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Education:
a model for public service reform

By **Charles Seaford**, 5 September 2006



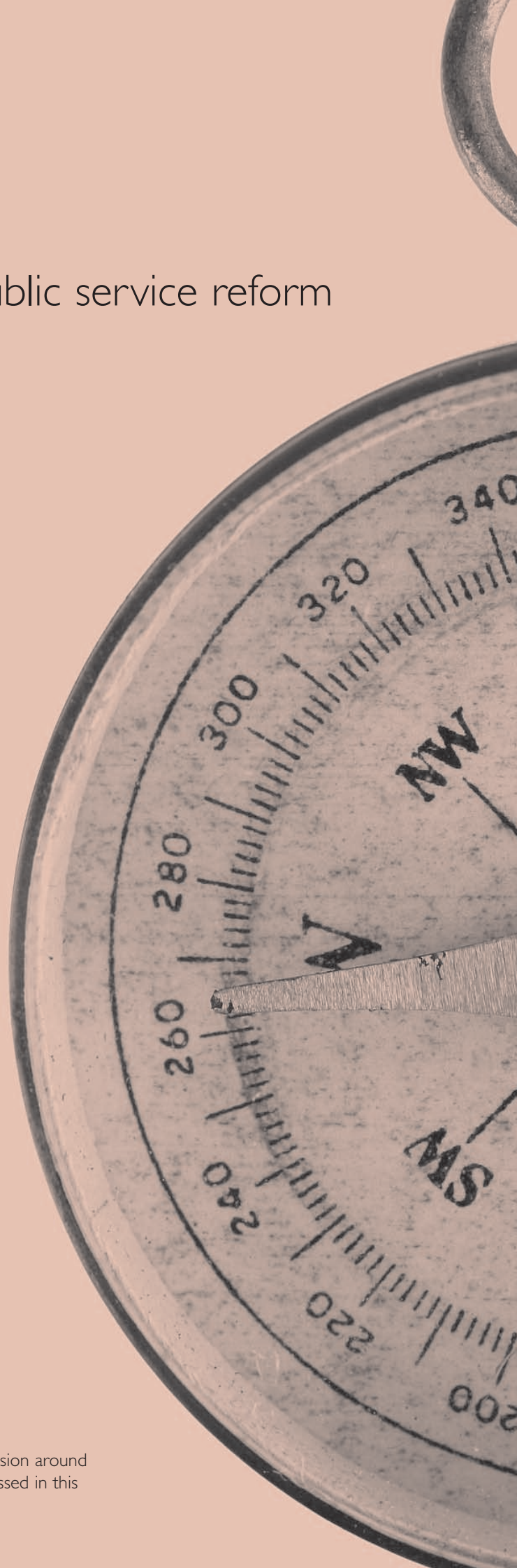
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Middle class parents will simply exit the system if all that is on offer is schools they consider inadequate. Equality cannot be achieved by even appearing to level down since the privileged will find a way to buy their way out.



Education: a model for public service reform

Introduction

This bumper thinkpiece is about education — but the conclusions it reaches about improving public service apply more widely. It turns out policy makers could use the framework developed here in other areas. This framework does not depend on market choice.

The argument runs as follows.

1. Standards in the English state education system are not as consistently high as they should be.
2. To raise standards we need a simple model of what determines standards.
 1. Standards in any service, public or private, are only sustained if there is effective accountability; this can be delivered through hierarchy, markets or democracy.
 2. Standards also depend on the right people being in place, on procedures and guidelines, and in many jobs, on specialist skills and knowledge and the conscientious use of discretion (professionalism).
 3. Standards in education are best sustained through a combination of democratic accountability and the development of professionalism.
 4. Democratic accountability and professionalism may be in tension, but that is why both are needed.
3. The current system of accountability is broken but can be mended. Markets cannot deliver but a radically restructured democracy can.
4. Teachers professional ethic is not exactly broken, but it is weak. Government — and the profession itself — can do things (and refrain from doing things) to strengthen it.
5. Unequal standards in part reflect inequalities in society, which the education system alone cannot be expected to eliminate. But they also reflect the tendency of privileged children and good teachers to cluster. Government can counter this tendency, but only by a concerted use of admissions and funding mechanisms.
6. While different public services face different specific problems, these arguments are generalisable. Government should focus on four broad measures:-
 1. Developing appropriate forms of democratic accountability, which is a more cost effective way of raising quality than use of markets
 2. Ensuring the right people are entering public services
 3. Providing the support needed to grow the appropriate professional ethic (and removing the barriers that hinder this)
 4. Continuing to plan funding from the center to ensure efficient and equitable allocation of resources.

The following six sections develop each of these arguments in turn.

Two caveats. First, there are no arguments here for putting more money into the system across the board. Of course we would do better if there was more money and class sizes were smaller. After all the UK only comes 20th out of 28 OECD countries in terms of expenditure per full time secondary pupil (at power purchasing parity) which is not that impressive.^[1] However we will do even better if we put the extra money into a more effective system.

Second, huge areas of the policy debate are ignored — for example there is nothing here about special needs, the curriculum, or the shortage of maths teachers. The aim is to suggest a simple, almost common sense framework to replace the current rhetoric and refute the idea that there is no choice but choice. It is not necessary to resolve every issue.



I. The problem

The figures

According to Ofsted over 30% of schools are no better than satisfactory. While 26% of secondary schools are excellent or very good in terms of their overall effectiveness and 44% are good, 23% are only satisfactory and 7% are inadequate; for primary schools the equivalent figures are 19%, 49%, 27% and 4%.^[2] The National Audit Office, working from a range of sources, estimates that 13% of children are receiving an unsatisfactory education and that 23% of secondary schools are unsatisfactory.^[3]

When we turn from the performance of schools to that of individual children the statistics are equally if not more distressing. Only 42% of children achieve A-C in 5 GCSE subjects including Maths and English^[4]. Employers, incidentally, are quite clear that this, rather than achievement of A-C in any 5 GCSE subjects, is the critical bench mark.

Low standards are one problem, the effects of deprivation on standards a second. Amongst children entitled to free school meals only 18% achieve A-C in 5 GCSE subjects including Maths and English. The gap in performance at age 11 between those entitled to free school meals and those not entitled actually widened between 1998 and 2004.

The challenge

These figures make clear the size of the immediate policy challenge: to improve significantly the performance of no less than 30% of our schools. A welcome feature of last year's Education White Paper was its recognition that 'satisfactory' as recorded by Ofsted is really unsatisfactory. To quote "No parent should feel that their child is at a school that is content merely to remain satisfactory"^[5]. This reflects accurately the attitude of many parents, for whom "excellent" is really good and "good" is really satisfactory, with "satisfactory" being the new unsatisfactory. (How many senior administrators of the education system, for example, would be happy to send their own children to merely satisfactory schools?) These more discerning parents – more likely to be middle class – are setting the standard for all schools, not just for those attended by their own children.

The policy objective is that all children should go to schools which satisfy the most discerning. Really this probably means they have to be "outstanding" in terms of the new Ofsted categories, but let us compromise a little. In the short to medium term they must be at least "good" or "outstanding."^[6] Alternatively we can describe the target in terms of individual achievement. In schools where less than 5% of the pupils are entitled to free school meals 70% of pupils now achieve 5 GCSEs at grade A-C. Why don't we say that 70% of all children - including those entitled to free school meals – should achieve 5 GCSEs at grade A-C including Maths and English?

Complacency

Over ambitious? It depends on how important you think the goals are. There has been a tolerance of the "merely satisfactory" in the state education system for a long time, reflecting a political settlement between budget constrained politicians, conservative administrators, and a profession whose representatives sometimes appear a little defensive.^[7] Of course standards have improved since 1997, particularly in primary schools^[8], but there is still a pervasive sense that you cannot expect too much.

The fact that only 40% of girls and 32% of boys who achieve the 'expected standard' at age 11 (level 4 in the Key Stage 2 exams) go on to achieve 5 A-C passes at 16 also tells us something. Either something truly terrible is happening in our secondary schools, or, much more likely, expectations at 11 are simply too low.

To date the main focus of policy, perhaps rightly, has been to set minimum standards and make the worst performing schools adequate rather than adequate schools good. While local and central government monitors and offers support, and while it intervenes when things get really bad, it has not taken active responsibility for improving "merely satisfactory" schools. The authors of the White Paper clearly want this to change, but what is striking is less their mistaken ideology than the small scale of their solutions. They do not seem to have identified the levers of the change they want. It is frustration with this that inspires this pamphlet.

A heartwarming piece of recent news: children from a Hackney primary school were taken on a day trip to Oxford as part of an effort to raise their sights. Interviews with the children afterwards suggested it may well have succeeded. The disheartening thing is that such stories are still news.

2. Delivering standards

This section contains the basic model underpinning the more specific analysis and recommendations on education in sections 3 and 4.

The basics: accountability, guidelines and professionalism

Anyone who has ever done one knows that a job needs discipline. Even those with a vocation need this – after all monks are the prime example of submission to a rule. The discipline usually takes the form of being accountable to someone else – a client, a boss, a board, an electorate – that is you can be called to account if you fail to meet the job's obligations.

But anyone who has ever done a job also knows that discipline is not enough. At the very least you have to know what to do. Even the simplest job involves some routines or procedures which have to be learned and followed. More complex jobs also involve judgement, the application of specialised knowledge, and the conscientious use of discretion – professionalism, in short.

So managers do not just have to hold people to account. They also have to give people the tools to do the job, which may mean procedures or 'guidelines', but equally may mean the development of their professional skills and ethic.

Accountability

In simple terms you can be accountable to one of three kinds of person: a boss, who may or may not reward you, a client, who may or may not buy from you, or an electorate, who may or may not vote you into office. In other words there are three forms of accountability: hierarchical, market and democratic. All three forms may have a strong or weak effect on your behaviour.

In any organisation there are chains of hierarchical accountability, that is to say A is accountable to B, who is accountable to C, and in large organisations (such as government run services) A may be accountable to some remote boss D through an obligation to meet certain targets. The chain may just end in some individual with supreme authority, accountable to no-one, but typically those at the top are subject to either market accountability (for example capitalist organisations, held to account, at least in theory, by a combination of consumer and capital markets) or democratic accountability (governments, some charities, trade unions etc) ^[9].

It will be evident that accountability, as just described, can only help to deliver high standards of service if (a) the chain leads at some point to those who are meant to benefit from the service and (b) there are no weak links in the chain. Typically hierarchies fail to deliver high standards when they create too great a distance between those delivering and those benefiting from a service – or worse, fail to link to those benefiting from the service at all. This may be manifest in targets and guidelines which become ends in themselves.

Markets fail (among other reasons) when consumers cannot make an effective choice. This might be because there is a monopoly or because they do not have the information or skill to make the best choices. Both these conditions currently apply to state funded education. Given this it is not surprising that no-one has shown how markets can work effectively to raise standards. Various right wing pamphleteers have set off with high hopes but have in effect thrown in the towel.^[10] (See the appendix for a fuller argument as to why markets will not deliver quality).

Democracy can fail for the same reasons as markets: no effective choice, or voters without the information or knowledge to exercise choice. It can also fail when those intended to benefit from the service are only a small proportion of those voting, or when those standing for election are responsible for so many things that the quality of the service in question plays little part in influencing the outcome. Additionally it can fail when those who are standing for election do not really have control over the quality of service. Unfortunately many of these conditions apply to existing democratic control of state funded education.

In fact the failure of existing accountability mechanisms in education is one thing that at least some of the Labour left and the right appear to agree on. On the left, one of the most long-standing arguments for abolishing private schools has been that prosperous parents forced to use the state system would create an irresistible political pressure to improve performance. The implication is that democratic accountability, as it works now, just will not deliver real quality.

The authors of the White Paper are also looking to create new pressures. They never make the point explicitly, but much of their



agenda – empowering parents, facilitating new entrants into the education market, and above all creating trust schools – is really about creating new forms of accountability. The heads and governing bodies of trust schools, for example, would be held to account by the trusts, keen to sustain the reputation of their brand. The threat of new entrants to the market will keep existing operators on their toes (it is suggested). Parent power will do the same. This new accountability is needed to sustain standards – so the unspoken argument goes – because the old, political channel of accountability is broken. It is mired in a political equilibrium that is not really committed to achieving the highest possible standards.

Professionalism

Teachers may need guidelines and a structured syllabus, and of course they need books and other teaching materials. But above all they need professionalism – their individual ability to make judgements, use specialised knowledge and exercise discretion conscientiously.

This is because the heart of learning is an interaction between teacher and pupil. Of course books, on-line resources and contact with other children also contribute, but the quality of the teacher-pupil interaction is most important of all.^[11] It is teachers that set expectations, arouse curiosity, engage in dialogue and provide feedback. This by its nature involves individual judgement and discretion, and hence by its nature requires professionalism. Excellence depends on this and not simply external standards and a well designed curriculum. Once certain minimum standards have been reached, the support schools need is ensuring high levels of professionalism rather than programmatic guidance. Unfortunately this has not been the emphasis of policy to date.

Some may imagine that accountability and the autonomy associated with professional discretion are opposites: that the way to deliver accountability is to reduce autonomy, and vice versa. It is true that some forms of accountability – an over emphasis on tests and targets for example – can and have damaged teachers' professionalism. But there is no necessary contradiction between accountability and autonomy. Professionals are accountable for their results but (within certain boundaries) autonomous in what they do – they follow an internal code. Indeed the professional ethic complements accountability. It provides the inner drive and determination, the creative spark, the commitment to excellence. Accountability ensures these things are channelled in ways that deliver benefits for others. It is true there is often a tension between the two – but that is why both are needed.

3. Making accountability work

In theory, the chain of accountability currently extends from the teacher to the headteacher to the governing body, and then in some obscure way to the parents^[12], the local authority and ultimately to the local population at large. The chain is broken. To see why, and how to fix it, let us look at each link.

The chain as it is now

Within schools, good heads do hold their staff to account – it is almost a defining feature of weak heads, by contrast, that they allow inadequate teaching to continue.^[13] There will always be more and less effective headteachers, but the systemic failure for policy to address is the existence of so much weak school leadership (whether at the level of the headteacher or the senior team).

At the moment, the head teacher is accountable to the governing body, but this is an unreliable mechanism. While there are exceptions, most governing bodies are not equipped to take action if performance is unsatisfactory (or 'merely satisfactory'), and are generally only 'galvanised' into action when Ofsted reports the school is inadequate^[14]. More usually they feel a (natural and praiseworthy) loyalty to the school and staff, and often feel Ofsted and the education authority are outsiders, forces to be managed rather than used. If they saw their role as holding the headteacher to account they would instead see Ofsted as a most valued ally, a vital source of information. To repeat, this is not a criticism of governing bodies. It is an inevitable pattern. Indeed the pattern is not so different from that displayed by the directors of public companies, who may in theory represent the shareholders, but in practice often identify with the management and see the institutional investors as a constituency to be managed, changing the management only in extremis. Governors do have a role in sustaining standards (see section 4), and parent governors provide an important channel for parents' concerns, but this does not mean they have to have primary responsibility for appointing head teachers and holding them to account.

The governing body is accountable to the education authority but only in the sense that when Ofsted reports failure the authority can intervene – their powers are limited^[15]. In addition, the evidence is that many authorities are reluctant to exercise such discretionary powers as they have. They can recommend changes to 'vulnerable' schools, and if the schools resist, they have the powers to insist, but, the National Audit Office reports, they rarely use these powers.^[16] Finally, although there is nothing to stop them offering advice and support, the NAO report:-

'Many headteachers consider that local authorities give sufficient support to vulnerable schools only after they have been put into an Ofsted category...Indeed half received no advice until this happened.'

To put it bluntly, the merely satisfactory, and sometimes the unsatisfactory, is tolerated.

This is not surprising because the authorities are not really accountable to anyone. It is true that they have an obligation to respond to Ofsted reports, and this kind of bureaucratic pressure works well if all we want to do is ensure maintenance of minimum standards. After all the elimination of exceptions is what bureaucracy is designed for. It is inadequate however when what is required is a movement towards excellence. That requires effective pressure from people who care, in other words chains of accountability leading to those whose who benefit from the service.

Of course in theory education authorities are part of democratically elected local authorities and voters could exert pressure through local council elections. In reality they are controlled either by unelected officers with permanent tenure or councillors whose mandate depends only marginally if at all on the performance of the local schools. They may face occasional protests from parents, but generally only when schools are closed down. There is no democratic pressure on them to perform.

There are real variations in the quality of education provided by different local authorities even when the effects of relative deprivation have been factored out.^[17] Are the Directors of Education in the worse performing areas in danger of losing their jobs? Do the councillors responsible lose their seats as a result of this failure? Of course not.

Of course accountability is not everything. One reason authorities may tolerate low standards is that there is an undersupply of talent and they may fear they will not be able to find suitable replacement headteachers. Self-evidently, all the improvements in accountability in the world will make no difference if no-one is available to do the job. I return to this in section 4.

Two solutions that do not work

So what should be done to repair this broken chain? Perhaps education authorities are irredeemable and headteachers and their senior teams should be accountable to the parents, either directly or through the governing body? No – if governors are ill equipped to take action, parents are even more so. For the most part they display considerable loyalty to the school, and tend to rally round when the school is criticised.^[18] In addition relying on parent pressure at the level of the school runs the risk of reinforcing inequalities between schools. We do not want a system that works for middle class children with vociferous parents but not for those whose parents lack the knowledge or inclination to ensure standards are maintained. Even if parents are 'co-producers' of their own children's education, they cannot all be expected to have the time or skills to run their children's school.

Perhaps education authorities are irredeemable and headteachers should be accountable to 'trusts', federations say, or bodies led by universities or businesses? The trust directors might then be so keen to protect and develop their own brand, for commercial reasons or simply out of professional pride, that they would ensure standards in their schools were raised and maintained.

If this weren't an important issue, there would be something almost charming in such a hare-brained scheme reaching the statute book. There are (at least) two basic problems with it. First, in its most extreme form, it could allow individuals with little understanding of education or sympathy with the associated professional values to control schools. This could well create conflict within or with the staff room – leading to lower standards. Worse it could erode the liberal values needed to underpin professionalism.

Second, while membership of a federation or sponsorship by an Oxbridge college might well benefit an individual school, this can never be a system wide solution to the problem of accountability. Trusts are by their nature voluntary, and voluntary things are not universal. Of course you could force schools to form federations and even force universities to take responsibility for schools, but if



you did there would be little personal commitment in most cases – and there would be no organisational imperative to create real accountability either. The links would become purely formal.

Heads should be accountable to education authorities and authorities to parents.

Parents may be ill equipped to hold a head teacher to account, but they are much better equipped to hold the education authority to account. They can vote it in or out far more easily than they can appoint, dismiss or discipline a headteacher. This of course is only useful if the headteacher is him or herself accountable to the authority. But there is no reason why this should not be, why the chain of accountability should not run from the headteacher to the education authority to parents. In this way the authorities (rather than the governors) would have direct accountability for the schools in their area. They would appoint headteachers and provide support for headteachers. They would also dismiss head teachers if they consistently failed to meet the (high) expectations placed on them.^[19]

How should the authority be made accountable to parents? As a minimum, it should be directly elected with a franchise restricted to parents of children at or under school age. Only they have a real interest in holding the authority to account, and their votes should not be diluted by those who, for example, care more about the fortunes of one or other political party.

Some will say that an integrated child policy requires an integrated local authority, with social services and education services coming under the same mandate. However in practice co-operation between entities with different mandates takes place widely in both the private and the public sectors. To the extent that different agencies have shared objectives, let them co-operate. To the extent that one agency needs the services of another, let it buy or barter for those services. But the necessary complications of co-operation and interaction should not obscure the clarity of purpose that, for schools, comes from a direct line of accountability to parents. Combining different objectives under the same mandate is the curse of the public sector, and, in the end, is a way of keeping power within the bureaucracy and away from the people.

Some will also argue that local residents have an interest in the schools in their area, and that therefore they should be part of the electorate for education authorities. This is partly because schools are in effect partly funded by council tax ^[20] and partly because they do more than educate children, and in practice play a role in the wider community.

The tax point is simply dealt with. Education budgets should not be funded by local taxes. This is inequitable as between rich and poor areas, it creates incentives to councillors to cut budgets given a universal franchise – cuts are attractive to voters without children – and it adds to the complexity and uncertainties faced by school management.

The wider role point is also straightforward. It is true that schools play a role in the community, but this is always secondary to their role in educating children. Indeed schools that are successful in their primary role are more likely to make a positive contribution to the community, and are likely to want to (even if some require incentivising). Finally, there is a reasonable concern that making education authorities accountable to parents is in practice making them accountable to more active, middle class parents. Only they will have the ability and inclination to vote in a way that influences policy. The result could be a bias in authorities' decision making, favouring the children of such parents. So authority officials, keen to attract the votes of middle class parents, might put all their efforts into raising standards at the schools attended by middle class children and neglect the rest.

There is something in this, given the current admissions and funding system which encourages diverging standards and social ghettos. However if the schools in an education authority's area were socially comprehensive, the issue would not arise. In section 5 I suggest changes to the admissions and funding system, the rules to be set from the centre not locally, and designed to create a socially comprehensive system and more even standards. With such a system in place, parent elected education authority officials would have a strong incentive to raise standards at the worst performing schools.

Making parent power a reality

But elections and a specialised franchise on their own are not enough. The chain of accountability only works if parents can use elections to dismiss authorities that are underperforming. This means they have to have a clear sense of what underperforming means and then have viable alternatives to underperforming incumbents.

Understanding underperformance is straightforward. Parents need performance data and this should be provided by the Government.

There should not be a sea of measures: what matters is the proportion of schools that are judged to be outstanding, good, satisfactory and unsatisfactory by Ofsted, with comparisons to the national average. Improvement over the authority's previous term should be included as well as current data since the authority can only work with what it has got. If the authority has fewer excellent schools than others, that may reflect its legacy, but if it has failed to improve its merely satisfactory schools as fast as the average, perhaps others could do better.^[21]

Note that such a system would reduce the crushing emphasis on tests and league tables. Ofsted's categories take into account far more than exam results.

Ensuring voter-parents have viable alternatives could be more tricky. Simply voting out a group of Lib Dem councillors and replacing them with Labour councillors while leaving everything else the same is not likely to have a great deal of impact – nor are voters likely to have much confidence in its impact. "We can do better" is only credible when backed up by some evidence.

One solution would be to encourage representatives of successful education authorities to stand for election to less successful authorities. Imagine Authority A has improved its schools dramatically but Authority B has failed to improve its schools at all. Come the elections, representatives of Authority A might stand against the existing incumbents of Authority B. They would then be able to use the Ofsted data to point out to parents how much better off their children would have been had they been in charge.

This is a pretty implausible scenario if elections are for unpaid representatives who in turn appoint paid officers. Successful representatives of one area would have little incentive to take on the problems of another.^[22] However it would be perfectly plausible if elections were not for unpaid representatives but for slates of paid officials – say three or four individuals. Teams that had been successful at one authority could be incentivised to stand for election to other less successful authorities. The incentives would be primarily professional – based on a commitment to improve education – but could be reinforced with financial measures. For example the team could be allowed to stand in more than one place and receive bonuses for running two authorities, or it could be allowed to stand in one place only, but receive bonuses to move to a new authority with more room for improvement.^[23]

Some people will throw up their hands in unthinking horror at such proposals. It is true they are alien to the British tradition of local democracy, but the fact is that tradition has reached a total dead end. Democracy can work, but we need to take radical steps to make it work.^[24]

4. Developing the profession

Accountability is vital, but accountability without a strong profession will never deliver excellence. A policy that creates a perfectly working set of external pressures will not deliver the kind of changes we need in schools – including a commitment to excellence - if it does not also ensure that teachers – especially teachers in the schools that need to change – feel strong internal pressures to perform and the confidence to aim high - that is share a strong professional ethic.

Professionalism is not guaranteed

This ethic is just as liable to fail as the system of external accountability. Particular individuals may simply lack the necessary motivation, in which case they should probably leave the profession, but systemic failure is also possible. Organisations – whole professions – can suffer from low morale, which is really another way of describing a collapse, or weakening, of collective purpose. They may lose their sense of what excellence means, and instead become fixated on targets and exams. The result is they start 'teaching to the test' or become too frightened to deviate from guidelines, treating them as rules. The tests and the league tables become all that matters, linked as they are to performance pay, and real education suffers.

Even in 'good' schools this happens. At one school pupils studying Romeo and Juliet for GCSE are only required to read the specific passages mentioned in the syllabus and likely to be included in the exam itself. They are not required to read the whole play. This is a cruel dumbing down. Either the pupils should not be taking English literature GCSE at all (and not everyone should) or they should read the whole of this play about teenage love.



Autonomy

In teaching, as in other professions, the professional ethic justifies professional autonomy and this professional autonomy then helps build the professional ethic. The ideal is a virtuous circle, autonomous schools staffed by autonomous professionals – allowed their autonomy because seen to deliver, and encouraged to use that autonomy to shape the improvement of their schools.

Obvious and uncontroversial perhaps. But not how things are. Teachers and schools follow guidelines from the DFES far more scrupulously than they deserve, misinterpreting what are after all only 'guidelines' as 'rules.' There are plenty of teachers that are hamstrung as a result, never taking the class on a spontaneous journey, always grinding through what has to be done. Sometimes rigid lesson formats even become an economy measure, since they allow deployment of low paid teaching assistants. Sometimes teachers follow the guidelines against their better judgement – and then, when the DFES reverses its position, as in the case of synthetic phonics (a method for teaching reading), find that their judgement was right all along.^[25] So called 'personalised learning' - the teacher responding to the individual needs of each pupil – can hardly happen when every detail of every lesson is pre-prescribed.

In the words of one teacher:-

'It's entirely legitimate for an elected government to tell schools what they expect from them, but where this government and all previous governments have gone wrong I think is that they say not only what they expect as a product but how to go about getting it.'^[26] The contrast with the health service is instructive. Would ministers ever pronounce on the treatments doctors should use? Would the individual discretion used in the consulting room ever be replaced by a fixed format? Of course there are basic rules, and a core professional competence which is standard, but these support rather than constrain the professional's judgement.

It is clear that the DFES needs to take a lead in the reducing the emphasis on tests and league tables – and a more active form of democratic accountability would make this much easier. But it is not simply the DFES's fault. Teachers acknowledge that perhaps they are too compliant, that they lack a strong professional voice which would give them the confidence to challenge the dictates.^[27] Such a voice, incidentally, cannot be organised by the government, although characteristically it has tried, by setting up the General Teaching Council.^[28] To put the same point another way: you cannot end dependence on top down methods by using top down methods. More autonomous forms of professional development are needed.

The dilemma

But there is and always will be a tension between the autonomy needed to achieve excellence and the control needed to deal with low standards. Initially, after 1997, the Labour government got results in primary schools precisely by reducing autonomy – defining the curriculum more tightly and issuing a stream of guidelines. The approach has now been reversed to some extent: while everyone agrees there should be a national curriculum, policy makers know that the benefits of a very programmatic approach have reached their limit. Once one reaches a certain standard, central control produces diminishing returns.

Thus no-one is upset, or indeed that surprised, when the headteacher of Combe Church of England Primary School, which came top of the national league tables, attributes her success to ignoring most of the government's literacy and numeracy strategies, and urges teachers to trust their own professional judgement^[29]. The real dilemma lies in the increasing sense that 'coasting' schools – those that appear content to remain 'satisfactory' as the White Paper puts it - may need more not less support if they are to improve. Does that mean less autonomy – with all the potentially damaging consequences for the school's professional ethic and advance towards excellence?

The resolution is in fact quite simple. Guidelines, formats and the rest should be available, but how and whether they are used should be up to individual teachers or, where they judge it necessary, head teachers. To reinforce this message – and it certainly needs reinforcing - the guidelines should be paid for by schools that want to use them (with the schools budget increased accordingly), ensuring it is teachers not administrators who decide what is economically worthwhile.

Of course coasting schools may need external pressure from the local authority, in extremis ruthless intervention, and they may need more help and support from the authority and national training resources. The principle remains: do not tell teachers how to do their jobs, do not to micro manage, but hold them to account and then invest in the professional development that will help justify their professional autonomy.

What is involved?

If encouraging accountability requires system redesign, encouraging autonomy is more a matter of many small measures, all designed with a similar purpose. Many of these measures are in place; some are in the White Paper or the Bill; more are possible. The following are examples of the kind of thing worth considering.

* Partnerships and federations

As already argued, federations are unlikely to be a system wide answer to the problem of accountability, but they may contribute to the level of professionalism within some schools. Individuals develop by imitating others, and whole institutions can do something similar. Schools in need of improvement can therefore benefit from close co-operation with schools or groups of schools that have already established excellent standards and where professionalism is a given.

There are plenty of fairly obvious potential problems with this: getting the incentives right at excellent schools (financial incentives alone are unlikely to create the right level of commitment), sustaining morale at the less successful school, bridging what may be simply too wide a gap. There are some examples where it has worked^[30] but despite the mechanisms set out in the White Paper, it is not clear whether the model is scaleable – whether in fact it depends on extraordinary circumstances or extraordinary people to make it work. Nonetheless it is clearly worth pursuing.

* Involve universities

Universities are centres of educational excellence, and they too could be called upon to help build and sustain excellence in our schools, initially in sixth forms. This could take the form of exchange schemes, visiting lecturers, mentoring, syllabus development and so on. Academics are fond of complaining about falling standards: let them go into the schools and take some action!

* A new role for governors

One vehicle for partnership is representation on the governing body. Again while it may be difficult for governors to hold the head teacher to account in an effective way, they can still have an important role in encouraging professional excellence. Realistically they can only do this if they represent constituencies with a commitment to and interest in excellence: parents of course, but also appropriate outside bodies such as universities and the best FE colleges and employers. The incentives for outside organisations have to be considered carefully – active not passive membership is required.

As already argued, outside bodies, and the governing body, should not control the school. The 'governing body' should be an advisory council – a source of support and advice for head teachers and other staff, a place where major decisions are discussed – but also where concerns can be aired, and if necessary communicated to the relevant authorities. That is the role the best governing bodies perform now anyway.

* Enhanced role for SIPs

It is planned that School Improvement Partners (SIPs), employed by the education authority, will play a more extensive role, providing advice to headteachers. This is clearly a good thing, and it is arguable that the SIP should represent the authority on the governing body, ensuring he or she hears the views of other governors and that the headteacher gets a consistent message. SIPs need to be highly experienced teachers who can gain the respect of other senior members of their profession.

* Team leadership

Everyone agrees that leadership is critical, but the signs are there is a shortage of quality leadership. Initiatives to recruit potential future heads to the profession are in place, and naturally have long lead times, but a report published in September 2006 suggests more action may be needed.^[31]

However too much emphasis should not be placed on the redemptive power of a single dominant individual. In the commercial world an obsession with leadership has led to what some writers have called the 'leadership deficit' - a shortage of individuals capable of



taking on the challenges of running major organisations. But this is back to front thinking. If no-one fits the job then the job specification is probably wrong – in plain terms, simply too demanding for any one individual. In fact many of the best organisations are run by teams with complementary skills; increasingly it is recognised that the best schools, at least the larger ones, will be run by teams of senior teachers with complementary skills. The head does not have to bear everything on his or her shoulders. Education authorities need to take note – and review and develop the senior team as a team, not just the headteacher.

* Individual professional development

The emphasis – as in all professional development – must be on workplace based development, led by senior professionals and controlled by the individuals it is intended to benefit.

* Smaller schools

There are some very large comprehensive schools, which, those on the ground report, are simply too big to manage effectively. Many members of staff are strangers to each other. The schools are simply too big for their headteachers to develop the kind of professional autonomy in the staff advocated. So in some instances there will be a need for new schools or to split existing schools in two

There are many other actions needed, for example improving the discipline regime and continuing efforts to ensure a reasonable work load. Some inaction is needed too: fewer 'initiatives', less reliance on the pilot/roll out model, less form filling and fewer channels by which government money reaches schools. Progress is being made on many of these fronts, but the pace needs to be upped and the general direction of policy – increasing professionalism – made clearer.

5. Admissions

At the moment the education system exacerbates the impact of deprivation on life chances. We may never reach the point where it eliminates that impact – but let us try at least to reduce it.

Measures to promote accountability and professionalism can raise standards, but they will not deal with uneven standards. In London and some other major cities there are striking variations in performance and parents pay large sums to live in the right catchment areas.^[32] The result is widened inequality: the evidence is that variations in individual children's performance are widened when the deprived and the prosperous attend different schools and reduced when they attend the same schools.^[33]

Two reasons for this have been suggested. One is that grouping together the deprived creates peer group effects that lower expectations and hence performance, with the opposite effect for the prosperous. A recent study suggested that peer group effects were not that important^[34] although the evidence is not conclusive. Another explanation is that schools with a more prosperous intake are more attractive to teachers, and therefore jobs at these schools are more keenly competed for. Thus the best teachers tend to end up at these schools. The more deprived schools then find it difficult not just to attract the best teachers, but also to maintain the motivation of those teachers they do attract.^[35]

Thus there is a natural cluster effect, with good teachers and 'good' pupils clustering together into good schools, leading to natural or social inequalities being reflected, and exaggerated, in the school system.

It is of course perfectly possible for schools to break this circle without a change in social composition. There are plenty of success stories, often involving a new headteacher who has inspired staff to turn their school round.^[36] What is being reported in the studies cited here is a statistical relationship not an inevitable link. But a successful policy cannot depend on an unrestricted supply of exceptional headteachers who lead dramatic turn arounds. Given the evidence, socially comprehensive schools are likely to enhance the life chances of the least privileged.

The trouble, of course, is that some children currently benefit from the cluster effect. The statistics indicate that performance is best in schools where there is least deprivation, not just that it is worst where there is most.^[37] If some schools are attracting more than their fair share of good teachers, then the children attending those schools are doing well by the system.

Middle class parents will simply exit the system if all that is on offer is schools they consider inadequate. Equality cannot be achieved by even appearing to level down since the privileged will find a way to buy their way out. This may save money, but it drives good teaching resource into the private sector and it cements class divisions. A system in which places are simply allocated centrally and parents do not have a choice can no more deliver socially comprehensive schools than a system of parent choice and individual school admission authorities can deliver uniformly good schools^[39]. Both systems have their attractions, but neither will work until schools are uniformly good and neither on their own will deliver this. Various clever schemes - lotteries, banding - have been suggested, and these may sometimes soften the edges, but on their own they always boil down either to a system that the middle class can manipulate to their advantage, or to a system that they will reject.^[39]

Does this mean nothing can be done? No – but dealing with the problem requires considerable political will. Changes to the admissions system have to be combined with changes to the way schools are funded if there is to be any real effect.

First, a variety of banding does have a part to play. Schools that are popular with the middle classes must take their share of less advantaged children and those who are refugees from failed schools. This will not happen naturally, as any observer of the current system can see. It requires a compulsory area wide banding system, with an area admissions authority having the right to allocate some places in some bands. (Note that the Education Bill as it currently stands permits banding, but does not make it compulsory).

Second, schools that need to improve and are capable of improving (with or without a change in the leadership team) should have their funding increased substantially - to the point where improvement is accelerated and eventually middle class parents are fighting to get their children in. Of course this would also benefit those schools in areas where there are no middle class parents and therefore where there will never be a significant change in the intake.

Does money make a difference? The evidence is that it does, especially at the lower end of the ability range, and especially if spent on smaller class sizes.^[40] It can also be usefully spent on attracting the best teachers, on strengthening the leadership team at the school, on staff development and in some instances on strengthening links with parents and the community.^[41]

However the difference will be marginal if the spending increases are marginal. The emphasis must be on “substantially” increasing funding. There are already various existing schemes for increasing the funding of disadvantaged pupils (by up to £1,300 a head) and disadvantaged schools, but the system is complex, the pupils are spread out between schools, and by the time the funds reach the schools the amounts have been diluted to the point where they do not make a critical difference. This policy will not work if it is watered down. It has to be pursued single mindedly until the tipping point is reached, with a change in senior and/or junior staff if that too is necessary.

Neither of these measures – compulsory banding and extra funding – will work on their own. They have to be combined. For only then will supply and demand balance: the first reduces supply at the best schools as far as the privileged are concerned, the second increases that supply again. Compulsory banding on its own will drive people out of the system. Extra funding on its own is unlikely to bring schools to the tipping point where a school's success breeds further success. In addition extra funding on its own will not create a social mix in those areas where sharply distinct catchment areas for different schools have developed. It is by combining the two that we have a chance of succeeding.

6. A framework for public services generally?

Will the approach described here work in other public services – or are the problems of education peculiar to education?

First, as already argued, quality in any service depends on a mix of accountability, good procedures and professionalism.

We have already outlined the limitations of hierarchical and market accountability in public service. The perverse consequences of an excess of centrally set targets – and their failure to galvanise people - is now (almost) universally acknowledged. They are often gamed, and more seriously, often work against rather than with the grain of individuals' shared or personal professional ethic. Pulling levers at the centre does not really change things, which is one reason choice and markets have been seized on by policy makers, almost in desperation.^[42] But markets do not work either when consumers have no real choice of service provider, or are ill-equipped to make such choices as they have: this is inevitably true of many public services and not just education. Strictly speaking it is not true of all public services: for example patients could have a choice between hospitals, at least in densely populated areas. However in



practice an argument comparable to that advanced in the appendix applies to hospitals as well as schools. To sum this up, choice can only become a reality if there is considerable overcapacity in the system, which makes it a very expensive way of delivering quality.

Democratic accountability, by contrast can deliver results cost-effectively – provided the conditions described here are met: the mandate restricted to those with a real interest, and steps taken to ensure voters are offered genuine alternatives. This is true in areas other than education. For example would the Child Support Agency fiasco have lasted so long if those entitled to payments could have dismissed its Chair? Would farm subsidies have been paid more quickly if the payments agency board was elected by farmers? Should benefit claimants have the right to vote for their agency board, so as to provide a sharper incentive to managers than endless Whitehall targets?

Proponents of 'choice' should welcome this kind of democracy: it is designed to make their agenda work – to put power into the hands of those benefiting from services. There can indeed be choice – but it is between individuals not institutions, and it is exercised through the vote. The alternative - market choice - is expensive and often does not work; those who persist in advocating it are guilty of mindless ideology.

Accountability is not everything of course. Good procedures clearly have their place. Train drivers and tax collectors have to follow them, and there are rules and guidelines to follow in any organisation. But to an increasing extent we expect the individuals who represent an organisation to be capable of individual judgement, and are frustrated when, as is often the case, they are not. Of course there are boundaries, but we want there to be more room for discretion and compromise within those boundaries. Since we do not want arbitrary behaviour, there is an increased need for professionalism.

Take for example those advising benefit claimants. The mechanical aspects of processing applications are increasingly being automated, creating the opportunity to devote more effort to providing help and advice. Naturally the advisors have to work within the rules, in the sense that a lawyer has to work within the rules. But to do their job well they cannot simply apply the rules in a mechanical fashion. Like a good lawyer they have to try and understand the client's situation and then use their knowledge to maximise the client's welfare. They have to be professionals.

We may want this, but it is difficult to achieve. Good people have to be attracted to the service, retained and trained, and this applies in all public services of course, not just education. Likewise professionalism has to be developed and nurtured in those areas where it has not already taken root. At the same time the forces encouraging a bureaucratic approach have to be tackled, again across the public service and not just in education. For example judges, through their rulings in compensation cases, are encouraging the natural risk aversion that reinforces bureaucracy. We are all familiar with officials who justify ludicrous decisions by citing the danger of court action. The government is taking steps to deal with this, but the problem is likely to require a range of different measures, both to reduce the risk and the risk aversion.

The way accountability and professionalism interact will vary from service to service. Amongst GPs for example, the professional ethic is taken for granted and so accountability is achieved through bureaucracies that safeguard minimum standards (ie the GMC and Primary Care Trusts). There may be a case for democratic accountability, say through direct election of PCTs, but it is not that compelling. This is different from the situation in schools, where the professional tradition is less well established, and where leadership and organisation are more important. These two facts make reliance on individual professionalism more precarious, and so they increase the need for a stronger form of accountability of the kind described here.

Hospitals are different again. Highly complex organisations, they would struggle if they relied solely on the ethics of their various professionals – which often push the organisation in different directions. The development of a shared purpose, and thus a shared professional ethic, may be possible, but is a major task. As for accountability, hospitals do not have a long term client group in the way that schools and GPs do, which is one reason why current foundation hospital governance, involving self-selected members, does not feel quite right. There is no natural constituency with sufficient interest to vote out an underperforming directorate. Perhaps GPs are hospitals' long term clients, and hospitals should be democratically accountable to local GPs, advised by the health service equivalent of Ofsted.

Finally the use of centrally controlled budgets to reduce inequalities as advocated here is already, and will continue to be, an important part of other public services policy. Some central planning is still needed. However in other respects the section on admissions is dealing with a problem peculiar to education: the role it plays in reproducing class division. There is no obvious parallel in health,

policing or social services. There are some parallels in the planning of housing – the need for intervention to create mixed areas rather than ghettos - but the practical issues and the tools used are completely different.

To sum up, the issues in education apply more widely and government policy on public service could and should focus on four key measures:-

1. Developing appropriate forms of democratic accountability
2. Ensuring the right people are entering public services
3. Providing the support needed to grow the appropriate professional ethic (and removing the barriers that hinder this)
4. Continuing to plan funding from the center to ensure efficient and equitable allocation of resources.

Appendix: why choice does not deliver quality

No-one, on the right or left, has even begun to show that choice of school – the market mechanism – is the lever that will lead to consistently good state schools. Indeed, if anything, it reinforces the natural cluster tendency whereby good schools attract 'good' pupils and thus 'good' teachers, and so get better; while poor schools end up with 'bad' pupils and so with 'bad' teachers and so get worse. There is now a belated consensus across the political spectrum, at least amongst those that have thought about the issue, that choice of school is probably desirable once consistently high standards have been achieved but is not a mechanism for achieving those standards.

It is important that those who oppose choice because it does not deliver quality, or because of its currently socially divisive nature, do not get branded as being opposed to choice outright. Choice is good, particularly at secondary level – for example, the style of one school may well suit the personality and aptitudes of one child, the style of another the personality and aptitudes of another. Indeed we should be aiming for a situation where choice is meaningful. But at the moment we do not have the consistent quality which would make choice meaningful and equitable. Choice is, as it were, stage 2.

The theoretical scenario in which choice delivers high standards runs something like this:-

1. There are good schools and bad schools
2. Parents recognise this, and they choose good schools which become oversubscribed
3. Good schools expand to meet at least some of this extra demand
4. New schools are set up to meet the rest of the demand
5. Bad schools are undersubscribed, and eventually close due to lack of funds
6. Thus eventually there are only good schools.

There are two weaknesses in this argument. The first is, of course, that points 3 and 4 are simply fantasy. Good schools may expand a little but many do not want to expand and most cannot expand that much. Even more obvious it is very difficult, expensive and time-consuming to set up a new school. The 'barriers to entry' and the timescales are huge. There are measures in the Education Bill designed to reduce the bureaucratic barriers to entry, but these are as nothing compared with the financial and practical barriers, notably finding a suitable site. Of course there will be room for the occasional new school, and these do sometimes replace failed schools once they have closed down, but the kind of investment and activity required to deal with parents moving away from the 30% of schools that are not yet 'good' or better is unimaginable.

The second weakness is that point 5 glosses over a whole host of problems. First, one way or another the tax payer has to bear the cost of undersubscribed schools. Even if new schools were launched, the resulting false market would be a very expensive way of dealing with failure. Second, bad schools can often improve with support. It is wasteful and unfair on both pupils and teachers not to make an effort to achieve this improvement when it is possible. Third, the kind of lingering death envisaged would be intolerable: the pupils involved, inevitably the least advantaged, would receive an even worse education than they otherwise would have done. Watered down versions of this scenario, such as that suggested in the White Paper, do not have the same calamitous effects, but simply fail to create a market. They are a fraud.

Charles Seaford, 5 September 2006



Footnotes Summary:

- [1] It is ahead only of Spain, Korea, Poland, Greece, The Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia and Mexico. However it does better at younger age groups: 'Education at a Glance' (OECD 2005)
- [2] 'Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools 2004/05' (Ofsted 2005). Note that the Ofsted categories refer to the quality of the school and do not simply translate into exam results. Schools have other objectives, and in any case exam results also depend on the intake.
- [3] 'Improving Poorly Performing Schools in England' (National Audit Office 2006)
- [4] 'National School Improvement Report for Maintained Mainstream Secondary Schools' (Ofsted 2006)
- [5] 'Higher Standards. Better Schools for All' (DfES 2005)
- [6] Ofsted is replacing its 5 categories with 4 the top 2 being 'outstanding' and 'good'.
- [7] This is not necessarily a criticism of the trade unions whose primary role is to defend their members.
- [8] The proportion of good and excellent teaching in primary schools has risen from 45% to 74% and in secondary schools from 59% to 78%.
- [9] Individuals at lower levels may also be subject to market accountability in so far as they are charged by their superiors to win business, which requires that they accept and meet obligations to clients.
- [10] See for example J. O'Shaughnessy and C. Leslie 'More Good School Places' (Policy Exchange 2005) – an intelligent paper that admits that choice will not result in 'more good school places' - and C. Wood 'Making Choice a Reality in Secondary Education' (Social Market Foundation 2005) – which only argues rather lamely that choice will send a signal to Ofsted.
- [11] Perhaps not everyone will agree with this. There are those that think that the internet has created a fundamentally new kind of interaction that while not replacing the teacher makes the teacher's role less fundamental. But this is really poverty of aspiration – teaching on the cheap. The internet, and interactive materials generally, are a useful supplement to, sometimes even replacement for, books, particularly for those children who are not naturally bookish. They can never replace the personal inspiration, challenge and guidance that a good teacher provides.
- [12] Let us be clear: children are the clients of education, not parents. It is their lives that are shaped by it, not those of their parents. But of course parents are the most common proxies.
- [13] See NAO op cit which describes the difference between effective and ineffective headteachers.
- [14] NAO op cit
- [15] As it stands today – August 2006 - the Education Bill proposes some relatively modest but still welcome increases to the power of authorities, for example to take control of schools where pupils' achievements are lower than at comparable schools.
- [16] NAO op cit.
- [17] As measured by Ofsted. One example: Ofsted reports that education authorities in the North East perform better than those in the South East. In the former area 0.4% of schools are in special measures, in the latter 1.5% (NAO op cit).
- [18] So, in the words of the Cabinet Member for Education Wandsworth 'Even the weakest of schools, when threatened with closure, becomes enormously popular'. Quoted in O'Shaughnessy and Leslie op cit.
- [19] Changes in leadership are not always needed of course, but the following figures from the NAO report are interesting. The percentage of schools recovering from 'Special Measures' or 'Serious Weaknesses' where the following make a major contribution: increases or changes to teaching staff- over 70%; changes to management team – over 70%; changes to headteacher – over 60%. Other high scoring areas are: initiatives to improve pupil learning – over 90%, initiatives to

improve performance monitoring – 70%; initiatives to improve existing leadership – over 60%.

- [20] Or the local authorities have a discretionary budget, and the size of this budget indirectly affects the level of council tax
- [21] The government will want authorities to concentrate attention on improving the worst performing schools, since this will reduce the inequalities in the system. This may not be achieved through the accountability system since parents may not have the same priority. It can however be achieved through the way schools are financed – for more on this see section 5.
- [22] Rather as successful schools do not have incentives to expand – despite the wishful thinking of the White Paper and certain pamphleteers.
- [23] Note that teams from high performing authorities already sometimes turn round authorities in difficulties (eg Warwickshire and Doncaster; Blackburn and Rochdale, Telford and Walsall): 'Shaping the Education Bill – Reaching for Consensus' (Compass web-site).
- [24] The quality control role described in this section is not the local education authorities' only role: there are at least three others. First, they have to plan provision – that is make sure there are enough but not too many places for the children in their area, including those children with special needs. For reasons discussed in the appendix this cannot be left to the market and the discussion about how to encourage new schools is something of a red herring. There has also been a rather pointless debate about whether this planning role should take the form of 'providing' or 'commissioning' – see for example the Prime Minister's forward to the White Paper. In the end this is a financial matter; turning on who bears the fixed costs of schools with spare places. If local authorities bear those costs, they are providing, if someone else bears the costs they are commissioning, and that is all there is to it. Those who argue for commissioning must make clear who, other than the authorities, will bear these costs. Second, local authorities can provide certain services to schools (IT support, pay-roll, catering contract management). They do not have to do this, and increasingly schools are buying the services from other providers. Third, local authorities will play a role in admissions – see section 5.
- [25] Or for example take the observation of two teachers quoted by Mathew Horne 'Classroom Assistance' (Demos 2001): 'For 10 years we were assessed on how well we were delivering a national curriculum in modern foreign languages that was seriously pedagogically flawed. It's called communicative language teaching, and it doesn't work. Basically, it's not teaching grammar. We all knew it didn't work'. "I've kept the original bulletins that told you to do it and I've kept the bits of paper where it says that teachers were stupid for doing it"
- [26] Horne op cit.
- [27] Horne op cit.
- [28] A body set up by the Government in 2000 to be the voice of the profession but which, according to the Audit Commission, has not yet had the desired impact. Annual Report (General Teaching Council 2005)
- [29] Independent 2 December 2005
- [30] Some are cited in the White Paper 'Higher Standards, Better Schools for All'. Ofsted reported that the majority of the small number of 'Independent State School Partnerships' were "very effective": 'Independent State School Partnerships' (Ofsted 2005)
- [31] This showed that only 4% of teachers want to become heads in the next 5 years and 34% of headteachers plan to retire in the next five years: 'Teachers Survey' (General Teaching Council 2006). The NAO report cited reports that 20% of secondary headteacher positions remained unfilled when a follow up survey of vacancies was conducted.
- [32] This is not a marginal problem. To get an even mix of pupils in each school, roughly one in three pupils would have to move: J Reed 'Just how radical is the White Paper' (IPPR web site 2005).
- [33] A 2004 DFES study showed that a pupil's results at GCSE are more strongly correlated with the proportion of pupils at his or her school entitled to free school meals than they are with whether he or she is entitled to free school meals, indicating that the level of deprivation at the school has more impact than the level of deprivation at home. The key variable was the percentage of pupils progressing from expected level at key stage 2 to the expected level at Key stage 3 in Mathematics in 2002. The difference between those entitled to free school meals and those not entitled was between 7 and 10% depending on the proportion of children entitled to free school meals at the school. The difference between those attending schools where less than 5% of the children were entitled and more than 35% were entitled was 16%, both for those entitled and those not entitled to free school meals: DFES figures quoted by R Lupton 'How does Place affect Education?' (IPPR 2006)



Note that studies which show a strong level of correlation between performance and deprivation – of which there are plenty – do not in themselves show that socially comprehensive schools would improve results, since of course such schools would not themselves eliminate deprivation. An example of such a study is the Sutton Trust's paper on 'The Social Composition of Top Comprehensive Schools (Sutton Trust 2006) which showed that at the top 200 performing comprehensive schools only 5.6 percent of children were entitled to free school meals as opposed to the national average of 14.3% (and average for the schools post code areas of 11.5% - the difference here being only noticeable when the school was its own admissions authority). See also S Gibbons 'Geography, Resources and Primary School Resources' (London School of Economics 2002) which quotes a study showing that 69% of schools in the worst category of special measures were in the most disadvantaged 10% of wards.

- [34] A 2006 study indicated that peer groups themselves had some but relatively little impact on results, and the effect was concentrated amongst the most able (ie the able benefit most from being with the able). Social peer grouping had no impact independent from that of ability peer grouping: S. Gibbons 'Peer Effects and Pupil Attainment' (LSE 2006)
- [35] "The very schools most in need of high levels of consistent leadership" experience the most difficulties in recruiting heads and deputy heads: NAO op cit referring to research by Education Data Surveys. See also A Bush 'Choice and Equity in Teacher Supply' (IPPR 2005).
- [36] The Sir John Cass Secondary School in East London is a much quoted example
- [37] See note 32 above: the gap of 16% referred to is split evenly: the percentage of pupils progressing as expected at schools with an average level of free school meal entitlement is 8 above that at the most deprived and 8 below that at the least deprived. See the Sutton Trust study also referred to in note 34.
- [38] Short of abolishing the private sector.
- [39] A variation on fixed place allocation - a lottery system, proposed by the Social Market Foundation (M Haddad (ed) 'School Admissions – a Report of the Social Market Foundation Commission, 2004) – has been shown not to work because middle class parents who lose the lottery will opt out. (O'Shaughnessy and Leslie op cit). Banding (ie allocating places to a fixed number of pupils in each of several ability bands) may make some more popular schools more comprehensive (if they adopt the system – a big if), but it does not do a great deal for the least successful schools who will find themselves sadly undersubscribed in the high bands. Middle class parents will opt out rather than send their children to the 'wrong' school.
- [40] See R Levaiae and others 'Estimating the relationship between school resources and pupil attainment at KS3' (Institute of Education/DFES 2005) and A Jenkins and others 'Estimating the relationship between school resources and pupil attainment at GCSE' (Institute of Education/DFES 2006). The latter study in particular shows that the effect of lowering the teacher pupil ratio by 1 over 5 years (at a cost of £127 per pupil per year in a subject) could lead to an improvement of 1.2 GCSE grades.
- [41] The research supporting these priorities is cited in Ruth Lupton 2006 op cit.
- [42] The following rather revealing sentence appeared in the preface to C Wood op cit, written by a Deloitte partner: "Choice is at the forefront of the debate about reforming Britain's public services for one simple reason. No practical long term alternative set of reforms has been put forward."

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