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**Government Education Reform 2010-15; 'Supply-  
side/Demand-side'**  
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**ABSTRACT**

**FACULTY OF SOCIAL, HUMAN AND MATHEMATICS SCIENCES**

**Southampton Education School**

**Doctor of Education**

**GOVERNMENT EDUCATION REFORM 2010-15; 'SUPPLY-SIDE/DEMAND-SIDE'**

**Malcolm Scott Honour**

This thesis reviews the shifts in education policy under the Conservative-Liberal Democrat government between 2010 and 2015; analysing selected policies to articulate dominant themes in recent policy-making. It illustrates how the Coalition was heavily influenced by neoliberal ideas. These dominant themes emphasise the role of the free market, the individual as consumer and the state as a regulator as opposed to provider. The focus is on how ideas of demand-side and supply-side are promoted through an analysis of chosen policies. The opening chapters give the historical and political backdrop of Coalition education policy since 1988, while subsequent chapters explore the field of policy-making in education under the recent Coalition. Using Stephen Ball's Policy Cycle and Sandra Taylor's framework for policy as an analytical tools, the implications of new academies and free schools are examined, alongside the impact of pupil premium.

It draws on two case studies: the ARK academy chain and the New Schools Network. Three documents were analysed: House of Commons Education Committee Academies and free schools: Government Response to the Committee's Fourth Report of Session 2014-15 21 January 2015; Unleashing greatness: getting the best from an academised system (Academies Commission, January, 2013); Chain Effects, 2015 The impact of academy chains

on low-income students (Sutton Trust, 2015). Data from the documents was categorised in a thematic way and allocated to three major themes namely: marketization, managerialism and standards.

The second part of the thesis examines these policies in the context of practice and the context of policy outcomes. The findings showed clear indications of deficiencies and weaknesses in the current policies and practices around the role of academy chains and free schools. These changes have resulted in major shifts in the structure of schools in England but without achieving distinctive outcomes compared with mainstream schools. From there, it moves to look at how professionals can make a conscious choice to replace the language of neoliberalism with the language of local interchange.

Finally, a number of recommendations are made linked to supply-side and demand-side reform. These include: increasing the focus on the most disadvantaged pupils; the inspection of academy chains; judging schools on a broader range of outcome measures; and, further research to see if the aspirations of communities and individuals is realised through these school-based markets. Hopefully, this study provides a valuable review of the processes and times when significant transformations in education policy were being initiated.

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## **Author's declaration**

No portion of the work referred to in the Thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university of institute of learning.

I confirm that the thesis is my own work.

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## List of abbreviations

APU - Assessment of Performance Unit  
ARK - Absolute Return for Kids  
BSF - Building Schools for the Future  
CASE - Campaign for State Education  
CPD - Continuing Professional Development  
CTC - City Technology College  
DES - Department for Education and Science  
DCSF - Department for Children, Schools and Families  
DfE - Department for Education  
DfEE - Department for Education and Employment  
DfES - Department for Education and Skills  
EAZ - Education Action Zone  
ECM - Every Child Matters  
EiC - Excellence in Cities  
FSM - Free School Meals  
FTSE - Financial Times Stock Exchange  
GMS - Grant Maintained Schools  
GTC - General Teaching Council  
HMI - Her Majesty's Inspector  
HM Treasury - Her Majesty's Treasury  
ITE - Initial Teacher Education  
ITT - Initial Teacher Training  
KIPP - Knowledge in Power Programme  
LEA - Local Education Authority  
LMS - Local Management of Schools  
MATs - Multi Academy Trusts  
NASUWT - National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers  
NCTL - National College for Teaching and Leadership  
NAO - National Audit Office  
NEET - those not in education, employment or training  
NFER - National Foundation for Educational Research  
NHS - National Health Service  
NSN - New Schools Network  
NUT - National Union of Teachers  
PSHE - Personal, Social and Health Education  
PRU - Pupil Referral Unit  
PWC - Price Waterhouse Coopers  
OECD - Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development  
Ofsted - Office for Standards in Education  
PISA - Programme for International Student Assessment  
SHINE - Support and Help in Education  
SEM - Structural Equation Modelling  
SLE - Specialist Leader of Education



SMSC – Social, Moral, Spiritual and Cultural

TSA – Teaching School Alliances

UNESCO – United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

# **Chapter 1: Introduction to the thesis**

## **New politics or same old?**

The aim of this thesis is to produce a review of the major policy changes relating to academies, free schools and the pupil premium which have taken place in England since the 2010 general election, and to summarise any assessments or evaluations that have been made on their impact.

On 11 May 2010 David Cameron claimed success: he had just become the youngest Prime Minister for nearly 200 years, and had returned the Conservative Party to power for the first time in 13 years. However, Cameron's critics argued that he had failed: he was not the head of a Conservative government, but of a coalition with one of the parties he had campaigned against. The Labour Party had suffered its second-worst defeat since the Second World War, but still sufficiently prevented a resounding Conservative victory.

The Liberal Democrats and the Conservatives joined forces to develop what they considered to be a progressive agenda. The coalition's programme was not simply a disparate collection of elements from both parties' programmes; instead, they claimed to have found a combination of their best ideas and attitudes and used these to produce a programme for government. The coalition agreement stressed the radical and progressive nature of the new government. Their overriding priority was dealing with the deficit, which required them to make many difficult choices, many of them less congenial to the Liberal Democrats than the Conservatives. However, there was some consistency running with the previous Labour government, combined with a typical Conservative ability to react to circumstance.

Conservatism is not an extreme doctrine: it does not seek to transgress established patterns. Instead, it aims to employ a balanced approach to government. Burke's ideal is government by increments: governing that rejects large leaps and the sudden changes of direction, as these is a great deal of risk involved with such strategies. Government, one might suggest, is like stepping out onto a tightrope straddling two sides of a steep canyon. We only get from one side to the other with extreme care, concentration, and a great deal of luck. Crucially, you also need a high level of expertise and a steely nerve. Few would dare to attempt to walk the tightrope, even fewer would actually be able to do so.

Government priorities have always impacted education policy. Priorities impacting education policy include deficit reduction and the introduction of austerity measures; cuts to public spending, particularly in local government; the removal of the National Indicator set and rationalisation of accountability measures; the reduction in the volume and level of detail in official guidance; and the intention to devolve decision-making responsibilities to practitioners which, in the case of education policy, has at times appeared to be in conflict with some of the more centralising elements of the Government's reform programme including the expansion of academies and free schools and their particular relationship with central (rather than local) government administration.

### **1.1 General education policies and reforms**

The coalition government's overarching education policy was outlined in its 2010 white paper, *The importance of teaching* (DfE, 2010); this statement of intent

has continued to provide the framework for nearly all of the major education reforms that have taken place since the 2010 general election. The white paper priorities for reform of the education system in England were:

1. Workforce and leadership - attract and retain more excellent teachers; ensure sufficient supply of high quality school leaders; give teachers and head teachers professional autonomy and responsibility to improve their own practice.
2. Improve behaviour and discipline, strengthen teachers' and head teachers' authority; improve the quality of alternative provision for pupils who are excluded.
3. Reform curriculum assessment and qualifications so that the content of education and the standards pupils achieve are among the best in the world and increase England's economic competitiveness.
4. Support a new school system - expand the academies programme so that all schools can choose to benefit from academy-style freedoms; promote innovation by inviting providers to open free schools; give local authorities a strong strategic role.
5. Sharpen accountability mechanisms to set out clear expectations of schools, inform and influence parents' decisions and allow everyone (including teachers, governors, and the public) to benchmark schools' performance.
6. Support school improvement - give teachers and head teachers responsibility and freedom to drive improvements within individual classrooms and schools, and to lead system-wide change.
7. Move towards a more transparent and fair funding system for schools' revenue and capital costs.

In addition, the white paper referred to a separate green paper on special educational needs and disability that was published in 2011 (The National Archive, 2011), with those reforms in the process of being implemented.

The DfE has also published a need-to-know implementation timeline on major education reforms, differentiating between mandatory and optional reforms. This information covered all state-funded schools including academies and free schools, as well as 16-19 providers.<sup>1</sup>

## **1.2 Values in the thesis**

According to Rokeach (1973), values relate to preferred modes of conduct, which he calls instrumental values. He argues that these include both moral values (what a person feels is the 'right' thing to do), and competency values (what an individual believes is the most effective way to go about doing something). Rokeach (1973) also identifies what he calls terminal values, which relate to what a person hopes to achieve for themselves (personal values) and how they wish society to operate (social values). The latter include political and educational beliefs and objectives. Individuals have a value system consisting of a small cluster of moral, competency, personal and social values that influence a person's attitudes and behaviour (Rokeach, 1973; Harrison, 1999). Problems may occur when values conflict, forcing individuals to prioritise their values (Glen, 2000).

The ontological and epistemological basis of positivism is a belief in a single independently existing reality that can be accessed by researchers adopting an

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<sup>1</sup> Source:

<http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/toolsandinitiatives/cuttingburdens/b00216133/need-to-know-schools/mandatory>

objectivist approach to the acquisition of knowledge (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). Although qualitative methods can be undertaken using a positivist approach, researchers accepting this perspective generally favour scientific methods and therefore tend to utilise experiments, large-scale surveys and quantitative techniques (Scott & Usher, 1999; Cohen et al 2007).

Fundamentally, researchers assuming a positivist perspective seek the truth by attempting to eliminate the effect of their preconceptions, personal views and value judgements on the research process (Sarantakos, 1993).

Whilst it can be argued that value-neutrality is, itself, a value (Walsh, 1999); more damaging to the positivist position are claims that value-neutrality cannot be sustained. According to Carr (1995), those who profess to carry out value-neutral research are deluding themselves. They are also misleading others by presenting their research as depersonalised and value-free (MacDonald, 1993). This is supported by Boyd (2000), who argues that no matter how well designed, research can never be value-free. Even before data is analysed, interpreted and presented the researcher's method of sampling, experimental design or questionnaires are likely to reflect their (often unconscious) values (see, for example, Lather, 1986; Government Statisticians' Collective, 1993; Hammersley & Gomm, 1997). According to Eisner, 'the facts never speak for themselves. What they say depends upon the questions we ask' (Eisner, 1992:14). For example, government statistics obtained through multiple-choice questions, create and impose racial categories that reflect the assumptions and motivations of researchers rather than the experience of research subjects (Thomas, 1996). Moreover, in experiments and interviews, the researcher records the process from their value-laden perspective. Whilst researchers may attempt to eliminate the effect of bias, they are unlikely to totally eradicate it.

In contrast to the positivist approach, those following an interpretivist tradition accept subjectivity and the idea that research can result in different or multiple realities (see Cohen et al., 2007, Pring, 2000). These researchers generally favour more qualitative approaches, although quantitative methods can be utilised from an interpretivist position. Interpretivists accept the influence of their values, rather than falsely assuming that they are able to depersonalise their research.

Educational researchers have been accused of allowing their political and educational beliefs to bias not only what they research, but also the research process and the conclusions they reach (Tooley & Darby, 1998). For example, in their 1998 review of educational research, Tooley and Darby state that 'One of the most striking themes was how partisan much of the educational research seemed to be' (Tooley & Darby, 1998:28); they were concerned with the focus, conduct and presentation of research.

I acknowledge the influence of values on this thesis. There are biographical details that influence my underlying values, including:

1. My father's grammar school education and his route from the son of a railway labourer to higher education and a career as a teacher. There is an underpinning belief in meritocracy and achievement based on merit, talent and motivation.
2. Growing up in the 1970s and 80s, during a period of political change: these changes of course included Margaret Thatcher and notions of marketisation; the formation of the SDP a party of cooperation, not conflict, fed up with the bickering and contrived antagonism of Tory and Labour; Michael Foot's left leading leadership of the Labour Party. A

period influenced by two major perspectives – social democracy and neoliberalism.

3. As a headteacher in Hampshire and New Labour's Third Way approach, supposedly providing an alternative to either capitalism and socialism. Politics became less important and lines of responsibility for public services became more obscure.

All of the above have led to an interest in contemporary politics: particularly in how the state, the market, corporations and civil society and how the tensions between these forces can be harnessed for the good of education.

While writing this thesis, I have been conscious that accounts can never be complete or objective because they will represent a construction on my part. However, Walsh (1999) argues for suspending (or bracketing) some values, whilst allowing others to influence the research process. It has been suggested that certain values may facilitate the researcher's understanding of a situation by sharpening their awareness (May, 1997) and by providing the motivation to rigorously analyse data (Abraham, 1996). Walsh (1999) also discusses the need for researchers to recognise evidence that contradicts their social values and to actively seek further insight into such. I have purposefully sought to understand policy motivations and intentions in an open and honest way.

### **1.3 Research aim and questions**

The thesis aims to analyse the various policies in relation to academies, free schools and the pupil premium. To support this, the following research questions informed the study. Considering the key elements of policy narratives and the elements, continuities and differences, within Conservative, New Labour and



Coalition the first two research questions are significant. This will allow the honing in on some of the specific ideas that influence, inform and animate education policy. Secondly, some aspects of current policy that directly relate to academies and free schools are considered and a range of issues are explored through two case studies. The third research question asks who is trying to influence policy. The fourth research question involves documentary analysis. The final question examines the impact of key policies. By applying these methods, we are able to discuss findings against literature, generate a more comprehensive picture and establish new perspectives.

1. What debates have taken place with the policy making process and, how do these appear to have influenced current national legislation and statutory policy texts in England?
2. What ideologies and values informed policy changes?
3. Who are trying to influence policy?
4. What are the effects of the key policy documents (House of Commons Education Committee Academies and free schools: Government Response to the Committee's Fourth Report of Session 2014–15 21 (January, 2015); Unleashing greatness: getting the best from an academised system. Academies Commission (January, 2013); Chain Effects 2015 The impact of academy chains on low-income students. Sutton Trust (July, 2015) and the Academies Act 2010) on education policy?
5. What is the impact and perceived effectiveness of policies in relation to academies, free schools and the pupil premium?

This thesis contributes to the existing pool of literature by illustrating that the spaces that policy is thought about and talked about have changed – a new

modality of state power, agency and action have emerged – a form of meta-governance (Chapter 6).

#### **1.4 Supply-side/demand-side reform**

Systems of accountability are largely of three kinds (Anderson, 2005):

- Regulatory accountability to rules and regulations ('administrative accountability')
- Adherence to professional norms, values and standards ('professional accountability')
- Results-driven accountability relating to the effectiveness and efficiency of the educational system in generating desired outcomes ('performance of outcome accountability').

The first system demands compliance with rules, regulations and laws; current legislation on radicalisation is an example of this, as are current inspection frameworks. The second system attempts to use accountability to specify the professional conduct, behaviour and processes expected from groups of professionals; the *Teachers' Standards* (2013b) is an example of this kind of accountability. The third system attempts to share data about how well education systems and schools individually have been performing in order to give information to government, parents and the general public. This data will then be used by these bodies to inform their decisions about education.

The direction of travel over the last 30 years has been strongly of the third type – 'performance accountability'. This uses the demand-side of education as a lever of improvement through parents choosing what they see as more appropriate schools for their children and through the monitoring of performance of these schools and the education system more generally. Performance accountability is

also linked to the supply-side of education; specifically to the national and local states that run public education. This model is, therefore, one of simultaneous supply-side/demand-side reform, and of supply-side/demand-side accountability.

This review of the major shifts in the education sector since 1988 with a focus on selected case study policies of the Conservative/Liberal Democrat Coalition government from 2010-15 aims to contribute to the analysis of 'supply-side/demand-side' reform in recent policy making.

*Why do we need to be aware of policy?*

Policy is influential in determining how individuals interact, what they perceive to be good and how they shape their lives in order to fulfil or move against rewards of success. Policy often reflects a conversation between influential players in its construction, including communities affected by that policy, business and media. Policy shapes how society is desired to function and be in certain contexts, influencing the language that people value, the actions which receive reward and the way in which people choose to express goodness as a way of confirming or rejecting certain policy. This thesis illustrates how a number of policies produced during the Coalition government represent the impact of influential supply-side and demand-side ideologies, shaping the priorities and language changes which different services are expected to fulfil.

### **1.5 Organisation of the thesis**

This section details how the thesis is structured and offers a brief description of the subsequent chapters. I have chosen to use Sandra Taylor's framework for policy analysis developed with Fazal Rizvi, Bob Lingard and Miriam Henry (Taylor, Rizvi, Lingard & Henry, 1997) and Stephen Ball's (1990) Policy Cycle as

theoretical frameworks. This focuses on three aspects of policy: context, text, and consequences.

Context refers to the antecedents and pressures leading to the development of specific policy. This requires an analysis of the economic, social and political factors that give rise to an issue emerging on the policy agenda. However, it goes beyond this and includes a study of the role played by pressure groups and social movements that may have forced policy makers to respond to the issue in the first place. It is important to understand how policy may relate to previous policy experience: to what extent does it build on, or break with previous policy.

Text broadly refers to the content of the policy itself. It focuses on the policy's articulation and how it is framed; its aims; and the implicit and explicit values contained within it. It also establishes whether the policy requires action, and, if so, what, and from whom. Analysis of text is not a straightforward activity: there is scope for interpretation, even in the most explicit of policies. It is important to identify the silences (what is not stated), as well as what is clearly articulated within the policy.

Consequences generally refer to the differences in implementation that will occur as a result of a policy texts being open to differing interpretations by practitioners. Distortions and gaps appear in the implementation process, which results in what is described as policy refraction.

Chapter 2 reviews the literature and gives the historical and political backdrop of demand-side/supply-side reform to the expansion of academies and free schools, and the pupil premium: the context element of Sandra Taylor's framework.

Chapter 3 outlines the methodological approach taken by the research. It outlines the ontological and epistemological position taken by the research, describes the methods used drawing upon an interpretivist ontology and documentary analysis as a research method. Chapters 4 and 5 then present a summary of educational reforms pertaining to academies, free schools, and the pupil premium. This is the text element of Sandra Taylor's framework.

Additionally, the chapter analyses the consequences of these policy texts.

Chapter 6 discusses the findings and meta-governance as a response to these new policy initiatives and outcomes. It draws attention to new potential forms of governance which shape relationships of power, influence, and degrees of independence. Chapter 7 presents the research conclusions and recommendations, along with the study's limitations.

There are many different ways of critiquing policy in order to understand the ways in which it does or does not achieve its influence. Taylor et al. (1997) suggest that a simple summary of policy analysis is the study of what governments do, why, and with what effects. They identify a number of questions that can form the basis of policy analysis, and which are capable of handling the diversity of contexts identified. These are:

- What is the approach to education? What are the values relating to the curriculum, assessment and pedagogy?
- How are the proposals organised? How do they affect resourcing and organisational structures?
- Why was the policy adopted?
- On whose terms was the policy adopted? Why?

- On what grounds have these selections been justified? Why?
- In whose interest? How have competing interests been negotiated?
- Why now? Why has policy emerged at this time?
- What are the consequences? In particular, what are the consequences for both processes (professional practice) and outcomes?

Taylor et al.'s analytical framework (1979) focuses on the context, content, and consequences of policy, and offers a useful model for policy analysis. The process begins by recognising the importance of the wider political environment in shaping the discourse within which policy debate is conducted. From within this discourse, strategic direction develops in which specific education policies become more clearly defined, ultimately becoming practices that shape policy at an institutional level.

The notion of policy as the pursuit of fundamentally political objectives is recognised in Kogan's study of educational policy making. He refers to policies as the 'operational statements of values' and the 'authoritative allocation of values' (Kogan, 1975:55); this helpfully locates policy within the context of the aforementioned wider fundamental questions: What is education for? Who is education for? Who decides?

Kogan identified four key values that underpin and inform educational policy: educational, social, economic, and institutional values. In his study, he distinguishes between basic and secondary values. Educational, social, and economic values are considered as instrumental or basic, and institutional values are considered as consequential or secondary. A basic value is one that 'requires no further defence than that it is held to be right by those who believe it'

(Kogan, 1975:53). Secondary or instrumental values are justified by the extent to which they support, or further, the advancement of basic values. 'The secondary values are concepts that carry the argument into the zone of consequences and instruments and institutions' (1975:54).

The suggestion of a hierarchy of values is helpful in so far that it can highlight the relative importance of the different factors that drive policy. Some of these policy drivers are discussed in more detail in later chapters. Kogan's (1975) research into the policy-making process in England and Wales presents a thorough study of the development of education policy in a period characterised largely by cross-party consensus and a commitment to the expansion of educational provision (Simon, 1991). This was a period of social and political consensus in which accommodation between capital and labour, the emergence of Keynesian economic management, and the development of a substantial welfare sector provided the basis for a social democratic settlement. This phase of broad political consensus was effectively a period of values consensus in which it was argued that the development of welfarism had led to a new era of citizenship based on the developments of new social rights. As a result of this consensus, studies of policy, such as Kogan's (1975), viewed the values underpinning policy as being largely unproblematic. Policies were presented in terms of achieving objectives or solving problems: negotiation and compromise through the policy process would result in coalescing of views and values. The process was both technical and rational. The corollary of this analysis was a largely linear view of policy development whereby problems were identified, solutions developed and strategies and interventions then implemented. Such an approach to policy making is to locate it within the pluralist tradition that sees the role of political institutions as reconciling the competing demands and

expectations of different interest groups. While conflict is not denied, it is not seen as inevitable: it is seen as being manageable.

This view of policy and the policy making process has several strengths. Its emphasis on the internal workings of policy-making bureaucracies, especially at the governmental level, casts an important spotlight on the internal workings of public administration. However, it provides an inadequate model of what constitutes policy, and how policy is both shaped and experienced by those involved at all stages of the policy process. Policy emerges from political pressures and it is contained within a political system which aims to transform 'group conflict over public resources and values into authorised courses of action concerning their allocation' (Harman, 1984:16). Conflict is recognised, but exists within tightly defined parameters. Sources of power are rarely discussed and little attention is paid to the (unequal) distribution of power. Similarly, the pluralist emphasis on institutional policy processes tends to privilege the generation of policy, but has less to say about implementation.

Ball (1994) seeks to conceptualise policy as both text and discourse. As text, policy emphasises the manner in which policies are presented and interpreted or, in literary terms, how the policy is written and read. The literary analogy can be helpful in illustrating how policies may have multiple authors and readers. Authorship of the text involves encoding policy in complex ways 'via struggles, compromises, authoritative public interpretations and reinterpretations' (Ball, 1994:16). However, in the decoding of policy texts, multiple readers ensure a multiplicity of interpretations. Readers have their own contexts, their own histories and values. All these factors shape how policies may be interpreted by readers:



*'The physical text that pops through the school letterbox, or wherever, does not arrive 'out of the blue' – it has an interpretational and representational history – and neither does it enter into a social and institutional vacuum'.*

(Ball, 1994:17)

Ball's notion of text emphasises the capacity of those writing and reading the policy to shape its form at the strategic, organisational and operational levels. It highlights the scope for actors in the policy process to exert some element of agency over the development of policy. Whilst acknowledging the scope for individual and collective agency, there is also a need to recognise that policy responses are also shaped by wider structural factors and these circumscribe the capacity of the individual actor to shape policy. This introduces Ball's notion of policy as discourse: he argues that the way in which policies are framed, and the discourses that developed around policies, shapes and constrains the scope of individual agency. Ball (1994) draws on the work of Foucault (1971) and argues that discourses provide a parameter within which notions of truth and knowledge are formed: the actions of actors take place within such parameters. However, the factors that shape such discourses are not value-neutral, but reflect the structural balance of power in society: 'Discourses are about what can be said, and thought, but also about who can speak, when, where, and with what authority' (Ball, 1994:21). Such an approach to policy analysis recognises the importance of human agency (the capacity of individuals to fashion their own future); however, it is arguably better placed to reflect powerful structural pressures, such as the economic imperative to develop human capital, that have a decisive influence on driving policy.

Ball's (1994) two-dimensional approach to policy reinforces the need to see policy as both product and process. Policy can be seen as not only the

statements of strategic, organisational and operational values (product) but also the capacity to operationalise values (process). Conceptualising policy in these twin terms emphasises the political character of policy.

The Policy Cycle as a concept and a theoretical framework was developed by Stephen Ball with Richard Bowe and Anne Gold (Bowe, Ball & Gold, 1992) and builds an understanding of where policy is made and remade in different contexts. Taking a policy through various contexts of the Policy Cycle clarifies the origins of the policy, the voices which are reflected in the policy, and the interpretations of it. The elements of the Policy Cycle are as follows:

- *Context of influence* is where interest groups struggle over the construction of policy discourses and where key policy concepts are established. Which voices are heard is crucial.
- *Context of policy text production* is where texts represent policies. Texts have to be read in relation to time and site of production, and with other relevant texts
- *Context of practice* is where policy is subject to interpretation, recreation and practice on the ground

In his 1994 book, Ball added two more contexts in apparent recognition of the need for a feedback loop from the context of practice at micro level back to the context of influence at macro level:

- *Context of outcomes* is where the impact of policies on existing social inequalities is seen. This context's analytical concern is with issues of justice, equality and individual freedom.
- *Context of political strategy* is where one identifies political activities which might tackle the inequalities which have been identified in the

Context of Outcomes. In effect, this is a feedback loop into the Context of Influence.

Whilst the frameworks of Sandra Taylor (1979) and Stephen Ball (1992) do not explain how policy gets established, they provide a way of thinking about, representing, and theorising policy. By using the framework, the ideologies and discourses which influenced a number of Coalition policies are able to be scrutinised, with a focus upon the prominence of supply-side/demand-side reform.

The models presented in this chapter, and applied throughout this thesis, identify a four stage process.

Table 1: The connections between Sandra Taylor’s, Stephen Ball’s policy frameworks and presentation of material in this thesis

<b>Sandra Taylor’s framework for policy analysis</b>	<b>Stephen Ball’s Policy Cycle</b>	<b>Presentation and organisation of material in this thesis</b>
Context	Context of influence	Chapter 2
Text	Context of text production Context of practice	Chapters 4 and 5
Consequences	Context of outcomes	Chapters 4 and 5
	Context of influence	Chapters 6 and 7

This thesis begins by identifying the influence of the wider socio-political environment in shaping the discourse within which policy debate is conducted. From within this discourse, a strategic direction develops with specific education policies (texts) being clearly defined and success criteria established. These, in turn, shape organisational principles and ultimately operational practices. Finally,

the emphasis is very much on the impact of policy. In reality, this is not a tidy linear process in which policy progresses obediently from one stage to the next. Differences of emphasis, differences in interpretation and differences in attitudes to policy are ever present and will largely reflect the differences in values that underpin policies. The frameworks are used as tools for making sense of policy, exploring how it works and what it does. This framework differentiates this thesis from many existing educational policy texts.

Policies are key instruments in helping government establish the common sense of the day. In order to unpick coalition education policy and to understand how it has been established, it is important to return to key policy documents. Only policy analysis will allow for a true investigation into how the discourse has influenced and differed from practice on the ground. It also allows the investigation of how those who wrote the policies intended to convince the practitioners that their commitment to marketisation, performativity, academies, free schools and social justice was best served by an increasingly neoliberal agenda. In order to do this, Taylor's framework and Ball's Policy Cycle are applied as a theoretical and analytical framework for the chosen policy initiatives.

## **Chapter 2 Literature review: a historical overview of demand-side/supply side**

Beginning in the late 1970s, there was a crisis of the Fordist-Keynsian model of regulation; national governments sought to prioritise the market as an instrument for economic distribution and accumulation (Bonal, 2003). The objective of minimalising public expenditure of under the constraints of fiscal austerity as well as under the impact of a new free-market orthodoxy led to a recasting of the role of the state in the provision and funding of public services (Dale, 2000). This led to the creation of demand-side reform with an ethos of choice, freedom, and competitiveness. New Labour adopted demand-side reform but trod a middle ground where supply-side reform was not to be abandoned.

Education policy making in the United Kingdom has become increasingly politicised, particularly over the last 30 years. Both the Conservative government from 1979-97 and the New Labour government 1997-2010 introduced what can almost be described as an epidemic of reforms.

An education policy can, according to Trowler, be defined as: 'a specification of principles and actions related to educational issues, which are followed or which should be followed and which are designed to bring about desired goal' (Trowler, 2003:95). According to Baldock, Fitzgerald and Kay (2009:5), 'a policy is an attempt to think coherently about objectives and the means to achieve them...(and is something)...that will occur at every organisational level'.

Therefore, a policy can provide a statement of: the intent to make something happen; the actions to be taken; the organisational or administrative practice to be put in place (Baldock, Fitzgerald, & Kay, 2009:2).

From the Government's perspective, policy making is simply considered to be 'the process by which governments translate their political vision into programmes and actions to deliver 'outcomes' – desired changes in the real world' (*Modernising Government*' White Paper, 1999).

There are a number of competing political ideologies evident within policy making (see Table 2). According to Trowler, 'ideology does place limits on thinking. It defines what the important questions are, where priorities lie, how issues should be viewed, and indicates the sorts of actions that can be taken' (Trowler, 2003:171). As Trowler indicates, thinking about education is always inherently ideologically laden. However, the link between ideology and education policy is not always straightforward, so it is important to highlight the adoption of contradictory ideological stances.

Table 2: Political ideologies, adapted from Trowler, 2003

<b>Neo-liberalism</b>	<b>Neo-conservative</b>	<b>Social democracy</b>
<b>Belief in the free market</b> <b>Limited government intervention</b> <b>Individualism</b> <b>Freedom of choice</b>	Belief in traditions and customs Small but strongly directed state providing direction Central control Disciplined society	Belief in state intervention Private charitable organisations used to complement the state's activities Pluralistic decision making Regulation to overcome social disadvantage
<b>For education</b>		
<b>Competition between schools</b> <b>Diversity of schooling</b> <b>Parental choice</b>	Compulsory attendance Centralised curriculum Traditional subjects Focus on school discipline	Focus on the link between education and national performance Promotion of social justice State intervention to mitigate the effects of multiple disadvantage

The political New Right agenda represents a coalition of neo-liberal and neo-conservative thinking. Neo-liberal thinking promotes the virtue of a free-market economy as a more effective mechanism for the distribution of social resources, competition, privatisation, and individual liberty; neo-conservative thinking privileges tradition, hierarchy, authority, and social order. Neo-conservatism is committed to the regeneration of traditional moral values, authority, the virtues of a strong state and the intervention by the government to achieve these. Under neo-conservatism, individual liberty remains important but ultimately defers to the authority of established government and the concept of nation (Scruton, 1980). Educational ideologies also inform and influence teaching and learning and comprise traditionalism (transmission of heritage, subject centred),

progressivism (child-centeredness), and enterprise (emphasis on core skills, the workplace) (see Table 3) (Trowler, 2003). Political ideologies can crudely be married with educational ideologies as follows: social democracy – progressive, neo-conservatism – traditionalism, and neo-liberalism – enterprise.

Neoliberalism broadly means the agenda of economic and social transformation under the sign of the free market. It also means the institutional arrangements to implement this project that have been installed, step by step (Connell, 2010). The shift to neoliberal governance refigured relations between government, private enterprise and society, with the economic imperatives of the private sector situated as central to government economic and social policies. Under neoliberalism, public institutions, such as schools, previously supported as essential to collective well-being, were reconstituted as part of the market. Within this view, 'there is nothing distinctive or special about education or health; they are services and products like any other, to be traded in the marketplace' (Peters, 1999:2). The public service and schools were early targets of the neoliberal ideology. The neoliberal management technologies that were installed included increased exposure to competition, increased accountability measures, and the implementation of performance goals in the contracts of management.

Neoliberalism does not begin and end with economic orthodoxies and a minimal state. In fact, aspects present a different view of the state and emphasise social orthodoxies. Specifically, freedom is taken to lie in a willing subordination to the nation. Thus, according to Roger Scruton, 'the value of individual liberty is not absolute, but stands subject to another and higher value, the authority of established government' (1980:19). Community is founded on economic and



social bonds arising from common cultures and a sense of national identity, held together, and, when necessary, enforced by strong government. Here, the essence of social order is neither individualism, nor the mutuality or collectiveness of a society, but of a nation.

*[Neoliberalism] is treated neither as a concrete economic doctrine nor as a definite set of political projects. Rather, I treat neoliberalism as a complex, often incoherent, unstable and even contradictory set of practices that are organised around certain imagination of the 'market' as a basis for the universalisation of market-based social relations, with the corresponding penetration in almost every single aspect of our lives for the discourse and /or practice of commodification, capital-accumulation and profit-making.*

(Shamir, 2008:3)

Such a view of Neoliberalism recognises both the material and the social relations involved, that is both the Marxist focus on the 'economisation' of social life and the creation of new opportunities for profit, what Ong (2007) calls neoliberalism with a big 'N' and the governing of populations through the production of 'willing', 'self-governing'. Ong calls entrepreneurial selves neoliberalism with a small 'n'; it is reconfiguring relationships between the governing and the governed, power and knowledge, and sovereignty and territoriality (Ong, 2007:4).

Peck and Tickell (2002) identify three interrelated and uneven phases, waves or processes of neoliberalism: 'proto' neoliberalism, 'roll-back' neoliberalism, and 'roll-out' neoliberalism. 'Proto neoliberalism' is the intellectual project, shaped by Hayek and Friedman and other economic libertarian theorists, that criticised the discursive construction of a political and economic crisis around the Keynesian welfare state and proposed an 'alternative' to it. With intellectual roots traceable back to Adam Smith and David Ricardo, Frederick Hayek analysed collectivism, focusing on the catalyst for the revival of liberal economic

state theory in *The Road to Serfdom* (1944). 'Roll-back neoliberalism' refers to 'the active destruction or discreditation of Keynesian-welfarist and social-collectivist institutions. The third neoliberal wave, 'roll-out neoliberalism, refers to 'the purposeful construction and consolidation of neoliberal state forms, modes of governance, and regulatory regulations' (Peck & Tickell, 2002:398) in order to stabilise or further entrench neoliberalism through the introduction of new institutions, policies, and governmentalities.

When the Keynesian economic system of the 1960s and 70s was seen to be working well, Western governments had invested in social institutions that would contribute to the improvement of human capital, such as education and health. Informing this link between quality of workers and productivity was a belief that much of the economic growth of recent times had come from improvements in the quality of capital and labour. Education was one of the central means by which the 'quality of capital and labour' was to be improved. The generous funding of education institutions in this period had been made on the basis of the belief that knowledge and education were valuable to the state and society for the purposes of defence and for ensuring that all members of the society were able to participate and to contribute. Unlike liberalism, neoliberalism, withdraws value from the social good. Instead of coming from government investment in education, economic productivity is seen to come from transforming education into a commercialised product.

Table 3: Educational Ideologies

<b>Traditionalism</b>	Progressivism	Enterprise	Social reconstruction
<b>Disciplinary and subject knowledge</b>	Student-centric learning	Students viewed as future workers	Education viewed as a force for social change
<b>Traditions and heritage</b>	Freedom of choice for students	Emphasis on usefulness of the curriculum	Radical approach to enterprise
<b>Elitism</b>	Subject and disciplinary knowledge not important	Emphasis on the use of new technologies and approaches	Experiential learning
<b>Teacher-centred learning</b>	Mass access to higher education	Concentration on core skills	Focus on subjects
<b>Has links with Neo-Conservative ideology</b>	<b>Has links with Social Democratic ideology</b>	<b>Has links with Neoliberal ideological perspective</b>	Students become autonomous learners facilitated by teachers

(Adapted from Trowler, 2003)

Using Taylor’s framework for policy analysis, this chapter examines the context of education policy, the antecedents and pressures that led to Coalition education policy. The first section outlines key features of Conservative governments from 1979-97. The second section discusses the basic tenets of New Labour’s ‘third way’ theory and examines its implications for education policies. Finally, section three emphasises the context of policy production and fundamental influences on Coalition policy formation. Using Stephen Ball’s Policy Cycle as an analytical tool the chapter focusses on foundational ideas (context of influence) and historical specificity (context of policy production).

## **2.1 Demand-side reform 1979-97: context of influence**

In 1976, James Callaghan made his Ruskin College speech on education (Gillard, 2015). At the time, it was unusual for a Prime Minister to devote a major speech to the topic of education. Whatever his intentions, the speech gave powerful encouragement to the discourse of derision teachers by the *Black Papers* being aimed at schools and (Cox & Dyson, 1969-1977). It questioned the value for money of education spending and unsatisfactory standards of school performance. Education should have two goals, Callaghan argued: to equip children for a lively, constructive place in society and to fit them to do a job of work. He emphasised the importance of basic literacy and numeracy and reiterated the need to mitigate as far as is possible the disadvantages that may be suffered through poor home conditions or physical and mental handicap. Callaghan further announced a great debate about education based around the themes of curriculum, assessment of standards, education and training of teachers, and school and working life. In a number of ways the Ruskin College speech anticipates and would not have been out of place within policy agenda of the Coalition; it opened up a set of policy initiatives pursued by the Conservative governments of 1979- 97 and New Labour.

Margaret Thatcher's Conservative Party was elected in 1979, at a time when the welfare state in Britain was thought by policy-makers to be in crisis. Advocates of the New Right used economic problems to challenge the post-war social settlement and the symbolic place of the welfare state within it (Clarke & Newman, 1997). New Right ideology, coalescing neoliberal and neoconservative philosophies, challenged the dominance of the welfare state and became a force in education policy.

Ha-Joon Chang states that neoliberalism was 'born out of an unholy alliance between neoclassical economics and the Austrian-Libertarian tradition' (Chang, 2003:47); while James Ferguson maintains that it 'refers to a macroeconomic doctrine' (Ferguson, 2010:170). Colin Crouch explains that: 'in practice it is concerned with the dominance over public life of the giant corporation' (Crouch, 2011:vii). Aihwa Ong explains neoliberalism as a: 'new mode of political optimization' (Ong, 2006:3). Loic Wacquant argues that neoliberalism involves the growth and glorification of the penal wing of the state (Wacquant, 2012).

Ferguson's description of neoliberalism as a macro-economic doctrine exits with Crouch's conclusion that it is about large corporations, and Aihwa Ong's assertion that it is about radically decentred regimes of governance. Clarke catalogued the below list of the different contexts for which neoliberal has come to be deployed as an adjective:

*states, spaces, logics, techniques, technologies, discourses, discursive framework, ideologies, ways of thinking, projects, agendas, programs, governmentality, measures, regimes, development, ethno-development, development imaginaries, global forms of control, social policies, multiculturalism, audit cultures, managerialism, restructuring, reform, privatization, regulatory frameworks, governance, good governance, NGOs, third sector, subjects, subjectivities, individualization, professionalization, normalization, market logics, market forms of calculation, the destatalization of government and the degovernmentalization of the state.*

(Clarke 2008:138)

Armed with these frameworks and definitions, neoliberalism is described by Ha-Joon Chang as: 'the dominant economic doctrine of the last quarter century' (Chang, 2003:2). It draws on the conclusions of orthodox neoclassical economics and rational choice-based theories of human behaviour to advocate a tightly delimited role for the state in regulating economic activity. As a result, this agenda promotes not just the withdrawal of the state from market

regulation, but the establishment of market-friendly mechanisms and incentives to organise a wide range of economic, social, and political activity. It is often used as shorthand to describe any organisation in which the market has a significant role.

The New Right critique of the welfare state rested on an attempt to deconstruct its collectivism and reinvent a form of laissez-faire individualism. This critique owed much to the economic liberalism of Friedman, Nozack's libertarianism (the advocacy of the minimal state), and Hayak's Austrian economics.

Hayak's work rests on a critique of socialism, statism and Keynesianism. He opposed trade unionism, government interventions into the economy, and state welfare. He maintained that trade unions artificially push wages above the level which would be set by the free market. They also take advantage of some workers, those in strong unions, and thus disadvantage others, ununionised or in weak unions. He asserted that state welfare is wasteful , reduces incentives, and depresses competition: without state benefits, unemployed workers would be motivated to accept jobs at lower wages and thus drive down wages generally. Indeed, Hayek suggests that collectivism has an effect of moral distortion, the national character can be damaged (Hayek, 1986). While welfare involves the substitution of state judgements about output for those of the market, state judgements are inevitably biased, the market is not. Furthermore, according to Hayek, welfare payments are based upon coerced transfers of income between individuals. Government intervention in the economy is also unfair and inefficient and once started is difficult to stop. The market embodies a superior rationality, Governments once embarked upon social or economic expenditure programmes are confronted by and susceptible to interest and client group pressures for

more or new expenditures. He also asserted that elections are imperfect public-choice mechanisms, encouraging governments to attempt to buy support.

Much of Hayek's analysis of the ills of collectivism are focused on a rebuttal of Keynesian economics. Keynesianism is identified with a politicised economy, an economy where decisions are made by public agencies, and with economic strategies which rely heavily on government expenditure and thus on high taxes and high levels of public sector borrowing. The result, it is argued, is inflation and government overload. Overload is used in two senses. The first is the vast and increasing responsibilities of modern democratic governments, and the concomitant increases in intervention in and control over people's lives. The second is the extent to which the increases in state expenditure outrun the growth in the national product to the point where the state has insufficient resources to meet its accumulated responsibilities. This also relates to Friedman's 'theory of bureaucratic displacement'. The theory suggests that 'increases in expenditure will act like 'black holes' in the economic universe, simultaneously sucking in resources and shrinking in terms of 'emitted' production' (Friedman & Friedman, 1980:155). This can lead to a decline in public confidence and a loss of state legitimacy.

As an alternative, Hayek argues for two things: free markets and individual freedom. Markets, according to Hayek, are better than central planning authorities at coping with rapid social and economic change and with uncertainty, by continuous adaption to unpredictable change. Decentralised markets also maximise creative entrepreneurship: the search for new ways to make profit (Hayek, 1976). The market may not produce equality, indeed equality would be unhelpful in market terms: as 'inequality arises from the generation of innumerable individual preferences, it cannot be evil unless these

preferences are themselves evil (Joseph & Sumption, 1979:78). Inequality produces a natural economic order and the poorest, the losers in the market, will benefit from the progress of the society as a whole.

Milton Friedman argued for the introduction of more educational choice and competition in order to improve the efficiency of the education system. His idea was that producers, in this case, educational institutions, would have an incentive to improve and innovate in order to provide their services at the lowest possible cost, and/or at the highest quality because consumers would otherwise opt for a different product. At the same time the paternalistic state could be held at bay (Friedman, 1962). Competition between educational institutions for customers has been introduced by coupling the funding received to the number of pupils attracted (per capita funding). According to this rationale, educational institutions would become 'more responsive to their clients and either...more effective or go to the wall' (Whitty & Power, 2000:97).

The New Right was, in reality, a broad coalition of neoliberals and neoconservatives; the former interested chiefly in competition, free markets and tight control of public spending, whilst the latter focussed on upholding nineteenth century traditions and social orders.

Neoliberalism as a market-liberalising policy regime is articulated as a project to dismantle the post-war Keynesian consensus on the goals of macro-economic policy (primarily full employment), and to diminish the welfare state (Gamble, 1979). Similarly, with respect to development, it signifies not just a change in policy regime from state to market, but a far more radical rupture in theory and practice. Between the 1950s and 70s, mainstream development policy was targeted towards the accelerated, state-led, structural economic transformation



of poor, agricultural economies to wealthy, industrialised ones. Neoliberalism signifies a counter-revolution that resulted in the dismantling of this broader project altogether; primarily through the liberalisation of foreign trade and the abandonment of import-substitution industrialisation, but also through a broader undoing and reordering of the regulatory purview of the state, and the imposition of tighter fiscal discipline.

These signal key facets of demand-side reform, specifically antagonism to the welfare state, demand-side reform rethinks the terms, conditions of operation, interrelationships, modes of planning and financing of education and makes them subject to competition and choice by the insertion of market proxies. Competition, it was argued, would increase the efficiency of public sector organisations and offer individuals freedom of choice.

Electorally neoliberalism and demand-side reform developed under the Thatcher-Major-Blair years. Variations of deregulation, privatisation and individualism permeated policy debates. Its basic tenet identified the largely unregulated liberal free market capitalist order as the most efficient allocator of resources.

## **2.2 Demand-side reform 1979-97 key policy texts**

Educational issues were accorded comparatively little space in the 1979 Conservative election manifesto; plans to maintain and improve standards were included as part of a larger section with the broad title 'Helping the Family'. In this part of the Manifesto, the Conservatives' chief proposal (Conservative Party, 1979) included:

- The repeal of those sections of the Labour government's 1976 Education Act that had required recalcitrant local education authorities to proceed with comprehensive reorganisation

- More effective use of Her Majesty's Inspectorate (HMI) and of the Assessment Performance Unit (APU) which had been set up in 1974 to promote the development of methods of assessing and monitoring the achievement of children at school
- The introduction of a new Parents' Charter
- The introduction of an Assisted Places Scheme

The Assisted Places Scheme was designed to enable less well-off parents to claim part or all of the fees at a certain independent schools from a special government fund. It was broadly conceived as a sort of scholarship ladder that would benefit able children from poor homes who would otherwise be inadequately stretched at their local underachieving comprehensive school. The Labour Party pledged to abolish this scheme: this happened in 1997.

The most significant educational changes of the Thatcher period dated from the Education Act of 1988 (Chitty, 1989; Ball, 1990; Chitty and Simon, 1993; Pierson, 1998). The 1988 Act made the decisive break with the principles which underpinned the education service since the Butler Education Act of 1944. It focussed on the creation of a new tier of schooling comprising City Technology Colleges (CTCs), grant maintained schools and the introduction of Local Management of Schools (LMS) whereby local authorities would be required to distribute funds to schools by means of a weighted per capita formula and a clause pertaining to the creation of a compulsory national curriculum. This curriculum consisted of three core and seven foundation subjects for all pupils aged 5-16, to be assessed at the end of four key stages.

On the one hand, the act was intended to be decentralising demand-side reform by means of creating quasi-markets among schools. It intensified the moves towards local management of schools, transferring greater discretion to boards of governors. It allowed parents of current pupils to vote to make their school grant maintained, or directly funded by and responsible to central government, rather than the local authority. These schools were eventually allowed to select some of their pupils by ability. This gave parents almost complete freedom of choice of school. To encourage competition among schools and to aid parents in exercising their choices, tables of examination and other performance began to be regularly published. This, it was argued, would force teachers to be accountable.

On the other hand, these reforms were also centralising. The publication of standardised statistical information discouraged local initiative, since it focused public attention on the same criteria for measuring all schools. Standardisation was also the result of the development of new public management, with its emphasis on performance indicators that measured outputs, and its ideology of generic management that was applicable in all places and all circumstances. That new management was determinedly technocratic, eschewing overt politics; this likely corresponded to a public mood that was becoming increasingly cynical about politicians, and was more interested in outcomes than in processes. The most significant centralising forces in England and Wales, however, were curricular. The National Curriculum (1988) standardised what was taught (and tested) in public sector schools in a way that had no precedent in the educational history of these countries. This was justified on a variety of grounds to appeal to a variety of constituencies. The aim of improving standards was directed at the Conservatives' core supporters, since the party in England had

never been reconciled to the introduction of comprehensive secondary schools in the 1960s and 70s. The aim of guaranteeing basic skills was meant to appeal to employers: this built on earlier attempts by the government to increase the vocational element in the school curriculum, such as in the generally well-received Technical and Vocational Education Initiative. A standard curriculum could also be defended in terms of entitlements or equity, and had long been supported on these grounds by elements of the educational left (Lawton, 1980). Despite the various appeals of a national curriculum, it reduced the scope for diversity amongst schools.

In November 1990, John Major replaced Margaret Thatcher as Leader of the Conservative Party and the operation of mostly demand-side policies. His philosophy favoured promoting the privatising measures, and was a more traditional Conservative belief in the values of a meritocratic society. Schools would increasingly compete for pupils by offering various specialisations, with parents being encouraged to consult league tables as reliable guides to local authority, schools, and pupil performance.

The White Paper, *Choice and Diversity: A New Framework for Schools* (1992) claimed that since the 1979 Conservative victory, five great themes characterised educational change in England and Wales: quality, diversity, increasing parental choice, greater autonomy and greater accountability for schools. It also stated that the provision of education, and particularly secondary education, should be geared more to local circumstances and individual needs: this produced a commitment to diversity in education (DfE, 1992). The White Paper announced plans to build on the work of the 15 City Technology Colleges by establishing a network of secondary schools established with business sponsorship, to be known as technology colleges. One of the key objectives of

the White Paper, and of the 1993 Education Act which translated its proposals into legislation, was to increase the number of grant-maintained schools.

### **2.3 Supply-side/demand-side reform New Labour context of influence**

Supply-side reform adopts ideas from two distinct philosophical traditions:

liberal-humanist and social democrat. The liberal-humanist tradition is associated primarily with John Rawls's (1999) basic principles, conceptualised in his *A Theory of Justice*, originally published in 1971. His ideas about supply-side reform have come to dominate contemporary understandings. Rawls (1999:53) outlines the two principles as follows:

*First: each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive scheme for equal basic liberties compatible with the similar scheme of liberties of others.*

*Second: social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are both: (a) reasonably expected to be to everyone's advantage, and (b) attached to positions and offices open to all.*

The first is the liberty principle and the second actually comprises two parts: (a) is the difference principle and (b) the fair opportunity principle. Rawls' (1999) principles encompass notions of fairness and individual freedom in addition to the state's responsibility to create policies and interventions that facilitate access, equity and participation; whilst eliminating barriers arising from inequitable power relations. It is the principle that is closest to traditional notions of social justice and is Rawls' particular contribution to the debate.

In considering different dimensions of supply-side reform, Gerwitz (1998) raises some important issues, particularly in relation to distributive policies. She makes a distinction between its distributional and relational dimensions. Gerwitz (1998) purports that the distributional dimension has been conceived in two ways; first, in terms of equality of opportunity, noted as the traditionally weak

liberal definition of justice and secondly, as equality of outcome, which is the more radical strong liberal version of justice. While equality of opportunity refers to equal formal rights, access and participation, equality of outcome is different in that it seeks to ensure, through interventionist policies, to combat disadvantage and maintain equal rates of success for different societal groups. Gerwitz suggests a distinction is made between distributive and relational dimensions. Relational justice constitutes the nature of the relationships that structure society which Gerwitz regards as being strongly connected to, though separate from, the distributive dimension. Gerwitz contends the distributive dimension is individualistic in nature whereas the relational dimension is holistic and more concerned with the nature of inter-connections between individuals and society.

The social democratic settlement pursued supply-side reform based on redistribution from the mid-1940s to the late 70s, when thinking shifted towards individual rights, market-individualism, and demand-side reform. It operates on the assumption that the state does not have the right to transfer goods or property owned by individuals without their consent. Thus the market is perceived as a neutral mechanism in facilitating social exchange and the exercise of individual choice. In contrast, the social democratic tradition rejects the notion of individualism while promoting that of community. Also, the idea of the market sits uneasily with the social democratic view of justice, unless markets are controlled to ensure equal treatment, access, participation in decision making, and in power relations.

Electorally, social democrats are rooted in the manual working class and organised labour which provide the bedrock of their political support and the core of their identity. After 1945, this coalesced around a commitment to the

welfare state and the managed market economies of Western Europe. In particular, Keynesian political economy provided theoretical justification for redistribution. His ideas came to be an important influence on the labour movement generally (Sassoon, 1998). This provides social democracy with a coherent identity, as a fixed set of values, and practices that included a strong commitment to redistribution, democratic control over the market through state intervention and the guarantee of citizen's welfare throughout the life course from cradle to grave in Beveridge's phrase. This was closely linked to greater income equality and wealth achieved through redistributive tax and benefits policies, and according priority to full employment.

Under New Labour, the commitment to the social and the public resurged. This was mirrored in a different approach towards public goods and services, with the public interest defined in broader terms. However, this re-expansion of the public was not a return to 'Old Labour' or to the model of the Keynesian Welfare State. The modernising government initiative under Tony Blair's government explicitly emphasised market efficiency, consumer choice, and completion in its reform of public services (Clark, 2002).

## **2.4 The Third Way**

New Labour positioned its thinking as the Third Way (Giddens, 1998); a perspective which harnesses the supply-side model and the demand-side model to create social and economic well-being. The Third Way draws 'selectively on fragments and components of the old' (Newman, 2001: 46), but is novel and distinctive. As Newman (2005:719) summarises, the third way signalled 'something different from the hierarchy of governance of social democracy and market-based governance of the 1980s and 1990s ...(but) the something

different is hard to pin down'. It would not be possible without Neoliberalism but differs in important ways in terms of the role of the state and its relationship with the public and private sectors. Peterson (2003) suggests three key elements to the Third Way repertoire:

- A version of progressive liberalism, with an inclination towards individualism, and a concomitant suspicion of the state
- Developmentalism, the explicit promotion of competitiveness by the state and concomitant interventionism
- New Social Democracy, with elements of both moral authoritarianism (made up of reciprocity, responsibility, strong values and community), new localism and a 'continuing insistence on the inadequacies of unregulated capitalism' (Peterson, 2003:166)

Peterson also argues that New Labour can be seen as a 'synthesis of three elements'. First, an 'older' plural ideology 'balancing egalitarians and meritocrats, authoritarians and libertarians in the familiar 'broad church'. Second, a 'centralised policy making structure' with almost 'all power concentrated in the hands of senior parliamentarians'. And third, electoral popularity, which was 'reduced to a partially symbolic emphasis on standards and choice, with simple clear messages for the electorate' (McCaig, 2001:201, cited in Ball, 2003).

The Third Way was centred on the project of modernisation: 'Modern government has a strategic role not to replace the market but to ensure that the market works properly' (Labour Party, 1992:11). Here, the state is positioned as the prime source and mediator of collective intelligence, particularly in relation



to the necessities of globalisation. This does not mean that the state is less active or less intrusive, but it acts differently. The total amount of state intervention will tend to increase as the state itself involves the promotion, support and maintenance of an ever-widening range of social and economic activities.

New Labour was characterised by themes that came from neoliberalism and the New Right of the 1980s and older themes from a reinterpretation of nineteenth century liberalism.

*The UK Government's Approach to Public Service Reform* (Cabinet Office, 2006) succinctly stated that 'Public services face major challenges from social, economic and technological changes and from major changes in public attitudes and expectations (2006:3), and that 'Reform is needed to ensure efficiency and effectiveness' (2006:4). These are presented as the problems whose solutions necessitate the reforms outlined. Lister (2001) argues that this is a discourse that brooks no opposition; who wants to appear as old fashioned and backward looking? The approach to reform that is summarised in the Cabinet Office document (2006) consists of four mechanisms:

- Top down performance management (pressure from government)
- The introduction of greater competition and contestability in the provision of public services
- The introduction of greater pressure from citizens, including through choice and voice
- Measures to strengthen the capability of civil and public servants and of central and local government to deliver improved public services

In its full form the model, a self-improving system, represents New Labour's approach to policy; each of its main components can be traced from neoliberal demand-side reform into Coalition policy, with tweaks, developments and changes in emphasis in each case.

Another characteristic of the Third Way, described as New Social Democracy, has elements in common with the New Right, but is different in its continuing insistence on the inadequacies of unregulated capitalism, on the role of the public sector and on the importance of redistributing power, wealth and opportunity. That sets it at odds with demand-side reform. Frank Vandebroucke, former leader of the Flemish Socialist Party, argued that a 'responsibility-sensitive social democracy' would countenance government intervention to change the reward structure of the economy in a more egalitarian direction and to ensure that opportunities to take part in that reformed economy really were open. Citizens would be expected to show social responsibility to receive the full rights of citizenship: the powerful and the wealthy would be expected to display much more social responsibility than the New Right would require' (Vandebroucke, 1999:78). Fielding (1997) and Smith (1994) argued that the reform of Labour's policies since the mid-1980s is best understood as a shift by the party towards the mainstream European social democracy, in which the free market is seen as the only efficient way of organising production and exchange but in which the state is seen as the only just way of mitigating the social consequences of the market.

The Third Way emphasised an interventionist supply-side economics. This is usually criticised by Labour's opponents on the left as paying inadequate attention to the structural constraints that prevent people getting jobs, but as a form of labour-market planning it belongs more firmly in the developmentalist

tradition than in the laissez-faire one (Peterson, 2003). The New Right also liked to talk about supply-side activity, but the difference is that Labour sees this as a means to deliberate regeneration of communities, not only as a means to giving jobs to individuals (although, in their view, it is first of all that). It also sees it as the appropriate governmental response to economic globalisation.

New Labour invested in supply-side reform with significant intervention programmes to support schools in 'challenging circumstances' in order to combat disadvantage. For example, *The Excellence in Cities* programme (DfEE, 1997b) provided funding for schools in deprived areas, aimed to raise achievement among working class groups and promote social inclusion (Whitty, 2001); *Education Action Zones* involved business participation and were introduced as part of the School Standards Frameworks Bill in areas with low levels of educational attainment and where there were high levels of social exclusion; *The Schools in Challenging Circumstances Initiative*, introduced in 2001; the *National Challenge* in 2008 were initiatives for schools in particularly difficult contexts and failing to meet government floor targets; The *Every Child Matters* (ECM) agenda (DfES, 2004) gave rise to a package of welfare reforms; and, early years provision was expanded with an increase in places for 3-5 year-olds, and greater concentration of resources.

So far as ages 3–16 are concerned, the resulting policy in England has been described as dirigiste (Hodgson & Spours, 1999). As Smithers (2001:408) highlights, the techniques for this may be quite different from the old social democracy of the 1960s; but target-setting, assessment of performance, and money directly tied to measurable school improvement are highly interventionist, and are distinctly different from the demand-side approach of the Thatcher and Major governments.

New Labour went for a simultaneous demand-side/supply-side reform attempting to make education more accountable to the education State, who would be involved in improving the supply of it, and to the demands of parents. New Labour enhanced demand-side accountability with attention to failing schools, zero tolerance of under-performance and poor performing schools were 'named and shamed' with arrangements made to close them down or re-open with a new headteacher under Fresh Start or as Academies. The 2002 City Academies Programme built on the Conservative's CTCs legacy.

## **2.5 Supply-side/demand-side reform key policy texts**

In July 1997, the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) set out the education plan for education and employment. It published a White Paper, *Excellence in Schools*, setting out the agenda for the lifetime of the Parliament. In a foreword to the document, the new Secretary of State, David Blunkett, emphasised the importance of rejecting all excuses for 'under-performance' in schools:

*To overcome economic and social disadvantage and to make equality of opportunity reality, we must strive to eliminate, and never excuse, underachievement in the most deprived parts of the country. Educational attainment encourages aspiration and self-belief in the next generation; and it is through family learning, as well as scholarship through formal schooling, that success will come... We must overcome the spiral of disadvantage in which alienation from, or failure within, the education system is passed from one generation to the next. (DfEE, 1997a:3).*

The White Paper listed the six principles that would underpin New Labour's education reform agenda (DfEE, 1997a:11-12):

- education will be at the heart of government
- policies will be designed to meet the many, not just the few

- standards will matter more than structures
- intervention will be in inverse proportion to success
- there will be zero tolerance of underperformance
- government will work in partnership with all those committed to raising standards.

It was then predicted that by 2002 (DfEE, 1997a:14):

- there will be a greater awareness across society of the importance of education and increased expectations of what can be achieved
- standards of performance will be higher

A key theme of the 1997 White Paper was that standards were more important than structures. Chitty (1997) argues that is difficult to know what the term structure means in this context and why it is not inextricably linked to standards:

*If the term refers to the structure of the education system as a whole, one is tempted to ask what sort of national framework we would now have in Britain if large numbers of parents, teachers, local education authorities and politicians had not cared about 'structures' in the 1950s and 1960s and campaigned for a less diverse system of secondary schooling. If it refers to the 'structure' of individual schools (which in any case cannot be viewed in isolation from the system as a whole), then we are being asked to consider a false dichotomy. Standards and structures are interrelated and can be understood only in relation to each other. A comprehensive school which is, in reality a secondary modern school in a still selective local system with inadequate resources to perform a wide variety of tasks, is less likely to achieve excellent results of the kind measured by Ofsted than will another school in the same area which occupies a safe and privileged position in the local hierarchy of schools. It is one of the major shortcomings of the school improvement/school effectiveness movement that it often treats schools as if they operated in some sort of school and political vacuum.*

(Chitty, 1997: 71)

CASE (Campaign for State Education) said it was 'heart-warming' to be able to endorse many of the proposals contained within the White Paper: the very idea of policies 'being designed to benefit the many, not just the few'; the establishment of a General Teaching Council; value added assessments of pupils performance; a national strategy for information and communication technology in schools; and more family learning initiatives in the early years and primary sectors. However, this broad welcome according to the Government's plans was not without some strong reservations. While calling the White Paper a real step forward, a CASE pamphlet also listed some of the key measures the Campaign could not support: home-school contracts; specialist secondary schools encouraged to select pupils on aptitude; non-governmental support for an end to existing grammar schools; and, more parents on school governing bodies and LEAs without looking at the need to encourage these parents to be more in touch with other classroom parents. The CASE leaflet went on to ask two important questions: 'where is the evidence that there is value in promoting diversity by allowing schools to develop a particular identity, character, and expertise?' and 'why do we need three types of state school: community, aided and foundation?' (CASE, 1997:1).

The first major Education Act of the Blair Government, with legislative proposals based on the reform outlined in the White Paper, was introduced to Parliament in December 1997 and became law in July 1998. In seven parts, it contained 145 sections and 32 schedules. It is interesting to note, bearing in mind the Government's repeated assertion that standards mattered more than structures, that this Act was, in fact, chiefly concerned with structures: 89 of the 145 sections were devoted to the new categories of maintained schools, their

establishment, financing, staffing, admissions and selection arrangements. The comprehensive school as such did not figure in the Act.

The New Labour Government inherited 164 grammar schools, 15 City Technology Colleges and 181 specialist schools and colleges. No attempt was made to overthrow the Conservative Policy of 'selection by specialisation', and the Government set a target to have 500 specialist schools in place by September 2000 and 650 by September 2001. These schools would be encouraged to play to their strengths and recognise children's particular aptitudes. Admissions policies could then include a small degree of selection based on these 'perceived aptitudes'. According to *Excellence and Enjoyment* the aim was to 'ensure that schools with specialisms will continue to be able to give priority to those children who demonstrate relevant aptitude, as long as that is not misused to select on the basis of general academic ability' (DfES 2003:71).

Clause 102 of the 1998 School Standards and Framework Act gave legislative backing to this pledge by stating that a maintained secondary school may make provision for the selection of pupils for admission to the school by reference to their aptitude for one of the more prescribed subjects where the admissions authority for the school are satisfied that the school has a specialism in the subject or subjects in question and the proportion of selective admissions in any relevant age group does not exceed 10 per cent.

It was argued that the Government's concept of specialist schools would simply create (or exacerbate) an unbalanced academic and social mix in inner-city schools. In a class-divided and highly competitive society, specialisms would never be equal, they would rapidly become ranked in a hierarchy of status. Moreover, the Government's long-term plans were based on the false

assumptions that children could actually be tested for particular talents rather than for general ability. Professor Peter Mortimore, the then Director of the Institute of Education, published an article in *The Guardian* in March 1998 and emphasised that:

*Except in music and perhaps in art, it does not seem possible to diagnose specific aptitudes for most school curriculum subjects. Instead, what seems to emerge from such testing is a general ability to learn, which is often, but not always, associated with the various advantages of coming from a middle-class home. How can headteachers know if the 'aptitude' of a ten-year-old in German shows anything more than parents' ability to pay for language lessons?*

In February 2001, the New Labour Government published a Green Paper: *Schools: Building on Success: Raising Standards, Promoting Diversity, Achieving Results* (DfESa, 2001) Having achieved considerable improvements at the primary level, the Government's mission (page 4 of the Green Paper) was to bring about a similar transformation in secondary schools. With this in sight, much of the document concentrated on the need to modernise the comprehensive school. In this respect we can discern a number of themes and policy alignments running through the document, notably:

- a rejection of the principles underpinning the era of the one size fits all comprehensive
- a concern to see the promotion of diversity among secondary schools and the extension of autonomy for successful schools
- a desire for private and voluntary sector sponsors to lay a greater role in the provision of secondary schooling

Here demand-side reform was promoted as a foundational value allowing autonomy with limited hindrance from government. As a prime means of



promoting demand-side reform, the Government intended to accelerate the Specialist Schools Project so that there would be around 1,000 specialist secondary schools in operation by September 2003 and 1,500 by September 2006. Furthermore, there would be a broadening of the range of specialisms available: in addition to technology, modern languages, sports, and the arts, schools could opt for one of three new specialist areas: engineering, science, and business and enterprise. Business and enterprise schools would be expected to develop strong curriculum-business links and also to develop teaching strengths in business studies, financial literacy, and enterprise-related vocational programmes.

Additionally, there were new Beacon Schools, intended to develop and spread good practice among neighbouring establishments. David Blunkett indicated that there would be 1,000 of these schools by 2001. By September 2000, the number of Beacon schools had more than doubled, with a further 425 schools becoming part of the initiative in 2001. The number of Beacon schools reached a peak of 1145 in September 2002 (Rudd et al., 2004).

The Green Paper also set out to increase the number and variety of schools within the state system sponsored by the Church of England and other major faith groups. Some 560 secondary schools were already provided by the Church of England or the Catholic Church; the Government wished to see more Muslim, Sikh and Greek Orthodox Schools brought inside the state system and funded on the same basis as existing aided schools.

In addition to more faith-based schools, which acted as their own admissions authority, the Government increased the number of schools that owed their existence to private sponsorship. The City Academy Programme, launched in

March 2000 and modelled on the Conservatives' City Technology Colleges project, enabled sponsors from the voluntary and private sectors to establish new schools whose basic running costs would be met fully by the state.

At the same time, the Government intended to develop a new model which would enable an external private or voluntary sector sponsor to take over responsibility for a weak or failing school with a fixed contract of 5-7 years and renewal subject to performance.

Many of the themes and specific policy proposals outlined in the February 2001 Green Paper were reiterated and expanded upon later in the year, first in the new White Paper *Schools Achieving Success* (DfES, 2001b), published on 5 September, and then in the new Education Bill, published on the 23 November. This Bill served as the basis for the 2002 Education Act.

The White Paper left no doubt that the idea of extending choice and diversity at the secondary level would be pursued. The word diversity appeared seven times in the space of the three-page introduction. The DfES highlighted that 'devolution and diversity' were 'the essential hallmarks of the White Paper'; whereas, theirs 'is a vision of a school system which values opportunity for all and embraces diversity and autonomy as the means to achieve it'. They felt that 'we need to move away from the outdated argument about diversity versus uniformity' (DfES 2001b:1-3).

The Government intended that there would be at least 1,000 specialist schools in operation by September 2003 and at least 1,500 by 2005. In addition to the new specialisms in engineering, science, and business and enterprise, there would be a fourth: mathematics and computing. The number of Beacon Schools in 2001

was roughly 1000, and included 250 secondary schools: the number of these secondary Beacons would be expanded to at least 400 by 2005.

The document reiterated the need for challenging new 'floor targets' for student performance, the term used to describe the minimum performance levels to be achieved by all secondary schools, irrespective of the nature of their catchment areas. By 2004, all schools needed at least 20 per cent of their students to be achieving five or more A\* to C grade GCSEs; and by 2006, this number should be at least 25 per cent (White Paper, 2001).

Demand- side reform remained in which New Labour encouraged schools to compete for a limited number of pupils in a market environment. Policies were deliberate attempts to provide greater diversity and choice by making schools significantly different from each other.

During Charles Clarke's period as Secretary of State for Education (October 2002 to December 2004), it became increasingly clear that, as far as both political parties were concerned, the twin foundations of choice and diversity were key concepts capable of securing wide appeal. Two documents were published in Summer 2004 which reflected this prioritisation of choice and diversity as guiding principles for future education policy: *Right to Choose*, published by the Conservative Party and *A Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners*, published by the Department for Education and Skills.

The first section of *Right to Choose*, headed 'The Chase for Change', contained an analysis of the existing educational scene arguing that after seven years of a Labour government, and despite a 40 per cent increase in public spending, standards in education remained unacceptably low. In a MORI survey for the General Teaching Council published in January 2003, the authors highlighted

that a third of teachers believed they would no longer be teaching in five years' time. According to the survey, there were two principal reasons why teachers were anxious to leave the profession after such a relatively short period of time. The first was stress resulting from unnecessary workload. The second reason was worsening pupil behaviour. Around two-thirds of teachers believed that standards of discipline, particularly in secondary schools, were failing.

The Conservative publication went on to claim that parents were responding to declining school standards, exacerbated by high staff turnover, by adopting one of a number of viable strategies. Some were able to move house into the catchment area of a good school. Others found they were lucky in the lottery of the admissions appeal system. Some went so far as to leave the state system entirely. This left millions of pupils 'trapped in under-performing schools' while their more fortunate peers got the start in life that 'should be the right of all British children' (Conservative Party, 2004:5).

Conservative education policy had three main elements: the right to choose; freedom for the professional; and the right to supply. The new Labour strategy document stated that the 'central characteristic' of the new education system would be 'personalisation', 'so that the system fits to the individual, rather than the individual having to fit the system'. In order to ensure that there really would be 'different and personalised opportunities available for all', the system had to be 'both freer and more diverse', with 'more choices between types of provider'. The twin goals of the education service had to be more choice for parents and pupils; and greater variety of schools (DfES, 2004:4).

The most contentious proposal in the strategy was to create 'independent specialist schools in place of the traditional comprehensive' (DfES 2004:8). The

document highlighted an increase in the numbers of two types of school, specialist schools and City Academies, as the chief means of enhancing choice and diversity in the secondary sector. The number of specialist schools had already increased when Labour came to power in 1997, from 196 to 1,955 as the projected figure for 2004; it was envisaged that there would be further expansion over the next four years. The number of City Academies, 17 in September 2004, would increase to around 200 by 2010. It was hoped that 95 per cent of state secondary schools would be independent specialist schools or City Academies by the year 2008 (DfES, 2004).

What is striking about the Conservative and New Labour policy documents was that the language used was more or less interchangeable, with the two political parties sharing ideals and aspirations. Both documents talked about the need for greater personalisation, choice and flexibility, particularly in the secondary sector. Both discussed the need to abandon the idea of a uniform system of comprehensive secondary schools: the Conservative manifesto argued that it was time to see an end to 'large, one-size-fits-all, state institutions' (Conservative Party, 2004:5) and the New Labour Strategy expressed the need to move away from the 1960s 'monolithic' model for secondary schools, with the focus on 'a basic and standard product for all (DfES, 2004:3). For both documents, the way forward involved the creation of new types of schools run by a variety of sponsors, including philanthropic individuals, educational trusts, faith groups, parents, and private companies.

After their third successive general election victory in May 2005, strategies for creating even greater demand-side diversity dominated. The 2005 Labour Party Election Manifesto, *Britain Forward Not Back* reiterated that Labour wanted all secondary schools to become 'independent specialist schools with a strong

ethos, high quality leadership, good discipline (including school uniforms), setting by ability and high-quality facilities as the norm (Labour Party, 2005:35).

In his foreword to the White Paper, *Higher Standards, Better Schools for All: More Choice for Parents and Pupils* (DfES, 2005) Tony Blair argued we were at a historic turning point: we now had an education system that had 'overcome many of the chronic inherited problems of the past' and, after eight years of investment and reform, it was poised to become 'world class', if only we had 'the courage and vision to reform and invest further and put the parent and pupil at the centre of the system'. Further reform must build on the freedoms that schools had already received and extend them radically; to underpin this change, 'the local authority must move from being a provider of education to being its local commissioner and the champion of parent choice'. According to Tony Blair, comprehensive schools had been introduced to deal with the post-war divided secondary system, but their introduction had been too often accompanied by all-ability classes, which had meant that 'setting by subject ability was rare' and 'overall standards were far too low'. The Government was committed to 're-energise comprehensive education' which meant creating a greater diversity of secondary schools; the aim now was to set up a system of 'independent non-fee paying state schools', with all secondary schools deciding whether they wished to acquire a Trust, similar to those that supported the new Academies, or become a self-governing foundation school (DfES, 2005:1-4).

The White Paper made a number of far reaching proposals including the opportunity for existing secondary and primary schools to create their own trust or to link with an existing Trust. These new trusts would be formed by businesses, charities, faith groups, universities, and parent or community organisations. They would have many of the same freedoms as those currently

enjoyed by Academies and be able to appoint the governing body, control their assets, employ their own staff and set their own admissions criteria while having regard to the Admissions Code of Practice.

The promotion of Academies was seen by many as a deliberate way to privatise education. The National Union of Teachers (NUT) thought the White paper was extraordinarily wrong-headed; they wanted each local authority to be able to establish the admissions policy for all the schools in the maintained sector in its area, including all foundation schools, voluntary aided schools and existing Academies (White & Taylor, 2005). The Editor of the educational journal *Forum* was concerned that there was no talk in the White Paper about human educability, one of the underpinning principles of the comprehensive reform, with Chapter 1 including the highly questionable assertion that pupils could be divided into three main categories; 'the gifted and talented, the struggling and the just average' (Chitty, 2006:5). Professor Sally Tomlinson of Oxford University pointed out that the White Paper was full of 'repetitions and stunning contradictions', with, for example, paragraph 9.3 asserting that 'we will support local authorities in playing a new commissioning role in relation to the creation of a new system of schools at the heart of their local communities'; and then, on the next page, paragraph 9.7 telling local authorities that they had 'a duty to promote choice and diversity in the delivery of school places', where necessary to get children out of their local community (Tomlinson, 2006:52).

When the Education and Inspections Bill was published in February 2006, the basic architecture of the original White Paper's intention remained in place, but three key factors changed. There was now an agreement to require schools to act in accordance with the Admissions Code, rather than just have regard to it; there was a proposed ban on interviewing for selection; and local authorities

could propose new community schools if new schools were needed or a 'failing' school had to be replaced, but only following the approval of the secretary of State.

The continuities from Conservative Party policy cannot be ignored but there are differences between demand-side and supply-side reform. While demand-side rests on a fairly inflexible belief in markets and the private sector as the engine of national economic competitiveness, a free market fundamentalism (Eagle, 2003), which regards state intervention as almost always counterproductive, supply-side rests more on the adoption of a flexible repertoire of state roles and responses.

Tony Blair and New Labour were careful to keep what they liked from the Conservative's agenda – operation of market forces and parental choice (demand-side) while adding a different rhetoric that was more caring and compassionate.

These demand-side/supply-side reforms of the New Labour government are governed by the two principles outlined by Rawls in *A Theory of Social Justice* concerning the distribution of rights, duties and the division of advantages. The principles are presented in lexical order. The equal basic liberties principle is satisfied with the operation of market forces and parental choice but also invoking the second principle through supporting schools in challenging circumstances to combat disadvantage.

Gordon Brown took over as leader of the Labour Party and Prime Minister on 27 June 2007. Ed Balls replaced Alan Johnson as Secretary of State for Children, School and Families. Gordon Brown had given a broad indication of his educational philosophy in his final Mansion House speech as Chancellor of the



Exchequer, delivered in June 2007; he promised he would pursue the Blair agenda with renewed vigour. In particular, it was stressed that one of the clear priorities of the administration would be the expansion of the Academies Programme, with universities and colleges being encouraged to play a fuller part in the sponsorship of the new schools.

In Blair's 1999 Beveridge Lecture, he pledged the Government to eradicate child poverty in two decades and explained that children were the Government's 'top priority' because they are 'our future' (Blair, 1999:16). Although the pledge to end child poverty was made by Blair, the real drive behind the child poverty strategy came from Gordon Brown, who had taken up the cause of child poverty as a back-bench MP. Brown developed the theme of investing in Britain's children, particularly children living in poverty, as investment in the country's future. Moreover, he argued that tackling child poverty is the best anti-drug, anti-crime, anti-deprivation policy for our country. The 2003 Budget Report went so far as to claim that 'support for today's disadvantaged children will...help to ensure a more flexible economy tomorrow' (HM Treasury, 2003:para 5.4).

The strategic significance of children for a state keen to equip its citizens to respond and adapt to global economic change is to enhance competitiveness in the knowledge economy, underlined by a Strategic Audit drawn up by the Government's Strategy Unit in 2003. It stated that the first 'strategic priority' is to be 'ready for the future'. Key to its achievement is 'ensuring people have the skills and qualities for future jobs, lives and citizenship' (Strategic Audit, 2003:37). It emphasised 'the very strong evidence on the cost effectiveness of targeted investment in children' (2003:78-9). Likewise, the childcare strategy document *Choice for Parents, the Best Start for Children. A ten year strategy for child care*, emphasised that it is in 'the nation's social and economic interests'

that 'children get a good start in life', for 'children are the citizens, workers, parents and leaders of the future' (HM Treasury, 2004:para. 2.11).

This exemplified Gordon Brown's future-orientation of the 'social investment state'. This future orientation is also reflected in New Labour's pre-occupation with life chances and equality of life-long opportunity rather than the more traditional social democratic concern with equality as such. Structural divisions of class, gender and 'race' are overshadowed by the promise of a prosperous future for all and by a focus on the child as a 'unified, homogeneous, undifferentiated...category' (Dobrowolsky, 2002:67). This omission of structural divisions is described by Harry Hendrick as 'a reframing process within the 'social investment state': 'focus on the "needs" of specific groups of children, but underplay structural economic and social class determinants, thereby reframing the matter as one of personal responsibility in the quest to equip oneself to take advantage of "life's chances"' (2005:56).

The new Brown Government aimed to encourage all young people to stay on at school or join training programmes beyond the age of 16 and to offer so-called NEETs (those not in education, employment or training) a way back to work or education. One of the new laws in the education section of the Queen's Speech in November 2007 would require all young people to stay in education or training until 17 by 2013 and until 18 by 2015. Parents would have a legal duty to ensure their children stayed on in education until they were 18, and employers would be required to let young people attend training for at least one day a week. Gone was the insistence that vocational and academic qualifications must remain separate. Gone was the idea that schools must always act as though they were in cut-throat competition with one another. Gone was the idea that it was perfectly acceptable for certain schools to employ all manner of

questionable strategies in order to select a disproportionate number of pupils from desirable and well-heeled families.

Yet, if some ministers were aware of the need for change, the Prime Minister himself was of the opinion that the Blairite legacy should be preserved and built upon. Writing in the *Financial Times* in March 2008, Gordon Brown argued that it was now the time to implement 'the third act in public sector reform'. According to his analysis, the first act was a programme of investment and repair designed to remedy decades of neglect and establish a basic level of standards below which no hospital or school would fall. The second stage had focussed on tackling underperformance and on reducing variations in standards. It was now time to go to the third act where choice and diversity were enhanced and new providers were brought in to create the dynamism for transforming under-performing schools.

Antony Seldon and Guy Lodge argue that Gordon Brown took a different stance to Tony Blair: 'The Prime Minister was never (an) ideological opponent of academies and diversity...but his heart beats faster to educational tunes different to Blair' (Seldon & Lodge, 2010:81). Through the Children's Plan and the 'National Challenge', education policy focussed on improving exam standards and tackling failing schools rather than rolling out the academies programme. Choice, diversity, academies and empowering parents were all downplayed.

The Children's Plan built on the Children Act 2004 and aimed: 'to make England the best place in the world for children and young people to grow up'. (DCSF, 2007:3). The move towards an integrated approach to children's services was the driving force behind ongoing reform, the Children's Plan was underpinned by five principles:

- Government does not bring up children – parents do – so government needs to do more to back parents and families
- All children have the potential to succeed and should go as far as their talents can take them
- Children and young people need to enjoy their childhood as well as grow up prepared for adult life
- Services need to be shaped by and responsive to children, young peoples and families, not designed around professional boundaries
- It is always better to prevent failure than tackle a crisis later (DCSF, 2007:4)

The Children's Plan set ambitious goals for 2020 with targets to improve child health, to enhance success in school with at least 90 per cent achieving at or above the expected level in English and maths by age 11, to enable at least 90 per cent of young people to achieve five higher-level GCSEs and halve child poverty by 2010 with eradication by 2020. Specific proposals included a 'root-and-branch' review of the primary curriculum to be carried out by Sir Jim Rose. Furthermore, there was to be further investment in continuing professional development (CPD) for teachers making teaching a Master's-level profession. Legislation was to be introduced to raise the participation age to 17 from 2013 and 18 from 2015. Emphasis was also placed on raising standards in coasting schools which was defined as schools where students achieve in excess of the 30 per cent five A\* - C grades at GCSE including English and mathematics, but where pupil progression from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 4 is below average.

Despite a desire to continue the reform agenda, the final period of the Labour Government was overshadowed by the global economic crisis; the failure and

subsequent nationalisation of the Northern Rock Bank in 2007 and 2008, and internationally the failure of Lehman Brothers Investment Bank in 2008, resulted in the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression of the 1930s. Despite initial enthusiasm and support for Gordon Brown, the premiership ran into a series of political difficulties and failure to act decisively which was graphically illustrated by the postponement of the general election in the autumn of 2007.

The lack of clear direction under Gordon Brown enabled the Coalition to maintain that standards in public services were declining as reform had lost its way and that it needed to be relaunched. In a speech in January 2011, David Cameron said: 'I want one of the great achievements of this Government to be the complete modernisation of our public services. Like every other western industrialised nation, we won't sustainability live within our means with unreformed public services'. The idea that despite years of Labour government, the Conservatives could still use the state of public services as an election issue and claim they were unreformed reflected the uneven pattern of the New Labour 'modernisation' programmes. In his own memoirs of his years at Number 10 as Blair's Chief of Staff, Jonathan Powell suggested that the Conservatives were able to: 'pivot their entire election campaign around Gordon (Brown) as a block on reform' and that had any other Labour politician taken over as prime minister from him, 'the Tories would have been left without a campaign in 2010 and perhaps the Labour party would have won the election' (Powell, 2011:132).

## **2.6 The Coalition context of influence**

Having considered New Labour policies, the thesis now turns to key themes that form the context of Coalition education policy. The continued devolution of governance has facilitated the management by competition of the education

system; it has been a proficient means to overcome the state. There is a new emphasis on personal responsibility and community. Institutional autonomy, community involvement and personal responsibility are reflected in the Big Society, the first context of influence on Coalition education policy. Fiscal austerity and budget cuts prompted by the financial crisis in 2008 provide the second context of influence along with the impact of coalition government. Finally, Michael Gove's role and his political explanations, justifications and strategies are examined.

## **2.7 The Big Society**

When the Conservative and Liberal Democrat Coalition entered government in May 2010, it demonstrated, almost immediately, a demand-side emphasis in policy, which was framed by the Conservative Party's notion of a Big Society. Big Society embraces the idea that power should reside with individuals, social groups and communities rather than with government and its organisations.

The Conservative manifesto (2010) was entitled *Invitation to Join the Government of Britain*. Its presentation was distinctive, it was unlike the standard report form design. Instead, it was produced as a small blue hardback, and was full of colourful retro-style graphics. The manifesto was very much a document of its time. We can see this by the particular emphasis placed on green issues, which takes up 13 of the 118 pages. This compares with less than three pages specifically on dealing with the deficit. It was also, as Nelson and Forsyth (2010) pointed out, a conscious effort to put a big idea before the electorate. The big idea came across right at the start of the manifesto. The Conservatives sought to present themselves as offering something radically different from what they described as Labour's top-down approach:

*So we offer a new approach: a change not just from one set of politicians to another; from one set of policies to another. It is a change from one political philosophy to another. From the idea that the role of the state is to direct society and micro-manage public services, to the idea that the role of the state is to strengthen society and make public services serve the people who use them. In a simple phrase, the change we offer is from big government to Big Society.*

(Conservative Party, 2010:vii)

In David Cameron's articulation, the Big Society would bring about the social recovery that is necessary alongside the economic one. In a speech given in February 2011 he set out the three main tenets of the idea of the Big Society:

1. More power to local government and beyond local government, so people can actually do more and take more power
2. Open up the public services, make them less monolithic, say to people: if you want to start up new schools, you can: if you want to set up a co-op or a mutual within the health service, you can
3. More philanthropic giving, more charitable giving, and more volunteering in our country

Responsibilisation and mobility are evident here in the notion of openness, which takes two related demand-side meanings in Cameron's speech: first it refers to making public services more open. This refers to the rolling back of the state and to the opening up of public services to tender, enabling such services to run more efficiently and competitively by an appropriate agency. Second, in the sense of transparency, with reference to the obligations of various institutions, public and private, to publish the details of, for example, salaries.

The idea of making public services more open and less monolithic casts government departments as outmoded for today's challenges. Openness refers to flexibility and a removal of barriers between sectors: individuals, public

services, businesses and charities. Conservative MP Jesse Norman provided the philosophical basis for the Big Society as a political approach in his *The Big Society: The Anatomy of the New Politics* (2010). He writes:

*One of the lessons of the last ten years has been to remind us of the dangers of over-reliance on a certain kind of officially certified expertise. External consultants have proliferated. In many cases their supposed professional expertise does not embody genuine understanding. But even where it does, professional advisers, are often far too uncritically used, to avoid responsibility rather than to inform decision making. And the overall effect is to suggest that many genuinely political matters are in some sense 'merely technical': to substitute economics for politics, and to relegate politics to the margin.*

(Norman, 2010:224)

As a whole, the passage seeks to differentiate the Conservative/Coalition agenda from the previous New Labour administration, under which consultancy became part of the functioning of a system of permanent audit and feedback. Norman's articulation of the Big Society not only denies the inherent expertise of government, previously assumed by the virtue of their being given a mandate to govern by the electorate, but also eschews any general assumption of expertise on the basis of educational attainment or status. Norman continues:

*Politics is quintessentially, and in the best sense an amateur activity...of its nature it provides endless trade-offs between incommensurable priorities and values...Expertise can only get you so far. More valuable by far are experience, wisdom, independent judgement - and common sense.*

(Norman, 2010:224)

For Norman, by bringing common sense back into play the Big Society will be corrective. He claims that:

1. Both parties (of the Coalition) were exploring an idea which cannot be understood using conventional labels and political categories of left and right, which opens up hitherto unimagined areas of policy and debate, and



which may amount to the most profound reshaping of the relationship between the individual and the state in modern times

2. Social and economic renewal is presented as a shared challenge, which is the responsibility of the members of the Big Society to confront, in the face of evidence 'that the state in its present form is manifestly insufficient to the task' (Norman 2010:4). In its role as facilitator and agitator, the state will make accessible increasing 'evidence' in the form of feedback on performance
3. The Conservatives were offering to create the Big Society, which they described as an activist, participatory society in which power is devolved and where citizens take responsibility for services as much as professionals. This, the Conservatives suggested, was part of a long term-plan that started with the election of David Cameron as leader in 2005:

*...the Party has remoulded itself for the modern era, applying its deepest values and beliefs to the urgent problems of the hour. Even as it has done so, the problems confronting Britain have escalated, and escalated fast. So our ideas are ambitious and radical as well as modern. They match the scale of Britain's problems, and in tune with a world that is changing before our eyes. But our core values have not altered and our core beliefs remain consistent.*

(Norman, 2010:pvii)

It is significant that the manifesto states: 'We believe there is such a thing as society, it's just not the same as the state' (pvii). This is a direct reference and rebuttal of a famous phrase of Mrs Thatcher, a clear attempt to differentiate David Cameron's brand of Conservatism from his predecessor.

The Conservatives argue that what is needed is 'fundamental change: from big government that presumes to know best, to the Big Society that trusts in the people for ideas and innovation' (ibid). This idea of trust is restated on the

following page: 'As Conservatives, we trust people. We believe that if people are given more responsibility, they will behave more responsibly' (pix). The Conservatives argued that the Labour government took responsibility away from people, and sought to do things on their behalf rather than trusting them to get key decisions right themselves. Creating such a society involves a promise to 'redistribute power from the centre to individuals, families and local communities. We will give public sector workers back their professional autonomy' (Norman, 2010:35). They describe the Big Society as: 'a society with much higher levels of personal, professional, civic and corporate responsibility; a society where people come together to solve problems and improve life for themselves and their communities; a society where the leading force for progress is social responsibility, not state control' (Norman, 2010:37).

But, the Conservatives were careful to state that this is not to be taken as a recipe for laissez-faire: 'building the big society is not just a question of the state stepping back and hoping for the best: it will require an active role for the state. The state must take action to agitate for, catalyse and galvanise social renewal. We must use the state to help make society' (ibid). The manifesto makes explicit reference to a core conservative, Burkean notion:

*Our reform agenda is designed to empower communities to come together to address local issues. For example, we will enable parents to start new schools, empower communities to take over local amenities that are under threat...These policies will give new powers and rights to neighbourhood groups, the 'little platoons' of civil society – and the institutional building blocks of the Big Society.*

(Norman, 2010:38)

This reference to little platoons is a direct reference to Burke and his idea of natural local allegiances that form the bedrock of any society (Burke, 1999). In

order to encourage the little platoons, the manifesto argues for a shift away from top-down control towards localism and decentralisation:

*We believe in people power – and today the information revolution gives us the practical tools to realise that philosophy. So we plan to change Britain with a sweeping redistribution of power: from the state to the citizens; from the government to Parliament; from Whitehall to communities; from Brussels to Britain; from bureaucracy to democracy. Taking power away from the political elite and handing it to the man and woman in the street. Using decentralisation, accountability and transparency, we will weaken the old political elites, give people power, fix our broken politics and restore people's faith that if we act together things can change.*

(Norman, 2010:63)

This new citizenry is animated and articulated by Hayekian conceptions of liberty, freedom from rather than freedom to, and the right to choice. Consumer democracy is again both the means and the end in social and economic change. Active choice will ensure a more responsive, efficient public sector and release the natural enterprising and competitive tendencies of citizens, destroying the so-called dependency culture in the process. The very form of the state, the form of civil society and the form of relationships between them involve demand-side reform and market power.

Some caveats to the above need to be entered. First, the shift to the Big Society is, by no means, clear-cut. The use of performance indicators specified contracting and the continued interventions of the state into organisational practices all tended to encourage the retention of organisational characteristics of the state. Second, not all members of the Coalition government embraced change with either equal alacrity nor enthusiasm. There were pockets of Keynesian economics: the Coalition did introduce the Liberal Democratic manifesto commitment of a Pupil Premium which meant additional funding to schools for children from disadvantaged homes. Thirdly, it is important not to

mistake the heat and noise of reform and the rhetoric of marketisation for real structural and values change.

## **2.8 The political and economic context of the Coalition**

The economic and political environments in which the coalition must pursue its education strategy presented markedly different challenges and opportunities to those faced by New Labour at the key junctions of 1997 and 2001. There are a number of resulting contextual factors that militate against the Coalition adopting a simultaneous demand-side/supply-side position pursued by New Labour. First, the benign economic environment which New Labour confronted at these junctures can plausibly be seen as a key factor enabling the development of their supply-side education and governing projects. New Labour's education project was premised on steeply rising investment in education throughout its time in office. Funnelling the money directly to schools from the Department for Education allowed New Labour to circumvent perceived policy blockages in the form of potentially obstructive departmental and local bureaucracies or vested professional interest (Barber, 2007). Although school budgets were spared in budgets since 2010, with funding being maintained at previous levels, New Labour's strategy was based on significant expansion of education budgets from 1999. Any reform programmes the Coalition produced was not able to rely in the same way on financial inducement as an incentive for change.

Where New Labour was able to back its prioritisation of public services with substantially increased investment, the Coalition government chose to focus on restoring stability to the public finances. This dramatically reduced public spending as demonstrated in the first months of Coalition government, but it also implies a decline in the prominence of public service delivery in the self-

understanding of the government's purpose. For the Coalition, the role of government is not to ensure the best possible standards of public service improvement and delivery, but to balance the national budget. The resources available for investment in public services are fewer, this is also accompanied by a decline in the status of public services within a demand-side discourse as management of the economy and the public purse becomes the top priority.

The political environment is also not conducive to the continuation of an education strategy modelled on that of New Labour. The Coalition lacked the degree of executive and prime ministerial autonomy that New Labour enjoyed because the parties involved lacked a parliamentary majority. The British constitution is designed so there are few checks and balances on a prime minister leading a majority government comprised their own party.

New Labour, especially under Tony Blair's leadership, took full advantage of the opportunities offered by the organisation of the British state to energetically centralise the management reform of public services. It enjoyed strong stable majorities and weak opposition for the majority of its time in office while strong party discipline afforded the opportunity for the extension and increased employment of prime ministerial powers. The Conservatives did not enjoy similar advantages, and could not exploit the full range of powers the British constitution offers to prime ministers in majority governments.

However, there may be a more subtle advantage and reason for Cameron's choice of coalition. In a post-election review of electoral trends and arithmetic, Curtice (2010) shows there was a considerable slump since the 1960s in support for the main political parties. Instead of the 90-95 per cent support in the early post war period, it fell to around 65 per cent in 2005, and stayed at this level in

2010. Voters are more fickle in their allegiance and the various countries and regions of the UK are becoming more polarised to the extent that both Labour and the Conservatives are largely unrepresented in certain parts of the country. This means that it is now increasingly difficult for any party to get over 40 per cent of the vote. Accordingly, Curtice argues that it might be necessary to rethink electoral politics, and perceive 35-37 per cent as an optimal outcome.

If Cameron and his advisors had calculated that 36 per cent as the highest figure the Conservatives could expect in the less tribal times of 21st century Britain, then the 2010 result could be seen as being about as good as could be expected. There was, therefore, no point in a minority government and another election in late 2010 or 2011 if there was no real prospect of a much improved outcome for the Conservatives.

So it might appear that Cameron actually benefitted from the inconclusive outcome of the 2010 election. Even though he did not have a Conservative majority he was the leader of a government with a majority of 80 that commanded the implicit support of 60 per cent of the electorate, which allowed him cover for his progressive agenda, as well as for making the cuts in public spending he and his colleagues deemed necessary. Therefore, he was in a much stronger position than if he had received the 38-40 per cent he might have realistically planned for before the election and the rather small majority this would have delivered him.

In this section, I have argued that the Liberal Democrats allowed the Conservatives to present a more coherent strategy to the country, particularly with regard to the deficit. The Liberal Democrats were tied into the strategy of public sector cuts, and the combined vote share of nearly 60 per cent allowed for

a solid platform. The Coalition could claim that in a time of national emergency, it was not promoting the agenda of just one party that only gained minority support in the country. Naomi Klein (2005) argues in *The Shock Doctrine* that seize the time has become a central maxim of right-wing politicians. The right can detach itself from responsibility for whatever led to the event and seek outcomes, and resolutions that advance its own programme. Liberated by the Coalition government's presentation of itself as an emergency regime, that would use forceful measures to deal with an epochal crisis, Michael Gove and David Cameron would grab the opportunity, forcing through a demand-side programme designed to extend the educational market, implement a new national curriculum (DfE, 2013c), and a school system based on inter-school competition and parental choice, all key demand-side themes.

## **2.9 Michael Gove**

Michael Gove, Secretary of State for Education from 2010-14, is an important politician. A columnist for *The Times*, former Chairman of the think-tank Policy Exchange, he is central to the networks through which ideas of the right were developed and disseminated (Mills, Griffin & Miller, 2011). A leading member of a Cabinet who pledged to cut and reorganise social provision, he increased the pace at which schools were taken out of the local authority system to become academies, cut teachers' pensions and held down their pay; he introduced a school curriculum that was more strongly conservative, in terms of content, than any previous version.

One way of understanding Gove is in an international context. He has taken much from American intellectuals like E. D. Hirsch, whose concepts of cultural literacy and core knowledge to underpin his thinking about the curriculum. He

was the counterpart of militant ministers of the right who came to educational office in other European countries from 2003-10, with a mission to eradicate the virus that was said to have affected European schooling since 1968 (Jones, 2012). With this founding myth of neo-conservatism, he shares a neoliberal disposition to push market relations ever further into schooling. In other ways, his politics are shaped by traditions and situations that are distinctly English.

Gove was interested in a tradition of working-class intellectuality that he thought was once alive in political life and education, but has now been set aside. He cites Jonathan Rose's book on the intellectual life of the British working class (Rose, 2001) as evidence of a thirst for knowledge and self-improvement which state-provided mass education had not satisfied. On the basis of this reading of history, Gove presented his own policies not as a break from reforming tradition, but a reincarnation of it, a recovery from popular impulses to learning dumbed-down by a state that has institutionalised low expectations. Claiming to be for the poor against the privileged, for a good education for everyone, against the growth of intellectually rewarding and functionally valueless qualifications, Gove provides a justification for his Academies programme: such schools are providing children with the opportunity to transcend circumstances of their birth (Gove, 2011). In their place, the ladder of opportunity is within the reach of every talented student.

The rational basis for Gove's claim is that large sections of the working class movement did for a long period, understand equal opportunity in that way. In Yorkshire, the 'scholarship boy' whose talent and effort took him from the Ridings to Oxford, was a familiar figure of educational mythology. Across Western Europe, the anti-fascist movements of the 1940s framed their



educational demands in terms of a new system in which working class people would have access, on grounds of ability, to institutions that had previously shut the door to them. In France, the Trotskyists of 'La Verite' called for an 'elite of intellect,' not wealth (Jones, 2007), and the Council for National Resistance, in its 1944 programme for post-war reconstruction, demanded that working class students should be able to benefit from the highest levels of education and culture, so that the highest offices in the country, could be filled by people from a popular background. In England, the Communist President of the National Union of Teachers, GCT Giles, welcomed the 1944 Education Act: its main effect was to create a version of opportunity embodied in a class-divided, tripartite secondary education as an expression of a modern democratic outlook (Giles, 1946).

From one point of view, 1944 was the hour of the meritocrat, when an elite intelligence would supposedly take over from the elite of wealth. The 1944 Education Act made free grammar school education more widely available; the main beneficiaries were the middle class (McKibbin, 1998). The Conservative Party accepted this in 1970, when it dropped retention of grammar schools from its election-winning manifesto. However, Gove maintains that pursuing social justice is about students from non-elite groups, through the diligent study of a traditional curriculum being lifted to new intellectual and occupational heights.

In the 1990s, Stephen Ball wrote of a 'discourse of derision' directed by Conservatism against equality-orientated reform (Ball, 1990). Previously, influential political forces (unions, local authorities) were derided and marginalised by Gove. New institutions (Ofsted, National College for Teaching & Learning) were established, new centres of influence (global consultancy

companies like Pearson, and McKinsey) emerged, new working practices (market-sensitive, target-orientated) introduced. Foucault's insight that neoliberalism creates 'a kind of permanent economic tribunal' from whose perspective every area of social practice is monitored, judged and shaped was in this sense prophetic (Lemke, 2001:198).

Gove's emphasis on free schools and his deregulatory moves around pay, curricula and teacher conditions played to a version of neoliberalism which emphasised the role of the central state less than Labour did and imagined each school as a culturally bonded little platoon.

In this chapter, I have suggested that Michael Gove's educational politics can be understood as a struggle to eradicate the main institutions, agencies and practices. The main resources he deployed are found on the intellectual and political right: they supplied him with a clear agenda and powerful style. I have also noted that Gove borrowed some aspects from those traditions he disliked, in particular through reconstructing a version of equal opportunities that focussed on the unmet needs of the talented poor.

Previous studies have focussed on education in a post-welfare society (Tomlinson, 2005), social and educational inequalities (Trowler, 2003), competitive advantage and parental choice (Ball, 1994; Gerwitz, 1995) considering many of the views about outstanding schools outlined in Coalition education policy: independence – freedom for headteachers and staff to develop teaching strategies and styles best suited to their particular situations; accountability – to parents rather than to local and national bureaucracies; competition – between schools which will drive up standards; diversity and choice – a range of different schools to choose from. These views have been

strongly influenced by neoliberal ideas, as discussed in this chapter. However, debate about the performance of academies and free schools, and the rapid conversion of so many schools in such a short space of time makes them a focus point for this research. The pupil premium that formed part of the Coalition's social mobility strategy is the most significant 'supply-side' reform introduced between 2010-15. Both of these topics are especially good for applying the supply-side and demand-side lens as they represent both social democratic and neoliberal perspectives.

In the opening chapter of this thesis I have sought to address what may be seen as two distinct terms: supply-side and demand-side. Aspects of demand-side reform have been pursued by both Conservative and Labour governments and a number of strategies are evident: privatisation with aspects of education being managed by private companies; the insertion of direct surrogate market relations; the generation and publication of market information; and the insertion of competition and choice processes replacing monopolistic state providers with competitive independent ones. In many ways there is a well-developed language with which to describe and analyse demand-side/supply-side reform: this will be explored in the next chapter.

## Chapter 3: Research design and methodology

Cohen et al. (2007:78) wrote that 'there is no single blueprint for planning research' and that 'research design is governed by the notion of 'fitness for purpose''. The purposes of the research determines the methodology and design of the research. Three concepts mentioned in the social sciences literature are methods, methodology and design. According to Van Manen (1990, cited in Cresswell & Clarke, 2007) the term methodology encompasses the philosophical framework and the fundamental assumptions of any research. Cresswell and Clarke (2007) argue that the philosophical framework for research influences the research procedure. Therefore, they define the term methodology as the framework related to the overall research process. Bryman (2008) states that the research design provides a framework for the collection and analysis of data. Kaplan (1973, cited in Cohen et al., 2007) says that the word method means an approach that is used to gather data in a way that interprets, explains and predicts that data.

This chapter positions the research ontologically and epistemologically and describes the methods used in the conduct of the research. Section 3.1 explains the general methodological orientation, including an interpretive design. Next, the chapter explains how the use of Sandra Taylor' framework for policy analysis and Stephen Ball's (1990) Policy Cycle provide methodological frameworks. The discussion is continued with a consideration of documentary analysis and case studies to understand key policies. Finally, the ethical concerns are reviewed.

### **3.1 General ontological-epistemological orientation**

Ontology is concerned with 'what is' (Crotty, 1998:10) and ontological assumptions are 'assumptions made about the nature of the social reality that is investigated' (Blaikie, 2007:12). Blaikie (2009) asserts that ontological assumptions 'make claims about what kinds of social phenomena do or can exist, the conditions of their existence, and the ways in which they are related' (Blaikie, 2009:92). These assumptions fall under two opposing, yet mutually exclusive categories: positivistic and interpretive.

Positive and interpretive paradigms are essentially concerned with understanding phenomena through two different lenses. Positivism strives for objectivity, measurability, predictability, controllability, patterning, the construction of laws and rules of behaviour, and the ascription of causality; the interpretive paradigms strive to understand the world in terms of its actors. As this study is concerned with how those involved in developing and implementing academies, free schools and the pupil premium considering the ideological and political contexts, the interpretivist ontology is arguably the more appropriate approach to this subject matter.

It can get 'blurry' trying to separate and define one's ontological approach from one's epistemological ways of thinking as 'ontological and epistemological issues tend to merge together' (Crotty, 1998:10). However, Crotty (1998) provides a simplified definition to this complex issue. He states that one's epistemology is grounded within philosophical thinking that 'establish[es] what kinds of knowledge are possible, what can be known, and criteria for deciding how knowledge can be judged as being both adequate and legitimate' (Crotty, 1998:8). Out of the three-basic epistemological assumptions – objectivism, constructionism and subjectivism – the constructionist approach, in my view,

provides the most appropriate epistemological position to understand the knowledge presented in this thesis.

Objectivism views an 'object' or 'thing' as having intrinsic meaning, whereby 'all observers should discover the same meaning, the same truth' (Blaikie, 2007:19) about said 'object' or 'thing'. To achieve this study's aim, 'understandings' of academies, free schools and the pupil premium, and the factors or forces at work an objectivist approach would not be appropriate, as the focus of this study is on interpreting 'understandings' that are articulated through texts and narratives. A constructionist approach, on the other hand, suggests that there is not one true or valid interpretation or 'understanding' of an issue and that meaning emerges from policy actors' interactions between each other and through how each policy actor relates to other's understandings, whereby 'the subject [policy actors] and object ['understandings' of academies, free schools and the pupil premium] emerge as partners in the generation of meaning' (Crotty, 1998:9). This study adopts a constructionist epistemology asserting that everyday knowledge is derived from 'people having to make sense of their encounters with the physical world and other people' (Blaikie, 2007:22).

Given the nature of this thesis' research questions, the use of both an inductive and deductive research strategy is the most appropriate. An inductive research strategy aims to explain the 'characteristics of people and social situations, and then determine the nature of the patterns of the relationships, or networks of relationships, between these characteristics' (Blaikie, 2007:9).

A deductive strategy works in the reverse order to an inductive approach in that 'it begins with a pattern, or regularity, that has already been discovered and established, and which begs an explanation' (Blaikie, 2007:9). It has been described as a 'trial and error process' (Blaikie, 2009:19) and is generally

associated with the positivist ontology and epistemology of falsification. Although this study initially started from a ground up position, by collecting and reviewing documents, the second stage of analysis was influenced by a deductive strategy in order to extend examining of the issue through drawing on concepts already developed within the literature.

This thesis aims to do more than understand policy actors and policy making motives. It also seeks to identify other factors that shape and influence the policy process: external shocks, who has been given access to contexts where policy is made, distribution of power within a policy network, values and ideologies.

### **3.2 Data collection methods**

There are several ways that data can be collected using different methodologies. Huberman and Miles (2002) describe a qualitative approach when data is collected in text form, event descriptions, and comments by individuals and phenomena. On the other hand, data collected in numerical form or measurements that seek to provide a precise observation, can be classified as a quantitative approach.

DeVaus (1996) states that it is difficult to decide on the best data collection method, and that the selection of any of these methods depends upon the aims of the study and other factors such as time, funds, sample size, environment and conditions. The thesis used a qualitative approach, the data arising from describing situations, phenomena and individuals. This is suited to the topic with its emphasis on interpretive and subjective dimensions. Due to the nature and purpose of the research questions, the author selected case study and

documentary analysis to provide data on the impact of macro-political decision-making on specific cases.

### **3.3 Research strategy and design**

May (2001) asserts that documentary analysis is important given that documents have the capacity not only to reflect but also to construct, social reality. In discussing the different kinds of documents used in social sciences, Scott (1990) distinguishes between personal documents and official documents. Documents can be used as 'sources of evidence' (Prior, 2010:112) to gather information pertaining to how specific individuals, groups, communities or cultures 'make sense of the world' (McKee, 2003:1). Therefore, using documents as a source of data is helpful because of the 'bias' that can be revealed within each text (Abraham, 1994; Bryman, 2012). That is, documents 'cannot be regarded as providing objective accounts of a state of affairs' (Bryman, 2012:551) and should be examined using Scott's (1990) four criteria for assessing documents: authenticity; credibility; representativeness; and meaning (Scott, 1990:6). To achieve this study's aim and answer the proposed research questions, policy announcements, select and joint committee reports, legislative developments, parliamentary proceedings, and research/evaluations relating to children and young people were identified and analysed.

The status and reality of documents has implications for their interpretation. It is tempting to assume that documents reveal something about the underlying social reality, so that documents that an organisation generates are viewed as representatives of the reality of that organisation. Documents tell us something about what goes on and uncover such things as culture and ethos. According to such a view, documents are windows onto social and organisational realities.



Atkinson and Coffey (2004) argue that documents should be viewed as a distinct level of reality in their own right. They argue that documents should be examined in terms of, on the one hand, the context in which they were produced, and on the other hand, their implied readership. When viewed in this way, documents are written to convey an impression, usually, one that will be favourable to the authors and those whom they represent. Moreover, any document should be viewed as linked to other documents, because invariably they refer to and/or are a response to other documents. Other documents form part of the context of background to the writing of a document. Atkinson and Coffey (2004) refer to the inter-connectedness of documents as inter-textuality.

Atkinson and Coffey's (2004) central message is that documents have a distinctive ontological status, in that they form a separate reality which they refer to as documentary reality. This should not be taken as transparent representations of an underlying organisation or social reality. They state: 'We cannot...learn through written records alone how an organisation actually operates day by day. Equally, we cannot treat records – however "official" – as firm evidence of what they report' (Atkinson & Coffey, 2004:58).

The thesis recognises that documents should be considered for what they are – namely, texts written with distinctive purposes in mind, and not as simply reflecting reality. The thesis purposefully buttresses an analysis of policy with other sources of data. In this context, other data and reports regarding the reality of implementation and outcome.

### **3.4 Representing policy through text**

Policy as text understands policies to be complex encoded representations that are shaped through resistance, negotiation and debate (Bowe, Ball & Gold,

1992; Ball, 1993, 1994; Bell & Stevenson, 2006). Ball (1994) argues that policy as text calls attention to the manner in which policies are introduced as written and then interpreted after being read. Policy texts are 'fraught with the possibility of misunderstanding, texts are generalised, written in relation to idealisations of the 'real world' and can never be exhaustive' (Bowe et al 1992:21). This relates to the context of influence cited within the policy cycle highlighted in Bowe et al.'s (1992) discussed of the context of policy-making. The central argument is that 'policy is not simply received and implemented rather it is subject to interpretation and then 'recreated'' (Bowe et al., 1992:22) as each practitioner will confront a policy differently due to their own history, 'experiences, values, purposes and [vested] interests' (ibid).

Ozga (2000) regards policy texts as being any 'vehicle or medium for carrying or transmitting a policy message' (Ozga, 2000:33). Ball (2008) provides further detail by describing policy texts as including: 'documents and speeches that 'articulate' policies and policy ideas, which work to translate policy abstractions ... into roles and relationships and practices within institutions that enact policy and change what people do and how they think about what they do' (Ball, 2008:6).

Bowe et al. (1992) stress that there are two important aspects to remember about policy texts: first, 'the ensembles and the individual texts are not necessarily internally coherent or clear' (Bowe et al., 1992:21) and second, 'the texts themselves are the outcome of struggle and compromise' (ibid). They highlight that policy and policy texts have multiple authors and multiple readers which produces significant spaces within which misinterpretations and contradictory usage of terms among various policy texts occur. Furthermore, Ball (1994) emphasises that both the writers and readers of texts shape policy at the

strategic, organisational and operational level. Policy texts continue to be read, interpreted, and recreated during its implementation, whereby it is regularly re-implemented over space and time. As Bowe et al. (1992) state, "policy texts are not closed, their meanings are neither fixed nor clear, they 'carry over' of meanings from one policy arena and one educational site to another [and are] subject to interpretational slippage and contestation" (Bowe et al., 1992:83).

### **3.5 Policy as discourse**

Discourse is 'concerned with communication and refers to talk, conversation and dissertation'(Garratt & Forrester, 2012:10). It refers to the 'ways in which things are discussed and the argumentation and rhetoric used to support what is said' (Legge, 1995:326). Analysing discourses within policy is important because policies 'embody meaning and social relationships. They constitute both subjectivity and power relations' (Ball, 1990:17). Discursive structures (concepts, language, rules of logic) are often overlooked; however, they contain both cognitive and normative elements that establish what those involved in policy development understand and articulate. Thus, they can identify which policy ideas they are more likely to adopt (Campbell, 2002). Focusing on the discourses emanating from policy actors and embedded within policy texts is important, as the 'discourses of the more powerful groups in society are more likely to be influential and gain legitimacy, often gaining support in the form of legislation, while the perspectives of subordinate groups are marginalised' (Garratt & Forrester, 2012:11).

Discourse embodies the concepts and ideas related to policy, and the development of communication and policy formulation that assist with producing and implementing said ideas (Schmidt & Radaelli, 2004). Approaching policy as

discourse involves seeing knowledge and power as intertwined (Foucault, 1991). Ball (1993) makes the argument that, despite the potential for multiple interpretations and reformulations of policies, the concept of policy as discourse is key because it allows us to understand why policy is often implemented so uniformly – as the discourses around policy limit the extent to which it can be interpreted. Drawing on the work of Foucault (1971, 1974, 1977), Ball (1993) additionally maintains that within ensembles – or collections of related policies – discourses provide a boundary within which notions of truth and knowledge are formed. According to Foucault (1974), discourses are: 'Practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak ... Discourses are not about objects; they do not identify objects, they constitute them and in the practice of doing so they conceal their own invention' (Foucault, 1974:49).

The features that form such discourses are not value neutral, but instead reproduce the structural balance of power in society, for 'discourses are what can be said, and thought, but also about who can speak, when, where and with what authority' (Ball 1993:14). Similarly, to Ball, Kress (1985) describes discourses as establishing a set of statements 'that will define, describe, delimit, and circumscribe what is possible and impossible to say with respect to [a certain area of social life], and how it is to be talked about' (Kress, 1985:28). Discourses are both socially and politically constructed in order to develop a system of relationships among various objects and practices, while providing (subject) positions which social agents can recognise (Howarth & Stavrakakis, 2000). They encapsulate the understanding of words and statements and how these can be utilised; thus constructing 'certain possibilities for thought' (Ball, 1993:14). Additionally, discourse orders and constructs words and meanings in certain ways and in doing so excludes others as 'meanings thus arise not from

language but from institutional practices, from power relations, from social position' (Ball, 1990:18).

Policy discourse, thus, can illuminate specific factors or forces. Therefore, with this understanding, policy has, above all, a discursive effect, whereby it restricts the possibilities for outside thought and as a result restricts responses to change; for policy as discourse 'may have the effect of redistributing 'voice'' (Ball, 1993:15), whereby those given access to speak with authority are assembled from a series of exclusions (Anderson, 2003:3). From this perspective, policy development is merely a struggle over meaning and viewing policy and policy development as discourse 'is a way of indicating the significance of power relations in framing interpretations of policy texts' (Taylor et al., 1997:28). Therefore, analysing policy texts provide real opportunities for policy learning as to what discourses are currently shaping how academies, free schools and the pupil premium are characterised.

### **3.6 Selection of data sources**

These primary sources of data were:

- House of Commons Education Committee Academies and free schools: Government Response to the Committee's Fourth Report of Session 2014–15 21 January 2015
- Unleashing greatness: getting the best from an academised system. Academies Commission (January, 2013)
- CHAIN EFFECTS 2015 The impact of academy chains on low-income students. Sutton Trust (July, 2015)

All of the above are intentionally and unintentionally are capable of transmitting a first-hand account of an event. In terms of Scott's (1990) four criteria, such



materials can certainly be seen as authentic and as having meaning, in the sense of being clear and comprehensible to the researcher. The question of credibility raises the issue of whether the documentary source is biased. Such documents are used and are interesting because of the biases they reveal. Equally, this point suggests that caution is necessary in attempting to discuss them as depictions of reality. The issue of representativeness is complicated in that materials like these are in a sense unique, and it is precisely their official or quasi-official characteristic that makes them interesting in their own right. Finally, there is the question of whether it is representative, but in the context of this thesis this is not a meaningful question as, because no case can be representative in a statistical sense. The issue is one of establishing a coherent theoretical account and possibly examining the policy in other contexts. This thesis notes key factors across a range documents acknowledging diversity of interpretations.

### **3.7 Case study**

Case study designs within educational research have been widely used as well as assessed and scrutinised (Merriam, 1988; Anderson, 1990; Basse, 1999; Yin, 2009). Case studies can be used as a valuable tool to provide detailed, intensive knowledge about a single case or number of related cases (Robson, 2011:79); they are multi-perspectival analyses (Tellis, 1997). Miles and Huberman (1994) state that a: 'case-oriented approach considers the case as a whole entity, looking at configurations, associations and effects within the case – and only then turns to a comparative analysis of a (usually limited) number of cases' (Miles & Huberman, 1994:176).

Yin (1984) identifies three types of case studies in terms of their outcomes: exploratory (as a pilot to other studies or research questions); descriptive (providing narrative accounts); explanatory (testing theories). Yin (2003) distinguishes five types of case study: the critical case; the extreme of unique; the representative or typical; the revelatory case; the longitudinal case. For single case selection, Yin (1994) proposed four strategies and matched these strategies to the purpose of the case inquiry. Figure 3.1 lists these four strategies and relates each to the purpose it best serves.

Table 4: Selection strategies for single and multiple case designs (source: Yin, 1994)

<b>Single case</b>	<b>Multiple case</b>
<p>Critical</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Testing a well formulated theory</li> </ul>	<p>Literal replication</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cases selected to predict similar results</li> <li>- When rival theories are grossly different</li> <li>- Three to four cases</li> </ul>
<p>Extreme or unique</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Documentation and analysis of a rare case</li> </ul>	
<p>Revelatory case</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Observation and analysis of a phenomenon inaccessible to scientific investigation</li> </ul>	<p>Theoretical replication</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cases selected to predict contrasting results</li> <li>- When rival theories have subtle differences or to increase the degree of certainty of results</li> <li>- Two (or three) sets of three to four cases to pursue two (or three) patterns of theoretical replications</li> </ul>
<p>Prelude case</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Exploratory, e.g. the first phase of a multiple case study research</li> </ul>	



The selection of case studies needs not be a haphazard activity (Yin, 1994) and the selection of cases needs to be driven by the two issues of appropriateness and adequacy (Kuzel, 1999). While appropriateness is related to demonstrating a fit to both the purpose of research and the phenomenon of inquiry, adequacy is concerned with how much is enough or how many cases (Kuzel, 1999; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 1990). To facilitate the identification of the case selection to this study the framework in table 4 was applied. In this thesis, the two case studies included are representative or typical cases as they exemplify, for example, a typical multi-academy trust. The representative or typical case study is particularly valuable as they strive to portray what it is like, rich and vivid description, chronological narrative, a blending of description and with analysis, highlights specific events and attempts to portray the richness of an organisation (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995). Another rationale for choosing exemplifying cases is that they allow for the examination of key social processes.

Nisbet and Watt (1984) summarise the strength and weakness of case studies:

#### Strengths

1. The results are more easily understood by a large audience as they are frequently written in everyday, non-professional language.
2. They are immediately intelligible; they speak for themselves.
3. They catch the unique features that may otherwise be lost in larger data (e.g. surveys); these unique features may hold the key to understanding the situation.
4. They are strong on reality.
5. They provide insights into other, similar situations and cases, thereby assisting interpretation of other similar cases.

6. They can be undertaken by a single researcher without needing a full research team.
7. They embrace and build in unanticipated events and uncontrolled variables.

#### Weaknesses

1. The results may not be generalizable, except where other readers/researchers see their application.
2. They are not easily open to cross-checking; they may be selective, biased, personal and subjective.
3. They are prone to observer bias, despite attempts made to address reflexivity.

One of the key criticisms of the case study is that findings cannot be generalised (Cohen & Manion, 1989; Simons, 1996; Bryman, 2012), specifically, answering the question of 'How can a single case possibly be representative so that it might yield findings that can be applied more generally to other cases?' (Bryman, 2012:69). The findings from the analyses conducted within this study are not assumed to be generalisable to all education policy-making processes within England. As Stake (1994:245) states, 'The purpose of a case study is not to represent the world but to represent the case'. Furthermore, case study designs are argued to be helpful tools in generating and contributing to rich, detail-oriented understandings of policy contexts (Ragin, 1989; Creswell, 1994; Simons, 2009; Yin, 2009).

### **3.8 Possible issue within, and limitations, of the approach taken**

As with any research project, a researcher's own construction of meaning, methodology and chosen data collection methods have consequences in relation

to the validity and reliability of the study. I understand that my interpretivist approach warns me to be suspicious of my own assumptions about how the world appears to be (Burr, 2003) and that the categories with which we as human beings apprehend the world do not necessarily refer to real divisions (ibid). I also acknowledge that my knowledge is derived from exploring current policy are only a reading of the collected and analysed data instead of the stark empirical truth (Redman, 1998). Therefore, it is also understood that others reading this work will make their own active appropriations of it by interpreting the data whereby they create their own readings and interpretations.

Regarding validity, or the 'trustworthiness' and 'precision' of the research and its findings, Hammersley (1992; 69) states that an account is valid or true if it represents accurately those features of the phenomena that it is intended to describe, explain or theorise (Hammersley, 1992). When discussing the reliability of a research study, some describe that one's research findings and evidence must be trustworthy (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), dependable (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and consistent (Hammersley, 1992). Alternatively, Seale (1999) considers sound reliability and replication to be achieved through reflexivity and by 'showing the audience of (the research study) as much as is possible of the procedures that have led to a particular set of conclusions' (Seale, 1999:158). Data collected for this study was managed, synthesised and systematically carried out. Using such a clearly defined approach enables other researchers to replicate this study using the same (or similar) data, and allows readers of this thesis to follow the process taken to make sense of the data.

Additionally, while collecting, synthesising and interpreting this study's data, I was aware of the importance of my own personal reflexivity, or personal reactivity (Golby, 1994). Blaikie (2007) describes that the activities involved in

constructing knowledge occur against the backdrop of shared interpretations, practices and language; they occur within our historical, cultural and gendered ways of being. I recognized that my own background as a middle-class, white educated male from England will inevitably be incorporated into my own construction and interpretation of the collected and analysed data.

### **3.9 Ethical concerns**

The literature's ethical issues are of two main types. First, there are the codes of ethical and professional conduct for research, put out by various educational organisations, for example, the British Educational Research Association. The second type of literature is the various commentaries on ethical issues, sometimes across social research in general, and sometimes specific to educational research. For example, the writings of Miles and Huberman (1994), and Punch (1986, 1994) in social research, and of Hill (2005) and Robert-Holmes (2005) in education and psychological research. The first type offers researchers guidelines for ethical conduct, and checklists of points to consider. The second describes what issues have come up from different researchers, and how they have been handled. These two bodies of literature provide a general framework for dealing with ethical issues.

Punch (1994) summarises the main ethical issues in social research as harm, consent, deception, privacy, and confidentiality of data. Miles and Huberman (1994) have a broader list of eleven ethical issues that need attention before, during and after qualitative studies: *Issues arising early in the project*: worthiness of project, competence boundaries, informed consent, benefits, costs, reciprocity; *Issues arising as the project develops*: harm and risk, honesty and truth, privacy, confidentiality and anonymity, intervention and advocacy;

*Issues arising later in, or after, the project:* research integrity and quality, ownership of data and conclusions, use and misuse of results. As Miles and Huberman note, these issues typically involve dilemmas and conflicts, and negotiated trade-offs are often needed, rather than the application of rules. Heightened awareness of these issues is an important starting point.

Being a 'good' researcher demands a vigilant attitude toward oneself. It calls for an extraordinary ordinariness, about trying to act reasonably according to the dictates of our conscience and experience. Reflexivity is at the heart of being ethical. A 'wide and robust concept of reflexivity should include reflecting on, and being accountable about personal, interpersonal, institutional, pragmatic, emotional, theoretical, epistemological and ontological influences on our research and specifically about our data analysis processes' (Doucet & Mauthner, 2004:134). At times, I have felt out of my depth in understanding the prevailing political, historical and institutional structures that influenced Coalition education policy. It was difficult to deconstruct some entrenched professional issues about policy, and meta-ethics, a questioning of my own judgements, findings and claims, went along way to helping me make sense of territory fraught with uncertainties.

Ethical guidelines outlined by the British Educational Research Association (BERA) in its published *Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research (2011)* were adhered to throughout this study, more specifically, that educational research should always be conducted with an ethic of respect for: the person, knowledge, democratic values, the quality of educational research and academic freedom' (BERA, 2011:4).

Documents were the main source of data for this study. All the documents used are considered a 'public' document(s) and under the *Freedom of Information Act (2000)* is open to those outside of government to access and review. Therefore, neither oral nor written consent was sought to name these specific policy actors and their specific arguments, contributions as the documents used are open to public review and scrutiny.

I worked within the codes of conduct that protect researchers at the University of Southampton and was alert to ethical issues.

# Chapter 4 Analysis and findings: demand-side reform

## 4.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the expansion of academies and free schools. This chapter focuses on policy text and consequences, and uses Taylor's framework for policy analysis. This chapter also focuses on the contexts of practice and outcomes: Ball's Policy Cycle is used to analyse these contexts.

The purpose of this study is to review policy changes pertaining to academies, free schools and the pupil premium. The aim is to see who is trying to influence policy and what the impact is. Within this research, two methods documentary analysis and case study were used, in order to investigate the following research questions:

1. What debates have taken place with the policy making process, and how do they appear to have influenced current national legislation and statutory policy texts in England?
2. What ideologies and values informed policy changes?
3. Who are trying to influence policy?
4. What are the effects of the key policy documents: House of Commons Education Committee Academies and free schools: Government Response to the Committee's Fourth Report of Session 2014–15 21 (January, 2015); Unleashing greatness: getting the best from an academised system; the Academies Commission (January, 2013); Chain Effects 2015; The impact of academy chains

on low-income students; Sutton Trust (July, 2015) and the Academies Act (2010) on education policy?

5. What is the impact and perceived effectiveness of policies in relation to academies, free schools and the pupil premium?

#### **4.2 Data analysis procedure**

The data analysis involved an analysis of the 2010 Academies Act and three key publications related to academies and free schools; it also analysed two case studies which were written on the Ark Academy chain and the New Schools Network.

The first section tackles the last two research question of the study by presenting an analysis of a handful of publications which explored the issues attached to converting to academies, attainment levels, pupil intake and admissions. These documents are:

- House of Commons Education Committee Academies and free schools: Government Response to the Committee's Fourth Report of Session 2014–15 21 January 2015.
- Unleashing greatness: getting the best from an academised system (Academies Commission, January, 2013).
- Chain Effects, 2015 The impact of academy chains on low-income students (Sutton Trust, July, 2015).

A thorough and systematic literature review provided me with background information of the political context (research questions 1 and 2). Information in



the documents helped me to understand the events or situations that needed to be considered. The documents selected were assessed for completeness (covering the topic completely): The House of Commons Education Select Committee’s publication Academies and Free Schools (2015). Alternatively, they were selective (covering only some aspects of the topic): The Sutton Trust Report – Chain Effects 2015. While no document would be treated as necessarily a precise, accurate, or complete recording of events that have happened, they do provide a broad and balanced coverage.

Table 5: Criteria for selection of documents

<b>Document selected</b>	<b>Usefulness of the document</b>
House of Commons Education Committee Academies and free schools: Government Response to the Committee's Fourth Report of Session 2014–15 21 January 2015	At a parliamentary level, the body of scrutiny is the all-party select committee. Select committees do not veto policy they provide formal oversight of structures. The document is of interest because it provides detail of the shift from a pre to a post academy landscape between 2010-15.
Unleashing greatness: getting the best form an academised system. Academies Commission (January, 2013)	The Academies Commission - set up by the RSA and the Pearson Think Tank aimed to examine the implications of the 'mass academisation' of state schools and the impact this might have on educational outcomes. This document is of interest because it was set up not to question the academies programme but to help them work better.
CHAIN EFFECTS 2015 The impact of academy chains on low-income students. Sutton Trust (July, 2015)	The Sutton Trust is a think tank with the aim to commission research to influence policy and to improve social mobility through education. This documents is of interest because it can highlight links between academisation and pupils' achievement.

### **4.3 Analysing the documents**

The analysis of the documents involved skimming (superficial examination), reading (thorough examination), and interpretation. This iterative process combined elements of content analysis and thematic analysis. The content analysis excluded quantification typical of conventional mass media content analysis; rather, it entailed a first-pass document review, in which meaningful and relevant passages of text or other data are identified. The aim is to identify pertinent information and to separate it from that which is not pertinent (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Thematic analysis is a form of pattern recognition within the data: emerging themes are the analysis categories (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). The process involved a careful, more focused re-reading and review. It involved closely examining the selected data and performing coding and category construction, based on the data's characteristics, to uncover themes pertinent to academies and free schools. Predefined codes were used based on the literature. During the process, I needed to demonstrate objectivity, by seeking to represent the research material fairly, and sensitivity to subtle cues in meaning in the selection and analysis of data from the documents.

Thematic analysis was applied to the documents. The analysis of literature and the documents identified patterns and these are outlined below.

- **Marketisation**
  - Parental choice
  - Diversity of schools
  - Competition
- **Managerialism**

- School autonomy
- School-based management
- **Standards**
  - Raising standards
  - Closing the attainment gap
  - Assessment procedures

## **Marketisation**

During the last five decades, the market has become a central mechanism in the regulation of education. The supposedly 'old fashioned' interventionist state, the welfare or social state model wherein the state is the guarantor, promoter and responsible agent for the social and economic well-being of citizens via the control of the dynamics of redistribution of capital, is reworked in neoliberal terms in an effort to increase the efficiency and efficacy of the market and of the economic as a framing for guiding relations between citizens and the state. Under neoliberalism, the state can be understood as a facilitator of the market, 'a market-maker, as initiator of opportunities, as re-modeller and moderniser' (Ball, 2007:82). Parental choice, diversity of provision and competition became key themes that emphasise the individual, the choices they can make and the way they position themselves in the market (atomised, self-seeking, self-regulating). This theme focussed on these dimensions.

## **Managerialism**

As choice becomes a particularly important component of educational reform, managerialism, the insertion of the theories and techniques of business management, is crucial to the transformation of the organisational regimes of schools and their replacement with market-entrepreneurial regimes (Clarke & Newman, 1992). Managerialism through school autonomy and school-based

management becomes both a delivery system and a vehicle for change. These policy solutions are the focus of the second theme.

### **Standards**

Schools are constantly judged and measured through systems of appraisal, league tables and results, databases, inspections and reports in a constant drive to raise standards; this is one of the ways in which governments are able to enforce change without resorting to legislation. This focus on standards is the focus of the third theme.

## 4.4 Findings

Table 6: Summary of documentary analysis

	<p><b>House of Commons Education Committee Academies and free schools: Government Response to the Committee's Fourth Report of Session 2014–15 21 January 2015</b></p>	<p><b>Unleashing greatness: getting the best form an academised system. Academies Commission (January, 2013)</b></p>	<p><b>CHAIN EFFECTS 2015</b> The impact of academy chains on low-income students. Sutton Trust (July, 2015)</p>
<p><b>Marketisation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Parental choice</b></li> <li>○ <b>Diversity of schools</b></li> <li>○ <b>Competition</b></li> </ul>	<p><b>Concerns:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Accountability to parents, both collectively and individually</li> <li>Free schools meeting a basic need for places</li> <li>-Of the 21,500 state-funded schools in England, 17,300 are maintained schools and 4,200 are academies as of August 2014</li> <li>-The process of conversion is exceptionally fast by international standards</li> </ul>	<p><b>Serious shortcomings: -----</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Transparency and accountability to parents</li> <li>-Autonomy but little thought as to how schools can relate to secure trust of their pupils parents and communities</li> <li>-Provide parents with better data</li> <li>-Some popular schools are setting criteria to select and reject pupils</li> <li>-Increasing diversity of schools in many areas</li> <li>-Post 2010, DfE argues this will bring new collaboration and competition</li> </ul>	

<p><b>Managerialism</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>School autonomy</b></li> <li>○ <b>School-based management</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-OECD: decision-making must be delegated to the appropriate level of school leaders</li> <li>-Regional School Commissioners are intended to fill the gap between Whitehall and individual schools</li> <li>-Local authorities can play an effective role in challenging all schools, including academies</li> <li>-Collaboration is essential in a self-improving system in order to provide challenge, support and economies of scale</li> <li>-Inspection judgement for each academy chain would improve Multi Academy Trusts</li> <li>-Accountability and monitoring systems should be more transparent and open</li> <li>-Majority of academy freedoms are open to all schools</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Problems of quality control of academies and chains</li> <li>-Difficulties in terms of governance and financial management</li> <li>-Better check on the due diligence of sponsors to ensure effective school improvement</li> <li>-Fair and rigorous process for selecting sponsors</li> <li>-Systematic monitoring of chains, publically reported to parents</li> <li>-Local Authorities: clear roles as guardians and champions of all children`s needs and interests.</li> <li>-Critical evidence presented about the lack of a rigorous process for choosing sponsors</li> <li>-Many academy freedoms have not been used</li> <li>-Some freedoms constrained by sponsors</li> <li>-Duty for all academies to collaborate with Local Authorities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-New sponsors should have a strong record of school improvement and such schools should be monitored</li> <li>-Best chains need to spread their `lessons`</li> <li>-Ofsted to be allowed to inspect chains rather than just the schools within them</li> </ul>
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<p><b>Standards</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Raising standards</b></li> <li>○ <b>Closing the attainment gap</b></li> <li>○ <b>Assessment procedures</b></li> </ul>	<p>-PISA research does not support a straightforward relationship between autonomy and the academy model</p> <p>-Competitive effect upon the maintained sector may have incentivised local authorities to develop more effective intervention in underperforming schools</p> <p>-No convincing evidence of the impact of academy status on attainment in primary schools</p> <p>-Chains, such as Harris, have been very effective whilst others achieve worse outcomes than comparable mainstream schools</p>	<p>-Impact on attainment has been limited and uneven, with no clear benefits for disadvantaged pupils</p> <p>-Results (DfE, 2012) are broadly the same as statistically matched schools, but slightly worse without using 'equivalent qualifications'.</p> <p>-Improvement in 33 sponsored academies open for over 5 years</p> <p>-Intake of earlier academies has tended to change with fewer disadvantaged pupils</p> <p>-Particular problem with Free schools, few disadvantaged pupils</p>	<p>-Sponsored academies are twice as likely to be below floor standards</p> <p>-Significant variation in outcomes for disadvantaged pupils, both within and across academy chains</p> <p>-Contrast between the best and worst chains has increased in 2014</p> <p>-Majority of chains analysed still underperformed the mainstream average on attainment for disadvantaged pupils</p>
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Table 7: Summary of Academies Act 2010

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Academies Act 2010</b>
<p><b>Marketisation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Parental choice</b></li> <li>○ <b>Diversity of schools</b></li> <li>○ <b>Competition</b></li> </ul>	<p>-when considering conversion, governing bodies of existing schools and those promoting a new Free School are required to 'consult those persons whom they think appropriate'</p> <p>-faith schools may retain their religious character upon conversion to academy status, and selective schools are able to keep their selective status upon conversion</p>
<p><b>Managerialism</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>School autonomy</b></li> <li>○ <b>School-based management</b></li> </ul>	<p>-freedom from regulation to adopt innovative approaches to management, governance, teaching and the curriculum</p> <p>-the power to 'make arrangements' with another person (the governing body in the case of a maintained school) to establish and run an academy</p> <p>-an 'academy agreement' for schools converting to academy status, or 'arrangements for academy financial assistance' (grants) for free schools</p> <p>-academy proprietors will be treated as charities, but are regulated by central government rather than the Charity Commission</p> <p>-equivalent core funding it would receive as a maintained school in the same local authority area</p>
<p><b>Standards</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Raising standards</b></li> <li>○ <b>Closing the attainment gap</b></li> <li>○ <b>Assessment procedures</b></li> </ul>	<p>-Academies are freer than other schools to focus their efforts on teaching and learning and push up attainment as a consequence</p> <p>-a broad and balanced curriculum – requirements of section 78 of EA 2002 (balanced and broadly based curriculum)</p> <p>-for pupils of different abilities</p> <p>-Special educational needs, school admissions and school exclusions obligations equivalent to those that apply to maintained schools</p> <p>-If the school is a selective school, section 1(6)(c) (requirement to provide education for pupils of different abilities) does not apply in relation to any Academy arrangements to be entered into in relation to the school or a school that replaces it</p>

#### **4.5 Summary evidence from the documents and discussion**

*What are the effects of the key policy documents: House of Commons Education Committee Academies and free schools: Government Response to the Committee's Fourth Report of Session 2014–15 21 (January, 2015); Unleashing greatness: getting the best from an academised system; the Academies Commission (January, 2013); Chain Effects 2015; The impact of academy chains*



*on low-income students; Sutton Trust (July, 2015) and the Academies Act (2010) on education policy?*

## **Theme 1 Marketisation**

### **The data summary from the first theme**

- As of February 2013, the 'use of specific academy freedoms has not been widespread' (Pearson/RSA, 2013:44).
- There was a lack of clarity regarding the selection of or checks on potential sponsors by central government (HoC Education Committee, 2015).
- Lack of partnership with local authorities and concerns over transparency and accountability to parents (Pearson/RSA, 2013:44-5).
- Provide parents with better data (HoC, Education Committee, 2015)
- Increasing diversity of schools in many areas and achieved exceptionally quickly by international standards

### **Discussion**

Theories of and arguments for the benefits of the market, 'demand-side' reform are diverse, and political support for choice and entrepreneurship comes from a variety of directions. The market form carries with it a political vision which articulates a very individualistic conception of democracy and citizenship. This is captured very powerfully in Margaret Thatcher's often quoted dictum: 'There is no such thing as society. There are individual men and women and families' (*Woman's Own*, 31 October 1987). Morrell (1989:17) suggests that this remark 'is an expression of the Hayekian view in epigrammatic form'. Morell goes on to argue that Hayek is particularly concerned to argue against the involvement of the Government in the life of the citizen.

The market driven approach to Academies and Free Schools has been translated into strategic direction and a set of organisational principles and operation procedures for public sector institutions by Joseph (1976); the main tenets on which legitimation was based were:

- The absolute liberty of individuals to make choices based on their own self-interest
- The freedom of individuals to exercise such choices without being subject to coercion from others
- The freedom to choose being exercised daily through spending choices rather than every five years through the ballot box

There are four important limitations to the demand-side model in relation to Academies and Free schools. First, to what extent is it appropriate to identify the parent as the sole customer of the education service, especially as education is largely funded from tax revenue, is largely state provided and the context exists within a national framework of priorities? Secondly, in spite of choice within the system e.g. the option for Academies and Free Schools not to teach the National Curriculum, the education systems' position as a near-monopoly supplier is maintained by a range of regulations. Thirdly, the option of establishing cooperation and collaboration that could achieve similar ends is often ignored, although this is being re-established as part of the policy agenda through Teaching Schools. Even where such collaboration is attempted, residual competition between institutions makes collaboration difficult. While the curriculum may be national, the localisation of accountability is such that the onus is on individual schools to achieve successful implementation and to accept the consequences if they fail.

Fourthly, demand-side reform emphasises the role of the parent as customer, choosing between schools. The argument maintains that if the customer can be placed in a direct relationship with the supplier of the services they seek, then a self-regulatory market can be allowed to operate. As Gerwitz et al. (1995) warn, the limited capacity of many parents to avail themselves of the opportunity to send their children to any but the nearest school could mean that the exercising such choices has become a middle-class form of engagement. This gives rise to what Stoll and Fink call the quality-equality paradox:

The reforms...have been made in the name of quality and efficiency. They provide the rhetoric of equity but fail to accommodate the changing nature of society. Indeed, many changes tend to be ways for the 'haves' to escape from the 'have nots' ...various choice and voucher initiatives... gain favour with the affluent but ignore the impact of post modernity on the least empowered elements of society.

(Stoll and Fink, 1996:7)

## **Theme 2 Managerialism**

### **The data summary from the second theme**

The Pearson/RSA report on the academies system, lists academies as having freedom to:

- set their own curriculum, subject to teaching a broad and balanced curriculum that
- includes English, mathematics, science and religious education
- set the length of the school day and term
- appoint their own staff and set their own staff pay and conditions of service, subject to complying with employment law

- set and manage their own budgets, subject to certain restrictions (relating to running a balanced budget, not generating a surplus of more than 12 per cent of income, and acting in accordance with the Academies Financial Handbook)
- act as their own admissions authority and set their own admissions criteria, subject to following the School Admissions Code
- determine their own governance structures, subject to the inclusion of two parent governors. (Pearson/RSA, 2013:44-5)

## Discussion

The Coalition's Academies Act 2010 was passed just 76 days after the general election and established a statutory basis for all primary, secondary, special schools and PRU's to convert to an academy, with no requirement for a sponsor to be involved. In his first month as Secretary of State for Education, Michael Gove wrote to all primary and secondary schools in England inviting them to become academies.

## The Academies Act 2010:

- Removed local authorities' power to veto a school becoming an academy
- Dispensed with parents' and teachers' legal right to oppose such plans
- Allowed schools categorised by inspectors as 'outstanding' to 'fast-track' the process of becoming academies

In 2015, the National Audit Office (NAO) found that the rate at which maintained schools were becoming sponsored academies had increased: 'the Department opened over three times as many sponsored academies in 2012-13 as 2011-12 [... and] opened a further 376 sponsored academies by the end of 2013-14' (DfE,

2014). From the start of academic year 2014-15, an additional 154 sponsored academies opened over a three-month period. The rapid growth in the number of academies over the last four years has been fuelled mainly by converters: schools voluntarily becoming academies. These schools also have a funding agreement with the Secretary of State and are formally established as academy trusts. Unlike sponsored academies, they are previously outstanding or good schools, typically with low numbers of disadvantaged children amongst their intakes. Twenty-nine schools converted in September 2010. By the end of July 2011, 529 converter academies were open, followed by a further 1,058 between August 2011 and July 2012, and 731 between August 2012 and July 2013 (Academies Annual Report, 2012-13). By 1 December 2014 a total of 3,062 schools had converted to academy status as part of the Coalition programme (DfE 2014a). This is greatly in excess of the DfE's prediction at the time of the Academies Bill in 2010 that 200 schools would convert each year in the first few years of the programme (DfE, 2010).

This policy move builds on, extends, and advances previous ones. Although as the NASUWT Briefing for Governors says: 'It would be a mistake to assume that the academies being promoted by the Coalition government are merely an extension of the previous Government's Policy' (NASUWT, 2012:3, cited in Wilkins, 2012). The latest iteration of academies is packaged differently in political terms and is a much more decisive break from local democratic oversight of education. The NASUWT document goes on to say: 'They are designed to open up education to commercial activity and will result in previously public assets being handed over to the control of private providers' (ibid).

### **Ark case study**

### *Who are trying to influence policy?*

The ARK case study illustrates changes in the management of schools: academy chains are one manifestation of this. ARK plays a role in the process of public sector transformation whereby a variety of organisations working in different relationships to the state take up positions previously reserved to the state. ARK also exemplifies the international movement of innovative ideas, 'policy borrowing', and the way in which new governance ideas are being clustered: philanthropy, social enterprise, forms of localism and 'market solutions', a blurring of boundaries between sectors.

#### ARK: philanthropy

ARK is a charity founded in 2002 by a group of hedge fund managers 'pooling their skills and resources to improve the life chances of children' (ARK website). The charity is concerned with educational disadvantage and seeks to close the achievement gap between children from advantaged and disadvantaged backgrounds.

ARK founder Arpad Busson described education as 'in crisis' and 'the biggest issue government face today' and argued that 'charities must treat donors as if they were shareholders' (*Observer*, 29 May, 2005). ARK's approach to charitable giving draws from the methods of the hedge fund industry. As a founding trustee, Paul Marshall considered ARK to be an opportunity to create 'a proper hedge fund charity, which demonstrated the commitment the hedge fund industry to giving something back and which also used our combined financial and business experience to try and make a difference, apply some of the principles of our business to charitable giving' (ARK website). ARK introduces its approach as 'venture philanthropy' and describes it as 'a form of more engaged philanthropy which applied venture capital investment principles to the voluntary and community sector' (ARK website). Enterprise and the methods of business are seen as providing innovative and effective solutions to social and educational policy.

ARK's main source of direct funding comes from fund-raising activities (ARK website), principally its very high-profile annual gala dinners: 'the annual hedge fund extravaganza' (*Telegraph*, 7 July, 2010). These are attended by top financiers and celebrities and have raised over £150 million since 2002.

At the beginning of 2012, ARK ran a chain of 11 academies in London, Birmingham, Portsmouth: they are still expanding. Of the first 24 free schools

founded in September 2011, two are primary academies run by ARK. ARK's approach to academies draws heavily from the US charter schools, particularly from the Knowledge in Power Programme (KIPP), as Peter Marshall explained in a newspaper interview:

*At ARK, we demonstrate that if you set high expectations, robust discipline and focus relentlessly on literacy and numeracy, poor children can achieve as well as prosperous ones. We model ourselves on the American KIPP schools that have 80 per cent free school meals and send 80 per cent to university.*

(London Evening Standard, 7 March 2011).

An emphasis on discipline and behaviour management is among the central features of KIPP schools that have been visited by ARK Academies' leadership teams and promotes the deployment of non-traditional methods in closing the 'attainment gap'. The Academies programme is a policy space in which experimental ideas can be 'tried out' and ARK plays a role within that terrain. ARK Academies were celebrated by the Coalition government for 'driving up standards in the poorest areas' and Michael Gove indicated that ARK was among the academy providers that represent the ideas he most admires in education (TES, 1 February 2011).

There is a significant emphasis on leadership and the role of head teachers. Underlying the Coalition government's move to giving school leavers increasingly more freedoms, as Michael Gove put it, 'The best schools share certain characteristics. They have a strong head and good discipline' (*The Telegraph*, 2 September, 2010). Huge expectations are vested in the role of school leaders, the lone transformers of deficient schools who are seen as bringing their vision and charisma to bear to raise standards and rescue poorly served students. These are embodied in the person of Sir Michael Wilshaw who was the head of ARK's Mossbourne Academy. Mossbourne was one of the first Academies to open and became New Labour's 'pride and joy' when, under Wilshaw's leadership, it was reported to have gone from being 'Britain's worst performing school (to) one of the best' (*The Telegraph*, 23 February 2011). Michael Gove was a stronger supporter and has hailed Wilshaw as a 'real hero', adding that he expected all schools to be like Mossbourne (*The Guardian*, 5 January 2010).

The emphasis on reforming leadership has been fostered by the work of the NCSL and the Future Leaders programme. The Future Leaders scheme represents another area of state activity in relation to education (alongside others such as the National Centre for Excellence in the Teaching of Mathematics, managed by Tribal), that is being contracted out to, or run in partnership with private charitable providers.

Future Leaders is a three-year leadership development programme for current 'talented' teachers who have the potential to be senior leaders or headteachers of challenging schools, through an accelerated training programme. Participants are expected to 'gain senior leadership posts in challenging schools at the end of their residency year and will be working towards headship after a very intense four years' (Future Leaders website). The programme draws again on the leadership model of US charter schools, which are visited by trainee Future

Leaders as part of their international study tour section of the programme. The scheme draws explicitly on business methods. There are new fast track routes with a slighter or speeded up experience of classroom and school life. These programmes stress loyalty to the programme and the sponsor and their values rather than to institutions, and play career against commitment in new ways.

Again, Michael Gove enthusiastically endorsed the scheme and encouraged Future Leaders to look into setting up Free Schools: 'One of the best meetings I had was on the future leaders programme... They pleaded with me to go as fast as possible to change the Byzantine system we've inherited so that talented and enthusiastic teachers can start new schools in arrears where people are not getting a fair deal' (*The Telegraph*, 2 September 2010). This reflects Michael Gove and the Coalition government's commitment to stripping our red tape and bureaucracy from English education. Indeed, Future Leaders now plans to extend its work to involve Future Leaders in the setting up of new schools.

ARK also runs the Teaching Leaders scheme in partnership with the NCSL and Teach First. Teaching Leaders claims on its website to have 'secured support across the political spectrum and from heads nationwide...to expand to urban schools across the UK in the next few years' (ARK website). It received the support of the Coalition government in the School White Paper:

*Third sector organisations including Teach First, Teaching Leaders and Future Leaders are helping to attract more of the best graduates and school leaders to working in disadvantaged schools...We will also support third sector organisations to expand the availability of their programmes.*

(Department for Education, 2010)

### **Data summary from the Ark case study**

- Sponsor of academies include new philanthropic companies, charities, religious groups and universities
- There is a significant emphasis on leadership and the role of headteachers
- Academies had their origins in the Charter Schools of the United States
- There is a focus on improving failing schools in urban areas, providing greater diversity of provision and improved educational outcomes

### **New Schools Network (NSN) and governance case study**

*Who are trying to influence policy?*



## Blurring: New Schools Network (NSN) and governance

The NSN is an organisation that is closely associated with the development of Free Schools and that borrows from the Swedish model of free schools and US charter schools. The NSN is, according to its website, an independent charity that is 'helping 350 groups of parents and teachers to set up schools, and introducing them to providers who can help them turn their plans into reality' ([www.newschoolsnetwork.org](http://www.newschoolsnetwork.org)) and is working with education businesses and Montessori and Steiner education groups.

The NSN was set up in 2009 by Rachel Wolf who was previously a policy adviser to Michael Gove and Boris Johnson; she is said to have had an input into the 2010 Conservative election manifesto. In October 2010, the Department for Education announced a £500K grant to liaise with and provide support to groups interested in setting up Free Schools. The grant caused controversy over the lack of accountability of the NSN and the alleged independence of the charity. Both the fact that the funding had been given without tendering and that the charity's other sources of funding had not been made public have raised suspicion. 'The question remains why they felt that a lobbying organisation that was set up specifically to promote the benefits of free schools and has been in existence for less than a year was best placed to provide impartial information to groups seeking advice (Lisa Nandy, Labour member of the House of Commons Education Select Committee in the *Guardian*, 28 October, 2010). The funding is significant in the context of public spending cuts, and indicates increasingly complex crossings between education and governance. Hence, the remark by The Other Taxpayers' Alliance: 'What strange political terrain we now inhabit: a state-funded network the New Schools Network, promoting independent schools, and an independent network, the Local Schools Network, promoting state schools' ([www.localschoolsnetwork.org.uk](http://www.localschoolsnetwork.org.uk)).

The NSN and the Policy Exchange collaborated in publishing the report *Blocking the Best*, examining the changes required to make an expanded programme of genuinely independent state schools a reality. NSN trustees are linked with other organisations. For example, Christine Homer, formerly part of Andrew Adonis's academy team is now working on the Havelock Academy as adviser to the David Ross Foundation. Tony Eccles, an NSN adviser, is head of research with ARK, and a non-executive director of Antidote, a charity developing emotional intelligence in schools. Toby Eccles is also development director of Social Finance, a charity bank founded by leading city financiers, including Peter Wheeler (who was also a co-founder of New Philanthropy Capital, and one-time chairman of Future Builders) and David Blood (who with Jim O'Neill was a cofounder of SHINE). NSN also has international links, for example, through its adviser James Merriman, CEO of the New York City Charter School Center, which serves as a resource facilitator for the new charter schools. These links are discourses of innovation and social policy that stand in opposition to traditional public sector organisations. NSN reiterate enterprise and autonomy as means of public sector reform.

NSN has strong links with ARK. For example, Paul Marshall, ARK school's chairman and NSN adviser, is also an advisor to the Liberal Democrats and a chairman of the Liberal Democrat think-tank CentreForum. Marshall collaborated in writing a chapter in the book *Academies and the Future of State Education* (Aisle & Ryan, 2008) advocating the expansion of the Academies programme into 'failing' primary schools (*Telegraph*, 2 September 2010) which was attended by Michael Gove as Shadow Education Secretary and was reported as making 'a fresh political consensus on academies bringing together Andrew Adonis, CentreForum which is closely linked to the Liberal Democrat leadership, and the Conservative Party' (*Guardian*, 16 July, 2008). Here we might infer the play of influence of various kinds, directly on policy, and the way that new ideas taken up by government expand to include the participation of charities and social enterprises.

### **Data summary from the NSN case study**

- NSN is another example of policy borrowing being based on the Swedish model of schooling and Charter Schools
- There is a further fuzzifying of the division between public and state, the private and the third sector
- It reiterates enterprise and autonomy as the means of public sector reform

### **Theme 3 Standards**

#### **The data summary from the third theme**

- Chain Effects 2015: the impact of academy chains on low income students – was based on GCSE grades among 34 chains from 2014. It concluded: 'There is very significant variation in outcomes for disadvantaged pupils, both between and within chains (Hutchings, Francis, & Kirby, 2015:4). It added: 'A majority of the chains still underperform the mainstream average on attainment for their disadvantaged pupils' (Hutchings, Francis, & Kirby, 2015:29).

- The House of Commons Education Select Committee's publication: Academies and Free Schools (2015). This concluded that 'current evidence does not allow us to draw conclusions on whether academies in themselves are a positive force for change' (HoC Education Committee, 2015:3).
- 'There is at present no convincing evidence on the impact of academy status on attainment in primary schools' (ibid).
- The Sutton Trust report, cited by the select committee, also criticised supporters of academies for highlighting sponsored' academies generally lower-than-average results when this was also to expected 'given their low starting points and pupil demographic' (Hutchings, Francis and De Vries, 2014:11-12, in HoC Education Committee, 2015:23).
- Primary converter academies also do better against the new tougher Ofsted inspection framework. Department analysis shows that primary converters are more likely to retain their 'outstanding' rating, and are more likely to improve from 'good' to 'outstanding' than LA-maintained schools (HoC Education Committee, 2015b:14)
- As of February 2013, 'use of specific academy freedoms has not been widespread' (Pearson/RSA, 2013:44).
- There was a lack of clarity regarding the selection of or checks on potential sponsors by central government (HoC Education Committee, 2015).
- Lack of partnership with local authorities and concerns over transparency and accountability to parents (Pearson/RSA, 2013:44-5).

## **Discussion**

Machin and Silva's (2013) research indicates that academies have not helped low-attaining pupils. It shows that improved attainment centres on higher attainers, and particularly on those in the 50th–80th percentiles, i.e. average to quite high. It also cites research which shows a 12.5 per cent education in pupils on free school meals (FSM) attending academies compared with schools they replaced. The researchers conclude by asking:

But does autonomy work? And does it offer scope to improve the lot of disadvantaged students in the lower tail of the education distribution? Our conclusion is probably not or at least not in England and in the case of Labour's sponsored academies.

Recent data shows that free schools fail Ofsted inspections at a higher rate than state schools. Four free schools have been rated 'inadequate' by Ofsted, of the 41 that have had judgements published as of April 2014: this is 9.7 per cent. On the other hand, the latest data on all state schools shows only 3% are categorised as inadequate. While this is not a huge sample group, it supports evidence of a five year study of academies by PriceWaterhouseCoopers (PwC) for the previous government. They found that 'there is no simple, uniform Academy effect' and 'there is insufficient evidence to make a definitive judgement about Academies as a model for school improvement' (DCSF & PwC, 2008:10-5).

International evidence from the Pisa studies is that the countries that do best in terms of both quality and equity, such as Finland, Canada and Japan do not engage in English-style heavy duty restructuring but rely much more on sustaining comprehensive, integrated schooling systems. In England, as Pollitt pointed out, 'redisorganisation' is far easier and more attractive for politicians

and in consequence the policy of hugely expanding the number of academies is proceeding with little apparent constraint, even by a Coalition government in which one of the two parties had a contrasting schools policy prior to the 2010 election. In such a context, risk is magnified and evidence such as the findings outlined in the last chapter and the five-year evaluation study of academies by PwC is largely ignored.

Dylan Wiliam argues that the reason so many policies are designed to bring about improvement, including those aimed at changing school structures have achieved little or nothing is that we are looking in the wrong place for the answers. He has found that only 7 per cent of variation between schools on the standard benchmark of five or more good GCSEs is due to effects of the school itself. This type of finding has been common in school effectiveness research for many years and should have been enough in itself to encourage policy makers to place little faith in the efficacy of structural change. Individual teacher quality has a much greater impact on student achievement than difference between schools and our focus should be on that rather than structural change according to William. His proposals include a requirement that school leaders create a culture for the continuous improvement of practice and to emphasise those educational approaches that have been demonstrated to improve outcomes for teachers: time needs to be created within the teachers' contract.

I have argued for the need to be very sceptical about the predicted benefits of demand-side structural change. There will be occasions when this demand-side approach is appropriate and necessary, for example in adapting to the consequences of contraction. The debate about the effectiveness of these schools will continue, but the speed in which they are established is remarkable. Opening a new school was previously a lengthy process, but the first free

schools opened their doors to new pupils 15 months after the election of the Coalition government. Opening up the sector to new schools without involvement of local authorities has become a reality.



## **Chapter 5 Analysis and findings - supply-side reform – the pupil premium**

This chapter examines the Coalition's education policy in relation to the pupil premium. The chapter explores a specific education policy of the Coalition government: the pupil premium. Using Taylor's framework for policy analysis, the focus is on policy text and consequences. Using Ball's Policy Cycle as an analytical tool, the focus is on the contexts of practice and outcomes.

### **5.1. The pupil premium**

The pupil premium takes the form of additional funding allocated to schools on the basis of the number of children entitled to and registered for free school meals (FSM). The expectation is that this additional funding will be used to support Pupil Premium eligible pupils and close the attainment gap between children from families with different incomes. This is a policy which harnesses a social capitalist, state intervention, supply-side reform with resources available to those from socially disadvantaged backgrounds. In contrast to the demand-side, market forces model the academies and free schools programme.

Gove pledged to transform social segregation in schools; he highlighted that the British education system is 'one of the most segregated and stratified education systems in the world' (Gove, 2011). In October 2010, the Coalition introduced the Liberal Democrat manifesto commitment of a pupil premium: this gives schools extra funding to raise the attainment of disadvantaged pupils from reception to year 11. In April 2011, schools were given £400 per year for every child currently registered as eligible for free school meals and children who have been looked after (either in a children's home, foster care, or have been adopted) for 6 months or longer. In April 2012, the pupil premium funding was



extended to all children eligible for free school meals at any point in the past 6 years.

In the 2013 to 2014 financial year, funding for the pupil premium increased to £1.875 billion. As a result, the amount given to schools for each pupil who attracted the funding increased to £900 per pupil.

In the 2014 to 2015 financial year, pupil premium funding was £2.5 billion. The premium rose to £1,300 per pupil of primary-school age, £935 per pupil of secondary-school age and £1,900 per pupil for looked-after children who:

- have been looked after for 1 day or more
- are adopted
- leave care under a Special Guardianship Order or a Residence Order.

The strategic direction of the policy is driven by a desire to tackle specific problems concerning student participation and performance. Only 24 per cent of disadvantaged students in the UK perform better than expected compared with 76 per cent in Shanghai, 72 per cent in Hong Kong and 46 per cent in Finland (Gove, speech, 12 May 2012). It is the only explicitly redistributive Coalition policy, a blurring of the public-private divide and a desire to engage schools in decision making.

## **5.2 Discussion**

This is a policy that aims to ensure that children, irrespective of social background, parentage, postcode or any variable, have an ex ante endowment. This programme of 'compensatory' investment in the education of children from poorer families and communities is a significant gesture towards the redistribution of opportunity (Roamer, 1999). There is no doubt this is an important move. As the *Times Educational Supplement* (2010) reports, although

the sum to fund the Pupils Premium is less than the £7 billion first mooted, in relation to the cuts to other government departments in the recent 2010 Spending Review, the commitment to the £2.5 billion fund is significant. This fund constitutes a redistributive policy, given that the money is not additional; hence, while the policy will increase the budgets of some school, those with lower numbers of pupils on free school meals will lose out. The policy was envisaged by the Sutton Trust (2010) as mitigating the segregational consequences of marketisation by incentivising schools to take FSM pupils. Nevertheless, there is scepticism as to whether the sums allocated are sufficient to achieve the desired impact.

Although the Pupil Premium will provide extra funding to schools where young people on FSM are concentrated, there are concerns that: the money may not reach the pupils, and the funds are insufficient, particularly in regards to persuading the most successful schools to take additional FSM pupils.

Research from the Sutton Trust (2012) highlights that pupil premium funding is not ring-fenced and is in a challenging budgetary climate for schools. Thus, in many schools, the money is being used to fill budget deficits in other areas rather than being spent directly on the children that generated the funding. The Government has acted to mitigate this risk: since September 2012, schools have to publish online information about the amount of pupil premium money the school receives and how it is being spent, as well as its impact. Ofsted is also sharpening its focus on how schools spend the funding.

However, there are further arguments that the sums allocated do not reflect the estimated costs necessary to equalise disadvantaged pupils' educational needs with those of their peers (Sibieta, 2009). The OECD (2010b) observes that the premium is relatively low in an international perspective; it is not clear that it

will cover the extra costs of admitting disadvantaged students. The risk of insufficient funding is exacerbated by the counter-incentive of high stakes accountability measures in the UK context (OECD, 2010). League tables and other performance indicators, along with rising floor targets, mean that there are very strong potential consequences for schools whose exam achievement dips. Pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds and other vulnerable groups may be seen to compromise a risk in this regard.

Accountability measures may outweigh the pupil premium incentive in admitting such pupils. Indeed, an OECD (2010a) working paper on reforming education in England warns that if the 'perceived deprivation funding is lower than schools' perceived costs, they may engage in 'cream skimming', trying to dissuade disadvantaged students and recruit more able students' (Braconier, 2012:16). The Government is seeking to improve transparency by publishing data on the progress of individual schools in closing attainment gaps for FSM pupils; a move welcomed by Braconier (2012). Moreover, its effort to reframe school league tables to mitigate perverse incentives in the current system is to strongly commendable. It remains to be seen what effect this may have on reducing social segregation.

As Bell and Stevenson (2006:120) highlighted, New Labour education policy often involved reconciling equity and economy. The Coalition policies give a much higher profile to the problems of inequity. The logic of New Labour's policy strategy was that good policies would produce fairer outcomes by raising the achievement of all pupils. The focus on standards and attention given to entrenched patterns of under-achievement and to failing schools, particularly in inner city areas, was the mainstay of the New Labour approach to social justice;

the Coalition's approach was similar. The assumption is that education can break cycles of disadvantage and generate social mobility, and that early intervention and a focus on good parenting can improve the performance of disadvantaged students. For the Coalition, the tackling of disadvantage referred to some of the themes embedded in the Big Society agenda and the attempt to mend broken Britain.

# Chapter 6 Discussion

## 6.1 Introduction

This research aimed to explore policy changes relating to academies, free schools and the pupil premium. Within the research, two different methods, documentary analysis and case study were used to investigate the following research questions:

1. What debates have taken place with the policy making process, and how do these appear to have influenced current national legislation and statutory policy texts in England?

2. What ideologies and values informed policy changes?

3. Who are trying to influence policy?

4. What are the effects of the key policy documents (House of Commons Education Committee Academies and free schools: Government Response to the Committee's Fourth Report of Session 2014–15 21 (January 2015); Unleashing greatness: getting the best from an academised system. Academies Commission (January, 2013); CHAIN EFFECTS 2015 The impact of academy chains on low-income students. Sutton Trust (July, 2015) and the Academies Act 2010) on education policy?

5. What is the impact and perceived effectiveness of policies in relation to academies, free schools and the pupil premium?

In this chapter, the discussion will illustrate and clarify the study's results. This will consider both demand-side and supply-side reform in response to the final research question. Using Taylor's framework for policy analysis, the focus is on policy text and consequences. Using Ball's Policy Cycle as an analytical tool, the focus is on context of practice and context of outcomes.

## **6.2 Demand-side reform**

### *Academies and free schools*

As aforementioned, the Coalition Government expanded the academy programme; thus, it increased its control over school-based education. The 2010 Academies Act (Table 7) enabled schools to apply to the Department for Education (DfE) to convert to academy status under the control of central as opposed to local government. Other types of academies were also created, in particular, all-ability, publicly-funded free schools, set up by groups of parents, teachers or faith groups (DfE, 2015; Hatcher, 2011). Furthermore, university technical colleges and studio schools for 14 to 19 year-olds combining academic and practical learning were introduced (the former backed by university and employer sponsors and the latter by local businesses and employers) (DfE, 2014b).

According to the findings and analysis, academies and free schools were a market-driven approach. Teachers and parents were to be supported in setting up these schools to meet parental demand, particularly in deprived areas; they also aimed to meet the needs of disadvantaged children. This is consistent with the emphasis given in the White Paper *The Importance of Teaching* (DfE, 2010:59), where Academies and Free schools were to be demand-led, with their geographical distribution depending on 'individuals and organisations coming forward to play a role in improving provision in their community'.

The White Paper also made clear that when a new school was needed, the 'first choice' would be for it to be an academy or free school (DfE, 2010:62; see also DfE, 2013a). This presumption of an academy is important, as it signalled that a key function of the local authority, as the main provider of schools, was being curtailed, while the power of central government increased. For maintained

(non-academy) schools identified as underperforming, or deemed by Ofsted to have serious weaknesses, or to require special measures, the expectation was that they would convert to become an academy with a sponsor (DfE, 2015); this also reduced the role of local governments.

From the analysis of key documents, an emphasis in policy was that Academies and Free schools are not subject to the education legislation that regulates maintained schools (see West and Bailey, 2013; Wolfe, 2011). They do not need to follow the full national curriculum; instead, they must teach a broad and balanced curriculum including English, mathematics, science, and religious education. Nor do they need to adhere to the national statutory requirements for teachers' pay and conditions, and they can decide on the length of the teaching day and year (Academies Commission, 2013). Since 2012, the DfE's model funding agreement for academies and free schools has allowed them to employ teachers who are not qualified (Wolfe, 2015).

### *New managerialism*

Demand-side reform seeks to restructure schools around a market model in which consumers choose where there is diversity of types of school and league tables providing market information as a way of monitoring and comparing (Table 6). A further part of the process of demand-side reform has been an expansion of the new managerialism in schools which has resulted in new forms of organisation and control. Managerialism involves the use of private sector techniques in the public sector and has resulted in schools having to behave more like businesses, managing their own budgets, resources and staffing. Adopting a more business-like approach is considered as a mean of making schools more efficient while at the same time raising standards.

The case studies in the previous chapter illustrated that giving schools greater autonomy was a feature of Coalition education policy. Although originating on the political right, the model is heralded across the political spectrum. Both Conservative and Labour reformers have championed schools as private businesses, local areas as markets, students and parents as consumers, and knowledge as a product. Specifically such demand-side reform has taken the form of contracting out of schools to privately managed organisations.

One of the most important changes from the analysis of data and the embracing a demand-side approach is the way schools are managed. This new form of leadership is customer-orientated, with a focus on efficiency, cost effectiveness and instrumentalism whilst simultaneously promoting shared vision, shared goals and a productive culture with a commitment to community; notions of schools as autonomous individual entities was an important theme.

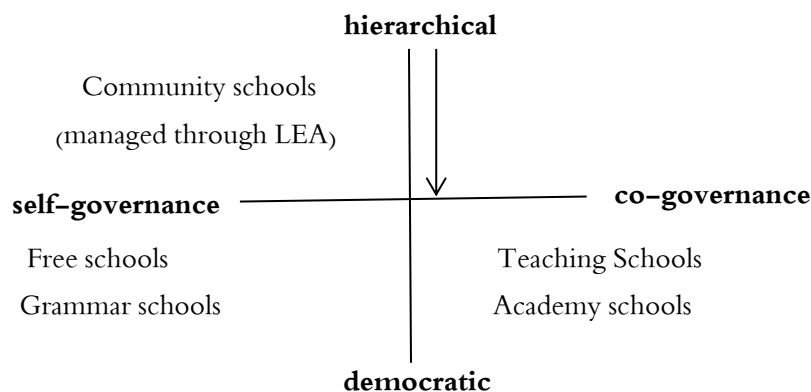
Hargreaves and Shirley (2009) highlight components of a sea change in educational reforms. The sustained growth of student voice, distributed leadership and acknowledgement of the key place of teachers and the professional capacity in school improvement arguably creates the potential for genuinely participative and collegial relationships. They argue that the fourth way is opening up. The principles of this comprise of: an energised profession; an engaged public; a guiding but not controlling government; interactive partnership of equals; and dedication to serving and improving the public and education common good (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009).

The importance of giving attention governance is reflected in the analysis and findings. Another way to gain a perspective on the changes we are seeing is through the 'governance axis' shown in Figure 1. This provides an overview of approaches to governance based on the nature of the interaction, which shape



relations of power and influence and degrees of independence. It is formulated from Jan Kooiman's distinction between hierarchical, self- and co-governance (Kooiman, 2009), and integrates into the scheme the concept of governance, so providing, arguably, a more complete overview.

Figure 1: Governance axis



Hierarchical governance is made up of vertical power relationships in which 'top-down' influences and decisions predominate, whether through steering or direct control. Community schools are examples of these institutions, mainly organised and managed through the local education authority (LEA). Responsibility for recruiting, human resources decisions, and admissions, historically lie in the hands of the LEA. As a result, these schools were characterised by very little autonomy (top down/hierarchical with elements of self-governance since the Education Act, 1988). Self-governance occurs when social actors (people and/or organisations) are able to be and act with independence: they have the capacity to develop and sustain their identities and 'a relatively high degree of social-political autonomy' (Kooiman, 2009:79). Free schools are an example of this institution. They enjoy substantial autonomy, particularly from the LEA and have substantial control over staffing and curriculum decisions. Co-governance is where social actors see that they have something significant which they share, such as interests or identity, and which they advance by working together: 'the

essential element (with co-modes of governance) is that the interacting parties have something 'in common' to pursue together' (Kooiman, 2009:96). Kooiman identifies various modes of co-governance, ranging from less formal ways of sharing information and developing common understandings of problems, to institutionalised relationships where responsibilities for agreed areas are formally shared; thus, co-governance includes networks as well as types of formal partnerships, such as public/private partnerships and federations of organisations. Teaching school alliances and multi academy trusts are examples of these institutions with larger degrees of autonomy than those in the state sector.

New models of schooling are being developed and include:

- *A single school*. One school, one headteacher, and one governing body. However, there can be leadership that involves staff without qualified teacher status joining the leadership team
- *A Collaboration* (a 'soft' or 'hard' federation). A formal partnership across a number of schools, sometimes under one governing body
- *A Chain* (A Multi-Academy Trust or An Umbrella Trust). A partnership between schools in which each have their own governing body. It is possible for different types of schools (i.e. community, voluntary aided, voluntary controlled, and foundation) to collaborate together in an Umbrella Trust
- *Teaching School Alliances*. Outstanding schools that work with others to provide high-quality training and development to new and experienced school staff

As a consequence, new styles of leadership, management and governance have emerged to accommodate new ways of working.

### **6.3 Supply-side reform**

#### *The pupil premium*

The funding of academies and free schools is inextricably related to that of the maintained schools in the local authority in which they are located (even though they are not part of local authorities). English local authorities must, by law, devise a formula to distribute funds to schools for which they are responsible. During the Coalition Government's term of office, government direction and control increased, with more prescriptive regulations being introduced in 2014 (cf. West, 2009). The new regulations require the local authority to allocate a single per pupil amount of at least £2,000 for each primary school pupil and £3,000 for each secondary school pupil, with at least 80 per cent of the funding being allocated through specified pupil-led factors: the single per pupil amount, social deprivation (which is mandatory), prior attainment, English as an additional language, pupil mobility, looked after children, and differential salaries of teachers near London (DfE, 2014a). Although academies (and free schools) receive the equivalent amount of revenue funding to other maintained schools in the local authority in which they are situated, they also receive funding – determined centrally – to cover services previously provided by the local authority via the Education Services Grant (DfE, 2015; Education Funding Agency, 2015).

As discussed in chapter 5 a new funding stream was introduced with the aim of raising the achievement of children from disadvantaged backgrounds. The Coalition Government introduced the pupil premium grant, with money accompanying eligible pupils to the school they attend; this money is additional

to the underlying schools budget (DfE, 2010). According to *The Importance of Teaching*, the pupil premium would make it more likely that 'schools will want to admit less affluent children, and it will make it more attractive to open new Free Schools in the most deprived parts of the country' (DfE, 2010:81). The pupil premium grant provides schools with a specific amount of money for each child registered as eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years (DfE, 2014c). In 2014-15, the rates were £1,300 per primary aged child and £935 per secondary aged pupil (Education Funding Agency, 2015).

These changes resulted in higher levels of funds being targeted at more deprived schools between 2010 and 2013 (Sibieta, 2015). However, there are concerns that the money may not reach the pupils concerned and the money is insufficient to incentivise the most successful schools to take additional FSM pupils (Sutton Trust, 2012).

# Chapter 7 Conclusion and recommendations

## 7.1 Introduction

Recent education policy can be summed up in terms of what writers call a shift from welfarist to post-welfarist education settlement or changing times or new times (Tomlinson, 2001; Gerwitz, 2002; Clarke, 2007; Kenway, 2007). There are two major dimensions to this: one is changes in the organisation and structure of schools, teaching and the curriculum and the other is regulatory, that is to say, changes in the form of governance, and control and delivery of education. Urry (2000) emphasises the shift of the role of the state from a gardener state to a gamekeeper state or from prescription to performance management.

From 1988 to 2013, the system and structure of English education changed from a national system locally administered to a national system nationally administered (Ball, 2008). More schools are funded directly by the Department for Education and administered or led by trusts. The Coalition represented their approaches to education policy as a process of transformation, and an adaption to the necessities of the global economy. The Coalition built upon the divisions and classifications that New Labour created, with its academies and free schools. The Coalition rhetoric combined the necessities of the economy with the necessities of social mobility; these were articulated in terms of basic skills, core knowledge, and social disadvantage. Throughout this is emphasis on a new form of individualism in terms of self-making, responsibility, flexibility, choice, family values, and entrepreneurship.

The disarticulation of the state system is well underway. We can ask what the outcomes or consequences will be of the tensions and contradictions noted in this thesis. Will schools really have the freedom to innovate without government intervention? How will this fit with plans for strong accountability measures over schools? There are questions around educational equality. Coalition philosophy focussed on liberty. Freedom is conceptualised in Hayekian terms as negative freedom from. Will it be possible to protect fully the needs of the least disadvantaged in society and guarantee comparable equality for all? Will parents have genuine empowered involvement in running free schools? Will teachers have the capacity to imagine and sustain different realities and alternatives offered by curriculum reforms and teaching school alliances when concerned about the immense pressure of economic and performative priorities? Will the pupil premium provide sufficient resources to secure high achievement? The discussion in this thesis has highlighted some positive possibilities. Policies of marketisation and managerialism have generated a dynamic from which ways of working can develop that can encourage the development of people's substantive liberty (the flourishing of all the capabilities of students and teachers). The spirit of dispersed energy sources is encapsulated in the approach articulated in the Cambridge Primary Review:

*Only if teachers, and their communities they serve, seize the opportunity and the evidence provided by initiatives such as the Cambridge Primary Review, and use them to debate the central educational questions which too often go by default: what primary education is for; what constitutes an enabling and balanced curriculum; how research on learning and teaching can be translated into effective classroom practice that engages every child; in what kinds of decisions about their lives and learning young children can and should be involved; how educational quality and standards should be defined and assessed; and how – individually and in partnership – schools should be organised.*

(Cambridge Primary Review, 2010:2)

## **7.2 Recommendations for policy, practice and research**

This study indicates a number of shortcomings and drawbacks of Coalition education policy in relation to Academies, Free schools and the pupil premium. Its findings are relevant to the current school context, especially for improving policy and practices. Therefore, the following recommendations are made.

### **Recommendations concerned with supply-side provision**

#### **1. Increase focus on the most disadvantaged children**

The Institute for Fiscal studies forecasts that by 2015 child poverty will have risen to 2.9 million, leaving nearly one-quarter of children growing up in poverty (Joseph Rowntree Trust, 2011). Teacher surveys indicate that children are increasingly coming to school too hungry to learn, while 77 per cent of social workers say their caseloads are unmanageable (British Association for Social Work, 2012). While charities have focussed their efforts on dealing with this problem, it requires government intervention. As we have seen, choice, portrayed in Coalition policies as mitigating social justice, has led to unintended persistence of stratification.

Pupil premium funding should be continued and increased along with the reintroduction of wider support systems for children, such as the reintroduction of early intervention funding along the lines of Sure Start and the ring fencing of local authorities' children's services budgets.

#### **2. Develop the meso level**

As Wilkinson and Pickett's book *The Spirit Level* demonstrates, ensuring that the lowest performing children do well is good for all children. This can be addressed by replacing the market-driven model with a collaborative approach. The City Challenge programme was an example of how schools working together to share expertise and resources could lift the achievement of all children. The state

provided the framework, and the schools provided the expertise and energy to make it succeed.

Policy should focus on developing the meso or middle level. The meso level lies mid-way between national government and individual schools, and one of the key findings from the international PISA survey, is that more successful education systems utilised this meso level of education (OECD, 2010). This level can operate as a form of support to schools since it is more closely located to them and is therefore more knowledgeable about their local contexts. Examples of successful meso level provision would be effective local authorities and the better teaching schools and academy chains, where the meso level is aligned with school needs, is self-evaluating and involved in school training and professional development.

There is evidence from the literature that systems and processes of internal schools self-evaluation may potentiate the power of external systems (Nevo, 2001 & 2002), perhaps because of the enhanced evaluation literacy and data richness that this may produce.

A focus on learning from schools' own Within School Variation (WSV) is appropriate here, particularly as there are programmes of demonstrable effectiveness (Reynolds, 2007 & 2010) which build capacity in the areas of middle management development, teaching and learning, student voice and data usage. Hofman (2009) provides strong empirical support for the importance of within school collaboration, and that synergy between enhanced internal capacity and external evaluation would be potentiated in its effects.

There is a context for the resurgence of interest in promoting practitioners as part of a wider regeneration of schools and an intention to rely on professionals and enhance autonomous professionalism. At an institutional level, this is



consistent with the Coalition's ideology of a Big Society where educational communities are central to delivering education and underpin broader societal developmental goals.

## **Recommendations concerned with demand-side reform**

### **3. Inspection of academy chains**

Ofsted's Annual Report on Schools for 2013 to 2014 found that several MATs had succeeded in raising GCSE attainment above the national average in 2013; this includes the Harris Federation where attainment rose to 73.3 per cent (five GCSEs at A\* to C) for all pupils and to 67.6 per cent for children eligible for free school meals (Ofsted, 2014). The Sutton Trust also found that there were several high-performing chains. On the other hand, the Trust researchers pointed out that most chains were not achieving distinctive outcomes compared to mainstream schools; and there are actually more that perform significantly worse than there are chains that perform significantly better (Hutchings, Francis & deVries, 2014). The Sutton Trust concluded that the poor results of some chains, both for pupils generally and for the disadvantaged pupils they were particularly envisaged to support, comprises a clear and urgent problem, and that there was a pressing need for further monitoring and transparent provision of publicly available data in order to ensure accountability (ibid).

There have been major shifts in the structure of schools in between 2010 and 2015. Ofsted should inspect academy chains in the same way as it does local authorities. The grading of academy chains and corresponding report information would help Regional Schools Commissioners monitor chain performance, and give governing bodies and parents information about academy chains.

#### 4. **Increase the number of outcome measures**

Schools should be judged on a broader range of outcomes than the present range of merely academic achievement data. Like many other processes of performance management and quality assurance developed in public services since the 1990s, school inspection has appeared to be at risk of becoming a 'tick box culture'. The idea of the 'tick box culture' has been a powerful critical idea that has been applied to many fields, including health care, social care, policing and criminal justice. Ofsted has been responsible for school inspection in England since 1992, extending its remit following *Every Child Matters* (2004) to the inspection of early years and childcare, children and families services and adult learning and skills, has been recurrently charged with promoting a tick box approach to inspection. Critics, both within and beyond the school system, have consistently complained about the inspection method and its pursuit of a narrow, checklist driven approach to the evaluation of teaching quality.

Interestingly, social, moral, spiritual and cultural (SMSC) development is being given attention in current Ofsted inspections. These outcomes may have historically been labelled soft, but they are not unimportant. These outcomes have been included in previous inspection frameworks. Pupils' development is much more difficult, because it entails observing and talking to them both inside and outside the classroom and in formal and informal settings. The execution of this depends on the focus and circumstances of the particular inspection and it is likely that inspectors may operate in slightly different ways depending on their experience. Nevertheless, guidance inspectors (Ofsted 2004) indicate the mechanisms that are likely to be used include:

- Watching assemblies and the pupils' responses to them

- Noting the way pupils behave and relate to each other and adults as they move around the school
- Listening to the type of questions they ask of their teachers and how, in turn, they respond to the teachers' questions
- Observing how they relate to others in paired or group work, as well as how willingly they take on individual tasks
- Assessing pupils' confidence in presenting their achievements (if given the opportunity)
- Attending extracurricular activities to see the level of pupil involvement and
- Enquiring about any charities that individual pupils support and links that they may have with institutions beyond the school

The specific criteria that an inspector might use in coming to a judgement in each of the different elements in SMSC could include the following:

- Do the pupils recognise that they have special gifts that make them unique and do the pupils develop self-esteem based on their recognition of their own individuality?
- When involved in different pursuits such as music, sport or drama, do they put spirit into what they do, determined to do well by making the best of their talents? Do they willingly recognise that their peers have talents that are worthy of praise, a characteristic that would be seen in assemblies or in conversation?
- Are they willing to explore attitudes, actions and happenings that are beyond the purely material through various subjects, for example, in PSHE lessons as well as in their personal relationships? Do they ask themselves questions looking for reasons for their existence or look beyond that for explanations of some of the climactic happenings in the world?

- Do they show an interest in searching for truth, in RE and science for instance where they have opportunities to ask searching questions?

In making judgements of their moral development, inspectors may explore the extent that pupils:

- Have an understanding that there is a right and wrong (a complex area because they may not regard the same things as right or wrong, but it is important that pupils recognise that there is a distinction between the two based on respect for others)
- Recognise the benefit of rules in relation to respecting people's rights
- Consider fairness an important concept from which emanates moral justice
- Recognise that different moral values exist in different cultures and need to be understood if they challenge their own moral values and
- Participate in charitable work that goes beyond a simple effort to do good and encapsulates the moral responsibility that they have for others

The social development of pupils might be observed/identified through:

- Courtesy and respect they show for each other and for their teachers
- How well do they respond when engaged in a range of activities within and outside the curriculum to the opportunities for cooperation, team work as well as taking individual responsibility
- Their willingness to take on responsibility, to contribute to the greater good and carry out responsibilities conscientiously and
- Their understanding of the possible effect of political and civil issues on social relationships

Cultural development might be gauged by considering whether pupils:

- Have any understanding of, and sympathy with, the different beliefs and customs in different parts of the world

- Respect classmates with different views to their own
- Recognise the riches to be gained from cultural diversity and
- Take advantage and express aspects of their own (particular) culture, for example through literature, music, and art

This study found that measuring SMSC development and methods such as Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) in analysis then the direction of causality is of academic outcomes generating the social, rather than vice versa (see review in Teddlie & Reynolds, 2000), measuring the achievement of both outcomes rather than one kind is likely to potentiate the attainment of both of them.

#### **5. Clear and transparent recommendations for free schools**

Free schools have been proven to be expensive: the amount spent per pupil is above average at a time when public spending in education is under threat. The first 24 free schools were, according to market analysts CACI, populated by middle class suburban people. This was a trend that emerged in Sweden and where, according to the Education Minister, they were generally attended by children of better education and wealthy families making things even more difficult for children attending ordinary schools in poorer areas. Free schools is a flagship policy and the opening of free schools could be based on innovation, basic need, deprivation and parental demand to ensure that free schools create more school places where they are needed.

Stephen Ball's qualitative contributions have been particularly influential in examining how parents responded to the choice offered in Conservative governments. Choosing a school involves numerous far-reaching decisions on the part of parents. Ball argues that parents' motivation to make an informed choice is based on their interest in education and their knowledge about different possibilities. Consequently, the social and cultural capital of middle class families

tend to lead to advantages for these families in the selection process. Further research is required to see if the aspirations of communities and individuals is realised through the academies and Free Schools programmes.

### **7.3 Future work**

The findings of this study reveal that there is a need for further research to clarify the nature of the shortcomings and weaknesses of Academies and Free schools. Additionally, the results suggest several areas that need further investigation, such as how parents respond different types of schools, the impact of reforms on educational outcomes, and the governance of multi academy trusts.

### **7.4 Limitations of this study**

The research has several limitations. One is that, while the study included two case studies on new groups linked to governance the number of organisations selected could have been wider. The correlation between type of school and pupil premium funding on pupil outcomes could have been fuller so that an understanding of the complexity of relationships within variables. This could then be used as a basis for further research or a source of additional hypothesis.

This thesis is not comprehensive, in any sense, either substantively or analytically: many things are missing. I have tried to get an understanding of the nature of education policy from 2010 to 2015 and tried to follow its ideological and institutional currents, philosophy, politics, and practice.

### **End note**

The Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition based policy on the following views about what makes schools outstanding:

1. Autonomy and freedom for headteachers and staff to develop teaching strategies and styles best suited to their particular students
2. Accountability to parents rather than to local and national government bureaucracies. According to the Coalition, the importance of these first two points can be seen from looking at fee-paying schools. They are independent, accountable to parents and, as a result, they argue, very successful
3. Competition between schools will drive up standards. Successful schools will expand while failing schools will not
4. Diversity of choice. Real choice requires diversity, and a range of different schools to choose from

These views have strongly influenced the landscape of schooling which has been transformed over the last five years. As an administrative feat, the delivery of so many schools into academy status has been remarkable. Changes have encouraged and facilitated the contribution of individuals not previously involved in education sponsorship and laid down a challenge to maintained schools to improve or face replacement by the insurgent academy model. The development of MATs offers an alternative system to the one overseen by local authorities.

Demand-side reform is based on the following views about what makes outstanding schools:

1. Independence and the freedom for headteachers and staff to develop teaching strategies and styles best suited to their particular students
2. Accountability to parents rather than to local and national government
3. Competition between schools will drive up standards. Successful schools will expand and failing schools will go to the wall

4. Diversity and choice – real choice requires diversity – a range of different schools to choose from.

These views are strongly influenced by neoliberal ideas.

Demand-side reform is economic (a rearrangement of relations between capital and the state) and cultural (new values and sensibilities) and political (a form of governing) and is 'extending – at least in potential through every arena of social life' (Connell, Fawcett et al., 2009:333). It works for and against the state. It destroys some possibilities for older ways of governing and creates new possibilities for new ways of governing, producing new kinds of social actors able to speak the languages of public, private and philanthropic values. Together, these people, along with their relationships and interactions and morality and money and ideas and influence are transforming social, economic and political relations.

Supply-side reform is influenced by social democratic perspectives, particularly concerns relating to equality of educational opportunity. The influence of these social democratic perspectives has been seen in the establishment of Education Action Zones, the Excellence in Cities programme, Sure Start and the pupil premium.

Ofsted's annual report on schools (2013-14) reported that there were more good schools in England than ever before: 82 per cent of primary schools and 71 per cent of secondary schools were rated by Ofsted as good or outstanding. Only time and research will improve understanding of which factors have contributed most to this welcome development.



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