

“education”  
education  
education

Taking  
Education  
Really  
Seriously

Four Years'  
Hard Labour

Edited by  
Michael Fielding

**Also available as a printed book**  
see title verso for ISBN details

## Taking Education Really Seriously

Michael Fielding has edited a timely and much needed review of four years of Labour government education policy, with contributions from authoritative friends and critics of the administration. This will provide analytic and critical purchase on the surprisingly conservative continuities and modern paradoxes of New Labour's educational policies, as well as some indications of alternatives to which it might wisely give the careful attention which is provided here.

Professor David Bridges, University of East Anglia

The now familiar 'education, education, education' as a statement of the New Labour government's priorities for national renewal has a substantial international significance. Many countries across the world see education as a key resource in the development of a vibrant knowledge economy on which they depend for their well-being and their success. The opportunity to reflect on the effectiveness or otherwise of a government that came to power with such singleness of purpose, such widespread support, and so many high hopes, particularly in the field of education, thus has a resonance that goes well beyond the shores of the UK.

In a book of considerable power, substantial insight and occasional beauty, leading writers from a range of educational fields examine New Labour's policy intentions against the varied realities of their fulfilment. A decidedly mixed picture emerges from the book's six sections

- The modernising agenda
- Alternative perspectives, particular values
- Feeling policy realities on the pulses
- Levers of change
- Rethinking the roles and realities of educational research
- International perspectives

Within the overwhelming majority of the contributions there is genuinely felt goodwill and substantial admiration for the degree of commitment and tenacity shown by the Labour administration: this is a government that clearly cares about a positive, challenging, educational experience for *all* students.

However, there are serious puzzles and challenges here too. Is there, as one leading commentator puts it, a ‘crisis of identity’ in the Labour government’s approach to education? Or is this perception the inevitable fallout of a government brave enough and determined enough to intervene judiciously and tenaciously to ensure ‘High Expectations and Standards for All, No Matter What’ in pursuit of a world class education system?

**Michael Fielding** is Reader in Education at the University of Sussex, where he is in the process of setting up a Centre for Educational Innovation.

# Taking Education Really Seriously

Four Years' Hard Labour

Edited by

**Michael Fielding**



London and New York

First published 2001  
by RoutledgeFalmer  
11 New Fetter Lane, London EC4P 4EE

Simultaneously published in the USA and Canada  
by RoutledgeFalmer  
29 West 35th Street, New York, NY 10001

*RoutledgeFalmer is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group*

This edition published in the Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2005.

“To purchase your own copy of this or any of Taylor & Francis or Routledge’s collection of thousands of eBooks please go to [www.eBookstore.tandf.co.uk](http://www.eBookstore.tandf.co.uk).”

© 2001 Edited by Michael Fielding

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilised in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

*British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data*

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

*Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication Data*

Taking education really seriously : four years’ hard labour/edited by Michael Fielding.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

1. Education and state—Great Britain—History—20th century.
2. Politics and education—Great Britain—History—20th century.
3. Labour Party (Great Britain)—History. I. Fielding, Michael, 1945–

LC93.G7 T35 2001

379.41–dc21 2001019110

ISBN 0-203-00632-1 Master e-book ISBN

ISBN 0-415-25210-5 (Print Edition)

# Contents

<i>List of figures and tables</i>	vii
<i>Notes on contributors</i>	viii
1 Taking education really seriously: four years' hard labour MICHAEL FIELDING	1
<b>PART I The modernising agenda</b>	<b>16</b>
2 High expectations and standards for all, no matter what: creating a world class education service in England MICHAEL BARBER	17
<b>PART II Alternative perspectives, particular values</b>	<b>44</b>
3 Labour, learning and the economy: a 'policy sociology' perspective STEPHEN J.BALL	45
4 The good, the bad and the ugly: on four years' Labour education policy JAMES TOOLEY	59
<b>PART III Feeling policy realities on the pulses</b>	<b>74</b>
5 Renewed hopes and lost opportunities: early childhood in the early years of the Labour government PETER MOSS	75
6 The impact of New Labour's educational policy on primary schools PETER WOODS, BOB JEFFREY AND GEOFF TROMAN	86
7 Will the curriculum caterpillar ever learn to fly? MIKE DAVIES AND GWYN EDWARDS	98

8	<b>Further education under New Labour: translating the language of aspiration into a springboard for achievement</b> ANN LIMB	110
9	<b>'It lifted my sights': revaluing higher education in an age of new technology</b> RICHARD SMITH AND PAUL STANDISH	122
10	<b>The creative society: reuniting schools and lifelong learning</b> TOM BENTLEY	133
<b>PART IV Levers of change</b>		144
11	<b>Target setting, policy pathology and student perspectives: learning to labour in new times</b> MICHAEL FIELDING	145
12	<b>Modernising headteachers as leaders: an analysis of the NPQH</b> HELEN M.GUNTER	157
13	<b>Reforming teachers' pay: crossing the threshold</b> MEL WEST	172
14	<b>'Modernising' LEAs: a changing framework of values</b> VALERIE HANNON	187
<b>PART V Rethinking the roles and realities of educational research</b>		199
15	<b>Revitalising educational research: past lessons and future prospects</b> DAVID H.HARGREAVES	200
16	<b>Restructuring educational research for the 'Third Way'?</b> JOHN ELLIOTT AND PAUL DOHERTY	213
<b>PART VI International perspectives</b>		227
17	<b>The two solitudes: policy makers and policy implementers</b> DEAN FINK	228
18	<b>Managing the myth of the self-managing school as an international educational reform</b> JOHN SMYTH	242
	<i>Index</i>	259

# Figures and tables

## Figures

2.1	Country maths scores relative to average, 1965	18
2.2	English education relative to other countries'	19
2.3	Policy approach of English education	20
2.4	Principles and policies	22
2.5	Pupils at level 4 or above in KS2 English tests	26
2.6	Pupils at level 4 or above in KS2 mathematics tests	26
2.7	Do primary school headteachers think the National Literacy Strategy is raising standards?	27
2.8	How confident are primary school headteachers that the National Numeracy Strategy will raise standards?	28
2.9	The aims of EiC for the individual student	31
14.1	Plans required of local education authorities	192
18.1	Elements of a critical theory of teachers' work	251

## Tables

2.1	Policies for the segments of Figure 2.4	23
11.1	Contrasting practices of target setting	154



# Contributors

**Michael Barber** is Director of the Standards and Effectiveness Unit and Chief Adviser on School Standards to the Secretary of State for Education and Employment, David Blunkett, at the Department for Education and Employment. Among his responsibilities are the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies, tackling school failure, modernising secondary education in the large cities and the contracting out of failing local education authorities. Major publications include *The Learning Game* (1997), *How to do the Impossible* (1997) and *A World Class Education Service for the Twenty-first Century* (1999).

**Stephen J. Ball** is Karl Mannheim Professor of the Sociology of Education at the Institute of Education, University of London. He is author of several books on education policy and edits the *Journal of Education Policy*.

**Tom Bentley** is Director of Demos, the independent UK-based think tank. He has worked as an adviser to the British on education and youth policy, and is active in education debates around the world. His publications include *Learning beyond the Classroom* (1998), *Destination Unknown* (1999) and *The Creative Age* (with Kim Seltzer, 1999).

**Mike Davies's** headships in rural Scotland, inner London and Milton Keynes gave rise to two parallel passions: school-based curriculum development and pedagogy, and the reculturing of large secondary schools on a human scale. Board membership of the British Curriculum Foundation and Human Scale Education Movement reflects these long-term quests.

**Paul Doherty** is a senior research officer with the National Foundation for Educational Research. He left school with few formal educational qualifications and returned to study as an adult, eventually being awarded a Ph.D. studentship at the Centre for Applied Research in Education (CARE) at the University of East Anglia. Here he has worked alongside John Elliott, developing interests in student disaffection, in case study and collaborative research methodology and in the ways in which educational research informs (or fails to inform) practice.

**Gwyn Edwards** is Associate Professor in the Department of Curriculum Studies, University of Hong Kong. His teaching and research interests include geographical education, the humanities curriculum, curriculum change and action research. He is co-author of *Change and the Curriculum* (with Geva M.Blenkin and A.V.Kelly, 1992) and co-editor of *Education and Experience* (with A.V.Kelly, 1998).

**John Elliott** is Professor of Education within the Centre for Applied Research in Education at the University of East Anglia. He is the author and editor of a number of publications in the fields of curriculum and teacher professional development. He is currently an Advisory Professor to the Hong Kong Institute of Education and a consultant to the Hong Kong government.

**Michael Fielding** is Reader in Education at the University of Sussex where he is currently setting up a Centre for Educational Innovation. His two main research interests are the development of the 'Person Centred School' and the radical potential of student voice in educational transformation.

**Dean Fink** is a former secondary Head and senior educational official in Ontario. He is an associate of the International Centre for Educational Change at the University of Toronto and a visiting fellow of the International Centre for Leadership at the University of Hull. His chief areas of interest are educational change and school leadership. He has consulted in twenty-seven countries in the past few years and is the author or co-author of *Changing our Schools* (with Louise Stoll, 1996); *Good Schools/Real Schools* (2000) and *It's about Learning* (with Louise Stoll and Lorna Earl, 2001).

**Helen M.Gunter** is Senior Lecturer in the School of Education at the University of Birmingham. Her research interests include the history of leadership and management studies. Helen is the author of *Rethinking Education* (1997) and *Leaders and Leadership in Education* (2001).

**Valerie Hannon** is an Honorary Professor in Education at the University of Sheffield, and an independent consultant and researcher in education policy and management. She was formerly Director of Education for Derbyshire County Council and adviser to the Local Government Association. Her related publications include 'Local government and schools' in *Modern Educational Myths*, ed. B.O'Hagan (1999). She is working on a series of projects to develop and support creativity in education.

**David H.Hargreaves** is Chief Executive of the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority and a member of the National Educational Research Forum.

**Bob Jeffrey** is a Research Fellow at the Open University focusing on primary schools and using qualitative methodology to investigate the creative practices of teachers and children and teachers' experiences of work. He is the author, with Peter Woods, of *Teachable Moments* (1996), *Testing Teachers* (1998) and *Restructuring Schools, Reconstructing Teachers* (with Geoff Troman and Mari Boyle, 1997). He has recently co-edited *Creativity in Education* (2001).

**Ann Limb**, formerly Principal of Cambridge Regional College, has recently been appointed as Chief Executive of the University for industry. Her interests focus on learning and leadership. She has published two textbooks (1980, 1982) on language learning and numerous articles on strategic and change management, leadership and post-16 education and training.

**Peter Moss** is Professor of Early Childhood Provision at the Institute of Education, University of London. His main interests are children's services and the relation between care and employment. Recent books include *Beyond Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care* (with Gunilla Dahlberg and Alan Pence, 1999) and *Parental Leave* (co-edited with Fred Deven, 2000).

**Richard Smith** is Director of Combined Social Sciences, University of Durham. His main interest is the philosophy of education, particularly how education counters the prevailing culture of performativity and rediscovers a sense of value. His most recent book is *Education in an Age of Nihilism* (with Nigel Blake, Paul Smeyers and Paul Standish, 2000).

**John Smyth** is Professor of Teacher Education at Flinders University of South Australia and Director of the Flinders Institute for the Study of Teaching. His research interests are in socio-critical policy analyses of education, and the sociology and politics of teachers' work. His recent works have appeared in the *British Educational Research Journal*, the *Journal of Education and Work*, the *Journal of Education Policy* and the *British Journal of Sociology of Education*. He is author or editor of fourteen books, the most recent of which is *A Critical Politics of Teachers' Work* (2001).

**Paul Standish** is Senior Lecturer in Education at the University of Dundee and editor of the *Journal of Philosophy of Education*. His main research interest is the relationship between analytical and Continental philosophy and its significance for education. His recent books include *Education in an Age of Nihilism* (with Nigel Blake, Paul Smeyers and Richard Smith, 2000), *Education at the Interface* (ed., with Nigel Blake, 2000), *Lyotard: Just Education* (ed., with Pradeep Dhillon, 2000) and *Universities Remembering Europe* (ed., with Francis Crawley and Paul Smeyers, 2000).

**James Tooley** is Professor of Education Policy at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne, where he directs the Centre for Market Solutions in Education. His publications include *The Global Education Industry* (1999) and *Reclaiming Education* (2000). He is researching the nature and developmental impact of private schools for the poor in India and Africa.

**Geoff Troman** is a Research Fellow and Associate Lecturer in the Faculty of Education and Language Studies at the Open University. His Ph.D. research was an ethnography of primary school restructuring. He is conducting research into the social construction of teacher stress. Among his publications is *Primary Teachers' Stress* (with Peter Woods, 2001).

**Mel West** is Professor of Educational Leadership at the Manchester Business School and also at the Faculty of Education, University of Manchester. He has written a number of books and articles on educational management topics and has a particular interest in strategies for school improvement both in the UK and abroad.

**Peter Woods** is a Research Professor in Education at the University of Plymouth, and also at the Open University, where he was formerly Director of the Centre for Sociology and Social Research. He has been researching 'creative teaching in primary schools' since the 1980s. His latest books, *Critical Events in Teaching and Learning* (1993), *Creative Teachers in Primary Schools* (1995), *Teachable Moments* (with Bob Jeffrey, 1996) and *Multicultural Children in the Early Years* (with Mari Boyle and Nick Hubbard, 1999) are products of this research. He has also published work on qualitative methodology, the most recent being *Researching the Art of Teaching* (1996) and *Successful Writing for Qualitative Researchers* (1999).

# 1

## Taking education really seriously

### Four years' hard labour

*Michael Fielding*

#### Origins and architecture

The now familiar 'Education, education, education' as a statement of the incoming Labour government's priorities for national renewal has a substantial international significance. Many countries across the world see education as a key resource in the development of a vibrant knowledge economy on which they depend for their well-being and success. The opportunity to reflect on the effectiveness or otherwise of a government that came to power with such singleness of purpose, such widespread support and so many high hopes, particularly within the field of education, thus has a resonance that goes well beyond the shores of the United Kingdom. That resonance is amplified still further by the sheer energy of its initial engagement—'50 or so policies' articulated 'Within 67 days of the government being elected' (Barber and Sebba 1999)—and the resoluteness and tenacity of its commitment.

The chapters of this book spring initially from a preliminary taking stock after two years of the Labour government's term of office. The special issue of the *Cambridge Journal of Education* in which they were published quickly sold out and many of the papers that appeared in it were widely referenced in the ongoing debate. Most of the original papers<sup>1</sup> have been slightly revised to take account of subsequent developments, but, with one exception,<sup>2</sup> none substantially. This is an indicator of the enduring nature of their particular contributions, not just because the government has remained steadfast in its intent, but also because the issues they touch on are rooted in debates about education and the good life that have deep historical roots and continuing significance. The additional invited contributions<sup>3</sup> serve to widen the range of the debate and extend its international engagement.

The book is organised into six parts. The first, 'The modernising agenda', consists solely of the contribution from Michael Barber, head of the UK government's Standards and Effectiveness Unit at the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE). In a chapter of wide international

reference and relevance he sets out the Labour government's aspirations, reflects on their progress to date and ends by suggesting a number of future prospects which transcend the boundaries of a single nation state.

The second, 'Alternative perspectives, particular values', contains two chapters. Coming at their task from quite different theoretical frameworks and quite different value standpoints, Stephen Ball and James Tooley engage with the intellectual grounding and practical realities of Labour's education policy. As with Michael Barber's contribution, the multiple threads of international economic development weave their way through the fabric of their texts.

**Part III**, 'Feeling policy realities on the pulses', addresses different aspects of policy realisation through a consideration of how different sectors of provision have been affected in the four years of Labour government. Peter Moss looks at early years education and Peter Woods, Bob Jeffrey and Geoff Troman examine the experience of those in the primary (elementary) sector. Mike Davies and Gwyn Edwards focus on curriculum thinking and practice, largely, though by no means exclusively, from a secondary (high school) perspective and Ann Limb reflects on changes in further education. Richard Smith and Paul Standish consider developments and aspirations in higher education and Tom Bentley extends horizons to lifelong learning and the adequacy or otherwise of contemporary schools as institutions of learning in the twenty-first century.

The issue of transformation is taken up by the subsequent four chapters focusing on some of the Labour government's key 'Levers of change'. In this fourth part Michael Fielding looks in something akin to disbelief at the virtually unchallenged reputation of target setting as panacea for multiple educational and other human dilemmas. Helen Gunter examines the Labour government's modernising agenda for the preparation and training of headteachers (principals), Mel West considers the North American and other evidence for performance management and Valerie Hannon asks some searching questions of the values and perspectives that have led to the transformation and near extinction of Local Education Authorities (Districts).

The two chapters that comprise **Part V**, 'Rethinking the role and realities of educational research', take forward a debate that has been running for some time on both sides of the Atlantic, in Australia, in New Zealand and in many other countries throughout the world. David Hargreaves on the one hand and John Elliott and Paul Doherty on the other take very different views of the move towards evidence-informed practice and its helpfulness or otherwise in realising the synergy between research and daily practice in education and other fields of social scientific enquiry.

The 'International perspectives' that conclude the book bring us full circle to the worldwide aspirations with which Michael Barber began. The two contributors who have strong international reputations as well as a

good knowledge of the English education system are Dean Fink from Canada and John Smyth from Australia. Both examine the international evidence for much of that to which English and many other educational systems aspire. In focusing particularly on the potential gap between policy makers and policy implementers and on the questionable evidence base for the self-managing school the volume ends as it began, with strong feeling, firmly held values and, above all else, a commitment to education as the most compelling agent of human transformation and well-being currently at our disposal.

*Part I*  
*The modernising agenda*

Michael Barber's chapter, based on a presentation in Washington DC, in May 2000, opens by locating the challenges facing many governments across the world today. Whilst the title, 'High expectations and standards for all, no matter what', articulates both standards-based continuities with New Labour's Conservative predecessors and an equity-informed insistence on new departures, his subtitle, 'Creating a world class education service in England', echoes aspirations that transcend national boundaries. The impetus and energy of his international orientations drive insistently through his advocacy and commitment. The high challenge, high support motif of New Labour policy orientation applies in equal measure to his manner of writing: the tone is upbeat; the aspirations both wide-ranging and focused; the data compelling in detail and presentation; and the pace and substance of argument urgent in its moral and economic resonance. The message is clear: a modernised education system is the key to economic vitality and international competitiveness, and if this is to be achieved then governments need to intervene judiciously and bravely to liberate energies and capacities in new ways through new combinations and partnerships. The only acceptable arbiter is a rigorous and undeviating insistence on what works.

*Part II*  
*Alternative perspectives, particular values*

The necessity of a transnational dimension in any contemporary debate about education policy is picked up both by Stephen Ball and James Tooley, though their frames of reference and values orientation are markedly different. Whilst both acknowledge positive dimensions of New Labour's approach, both are searchingly critical of the degree to which, on the one hand, the UK government has been captured or, on the other hand, insufficiently influenced by the development of an inevitably international

and, in the words of Richard Sennett (1998) increasingly ‘energetic’ twenty-first-century capitalism.

For Stephen Ball the labour government’s education policy is intelligible only within the wider international context, currently dominated by neo-liberal economics. In ‘Labour, learning and the economy: a “policy sociology” perspective’ he argues, not only that Labour’s chosen approach to education policy is more than compatible with that of the previous administration and the requirements of international agencies such as the World Bank and OECD, but also that their narrow approach to learning and the increasing influence of the ideology and practice of performativity on the daily realities and discursive arenas of schooling are actually antithetical to the high skills knowledge economy to which they are so fervently committed.

For James Tooley, too, Labour’s errors reside, at least in part, in a mistakenly narrow conception and practice of learning, though for him the mistake lies not in an unimaginative or narrow pedagogy but in the monopoly of state-run formal schooling in defining the only legitimate site and framework within which learning can take place. Whilst applauding aspects of Labour policy the overall verdict of his ‘The good, the bad and the ugly: on three years’ Labour education policy’ is ambivalent. At best, Labour’s approach is seen as schizophrenic, standing as much chance of making things worse as of making them better. At worst, its full blooded dirigism is seen to be indefensibly presumptuous, intellectually untenable and practically unrealisable.

### *Part III* *Feeling policy reality on the pulses*

Peter Moss’s ‘Renewed hopes and lost opportunities: early childhood in the early years of the Labour government’ is both generous in its praise and incisive in its philosophical and practical insights. Whilst acknowledging the ‘unparalleled and invigorating change of climate’ together with a welcome preparedness to spend significant amounts of money, there is also a sense of regret, of an opportunity missed as well as positive steps taken. What is missing is a philosophically coherent vision of childhood education. In its stead there seems to be an enlarged employment-led child care system where educational purposes are tagged on at the end, rather than integral to the process itself.

Peter Woods, Bob Jeffrey and Geoff Troman also identify a significant set of dilemmas and tensions that await a fuller resolution over time. ‘The impact of New Labour’s educational policy on primary schools’ includes reference to some signs of a broadening of perspective and a more differentiated approach to the challenge of school improvement through inspection. These are, not however, the dominant motifs of their research.



Well intentioned reforms are seen as likely to produce divisiveness and a further erosion of trust, and the strong tradition of child-centred education remains as embattled as it ever was under the previous Conservative administration: the reductionist backdrop of performativity seems an improbable agent of a more creative or fulfilling practice.

These continuities are picked up by Mike Davies and Gwyn Edwards in ‘Will the curriculum caterpillar ever learn to fly?’ If there is development it is seen as largely regressive: curriculum is seen to be replaced by ‘standards’ and pedagogy has become a legitimate site of explicit government intervention and requirement. None of this is seen as adequate for the inevitable flux and creative possibilities offered by a twenty-first-century context, and the chapter ends with a quite different set of questions and responses from those currently sanctioned by the Labour government.

In contrast, Ann Limb’s ‘Further education under New Labour: translating the language of aspiration into a springboard for achievement’ sees more positive progress made against a widespread backdrop of indifference or ignorance in many sectors of society. Her subtitle, ‘Translating the language of aspiration into a springboard for achievement’, is indicative of her upbeat assessment of current changes and future possibilities. Here we have a government unequivocally committed to ‘implementing radical reform which delivers results and brings about lasting change’, its continued progress predicated on its capacity to listen and learn from those working in the field.

‘It lifted my sights: revaluing higher education in an age of new technology’ is also cautiously optimistic about and appreciative of more recent developments. Richard Smith and Paul Standish remark on significant changes that connect very strongly with a quite different, positive set of values and aspirations from those often articulated as appropriate to other sectors of the education service. Whilst they see a degree of ambivalence and contradiction in government policy, they are nonetheless heartened by the vibrant sense of possibility, particularly with regard to the use of ICT.

In ‘The creative society: reuniting schools and lifelong learning’ Tom Bentley argues strongly that schools as currently conceived and experienced are incapable of doing what is required of them in terms of meeting the likely needs of twenty-first century learners. In an advocacy that resonates strongly with the curriculum thinking articulated earlier in this volume by Mike Davies and Gwyn Edwards he suggests that governments need to work on a long-term vision that involves schools turning themselves inside out, reconnecting strongly with the communities they serve.

*Part IV*  
*Levers of change*

The issue of transformation is taken up by the subsequent four chapters focusing on some of the Labour government's key levers of change. Michael Fielding's 'Target setting, policy pathology and student perspectives: learning to labour in new times', whilst not anti-target setting, nonetheless argues that if it is to achieve its educative potential then target setting should be less arrogant in its ambitions, less strident in its approach and more explicitly reciprocal in its understanding of the learning process. Students should be the agents of their own learning, not the objects of their teachers' ambitions or anxieties.

Agency, values and the struggle to develop and sustain a voice are also central to Helen Gunter's 'Modernising headteachers as leaders: an analysis of the NPQH'. In examining the Labour government's modernising agenda for the preparation and training of headteachers (principals) she looks with care at the kind of tensions and dilemmas facing candidates who wish to retain a commitment to democratic and humane traditions of public service. If we are to attract creative people the NPQH needs to rest explicitly on a view of headship that transcends the current technicist trend and in its stead re-establishes a stronger connection with the social and moral dimensions of both management and leadership

Mel West focuses on another part of the government's strategy for developing a more rigorous accountability and a more differentiated motivation within the profession. 'Reforming teachers' pay: crossing the threshold' considers arguments for the reform of existing arrangements before drawing on and critiquing international evidence from the United States on the wisdom or otherwise of performance-related pay. Both critical and supportive, like other contributors to this volume he underscores the necessity of closer dialogue with those who are most affected by its day-to-day operation.

The central importance of values is key to much of the chapter "Modernising" LEAs: a changing framework of values' by Valerie Hannon. Her three foci concern pluralism, achievement and equality of opportunity. Of these, pluralism is seen as particularly important, since within its ambit rests the legitimacy and future health of local democracy at regional and district level, and yet, unsurprisingly for a government that saw itself as leading a 'crusade', the status and strength of pluralism as a key orientation seem increasingly weak.

### *Part V*

#### *Rethinking the role and realities of educational research*

David Hargreaves's 'Revitalising educational research: past lessons and future prospects' opens with a series of quotations each of which underscores the debilitating gap between the expectations of social science researchers on the one hand and policy makers and practitioners on the other. Through an imaginative historical analysis of the debate over the past sixty years his chapter leads to a vigorous advocacy of the Labour government's pragmatic approach to 'what works', the rapid dissemination of good practice throughout the education service and the advent of evidence-informed practice.

The adequacy or otherwise of evidence-informed practice as a hegemonic motif for the immediate future of educational research is explored energetically in John Elliott and Paul Doherty's 'Restructuring educational research for the "Third Way"?' They argue not only that there are serious question marks over the political innocence of a 'what works' ideology, but also that the government has yet to find a genuinely Third Way in education that breaks the mould of a narrow neo-liberal agenda.

### *Part VI*

#### *International perspectives*

Dean Fink's 'The two solitudes: policy makers and policy implementers' identifies the gap between policy makers and policy implementers, tellingly described as 'a dialogue of the deaf', as a matter of serious concern, not just because it endangers the longevity of important changes but, more seriously, because it threatens to undermine the credibility of state-supported education itself. Central to his intention to restore our several capacities to hear, to listen and to learn from each other is the necessity of a shift from control to capacity building and a willingness to attend with as much imagination and commitment to the process as to the content of change.

Some of the most interesting aspects of John Smyth's 'Managing the myth of the self-managing school as an international education reform' are that his challenge to current government thinking on the legitimacy or viability of the self-managing school rests partly on his exposure of the staggering paucity of evidence to substantiate the considerable claims of the self-managing school approach (see Sennett 1998:50 for a similar expose of current macroeconomic equivalents) and partly on his unearthing of its heavily ideological base. For governments to extend and develop the self-managing school as a key strand of educational renewal is seen as a serious mistake with far-reaching adverse consequences for the future viability of publicly funded education provision.

## Critique

Within the overwhelming majority of the contributions to this volume there is genuinely felt goodwill and substantial admiration for the degree of commitment and tenacity shown by the Labour administration: this is a government that clearly cares about a positive, challenging educational experience for all students. Where critique is offered it is done with a view to furthering real, responsive and responsible education policy and practice that has an emancipatory, not an inquisitorial, intent. It is offered in the spirit of genuine dialogue which is the *sine qua non* of real, responsive and responsible democracy.

However, there are a number of puzzles here that are exacerbated by reference to a wider set of reference points. Standing back and reflecting on the wave of informed support that the Labour government received when it first came into power one cannot now fail to be struck, not only by the substantial achievements to which it can legitimately lay claim, but also by the equally strong set of concerns that have grown over time, even from its supporters. Why has the government ended up in a situation where close allies have talked of ‘a feeling of deep disgust’ (Simon 2000:91) and ‘a feeling close to contempt’ (Davies 2000:vi)? Why have we ended up in a situation where, in the words of one commentator, ‘We have...six year olds being coached for SATs in the name of improvement...parents haranguing teachers for not giving their children enough homework...and teenagers who just stop going to school’ (Moore 2000:17). Why, in the still compelling words of another writing some sixty-five years ago, is it still the case that ‘We have immense power, and immense resources; we worship efficiency and success: and *we do not know how to live finely*’ (Macmurray 1935:76, my italics)?

My own view is that there are six main reasons, not only for the puzzles and disappointments expressed above, but also, and more particularly, for the reservations that emerge from many of the contributors to this volume. These six sources of concern amount to what Clyde Chitty has called a ‘crisis of identity’ (2000:89) in the Labour government’s approach to education.

### *Six concerns*

The first source of concern is *ontological*. By this I mean that within government policy there is no adequately articulated understanding of human being, of what it is to be and become a person. This has at least two seriously damaging consequences. First, without a coherent ontology it has and can have no adequately articulated understanding of what education is ultimately and immediately about beyond the insistent imperatives of economic production. Second, the processes through which the government

seeks to achieve its modernising transformation are too often likely to go awry because it has not adequately addressed the specifically human dimension of change processes. Michael Barber's 'high challenge, high support' model does not provide the kind of contemporary anthropology on which its intended success depends. In Richard Sennett's words, 'Operationally, everything is so clear; emotionally so illegible' (1998:68).

The second concern is that Labour's approach to education struggles *morally*, not because it is morally indifferent, but rather because it is morally indiscriminate. It is deeply compromised by the strength of its links with a newly energetic international capitalism which is at best morally disengaged and at worst morally corrosive not only of character (Sennett 1998), but of the very service (i.e. education) in which the development of character has its most appropriate and compelling place. Despite its laudable and authentic commitment to social justice, the unremitting emphasis on performance, 'no matter what', marginalises the subtlety and complexity of the means of our engagement. The moral ambivalence of ambition and 'the chameleon values of the new economy' (Sennett 1998:26) replace the ethical transparency of service and the enduring values of commitment.

It is also *aesthetically* weak in both a substantive and a discursive way. Not only is its record on the arts woefully hesitant and uncertain, its discourse, its way of expressing its aspirations and articulating its requirements, is deeply and damagingly dull. Too much is metallic and managerialist, too often enunciated in ways which are overbearing and overconfident in their insistence. Why is it that we have such little confidence in the capacity of the much more subtle, ethically nuanced language of education to express what is important to us as teachers and learners? Why do we feel impelled to borrow the disfiguring language of performativity, which has neither the capacity nor the inclination to articulate what matters most to us in our daily work and our enduring intentions? The discourse of performance and the now regrettably familiar 'delivery' is not only offensive, it is dishonest: offensive because it violates both our interpersonal realities and our intellectual self-respect; dishonest because one can no more deliver learning than one can, with integrity, reduce the richness and complexity of vibrant professional practice to 'the effective management of performance'.

Unsurprisingly, it also fails *existentially*; there seems no place for either the language or the experience of joy, of spontaneity, of life lived in ways that are vibrant and fulfilling rather than watchfully earnest, focused and productive of economic activity. Nor does there seem to be a place for an aspiring narrative of human experience, for 'a sustainable sense of self' (Sennett 1998:27). It is understandable that the robust realities of policy realisation exemplified in the abrasive abruptness and unsurprising dislocation of bullet point thinking leave little room for nuance, or for the

openness and attentive reciprocity of dialogue that we need to make sense of our lives together. However, it is regrettable that there is so little that reminds us of the legitimacy, let alone the necessity, of such exploratory undertakings. Whilst I recognise that the suggestion that ‘Changing the metaphor changes the theory’ (Sergiovanni, 1994) is to overstate the case, it is not to overstate it by very much. If we began to talk to each other in a language that is more attuned to the intellectual and emotional realities which we all now face, we would begin to think and feel differently about what we do and why we do it. We would be able more often and more insistently to open up intellectual and practical spaces that challenge the conspicuous common sense of world class targets. It is not that, of themselves, aspirations to be world leaders in education are necessarily inappropriate (though some would argue they are that too). Rather it is that they are inadequate, humanly inadequate.

It is deeply ironic that a fifth source of concern is and will continue to be its failure on its own terms of educational *productivity*. The Labour government will not and cannot deliver genuinely educational goods unless it does so by accident or default or for reasons its own presumptions do not properly understand or value. Productivity in terms of certain kinds of measurable results is quite obviously and absurdly incomplete, both because it takes little account of wider aspirations and because it necessarily relies upon them (Fielding 2000a). Inevitably and dishonestly parasitic upon the richness of human encounter, such productivity is as likely to be destructive as constructive of educational progress, producing situations ‘where unjustifiable educational practices are not only possible, but encouraged’ (Reay and Wiliam 1999:353) Indeed, ‘[t]he more specific the Government is about what it is that schools are to achieve, the more likely it is to get it, but the less likely it is to mean anything’ (ibid.).

What these five sources of concern point to is an overarching *intellectual* inadequacy that adversely affects the quality and realisation of Labour’s educational project. It is here, at its intellectual heart, that Labour’s approach to education is most comprehensively and damagingly mistaken. At the most basic and fundamental level it seems to me that there are two key questions that, more than any others, expose the profundity of the challenge that needs to be faced and the distance that still needs to be travelled before it can be properly grasped or practically addressed. These are ‘What is education for?’ and ‘How might we best achieve our educational purposes?’ In other words, they concern the nature of educational ends and the proper relationship between those ends and the means we use to achieve them.

## On the practical necessity of philosophy

### *What is education for?*

With regard to ends, to the vision to which considerable government effort and commitment are directed, the most puzzling concern continues to be whether the vision is primarily an economic one with the occasional bit of social adhesive stuck on to ensure the enterprise remains viable, or whether the vision is one in which economics is the servant of a wider and deeper human flourishing. The differences between the two are profound, but show no evidence of having been acknowledged or properly understood. Certainly, Michael Barber has suggested elsewhere (1999:17) that a world class education system is not an end in itself, and that ‘It is a key element of achieving the Government’s goals of a more productive economy, a more cohesive society, a more successful democracy and more fulfilled individuals’ (ibid.), but this does nothing to help us understand the relationship between these things. A list is no substitute for argument: there are tensions to be acknowledged and properly addressed here. There are, as Maxine Greene (1997:64) points out:

two contradictory tendencies in education today: one has to do with shaping malleable young people to serve the needs of technology in a post-industrial society; the other has to do with educating young people to grow and become different, to find their individual voices, and to participate in a community in the making.

and we are in grave danger of the ‘tyranny of the technical’ winning out over the more complex, more profound human developments to which she points a contrasting finger. What we do about this tension is, of course, an immensely difficult matter. But what we cannot do is pretend it does not exist, wish it away by sheer strength of will, or simply fail to see there is a fundamentally important issue to be addressed.

### *Relating ends and means*

Because there is substantial ambivalence about the philosophical nature of the vision to which the government is committed there remains equally substantial ambivalence about the relationship between means and ends. This goes to the heart of the current malaise, exemplified by the still dominant place of the school effectiveness movement in the government’s educational imagination. It is, after all, a movement which remains an intellectually timid articulation of a largely frightened society (Elliott, 1996). When those who would in all probability wish to support what is a demonstrably well-intentioned government end up saying, ‘All I know is

that what is being done in the name of education is not what I would call education at all. It is about fear and pettiness and deliberate social exclusion' (Moore, 1999: 17), something has gone seriously awry. Similarly, the deeply felt anger in many primary (elementary) schools about what they saw as the political manipulation of booster funding arrangements had its roots firmly in the soil of an indignation that was neither self-righteous nor self-serving and was connected with what was seen as the questionable morality of the means rather than the ends of policy.

There are ways of addressing issues concerned with the integrity of means and ends, but they lie outside the intellectual arena of performativity. However, unless they are addressed at a fundamental philosophical level no amount of commitment will make a jot of difference. Joined-up policies, much trumpeted by those in power, require joined-up thinking that transcends more superficial continuities. Unless and until this is done teachers and their students will continue to feel and respond as objects rather than as agents of policy and their value will continue to reside and, what is equally damaging, be seen to reside in school performance rather than personal or communal significance.

*'The functional is for the sake of the personal; the  
personal is through the functional'*

It is a measure of the government's seriousness of purpose that the dialogue it has prompted delves deep into purposes and values and the relationship between them as well as into matters of a more transient relevance. These kinds of questions are undoubtedly the most difficult: they are, of course, primarily philosophical matters and it is to one of the UK's most profound and most neglected philosophers, John Macmurray, that we need to turn, both for their proper articulation and for their most likely resolution.

Macmurray argued that, broadly speaking, human beings enter into two kinds of relation with each other: functional relations which are essentially instrumental in nature and personal relations which have no purpose other than to enable us to be ourselves, as, for example in friendship or family. These two very different kinds of relationship will always remain different:

They are opposites, with a tension between them. They are inseparable and limit one another. They are essential to one another and form a unity. Any attempt to fuse them or absorb one into another will fail because they are opposites. Any attempt to separate them will fail because they limit one another. Any effort to run them parallel with one another without relating them will break down because they form an essential unity.

(Macmurray, 1941:5)



Both functional and personal relations are necessary. However—and here is the centrally important point—the personal is the more important of the two. In Macmurray’s view, the meaning of the functional lies in the personal, and not the other way round. The functional life is for the sake of the personal life: ‘an economic efficiency which is achieved at the expense of the personal life is self-condemned, and in the end self-frustrating...the economic is for the sake of the personal’ (1961:187). However, the personal also needs the functional to become real. Whilst it is true that the functional life is for the sake of the personal life, it is also true that the personal life is through the functional life. Unless it were so the personal life, the life of community, would be merely well intentioned rhetoric.

The consequences of these insights seem to me profound and of substantial importance in helping us to identify why some aspects of current policy are successful and why some are not working in ways which had been anticipated or hoped. They also suggest a number of ways in which things might not only be done differently, but done better. Above all they suggest why teaching within the context of education must be understood and practised as a personal and not a technical activity, why schools should aspire to be vibrant learning communities and not merely effective learning organisations, and why education policy should rest upon values and understandings which ensure that economic activity is expressive of human flourishing, not its intended or *de facto* master (Fielding 2000a).

This line of argument points to the necessity of a radical break from the still dominant but increasingly moribund paradigm of school effectiveness. Here, and elsewhere in our society, we have utterly misunderstood the proper relationship between the functional and the personal. Here, in the ‘high-performance organisation’ or effective school model (Fielding 2000b: 53–4) the personal is used for the sake of the functional, community is primarily a convenient tool to achieve organisational purposes. Following Macmurray, I would suggest that the relationship should be completely reversed. Instead of schools as ‘high-performance organisations’ we need schools as ‘person-centred communities’. Here the functional is for the sake of and expressive of the personal: organisation exists for the sake of community, not the other way round. The destructive and myopic obsession with outcomes is replaced by a commitment to schools as both morally and instrumentally successful (*ibid.*).

Whether the radical break I suggest is necessary follows my own suggestion of the ‘person-centred school’ or some other model which places human flourishing at the heart of our chosen educational processes remains to be seen. What we cannot do is continue as we are but more persistently and more intensely. The example offered by Governor Paul Patton of Kentucky, who ups the stakes by repeating ‘Education, education, education, and education’ four times rather than the now familiar three is

unlikely to provide the lead we require: repetition is seldom the harbinger of new departures, and it is genuinely new departures we now need. It is undoubtedly true that we do need to remind ourselves of the importance of attending to the demands of ‘what works’: the worth of the philosophy, policy and practice of any approach to education is, of course, most appropriately judged by its impact on the realities of people’s experience in the world. However, such a test must be complex rather than crude, patient rather than perfunctory or populist, creative rather than controlling, and productive in a richer and more wide-ranging sense than the dominant discourse currently allows. We have to break free from current modes of thinking and exhibit what in his contribution to this volume John Smyth calls ‘a preparedness to think radically outside the frame’. Unless we do so we will fail profoundly and persistently to educate ourselves, our contemporaries and our children’s children. At this juncture our most important tasks are intellectual. We are operating in the wrong frame of reference and as a consequence our lives will continue to become more busy, more exhausting, less humanly productive or satisfying and increasingly devoid of meaning. Alternative frameworks exist that are likely to serve our human needs more profoundly and more engagingly: it would be foolish to ignore them.

### Notes

- 1 The special issue of the *Cambridge Journal of Education* 29, 3 (June 1999) contained papers by Stephen Ball, Michael Barber and Judy Sebba, Mike Davies and Gwyn Edwards, Michael Fielding, Helen Gunter, Valerie Hannon, David Hargreaves, Ann Limb and Peter Moss.
- 2 Michael Barber and Judy Sebba’s paper now appears as a singly authored chapter by Michael Barber
- 3 Authors contributing new chapters to this book are Tom Bentley, John Elliott and Paul Doherty, Dean Fink, John Smyth, Richard Smith and Paul Standish, James Tooley, Mel West, and Peter Woods, Bob Jeffrey and Geoff Troman.

### References

- Barber, M. (1999) ‘Teachers’ place in the big picture’, *Times Educational Supplement*, 12 February, p. 17.
- Barber, M. and Sebba, J. (1999) ‘Reflections on progress towards a world class education system’, *Cambridge Journal of Education* 29 (3), 183–93.
- Chitty, C. (2000) ‘Crisis of identity’, *Forum* 42 (3), 89–90.
- Davies, N. (2000) *The School Report: Why Britain’s Schools are Failing*, London: Vintage.

- Elliott, J. (1996) 'School effectiveness research and its critics: alternative visions of schooling', *Cambridge Journal of Education* 26 (2), 199–224.
- Fielding, M. (2000a) 'Community, philosophy and education policy: against the immiseration of contemporary schooling', *Journal of Education Policy* 15 (4), 397–415.
- Fielding, M. (2000b) 'The person centred school', *Forum* 42 (2), 51–4.
- Greene, M. (1997) 'Art and imagination: reclaiming a sense of the possible', in E. Clinch (ed.) *Transforming Public Education: a new course for America's future*, New York: Teachers' College Press, pp. 145–53.
- Macmurray, J. (1935) *Reason and Emotion*, London: Faber.
- Macmurray, J. (1941) 'Persons and Functions'. Outline document for a series of radio talks submitted to the BBC, 19 September. Unpublished manuscript.
- Macmurray, J. (1961) *Persons in Relation*, London: Faber.
- Moore, S. (1999) 'I'd rather sacrifice my children to my political beliefs than for the sake of an A-level grade or two', *New Statesman*, 26 February, p. 17.
- Moore, S. (2000) 'Summerhill has filled the powers that be with fear of naked, feral children who never attend lessons', *New Statesman*, 27 March, p. 17.
- Reay, D. and Wiliam, D. (1999) "'I'll be a nothing": structure, agency and the construction of identity through assessment', *British Educational Research Journal* 25 (3), 343–54.
- Sennett, R. (1998) *The Corrosion of Character: The Personal Consequences of Work in the New Capitalism*, London: Norton.
- Sergiovanni, T.J. (1994) 'Organizations or communities? Changing the metaphor changes the theory', *Educational Administration Quarterly* 30 (2), 214–26.
- Simon, B. (2000) 'Blair on education', *Forum* 42 (3), 91–2.

# Part I

## The modernising agenda