of relative deprivation. This may be one answer to the problem of ensuring equality of access whilst continuing to have selective admissions processes.

Extended schools

Extended schools are another recent innovation, although to a certain extent grounded in existing practice, and again appear to be underpinned by social justice arguments. They provide pupils with equality of access to reliable and affordable pre- and after-school care, parenting and family support, a varied range of activities including study support, sport and music clubs, swift and easy referral to specialist services such as speech therapy, and community use of facilities including adult and family learning and ICT. It is grounded in the idea of a school being based firmly in its own locality, using local services, rather than drawing pupils or services from further afield. Additionally as an educational model, this probably comes closest to synthesizing all the educational theories discussed earlier in the chapter, and this may account for the apparent popularity of the model. The provision of social care and collaboration with external health and welfare organizations makes provision to lay the ground for learning. The opportunity to take part in extra curricular activities fulfils the role of providing a window onto different cultures and experiences, whilst extending the capabilities of the individual. Finally, the important community role of the school encourages pupils and teachers to look outwards to see education in a broader life context. In all of these endeavours the extended school

model resembles educational practices in countries such as Finland, which has been recognized internationally for social equity in its education system as a result of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA).

Therefore this latter model of schooling seems to be the most likely to have the greatest impact. It moves away from the tendency to pathologise social groups or situations towards a more cohesive model for urban education that anticipates needs rather than responds to them. On the basis of the arguments in this chapter, a wide-ranging approach of this type is more likely to improve educational standards than simply addressing schooling itself (Hewlett, 2006), and it also recognizes Caroline Benn's argument, that the struggle to develop genuinely comprehensive education goes well beyond the issue of selection at 11 plus (Whitty, 2004). The question remains, however, of how this is to be funded. If the reality of the extended school is such that socially deprived children are spending substantial periods of time outside normal school hours 'parked' in an institutional environment not designed for that purpose, staffed by poorly paid and poorly trained carers, with little opportunity to develop personal identities away from school, it may prove to be something of a poisoned chalice.

What needs to be embedded within any model of extended schooling is an understanding of the holistic nature of the child, evident throughout the school day. This is where nutrition, healthcare and social welfare support all play a role, as evidenced in the Finnish system, and in other countries where the disparity between the top and bottom of the social scale is not so great. Schools and social welfare organizations will also need to collaborate carefully as the cost of effective extended schooling is likely to be substantial, and it is unlikely that this cost can be recouped by charging all parents for services at market rates. Certainly if there is to be equality of access for children of all social classes, this is an important matter that needs to be addressed.

However despite the fact that this model probably presents the greatest day-to-day challenges to education professionals, it may prove to be the most worthwhile in the medium to long term. It seems extended schooling has the potential to be the mainstay of any post-competition era. It allows teachers to use their professional skills in collaboration with social welfare organizations to develop more diverse, responsive and comprehensive provision for the pupils in their care. This would be based on their experiential understanding of their particular local situations. At its best, it means individualised care and education for pupils, linking to the Every Child Matters agenda.

[Links to ECM agenda](#)

Conclusion

Overall, Whitehall appears to be giving a great deal of thought to the enduring problem of social and educational inequalities within London, based on the New Labour premise that comprehensive schools should be different but equal, with an emphasis on 'standards, not structures' (Whitty, 1998). The proposed reforms in school governance arrangements are a possible solution, such as encouraging schools to become Trusts or Federations.

However these reforms are grounded in the neoliberal marketisation philosophy of the late 1980s and early 1990s, still encouraging schools to compete against each other for pupils, rather than encouraging them to collaborate, in the same way that NHS Trusts currently compete for patients in certain situations. Federations may provide the answer to this, although hard federations seem to conflict with the idea of autonomous governance, which is so often mooted by policymakers as an essential part of the school improvement process. Other reforms, for example the introduction of grant maintained schools and city Academies, have been expensive, and have taken away resources from other areas of education, for example maintained comprehensive schools. This has led to differential rather than wholesale improvement in London's schooling. Such fragmentation is a symptom of the way that comprehensive education has developed in the capital over the last two decades, since the 1988 Education Reform Act. While there has been increased diversity in types of school, epitomized by the increasing range of technology colleges, specialist schools and Academies in the capital, there have been growing problems as a consequence of variable admissions policies and funding regimes. This has culminated in a situation where nearly a third of children are rejected from their first choice of school in London, and where the achievement gap between social classes has grown.

There is no evidence to suggest that there is a direct relationship between funding schools inequitably and raising overall standards, just as there is no evidence that variable admissions are responsible for overall improvement in pupil outcomes, rather than just the results of children in a particular school. The reality of the situation is considerably more complex, as we have discussed in this chapter. More specifically, claims that individual schools manage to conquer social inequality purely on the basis of their ideology are usually exaggerated (Whitty, 1998). The view of many of those making submissions to the Select Committee Enquiry on the White Paper *Higher Standards, better schools for all* is that both policies ensure the continuing existence of a hard to reach 'underclass' of pupils, who are unable to benefit from reforms in any useful sense. The phenomenon of adverse selection within social markets is not new. There are parallels with health and insurance markets, which have also been known to demonstrate selectivity trends. Schools are essentially following this pattern, choosing pupils in a way that fails to be neutral. This would suggest that there needs to be a greater degree of management on the part of the Local Education Authority, for this type of marketisation to work effectively (Glennerster, 1991). A degree of increased centralization is happening as a consequence of the introduction of the Pan London Co-ordinated Admissions system, and the new School Admissions Code is likely to have a positive impact on issues of social equality in relation to admissions. However it is too early to tell whether these measures will be sufficient. An additional point of concern is the provision and sustainability of extended schooling within the capital. As argued earlier in the chapter, extended schooling needs to be equitable, appropriately funded and fit for purpose. Only then can we hope to level the playing field, allowing pupils to achieve their full potential. Yet in terms of social equality, and its associated impact on overall standards in education, it is probably extended schooling that will prove to be the most significant of the three, so perhaps this is worth the most investment.

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