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## Lessons from the Past: the importance of educational history

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**ABSTRACT** For the past twenty years, the training of teachers in England has consisted of little more than instruction in ‘delivering’ the National Curriculum. In this piece, Derek Gillard argues that there are now encouraging signs of a resurgence of interest in the history of education. He reviews the new edition of Clyde Chitty’s *Education Policy in Britain*, which looks at the history of education from a political perspective, and summarises the content of his own website, which is devoted to the history of *Education in England*.

### **Education Policy in Britain (2nd Edn)**

CLYDE CHITTY

London: Palgrave Macmillan

280 pages, £20.99, ISBN 978-0-230-22278-6

### **Education in England**

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Voltaire described history as ‘nothing more than a tableau of crimes and misfortunes’, and Henry Ford famously said it was ‘more or less bunk’. In education, lip-service has often been paid to history’s importance in the curriculum, but it has endured a rather chequered career. After the Second World War it was often variously treated as part of social studies or integrated studies. Later, as a National Curriculum subject, it suffered interference from a variety of groups with political axes to grind, and more recently it has been effectively relegated to playing a minor part in citizenship education.

The history of education itself has fared no better. For the past two decades, student teachers have spent most of their time learning how to ‘deliver’ the National Curriculum. The idea that they might benefit from understanding

how the provision of education developed in the UK seems to have sunk without trace under a morass of tests and targets.

Fortunately, there are at least four signs that the subject is now being viewed with greater interest.

Firstly, some university education departments (notably the London Institute of Education, Goldsmiths College and the University of Birmingham School of Education) are offering courses in aspects of educational history.

Secondly, in February this year the Cambridge Primary Review, led by Professor Robin Alexander and supported by Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, published its report on the primary curriculum in two parts: *Past and Present* and *The Future*. Its authors stressed the importance of understanding the history. They commented:

Some readers may become impatient with the history, the account of witnesses' concerns and our apparent preoccupation with the problematic. For them, solutions are more important. They are of course welcome to turn straight to Part 2. Yet it is only by understanding the history, recognising the deeply-rooted and often cyclic nature of the problems, and by accepting the inadequacy of some of the surrounding discourse, that we can make progress. That is why the grounding provided by Part 1 is essential. Without it, we shall simply repeat past mistakes. (Alexander & Flutter, 2009, p. 1)

Thirdly, by August this year several of the chapters of my own online history of education in England had been read more than 60,000 times and one (covering the establishment of state education in the nineteenth century) had scored more than 75,000 'hits'. Also on my website are the full texts of more than two dozen important education reports. The Plowden Report alone has already notched up more than a quarter of a million hits.

And fourthly, Palgrave Macmillan has just published the second edition of Clyde Chitty's *Education Policy in Britain* (the first edition was published in 2004). Several of the chapters have been revised and updated; a new chapter on the privatisation of education has been added; higher education is now treated in a separate chapter; and the concluding chapter has been completely rewritten. At 280 pages, the second edition is considerably larger than the first (which had 231 pages).

### **Education Policy in Britain (Second Edition)**

In his *Introduction*, Clyde Chitty stresses the importance of the historical approach but warns that history must not be treated as a 'succession of chance events or as just "one thing after another".' He argues that 'policy-making is always influenced by what has happened in past decades and that the historical account must always be presented within a coherent explanatory framework stressing the key themes underpinning political and social change' (p. xiii).

In Chapter 1 he puts forward arguments as to *Why Education Matters*. He notes that, though all politicians talk of the need to raise educational standards, there is less agreement about what that means in practice. He points out that the very concept of mass education is a comparatively recent phenomenon, quoting Samuel Whitbread, who told the House of Commons in 1807 that 'giving education to the labouring classes of the poor ... would ... be prejudicial to their morals and happiness ... it would teach them to despise their lot in life' (p. 5).

He argues that education is increasingly seen in utilitarian terms. He quotes, for example, the 1985 White Paper *Better Schools*, which reminded schools that 'preparation for working life is one of their principal functions'. He laments the lack of importance attached to the social function of schooling and suggests that social reconstructionism is an appropriate ideology for the future. 'We must promote a form of education which is ... open to new ideas and prepared to challenge past orthodoxies. Above all, it must surely be one of the social functions of schooling to tackle issues of equity and social justice and help create a truly inclusive society in which all forms of diversity – cultural, racial, religious and sexual – are celebrated and endorsed' (p. 15).

In Chapters 2 to 4 he presents a chronological history of education policy-making from 1944 to the present day.

Chapter 2, *The Rise and Fall of the Post-War Consensus*, describes the assumptions underpinning the post-war consensus which began to break down in the 1970s when economic recession fundamentally altered the map of British politics and led to the questioning of many of the assumptions of the post-war era. In education, two assumptions in particular began to be questioned – the agreement, based on the 1944 Education Act's 'national system, locally administered', that politicians would not get involved in the school curriculum, and the effectiveness of the 'tripartite' system of secondary schools.

Chapter 3 covers the period from Callaghan's Ruskin College speech in 1976 to John Major's call for more grammar schools in 1997. Chitty suggests that accountability and control were the twin themes which underpinned the Callaghan administration's approach to education. These themes had become increasingly dominant as employers criticised teachers for being 'overtly hostile to the capitalist ethic' (p. 35), the writers of the 'Black Papers' attacked 'progressive' teaching methods and the William Tyndale affair legitimised (unfair) criticism of the Plowden Report. Despite all this ammunition, Margaret Thatcher's first two administrations, he argues, were 'notable for a remarkable degree of caution in the actual implementation of radical or innovative social policies' (p. 47). This was all the more surprising, given the number of right-wing think tanks and study groups (the 'New Right') which were seeking to influence the Thatcher governments. The big changes in education were to come in the 1988 Education 'Reform' Act which, Chitty suggests, 'made the decisive break with the principles which had underpinned the education service since the Butler Education Act of 1944' (p. 51).

He describes the educational philosophy of John Major, Thatcher's successor as Prime Minister, as 'an interesting mixture of a concern to promote

Thatcherite privatizing measures and a more traditional Conservative belief in the self-evident values of a meritocratic society' (p. 55). One of the policies which resulted from this was the promotion of selection by specialisation.

In Chapter 4, *Education and New Labour*, Chitty draws attention to the 'obvious contradictions involved in affirming a commitment to "social justice" and "community" while, at the same time, pursuing competitive market policies' (p. 59). He points out the discrepancy between the Blair government's mantra 'standards not structures' and its first education act which was 'chiefly concerned with structures' (p. 69). He notes David Blunkett's 'slip of the tongue' announcement of a change of party policy on selection and provides a critique of the government's attack on the comprehensive school (including the problems it caused Education Secretary Estelle Morris) and its 'single-minded determination' to pursue specialisation, choice and diversity at the secondary level (p. 75).

During Charles Clarke's period as Education Secretary there was a renewed commitment to choice and diversity by both major parties: the Tories published *Right to Choose* in June 2004, and the following month the Department for Education and Skills (DES) published the government's *Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners*. Chitty notes that 'What is striking about the Conservative and New Labour policy documents is that the language used was more or less interchangeable, with the two political parties sharing the same ideals and aspirations' (p. 84).

Indeed, after Blair won a historic third term in office, New Labour's 2005 White Paper *Higher Standards, Better Schools for All: more choice for parents and pupils* took the 'modernising' agenda even further, promising to speed up the creation of academies and to set up a system of 'independent non-fee paying state schools'. Chitty comments that Education Secretary Ruth Kelly 'found it very difficult to defend the Government's new proposals' (p. 87).

In the final section of the chapter, Chitty reviews New Labour education policies since Gordon Brown replaced Tony Blair as Prime Minister in June 2007 and Ed Balls replaced Alan Johnson as Schools Secretary in the revamped Department of Children, Schools and Families. He writes that 'it is obviously far too early to provide a detailed assessment of the new Brown administration's attitude towards education and social policy; but it is possible to comment on certain emerging trends' and notes that 'any hopes on the Left of the Labour Party that he [Brown] would seek to reverse some of the more controversial school reforms of the Blair era had been squashed by his promise that he would pursue the Blair agenda with renewed vigour' (p. 89).

There was some confusion over the Academies Programme (which is dealt with in detail in Chapter 5), with Schools Minister Lord Adonis arguing enthusiastically in favour of expansion, while Ed Balls ordered an urgent review of the programme 'amid growing concern at the heart of government that this was one of the education policies that could be said to be failing to target "the most disadvantaged pupils"' (p. 90).

Other issues concerning the Brown administration were the number of youngsters, largely working-class, who were still leaving school with few or no qualifications, and the complex issue of school admissions. However, while some ministers acknowledged the need for change, the Prime Minister himself 'seemed to be firmly of the opinion that the Blairite legacy – and particularly where it applied to education and health – must be preserved and built upon' (p. 92).

Having set out a chronological account of events from 1944 to the present in Chapters 2-4, Chitty turns his attention in Chapters 5-11 to some of the themes that run through the period.

In Chapter 5, *The Privatization of Education*, he notes that, apart from 'a spirited campaign on the Far Right of the Conservative Party to promote the cause of the education voucher as a means of enhancing parental choice and undermining the powers of the local education authorities', the notion of privatising parts of the education service really took hold in the 1980s. It took two main forms: 'the purchasing at private expense of educational services which ought to be free within the public system; and the purchasing at public expense of educational services in private institutions'. He argues that 'the privatization of education could be usefully defined as the systematic erosion, and possibly even abandonment, of the commitment to a common educational service based on pupil needs, rather than upon private means, and accessible to all young people on the basis of equal opportunity' (p. 93).

A major means of privatisation was the Private Finance Initiative (PFI), which had been launched by the Major Government in 1992, and was expanded by New Labour after 1997 under the umbrella title 'Public Private Partnership' (PPP), 'although the PFI policy was never discussed openly during the 1997 general election campaign' (p. 96). PFI or PPP projects have been required to demonstrate 'value for money', so many have been forced to reduce costs by 'operating schools more "efficiently" on facilities management contracts which have employed fewer staff, more staff on flexible contracts and which have included the right to increase income generation through heavy charges for private and community use of school premises' (p. 97).

Other privatising initiatives in the 1990s raised concerns, notably the 'mounting dependency of schools on donations from wealthy parents and from local and national businesses', the increasing use of sponsored educational materials whose content 'was not always strictly neutral' (p. 99), the acceptance of £100,000 sponsorship for one of the new Technology Specialist Schools from the tobacco giant BAT Industries, the creation of Ofsted to contract independent teams to conduct school inspections, the handing over of King's Manor School in Guildford to 3Es Enterprises Ltd, and the privatisation of many of the functions of Islington and Hackney local authorities.

The Academies Programme was launched by David Blunkett in March 2000, with its origins in the Conservatives' City Technology Colleges project of the 1990s. Chitty describes the concerns about the programme, notably those relating to sponsorship, accountability and the dubious religious beliefs

being promoted in some of the schools. Sadly, despite these concerns, 'The Academies Project seems to be assured of government support whatever the outcome of the next General Election, in that it has the support of the Conservative Opposition' (p. 107).

Finally, Chitty notes the problems the government has encountered in using private firms, particularly Capita (whose £177m contract to manage the literacy and numeracy strategies was called into question after its founder and executive chairperson made a secret £1 million loan to the Labour Party which became the subject of a police investigation) and ETS (whose £165m contract to mark SATs tests was cancelled following the marking fiasco in 2008).

In Chapter 6, *The Changing Worlds of Education Policy*, Chitty analyses the policy-making process itself and in particular the shift from the post-war tripartite partnership to central authority. He describes in some detail the tensions between the DES bureaucracy, Her Majesty's Inspectorate and the Downing Street Policy Unit and reports the political manoeuvrings and machinations behind the 1988 Education 'Reform' Act. He argues that under New Labour, concerns have focused on the increasing use of 'so-called special, or political, advisers' and the politicisation of the Civil Service (p. 135), and he argues that 'three individuals ... stand out as having exerted a powerful influence on the formulation of policy: Michael Barber, David Miliband and Andrew Adonis' (p. 137). He concludes with sections on policy-making in Scotland and Wales.

Chapter 7, *The Evolving Curriculum from 5 to 14*, looks at how control of the curriculum was taken away from teachers through the move from an ethos of partnership to one of accountability and analyses the problems created by competing definitions of the school curriculum as central government took control. He notes that, for many, 'the whole National Curriculum framework lacked any sound philosophical underpinnings' and he quotes Peter Watkins, the former Deputy Chief Executive of the National Curriculum Council: 'The National Curriculum had no architect, only builders' (p. 160). He argues that the watering-down of the National Curriculum began shortly after its implementation and that 'The process of simplifying and, in places, dismantling the National Curriculum has continued under New Labour' (p. 162). He notes the comments of the authors of the Cambridge Primary Review that 'the Government's micro-management of primary classrooms and its attempt to determine the precise scope and content of the primary curriculum have had a devastating effect on schools' (p. 166).

In Chapter 8, *The 14-19 Continuum: Issues and Policies for Education and Training*, Chitty presents and analyses the debates about the status of vocational qualifications, GCSEs and A Levels. He traces policy-making for this age range from before the raising of the school leaving age in 1972-3, through the 2003 14-19 discussion document, the 2004 Tomlinson Report (and the government's rejection of most of its recommendations), to Ed Balls' proposals in 2007 for a range of new diplomas which were 'hailed in the media as "the biggest shake-up of the examinations system in over half a century" – and this time with some

justification' ( p. 193). He concludes that it is not yet clear whether the new diploma system will be a success:

By the year 2013, when the review of A Levels is scheduled to take place, we will have had another general election. If the Conservatives win, A Levels will undoubtedly remain outside the diploma framework. Supporters of the Tomlinson Plan might hope that if the diplomas are well-entrenched by then, it will be hard for whoever is in power to continue to resist incorporating A Levels and GCSEs into a single system. But the reality is that by the time of the next election (probably May 2010), the diplomas will still be only half-formed. In which case, the supporters of the old regime will have benefited from New Labour's prevarication and lack of purpose. (pp.195-196)

Chapter 9, *Higher Education*, traces policy-making from the Robbins Report of 1963 to developments under the Thatcher and Major administrations. Chitty argues that 'New Labour inherited a higher education situation in 1997 that was both full of exciting possibilities, but also fraught with very real difficulties' (p. 203). Participation in higher education had increased eleven-fold in half a century but 'many would argue that this had been engineered "on the cheap", with a tight squeeze on the "unit of resource" for each student and university staff pay allowed to fall considerably below the rate of inflation' (p. 203). The 1998 Teaching and Higher Education Act included new arrangements for student loans, abolished maintenance grants and introduced tuition fees for undergraduate students – 'this last being a move that Labour had strenuously opposed before coming into office' (p. 204). The 2002 Green Paper, *14-19: Extending Opportunities, Raising Standards* 'reiterated the Government's determination that by the year 2010, some 50 per cent of those aged between 18 and 30 should be participating in higher education' (p. 205). This was a tough target, given that the social divide in higher education had actually widened over the previous five years. Next came the 2003 White Paper and the 2004 Higher Education Act with its controversial proposal for variable university top-up fees. Concerns about access to higher education have continued, with Universities UK warning in 2008 of a 'looming shortage in students triggered by the fall in birth rates at the beginning of this century' (p. 213).

Chapter 10 considers two issues: *Early Years and Childcare Strategies and the Concept of Lifelong Learning*.

In relation to the first, Chitty describes the provision of early childhood education in Britain and notes the concerns expressed about the increasing level of private provision of nursery places. He describes the launch of the National Childcare Strategy in 1998 and the Sure Start Programme in 1999 – 'probably the most important anti-poverty intervention of the first Blair administration' (p. 218). This was followed by the 'Every Child Matters' agenda, which was

about delivering the outcomes for children and young people enunciated in the 2004 Children Act.

He describes the debates which have surrounded the place of play in the nursery curriculum from 1816, when Robert Owen established his infant nursery in New Lanark, to recent developments. He argues that, when it became part of the National Curriculum, the Early Years Foundation Stage 'was not to retain its liberal curriculum framework ... it took on a far more restrictive character' (p. 224).

In the section on *Lifelong Learning*, Chitty notes that, under Tony Blair, New Labour has 'repeatedly stressed ... that education and training were to be the means by which Britain would be transformed from a low-skill, low-wage economy into a high-skill, high-wage and technologically advanced economy' (pp. 224-225), and that 'This renewed emphasis on economic objectives ... had obvious implications for the Party's attitude towards lifelong learning and the learning society' (p. 225). He concludes that 'Much of New Labour's attitude towards lifelong learning was ... based on so-called human capital theory' (p. 226) and that the government's record in this area 'has not been one of undiluted success' (p. 230).

Chapter 11 deals with *Issues of Diversity, Equality and Citizenship*. Chitty explains the historical background to the citizenship debate and outlines the recommendations of the 1998 Crick Report. He stresses the importance of combating prejudice, especially in the areas of race and sexuality, reviews the current debate about gender and educational achievement and looks at the arguments surrounding segregation or integration in relation to boys and girls, children with special educational needs, black children and faith communities. He concludes 'It would seem axiomatic that all primary and secondary schools have the twin functions of promoting the achievement of all their pupils and, at the same time, challenging prejudice and intolerance in all their various forms' (p. 247).

In his concluding chapter, Chitty argues that, for the most part, New Labour has continued to pursue Tory education policies. However, he acknowledges that, once Blair felt he no longer had to stick to Tory spending limits, 'New Labour has been prepared to compensate for years of low education expenditure and comparative neglect' (p. 249). As a result, many run-down school buildings have been refurbished, classrooms are 'strikingly well equipped' with technological aids, and many children have benefited from the increase in the numbers of support staff. 'The effects of all this should not be underestimated' (p. 250).

In a section on *Major themes of the last sixty years*, he argues that selection has been an educational and social disaster for Britain. He notes that 'Countries with more equal outcomes in education and fairer distributions of adult skills, such as the Nordic and East Asian states, tend to have lower rates of crime and higher levels of trust and civic cooperation. English-speaking countries – with the exception of Canada – have higher skills inequalities and fare worse in terms of income distribution and social cohesion' (p. 250) 'The more



“egalitarian” states, including the Nordic states, Japan and South Korea, have highly egalitarian, non-selective and “mixed ability” comprehensive education systems’, whereas the most unequal states have selective education systems or ‘quasi-comprehensive’ systems with extensive school choice, a ‘large degree of diversity at the secondary level’ and ‘rigid ability grouping in schools’ (p. 251).

Finally, he notes that the only agenda being put forward by politicians today is one of ‘greater competition between schools, greater choice and diversity ... and the increasing reliance on private sponsorship’. There are, he suggests, other scenarios on offer, ‘but they are not represented in the thinking of the leaders of the main political parties. Only in Wales and Scotland are alternative solutions being proposed, and it remains to be seen if their more “communitarian” approach ever regains a foothold in the thinking of mainstream politicians at Westminster’ (p. 253).

*Education Policy in Britain* looks at the history of education from a political perspective and at the politics of education from a historical perspective. These two perspectives need to be interwoven if sense is to be made of either, and Chitty does exactly that interweaving.

Nothing – especially in education – is entirely value-free, and this book is no exception. Clyde Chitty makes no secret of his support for a fully comprehensive school system or his concerns about Thatcher’s promotion of the market place and Blair’s dedication to ‘diversity’ and religious schools. At the same time, he presents the facts fairly and authoritatively, and in an extremely readable style. The book will undoubtedly be an invaluable resource for students.

### **Education in England** (<http://www.dg.dial.pipex.com>)

My website, which has been online since 2000, aims to provide students, teachers, lecturers and researchers with historical information including the full texts of some important documents. The site is divided into three main sections:

#### *HISTORY*

*Education in England: a brief history* tells the story of England’s schools from around 600 to 2007. In addition to the main text (40,000 words), there’s also a timeline of major events and education acts, a glossary, a bibliography and an updates page. Its six chapters are:

#### *1 600-1800 Beginnings*

600-1100 Grammar schools and song schools; 1100-1500 Institutional expansion and curriculum development; 1500-1600 Reformation and Renaissance; 1600-1800 Comenius and the concept of universal education

Chapter 1 traces the establishment of the earliest schools in England, the development of the curriculum in the seventeenth century and the debates about whether the masses should be educated at all. It notes that it was the industrial revolution which finally convinced politicians that an efficient workforce would need more than basic skills in reading and writing.

### *2 1800-1900 Towards a State System of Education*

1800-1860 Industrialisation: the need for mass education; 1860-1900 A class-based system; The purposes of education

Chapter 2 shows how, in the nineteenth century, education in England developed on the basis of class divisions and describes the style of education offered in the elementary schools.

### *3 1900-1944 The State System Takes Shape*

1900-1918 Laying the foundations; 1918-1944 Between the wars; The 1944 Education Act

Chapter 3 looks at early twentieth century developments in secondary education and lists some of the influences which shaped the style of teaching in the new primary schools. It outlines the main provisions of the 1944 Education Act, particularly in relation to the government of education and the 'tripartite system' of secondary schools.

### *4 1945-1979 Rise and Fall of a Public Service*

1945-1963 Post-war reconstruction; 1964-1970 Progressivism and expansion; 1971-1979 Retrenchment

Chapter 4 chronicles the post-war establishment of the welfare state, the provision of school meals and milk, and the expansion of further education. It notes the mood of progressivism and expansion in the 1960s, with moves towards comprehensivisation, the establishment of middle schools and the publication of the Plowden and Robbins Reports. It contrasts this mood with that of the 1970s, which saw the failure to establish a fully comprehensive secondary school system and the growing disenchantment with education characterised by the 'Black Papers', the William Tyndale affair, Callaghan's Ruskin College speech and the 'Great Debate'.

### *5 1979-1997 Thatcherism: the marketisation of education*

1979-1988 Preparing to take control; The 1988 Education 'Reform' Act; 1989-1997 John Major: more of the same

Chapter 5 describes how, in the 1980s, Margaret Thatcher's administrations began creating an 'education market place', transferring power from the schools and the LEAs to parents and central government, outlines the

provisions of the 1988 Education 'Reform' Act, explains why LEAs began closing their middle schools and notes John Major's call for more grammar schools.

#### *6 1997-2007 The Blair Decade: selection, privatisation and faith*

1997-2001 Destroying the comprehensive ideal; 2001-2005 Diversity and faith; 2005-2007 Third term extremism

Chapter 6 recalls that the mantra of Tony Blair's first administration was 'standards not structures' and describes how, with David Blunkett reneging on his promise to end selection, the assault on the comprehensive school began. It reports the Blair government's obsession with privatisation, diversity and 'faith schools'. It concludes that in just one decade Blair and his adviser Adonis effectively dismantled England's state system of education, destroyed the comprehensive ideal, and encouraged religious crackpots and used car salesmen to take over the nation's schools.

I am intending to undertake a further revision and expansion of *Education in England: a brief history* during 2010.

#### *DOCUMENTS*

This section contains the full texts of twenty important education reports published between 1867 and 1992, a couple of major HMI survey reports and various other government publications.

The full list (in chronological order) is currently as follows:

- 1867-8 Schools Inquiry Commission: *chapter on girls' schools*
- 1923 Hadow Report: *Differentiation of the Curriculum for Boys and Girls*
- 1924 Hadow Report: *Psychological Tests of Educable Capacity*
- 1926 Hadow Report: *The Education of the Adolescent*
- 1928 Hadow Report: *Books in Public Elementary Schools*
- 1931 Hadow Report: *The Primary School*
- 1933 Hadow Report: *Infant and Nursery Schools*
- 1938 Spens Report: *Secondary Education with special reference to Grammar Schools and Technical High Schools*
- 1943 Norwood Report: *Curriculum and Examinations in Secondary Schools*
- 1959 Primary Education: *Suggestions for the consideration of teachers*
- 1963 Newsom Report: *Half our Future*
- 1965 DES Circular 10/65: *The Organisation of Secondary Education*
- 1967 Plowden Report: *Children and their Primary Schools*
- 1972 James Report: *Teacher Education and Training*
- 1975 Bullock Report: *A Language for Life*
- 1977 *Ten Good Schools* (HMI)
- 1977 *Education in Schools: a consultative document*

- 1977 Taylor Report: *A New Partnership for our Schools*  
1978 Waddell Report: *School Examinations*  
1978 Warnock Report: *Special Educational Needs*  
1978 HMI Survey of *Primary Education in England*  
1980 *A View of the Curriculum* (HMI Series Matters for Discussion No. 11)  
1981 Rampton Report: *West Indian Children in our Schools*  
1981 *The School Curriculum* (DES)  
1981 DES Circular 6/81: *The school curriculum*  
1982 Cockcroft Report: *Mathematics Counts*  
1983 DES Circular 8/83: *The school curriculum*  
1985 Better Schools – *summary of the White Paper*  
1985 HMI Survey of *Education 8 to 12 in Combined and Middle Schools*  
1985 *The Curriculum from 5 to 16* (HMI series Curriculum Matters No. 2)  
1985 *Quality in Schools: Evaluation and Appraisal* (DES)  
1985 Swann Report: *Education for All*  
1989 *Personal and Social Education from 5 to 16* (HMI series Curriculum Matters No. 14)  
1989 Elton Report: *Enquiry into Discipline in Schools*  
1990 Rumbold Report: *Starting with Quality*  
1992 *Curriculum Organisation and Classroom Practice in Primary Schools* (The ‘Three Wise Men Report’)

#### ARTICLES

This section contains everything I’ve written about education since 1987. There are 29 articles (including major pieces on faith schools, academies, creationism, school meals and religious education in Oxfordshire) and 15 book reviews.

The six most recent articles are:

##### *Short and Fraught: the history of primary education in England*

June 2009. 8600 words. This piece seeks to provide the historical background to the two reports on primary education currently being undertaken: the Cambridge Primary Review and the government-appointed Independent Review of the Primary Curriculum.

##### *Us and Them: a history of pupil grouping policies in England’s schools*

December 2008. 19,000 words. This article describes the ways in which pupils in England have been allocated to teaching groups during the period in which the state has provided education – roughly from 1860 to the present. It

summarises relevant sections of government reports and white papers, the arguments made by educationists, and the findings of research projects.

*Never Mind the Evidence: Blair's obsession with faith schools*

May 2007. 8500 words. The Blair governments sought to increase the number of schools controlled by churches and other religious groups despite a mass of evidence about the dangers of faith-based education and in the face of widespread professional, political and public concerns. This piece recounts the history and analyses the motives behind the policy.

*Axes to Grind: the first five years of Blair's academies*

April 2007. 5100 words. Academies – effectively private schools funded by the taxpayer – were the brainchild of Blair's education adviser Andrew Adonis. This piece recounts the history of the first five years of a very controversial experiment.

*The Hadow Reports: an introduction*

September 2006. 10,700 words. After some brief notes on the historical context and the membership of the Consultative Committees chaired by Sir WH Hadow, this piece summarises each of the six reports produced between 1923 and 1933 and concludes with some observations on the extent to which their recommendations were implemented.

*Tricks of the Trade: whatever happened to teacher professionalism?*

May 2005. 10,400 words. This article seeks to answer the question: Why are teachers not taken seriously as professionals? It surveys the history of teaching in England, argues that teacher professionalism was a short-lived phenomenon which has been in decline for thirty years, and makes some suggestions for rescuing the profession.

## **Conclusion**

I began by suggesting that the history of schooling has had scant attention when it comes to training tomorrow's teachers. For the past twenty years their education has been almost entirely utilitarian. A knowledge of the content of the National Curriculum – and some idea of how to 'deliver' it – has been pretty well all that's been required. This is simply not good enough. The education of young teachers is about much more than assimilating a list of facts to be taught or acquiring some skills in classroom management, useful though these may be. Young teachers need to take an active part in the debate about the nature and purpose of education, something they can only do if they have

some understanding of its history and the politics which have shaped it. Fortunately, as I suggested earlier, there are now signs of a renewed interest in the history of education.

Much of the late Brian Simon's work – including the establishment of the History of Education Society and the journal *History of Education* – was dedicated to illustrating the inseparability of history and practice. Clyde Chitty's *Education Policy in Britain* is a fitting continuation of that work. Both it, and my *Education in England* website, seek to provide information for those who want to understand how we got to where we are now, and to stimulate an informed debate about where we go from here.

As Peter Mortimore has argued, '... those involved with education must continue to make the arguments for sounder ways to improve the system in the hope that, eventually, someone will listen' (Mortimore 2009).

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*Link*

The History of Education Society website can be found at  
<http://www.historyofeducation.org.uk/>

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