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Preparing for Government:

Education policymaking in the Labour Party

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Summary

This thesis sets out to examine changes to the policymaking structure and practice of the Labour Party during the 1994-1997 period, and to link these changes to the adoption of new policies. The leadership of new Labour has used its enhanced autonomy to move closer to the Conservative Party on a number of key education and training policies. The thesis uses manifesto and documentary analysis to illustrate policy movement, and interview evidence with policy actors past and present to trace the changing relationship between the party and the policy community. The thesis concludes that new Labour can best be understood as a synthesis of three elements; changing policymaking practices since the 1980s; the intellectual acceptance of globalisation, flexibility and market forces, which can be dated from the 1987-1989 policy review; and moral authoritarianism, introduced since the accession of Tony Blair to the leadership and the appointment of David Blunkett as shadow education spokesperson in 1994. The thesis identifies two main currents of thought within the Left's educational discourse, egalitarianism and meritocracy, and concludes that new Labour has succeeded in presenting its new policies within the boundaries set by such a broad ideology.

In educational terms, the new Labour Government has continued the centralisation of power within the Department for Education and Employment. Other key themes for new Labour include an enthusiasm for employer imperatives in education, institutional diversity in state education and centrally determined pedagogy. In post-compulsory and higher education, the costs and benefits will henceforth be the responsibility of the individual, not the state or employers. The thesis suggests that new Labour is characterised by cultural change rather than structural reform, because its adoption of Conservative positions in education and training has limited the opportunities for radicalism.

Chapter One
Introduction

This thesis sets out to answer two questions about the policymaking practices of both the Labour Party and the education and training polity. Firstly, why is education so high on the political agenda of all parties in the mature democracies, and Britain in particular? and secondly, what is the relationship between the Labour Party and an educational consensus? This initial chapter hopes to set the context for the rest of the thesis by explaining the linkages between education and the labour market and the parallel rise of education as a salient issue among the electorate as measured by opinion polling organisations. The chapter then goes on to explain why this high issues salience to some extent confounds the usual assumptions of policy network theory. The study argues for an educational exceptionalism.

The relationship between the Labour Party and educational consensus is treated historically in the first instance, while later chapters detail the policymaking practice of new Labour from 1994 to the present. The thesis contends that changes to the policymaking structure of the Labour Party since 1994 make it easier for the party leadership to make reactive and populist policy changes wherever such opportunities exist, or to stay within the consensus where no populist opportunities existed. In order to establish the existence of consensus on key issues, this chapter breaks the concept down into three areas: inter-party consensus; intra-party consensus; and what can be termed a wider educational consensus.

With regard to inter-party consensus, we can measure this quantitatively by examining General Election manifesto pledges for the period 1964 to 1997. This is set out below. The later case study chapters engage in a qualitative assessment of the relationship between Government legislation and Opposition responses. With regard to intra-party consensus, which is crucial to any party that seriously wants to fight an election without internal rancour and open debate, this is traced again throughout the case study chapters. This thesis argues that Labour Party ideology includes two major educational themes which usually have to be reconciled in policymaking and presentation- meritocracy and egalitarianism. The often subtle merging of these major themes is an underlying theme of this thesis which only emerges from a careful study of party documents and public statements which go further than manifesto statements. With regard to an 'educational consensus', this is taken to mean the positions that key pressure group actors take in relation to educational issues. Often there develops a consensus among practitioners and academic researchers, and again the later case study chapters attempt to trace new Labour's relationship with such policy actors. Establishing this relationship between new Labour and the consensus allows us

to draw conclusions about new Labour's radicalism or caution in relation to the policy community. Examination and analysis of consensus as expressed in party manifestos will follow later in the chapter. For now it is important to establish exactly why education is political.

A changing labour market

This thesis suggests that new Labour are reactive to changes in demand for labour in the economy. The nature of such changes can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1: Employment change, 1978-98 (thousands)

Year	Ag. & Fishing	Energy & Water	Manu-facturing	Constr-uction	Total services	Transport Storage & Communi-cation	Public admin, education, health
1978	407	713	6773	1254	13878	1474	4968
1979	400	719	6677	1281	14125	1493	4991
1980	393	705	6065	1222	13992	1459	4980
1981	381	673	5617	1098	13798	1399	4952
1982	387	640	5262	1085	13714	1359	4962
1983	372	604	5070	1080	14033	1342	5039
1984	365	576	5018	1074	14322	1336	5077
1985	358	534	4965	1041	14516	1315	5173
1986	348	485	4815	1031	14707	1287	5316
1987	343	462	4832	1074	15237	1304	5508
1988	332	438	4862	1096	15763	1340	5563
1989	322	415	4816	1133	16153	1384	5593
1990	311	392	4572	1117	16319	1395	5656
1991	312	358	4185	1003	16145	1366	5702
1992	313	324	3923	912	16049	1323	5721
1993	310	282	3899	860	16307	1305	5748
1994	279	247	3977	858	16510	1301	5756
1995	277	238	4126	893	17038	1313	5762
1996	328	225	4147	897	17358	1335	5809
1997	328	218	4156	1067	17801	1354	5757
1998	293	217	4064	1117	18189	1418	5803

Source: www.statistics.gov.uk/statbase

As we can see there are large falls in the numbers employed in agriculture and fishing, energy and water supply and manufacturing. The construction industry has fluctuated. The big growth areas are in services and public administration, education and health. Looking more closely at the figures, the flexibility of the new labour market can be demonstrated by the changing role of women and the numbers of self-employed. The Labour Force Surveys for 1990 and 1991 shows rises in the numbers of women employed (Table 2):

Table 2: Labour Force Survey, Spring 1984- Spring 1991

Category	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
All married women in employment (thousands)	6433	6060	6755	6961	7250	7460	7728	7798
Full-time %	45	45	45	46	47	48	49	50
Part-time %	55	55	55	54	53	52	49	50
Unmarried (thousands)	3197	2997	3140	3159	3228	3549	3425	3236
Full-time %	77	76	75	75	74	74	73	71
Part-time %	23	24	25	25	26	26	27	29

Here we can see the growth in women's employment and also the rising proportion of women who work full-time.

Self-employment is another indicator of a changing labour market as former large employers down-size and out-source services to previous employees, and new technologies provide new opportunities for small business start-ups:

Table 3: Proportion who are self-employed, Spring 1984- Spring 1991

Category	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
Ag & Fishing	48	47	48	49	51	51	52	53
Energy & Water	1	1	-	-	-	-	3	2
Non-fuel Mining	2	3	3	3	3	3	4	4
Engineering	3	3	3	4	4	4	4	4
Manufacturing	6	6	6	8	8	9	8	10
Construction	30	32	33	35	38	41	40	40
Distribution	17	17	17	17	17	16	16	15
Transport and Communications	9	8	8	11	10	11	11	10
Banking, finance & insurance	12	13	13	14	13	14	15	15

Other services	6	7	7	8	8	8	8	8

Source: Labour Force Survey 1991

Why education is politically important

Education is politically important on the most basic level because it affects everyone. This thesis demonstrates that education has become progressively more important both for the economy and for individuals. Changes in the economy dictate that individuals acquire new skills, that of new ways of delivering education and training are introduced, and that new standards and credentials are provided by the system. Individuals recognise the need to acquaint themselves with these new standards and credentials. Existing qualifications such as A levels and single honours degrees maintain their status and social value as education has become more socially and economically important, but new qualifications emerge

Education is also politically important because the education service is the third largest area of public spending in Britain. In the financial year 1999-2000, education cost the exchequer £41 billion out of a total spend of £349 billion; only social security and defence exceed this proportion of the budget[1]. Given this, it is only appropriate that public expenditure is accountable, in the sense that it is used efficiently and leads to useful outcomes; again this is as important to individuals as it is to the government, employers or taxpayers.

A further economic instigator of change is globalisation. Given the reduced capabilities of nation states to alter the national economy in relation to other states in an open trading environment, there are few other levers of economic power other than those which increase the value of human capital. Concerns about human capital and national competitiveness were voiced by new Labour both before and after the 1997 election, and formed the corpus of much Conservative policy during Labour's opposition years.

The need for a growing economy would alone be enough to lift education policy up the political agenda in recent years. However, there have also been concerns regarding the effectiveness of education policy in social terms. Concern about this aspect of education was first raised by Labour Prime Minister James Callaghan in a speech at Ruskin College in October 1976.

As we can see from Table 4, in percentage terms, concern about education and schools has steadily risen overall. The responses fluctuated between five and 18 during the period 1974 to

[1] *The Budget: Spending and Revenue, 1999/2000*, HM Treasury, March 1999.

1985 on the MORI scale of the 'most important issues facing Britain today'. From 1986 to 1996, concern varied between 11 and 32 percent and during 1991 and 1992, six months of each year registered concern in the twenties. Education and schools become even more politically salient (following a lull after the 1992 General Election) from 1993 onwards: the lowest register of concern in 1993 was 16%, in 1994 18%, in 1995 22%, in 1996 27% and in 1997 31%[2] (Table4).

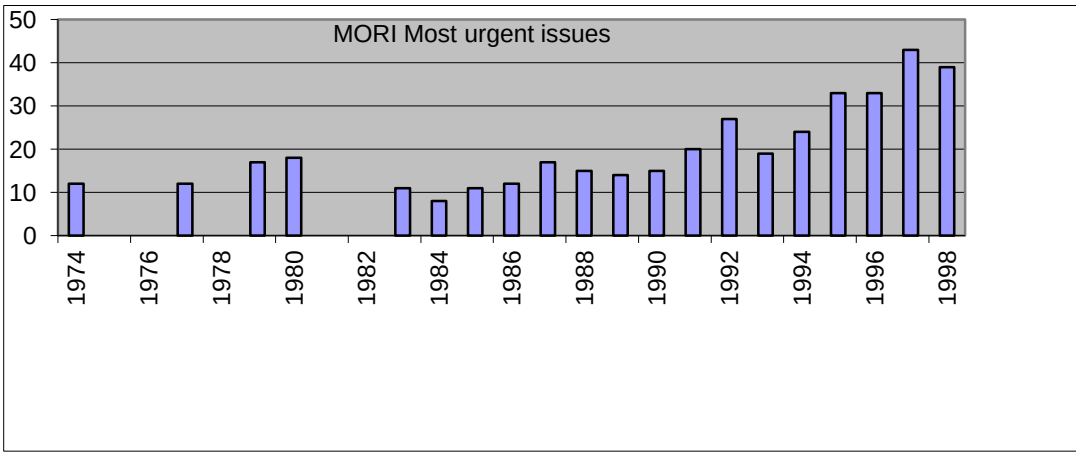

Table 4: Concern about education, 1974-1998, Mori Polls (1999)

The peak response illustrated by the table is 43% in April 1997. This continued after the May 1977 election, and in 1998 education and schools had risen to third position in the scale of 'most important issues' while concern about the education system stood at 33% eighteen months after new Labour came into office[3].

Education rises as a politically salient issue in line with both the timing of elections and of major legislation. Thus, MORI respondents registering concern about the education system almost doubled in percentage terms (from nine to 17) in the two opinion polls prior to the May 1979 General Election, suggesting that the Conservatives attacks on the comprehensive system (or Labour's management of it) hit home with potential electors[4]. On a longer time frame, Gallup's slightly different 'most urgent issue facing Britain today' index also found concern about education doubling between 1975 and 1976, and remaining at a high until after the 1979 election[5].

The 1983 General Election seems to have had little impact on such figures, but 1987 again produced a doubling of concern about education (from 11% to 24%) in the first six months of the

[2] MORI Polls (1998) Political Attitudes in Great Britain 20-23 November 1998
[3] MORI poll Political Attitudes in Great Britain for *The Times*, 26/11/98.
[4] MORI (1998)
[5] GPI Monthly Reports 1975 to 1979

year to coincide with the election. The approach to the 1992 General Election also precipitated a surge, not only in the peak of concern, but also the long sustainability of responses above 20% over a nine month period September 1991 to July 1992.

The conclusion is clear; in response to and in the use of public opinion data (as *de facto* market signalling) parties make education one of the bases of their appeal to the electorate. The Conservatives clearly attacked the incumbent Government's record in 1979, but education had a lower salience in 1983, certainly as far as the Opposition Labour Party were concerned. Elections in 1987 and 1992 continued the earlier pattern, with either the Government using educational aspirations to denigrate the opposition, or the Labour Party raising education as an example of governmental failure. This alone, however, would fail to explain the rising overall concern of respondents with the education service. Response figures in the major polls generally fell away after elections, but the inexorable rise in the long-run trend after 1986 suggests another cause. Here the timing of major legislation and the ability of the governing party to raise political awareness about the need for reform is also evident.

The two highest MORI responses of 1980 maintained the growth pattern of 1978/79, and coincide with the introduction of the Education Act, 1980. This obliged local authorities to make information available to parents about examination results. The presence of such a major piece of legislation would be expected to raise awareness of education and schools, and in fact 1980 figures were in general higher than 1983, an election year. In 1987 there was a surge corresponding to the election and to the White Paper which pre-figured the Education Reform Act of 1988, and thereafter the post-election falling off was absent from MORI's responses. More specific polling on the issues the Conservatives raised in the White Paper suggested broad support for one of the main planks of the legislation, a National Curriculum, and also suggested encouragement for the continuation of grammar schools; this is discussed in more detail in Chapter Three. After 1992, key educational legislation provided the opportunity for schools to opt out of LEA control and become Grant Maintained, with direct management of both statutory and additional (transitional) funding. The MORI index rose correspondingly in 1993 as the reforms were introduced. Chapter Three of this thesis demonstrates the power of the media in spreading (or reflecting) parental concern about state education, while Chapter Six explores the increasing propensity of Left-inclined newspapers such as the *Guardian* and *Independent* to highlight the failures of comprehensive education in the latter period. Although post-compulsory education and training, further education and (except on tuition fees) higher education were less of an immediate concern of the electorate, the combination of social, economic and political imperatives in an era of labour flexibility and open markets clearly helped raised the profile of education as a political issue. New

Labour's adoption of much of the rhetoric of labour flexibility, modernisation, renewal and zero tolerance of low standards in the pre-election period added to this trend. The importance new Labour attached to education was best summarised by Tony Blair in a speech, perhaps symbolically at Ruskin College, in 1996: "I will ensure that when strategic decisions need to be taken, it is not just the Education Secretary speaking for education".

Educational exceptionalism

In terms of methodology, this thesis uses policy network theory to establish the existence of a community and any consensus position it might hold. This is done to chart new Labour's position in relation to the consensus. However this thesis does not adopt a policy network theory framework. There are two main reasons for this; firstly, the electoral salience discussed in the previous section makes much education policy public property; secondly, much of the focus of the thesis is policymaking in opposition, and it is difficult to locate the opposition party in traditional policy network theory. In this survey of new Labour in opposition, the main question is the relationship between party ideology and electoral strategy. Therefore this thesis uses interview evidence with many representatives of pressure groups and other institutions which make up the policy community, with particular emphasis on the changing role of party actors.

In relation to policy network theory, the first problem is that education policy is not developed in as closed a policy community as many of the usual examples cited[6]. Instead, education policy debates are carried out almost continually in the public domain because educational outcomes potentially affect both the life-chances of virtually all citizens, and the future economic performance of the nation. In education the policy community has to operate more in a semi-public arena than in other policy areas. For example, all that the state and the public demand of the health service is cheap, quick and efficient medical practice; it is not expected to have much impact on Britain's relative economic performance and detailed questions about medical practice are usually carried out away from the public glare. The high issue salience of education adds a new dimension to the activities of the policy actors discussed here, where the media and public opinion shape the actions taken by many actors, not least the parties themselves. This set of additional factors means that politicians and opinion-formers are quick to seize on education as a political weapon or as providing a symbolic vision for a reinvigorated Britain. There is certainly less of a

[6] Martin Smith's examples in the British context include agriculture, health, business and public policy, and consumer policy, Smith,MJ (1993) Pressure, Power and Policy: State Autonomy and Policy Networks in Britain and United States, Harvester Wheatsheaf, London.

tendency to leave educational problems to the experts than in other fields; almost every public body has an interest, everyone has experienced education and most think they could order it better.

The second problem with policy network theory in relationship to this thesis is that Labour was in opposition for most of the period under study. The standard typology of a policy community sees the community proper (centred around the state) at one end of a continuum and an issue network at the other. The issue network is usually populated by groups which are either temporarily interested groups, or those interested only in a part of the concerns of the core policy community. It could be argued that Labour, starting from political oblivion (circa 1983) moved from the peripheral issue network to the core policy community as its proximity to power increased. Although the party's education spokespersons throughout the 1980s (Frank Dobson, Neil Kinnock, Giles Radice and Jack Straw) always contributed to debates, and at elections Labour presented a full programme of education policies, the resource dependency variable was absent because other policy actors would receive little in return from Labour. The party concentrated on opposing Conservative changes, and as we shall see, interacted with members of the policy community proper only for campaigning purposes. In so far as a policy community presupposes consensus as a price of entry (moving from the periphery to the core of the policy network[7]), Labour was not continuously a member in any real sense.

A further problem with policy network theory is that it claims that policy cannot emerge without state backing. In fact this thesis aims to show that the state has to respond to changes, such as demand for labour or the surges in inflation after the events of 1973 over which it has very little control. It is often assumed that the state follows and reflects new thinking among policy elites. However, as we shall see, the alleged declining standards in education, thought to be causing economic downturn, were not generally taken seriously until *anti-state* rhetoric from New Right thinkers persuaded successive governments that there was a need to recognise this linkage in policy change[8]. The openness of education as a policy domain forces us to reconceptualise. If policy network theories do not answer all the questions here, then other theories of how ideas (comprehensivisation, the economy-education link, parental choice) evolve into party manifesto pledges have to be considered. The following section looks at the manifesto statements in more detail.

[7] Ibid, p.62, Smith also cites Jordan,AG & Richardson,JJ (1987) Government and Pressure Groups in Britain, Clarendon, Oxford who talk about the 'rules of the game' core players have to abide by. These include accepting the Government has the final say, not making unreasonable public demands, and developing policy in secret - the opposite to what opposition groups do when far from power.

[8] The most obvious example is the Labour Party Prime Minister accepting this thesis at his Ruskin College speech in October 1976. The state initially tried to deny any failings of the comprehensive system, and then gradually adopted the New Right critique as state policy. Ideas and the fact of an opposition Conservative Party impacted more on state policy than state autonomy in itself.

Inter-party consensus in party election manifestos 1964-1997

This section looks at the evidence for inter-party consensus across a series of important educational and training issues as expressed in General Election Manifesto statements over the period 1964-1997. The intention is to establish movement by new Labour towards Conservative positions, which then form the basis for a consensus on key issues. However, this analysis also demonstrates that the Conservatives moved considerably on certain issues, whilst in Opposition in the 1960s and 1970s, and that there have been several periods of policy consensus throughout the period. Some important subject areas have been omitted from the analysis, such as the parties' position on public schools, direct grant schools and the Assisted Places scheme, where there was never a consensus. However the full series is reproduced in the appendix. Before we look in more detail at the findings which can be gleaned from such an exercise it is necessary to introduce several caveats relating to manifesto statement analysis.

The first caveat in relation to this thesis is that elections are not generally fought and won on education alone. Manifesto statements represent what the parties believe to be politically salient or relevant to the electorate, and the language of the statements reflect this. Quite often, major educational themes are not covered at all in manifesto statements; for instance there is very little on the nature of pedagogy or the details of the curriculum, which are of underlying importance to the recurring themes of selection, access and standards. This is either because parties did not wish to highlight areas of controversy (or indeed, consensus) or because they wished to keep the promises and pledges of the manifesto simple and easily digestible for the public. Both these tendencies are understandable, and this thesis is not restricted to such policy pledges. Far more policy detail is issued between elections, in Opposition policy documents, in White and Green Papers, and in the statements and speeches of key politicians, and these form the bulk of the evidence for this thesis.

A second problem with manifestos is that the statements are often too general and sweeping to identify the real trajectory of policy development. Omissions also present a problem, especially in the earlier manifestos covered by this survey. For example, the paucity of educational themes in

Labour's February 1974 document cannot be taken to mean that the party stopped caring about education, (it was a short document produced at short notice) and nor does the absence of specific standards-raising pledges by Labour until 1987 provide evidence that Labour did not care about higher standards. Standards would be raised, for all pupils, when comprehensivisation was complete.

Manifesto statements require another health warning: they are contextualised by changing circumstances of the time. There are two separate aspects to the time context. A party in government for a long time will emphasise changes and improvements since it came to power, and will often de-emphasise what it considers non-issues which it has already solved. The Conservatives stopped being concerned about class sizes and teacher supply after 1966, and in 1983 merely informed the electorate that "the country is now spending more per child than ever before". The same effect is observed with opposition parties. While the main opposition party may develop new ideas whilst out of office, manifesto statements tend to be critically reactive to the Government's activities rather than offering a coherent alternative system. In neither case do manifesto statements give the reader a representation of the full debates.

The second aspect of the time context is illustrated by the two elections of 1974. At the February election, Labour produced a short document with the smallest education section of all the manifestos surveyed here. That election (and manifesto) was primarily concerned with economic policy, trade union power and energy supplies, and was called at relatively short notice. Throughout 1974 both parties couched their education pledges in reference to the prevailing economic circumstances: in October 1974, Labour acknowledged that "economic constraints are bound to influence [the] timing" of its plans. However, the Conservative Opposition in October 1974 produced one of that party's fullest and most detailed education manifestos in the survey, highlighting standards of education and parental choice and attacking Labour's "ruthless imposition" of comprehensive reorganisation. This may reflect the beginnings of a rethink at Conservative Central Office in response to the February defeat (the ascendancy of the new right?), or equally that in times of rapid economic change it is legitimate to question the validity of public spending, especially on a (perhaps failing) policy; again, the manifestos provide only a partial view of developing policy imperatives.

Given the above caveats, is it realistic to expect to find much in the way of meaningful evidence about policy consensus? There are some factors which should encourage consensus: both major parties are usually seeking to go beyond their core voters and gain the approval of the same section of the electorate, the neither strongly Labour or Conservative identifiers. Hence the cross-

party consensus about the need to increase the supply of teachers to meet demand in the 1960s, or the requirement for government intervention in training especially during periods of persistently high unemployment. Another motive force for consensus might be the apparent success of a policy, which the Opposition wishes to endorse and build on if invited to form the next Government. Of the issues discussed in this section two such examples stand out; the Conservative's introduction of a national curriculum (which both parties highlighted for the first time in 1987) and local management of schools (LMS), introduced in the Conservative's 1987 manifesto and responded to by Labour in 1992. Bearing in mind these caveats and motivating factors, let us examine the policy issues in more detail to identify areas of consensus.

Inter-party consensus: issues in compulsory education

Class size and teacher supply.

As we can see, in 1964 there was a consensus shared by the parties on class sizes and teacher supply, but the Conservatives steadily move away from support for smaller class sizes over time. This is an example of movement by one party which leads to the breakdown of a consensus. Although only Labour pledged to cut class sizes in 1964, the Conservatives in Government had already planned teacher expansion. The 1966 manifestos also demonstrated consensus about the need for more teachers in primary schools, although already we can see a difference in emphasis with the Conservatives concerned more about manpower and encouraging more married women into the profession, while Labour are promoting the value of education and teaching.

Year	Labour	Conservatives
1964	Labour will cut down our overcrowded classes in both primary and secondary schools: the aim is to reduce all classes to 30 at the earliest possible moment.	The training colleges will be producing by 1970 three times as many new teachers as in 1958, and the larger numbers going on to higher education will mean more teachers later on.
1966	Our first priority is to reduce the size of classes. We shall intensify our efforts to increase the recruitment of teachers, and improve their status in society	Get more teachers especially for the primary schools by expanding the Colleges of Education, enabling part-time teachers to qualify for pension, and giving more encouragement to married women who want to return to teaching.

Labour continued to make class size pledges in 1970 (though not in either of the 1974 manifestos), and again in 1979. The Conservatives did not mention either class sizes or teacher supply between 1966 and 1979, which cannot be taken as evidence that they actually desired larger class sizes. The manifestos for 1983 show a resumption in the dialogue, with the Government clearly defending its record:

Year	Labour	Conservatives
1983	We will restore funds to local education authorities to reduce class sizes	This country is now spending more per child in school than ever before, even after allowing for price rises. As a result, the average number of children per teacher is the lowest ever

The 1987 manifestos show the beginnings of a divergence, with Labour continuing with its series of promises and the Conservatives hinting at relaxing the classroom's capacities to encourage more freedom for parents to opt for good schools:

Year	Labour	Conservatives
1987	We will make provision for smaller classes and ensure that children have up-to-date books, equipment and buildings without having to depend on fund-raising for those essentials.	Schools will be required to enrol children up to the school's physical capacity instead of artificially restricting pupil numbers, as can happen today

This Conservative statement echoes the intentions of the 1988 Education Reform Act, which is explored in more detail in Chapter Three. Despite the apparent ideological imperative to allow pupils the freedom to move to any school that their parents might desire for them, the Conservative Government of 1997 had to bow to the demands of teacher supply problems in specific areas, although it is a weak commitment compared to new Labour's specific and costed proposals:

1997	We will reduce class sizes for five, six and seven year-olds to 30 or under, by phasing out the assisted places scheme, the cost of which is set to rise to 180 million pounds per year.	We will.. encourage more teachers to enter the profession.

The issue of class sizes, especially for younger children, is one where there has been sufficient movement by one party to break down the consensus which existed. As we shall see in Chapter Six of this thesis, the consensus among policy actors on class sizes was almost universal by the middle 1990s, encompassing all the teacher unions, most practitioners and even the allegedly Conservative-orientated Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED). Only the Conservative Party and the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) stood outside this consensus. However, the Labour Party had also moved on this issue, as pledges after 1992 are concentrated only on class sizes in primary schools, whereas earlier promises referred either to all age groups or were not specific. The comparatively strong agreement on teacher supply in 1964 and 1966 shows evidence for a temporary consensus based on the changing basis of demand, while the later divergence is evidence for the re-emergence of a divide based on (undiscussed) pedagogic disputes.

Nursery provision for 3 and 4 year olds, prioritisation for early years

This is another issue characterised by the Conservatives moving away from a 1960s consensus position. In fact the Conservatives were first to register the importance of early years education, with Labour quickly entering the dialogue. (Empty boxes denote a manifesto with no mention of the subject at hand):

Year	Labour	Conservatives
1964		
1966		Give improvements to primary school accommodation priority over projects for building new comprehensive schools
1970	In the next five years, we shall put more resources, both teachers and building, into the primary schools and expand nursery schools provision both in, and outside, the educational priority areas.	We also recognise the need for expansion of nursery education. This is especially important in areas of social handicap, such as the poorer parts of our large cities, where it is so vital to give children a better start.
1974a	Expand the education service by the introduction of a national scheme of Nursery Schools, including day care facilities	We shall gradually extend free nursery schooling throughout the country so that within ten years it should be available for all three- and four-year-old children whose parents wish them to have it.

Note that the Conservative emphasis on primary education in the 1966 manifesto is coupled with a side-swipe at the comprehensive secondary school re-organisation programme favoured by Labour after 1964, and the 1970 manifesto echoes the Labour Government's actions to prioritise deprived areas. As with class sizes however, the Conservative manifestos between February 1974 and 1987 ignored the subject matter completely, only to re-enter the debate with a defence of its record in Government:

Year	Labour	Conservatives
1987	We will make nursery education available for all three- and four-year-olds whose parents want this opportunity	Eighty per cent of all three- and four-year-olds in this country attend nursery classes, reception classes or playgroups. Formal nursery education is not necessarily the most appropriate experience for children. Diversity of provision is desirable. LEA's should look to support the voluntary sector alongside their own provision

The key to the change in Conservative thinking lies in the suggestion of a role for the voluntary sector, as competition for LEA primary schools. There is also an acknowledgement of contemporary research findings which suggested that formal education is not always appropriate at such an early age. Labour, by contrast, inserted commitments to expand nursery opportunities in every manifesto from 1970 to 1997, although the repetition of the message reads almost perfunctorily by 1992. The introduction of Nursery Vouchers by the Conservatives in 1996 rejuvenated the dialogue in 1997, however:

Year	Labour	Conservatives
1992	We will offer nursery education to three and four year olds	We will continue to encourage the creation of nursery places
1997	Nursery vouchers have been proven not to work. They are costly and do not generate more quality nursery places. We will use the money saved by scrapping nursery vouchers to guarantee places for four year-olds. We will invite selected local authorities to pilot early excellence centres combining education and care for the under-fives. We will set targets for universal provision for three year-olds whose	[O]nly we are committed to giving the parent of every four year old child a voucher so they can choose the pre-school education they want for their child.

	parents want it.	

As we shall see in Chapter Six new Labour were reluctant to come out strongly against nursery vouchers throughout the period when they were being discussed (1995-1996). However, new Labour produced a new theme, that of combining all early years provision which allowed it to remain the party most concerned about early years education. The importance of repeated commitments on issues such as class size, teacher supply and offering nursery education is that they provide a clear brand image of what the party stands for.

Comprehensive reorganisation, parental choice and opting out

This issue is characterised by a changing inter-party consensus, with a large degree of movement exhibited by both parties who at different time sought to redefine comprehensive education after the Conservatives accepted its presence in 1974. Comprehensive schooling is probably the most complex of the issues discussed here. As Chapter Three demonstrates, the wider consensus about the need to reform and reorganise secondary education for the benefit of the many included senior Conservative figures in the 1950s and 1960s, and as some of the manifesto statements relate this consensus enjoyed the support of several Conservative-run local authorities. However, in terms of election manifestos the Conservatives had to tread a cautious path on comprehensive schools. The party's earliest objection was the threatened imposition of a socialist plan against the wishes of parents and professionals alike:

Year	Labour	Conservatives
1964	Labour will get rid of the segregation of children into separate schools caused by 11-plus Selection: secondary education will be reorganised on comprehensive lines. Within the new system, grammar school education will be extended: in future no child will he denied the opportunity of benefiting from it through arbitrary selection at the age of 11	Of the many different forms of secondary school organisation which now exist, none has established itself as exclusively right. The Socialist plan to impose the comprehensive principle, regardless of the wishes of parents, teachers and authorities, is therefore foolishly doctrinaire. Their leader may protest that grammar schools will be abolished ' over his dead body", but abolition would be the inevitable and disastrous consequence of the

		policy to which they are committed
1966	[W]e shall press ahead with our plans to abolish the 11-plus – that barrier to educational opportunity - and re-organise secondary education on comprehensive lines. We have appointed the Public Schools Commission, to recommend the best ways of integrating the Public Schools into the State sector	Give parents as much choice as possible by having diversity in the pattern of education.

From the 1970 manifesto Labour was understandably preoccupied with the success of the reorganisation programme and the liberation of children from the 11+ examination. The Conservatives continued to equivocate about comprehensive schooling in 1970 and only in October 1974 began the process of identifying comprehensivisation with the party. This in effect meant entering the comprehensive consensus for the first time:

Year	Labour	Conservatives
1970	Comprehensive reorganisation has been vigorously pursued. In the past six years 129 of the 163 English and Welsh local education authorities have agreed plans for reorganising their secondary schools. This progress must not be checked; it must go forward. We shall legislate to require the minority of Tory education authorities who have so far resisted change to abandon eleven plus selection.	In secondary education, a number of different patterns have developed over the years, including many types of comprehensive school. We will maintain the existing rights of local education authorities to decide what is best for their area. Many of the most imaginative new schemes abolishing the eleven-plus have been introduced by Conservative councils. We therefore believe that Labour's attempt to insist on compulsory reorganisation on rigid lines is contrary to local democracy and contrary to the best interests of the children.
1974a	..finally ending the 11+...	We believe it to be educationally unwise to impose a universal system of comprehensive education on the entire country. Local education authorities should allow genuine scope for parental choice, and we shall continue to use our powers to give as much choice as possible

1974b	As in all our plans, economic restraints are bound to influence timing. But the next Labour Government will: End the II plus and other forms of selection for secondary education.	We are in no way against comprehensive schools: what we oppose is the ruthless imposition of these schools, regardless of local needs and in defiance of parents' wishes. Typical of this approach is Labour's circular, which hits the building programmes of local authorities which have not gone comprehensive. The next Conservative government will withdraw this

Although we can speak of the Conservatives as part of an inter-party consensus from 1974, it is clear that there was thereafter tension within the consensus. Comprehensivisation was firmly established, apparently popular and was in effect the policy paradigm within which any further improvements to the education system would be discussed. Tension was created by a combination of factors. From the left, Labour was considering legislation to fully implement comprehensivisation, while from the right the Conservatives sought to maintain choice at the level of the local authority.

The Conservatives introduced a new critique of comprehensivisation in the 1979 manifesto. Once again we see the Conservative Party explaining its position at some length, in comparison to Labour's simple message:

Year	Labour	Conservatives
1979	The Labour Party believes in equality of opportunity. Universal comprehensive education, which is central to our policy, must be completed in the 1980s.	The Labour Party is still obsessed with the structure of the schools system, paying too little regard to the quality of education. Extending parents' rights and responsibilities, including their right of choice, will also help raise standards by giving them greater influence over education. Our Parents' Charter will place a clear duty on government and local authorities to take account of parents' wishes when allocating children to schools, with a local appeals system for those dissatisfied. Schools will be required to publish prospectuses giving details of their examination and other results.

This is the pivotal manifesto for this issue. For the first time the Conservatives connected comprehensive education with low standards of attainment, and predicted higher standards to emerge through parental choice. As we have seen from the MORI and Gallup data, concern about the education system began to rise from around 1976, and the 1979 Conservative manifesto reflects this, although remaining part of the consensus with a radical reformist message which included obliging local authorities to provide information to parents. Labour continued to stress equality and fairness, but in Opposition in the 1980s had less to say about the structure of education:

Year	Labour	Conservatives
1983	We will: Repeal the Education Act 1979 and prohibit all forms of academic selection, such as the eleven plus, as a condition of admission to secondary schools. Require local education authorities to maintain a broad, balanced and comprehensive curriculum, providing genuinely equal opportunities for boys and girls, and for the ethnic minorities to meet the needs of our multi-cultural society.	For a long time now, parents have been worried about standards and discipline in many of our schools. This Conservative Government has responded to that worry with the Parents' Charter and the 1980 Education Act. For the first time: Local authorities were obliged to take account of parents' choice of school for their children; schools were obliged to publish prospectuses, giving details of their examination results; parents were given the right to be represented on school governing bodies.
1987	Labour will invest in education so that the abilities of all children and adults from all home back grounds and in every part of our country are discovered and nourished. At the same time as we improve the quality of publicly provided education, we shall end the 11 plus everywhere.	These steps will compel schools to respond to the views of parents. But there must also be variety of educational provision so that parents can better compare one school with another. We will therefore support the co-existence of a variety of schools – comprehensive, grammar, secondary modern, voluntary controlled and aided. If, in a particular school, parents and governing bodies wish to become independent of the LEA, they will be given the choice to do so. Those schools which opt out of LEA control will receive a full grant direct from the Department of

		Education and Science

As we can see from the manifesto statements, the Conservatives became increasingly concerned with the performance of schools and the transmission of accurate information to parents, so as to optimise choice. This was to be further stimulated by allowing schools to opt-out of local authority control, first mentioned in 1987. The 1992 Conservative manifesto also introduced a new theme, pupils with different aptitudes who needed differential education. Meanwhile Labour were responding to the reality of schools which had opted-out:

Year	Labour	Conservatives
1992	Opted-out schools will be freed from central government control and brought together with City Technology Colleges into the mainstream of the local school system	We believe all parents have the right to choice in education – not only those who can afford school fees. Young people differ in their interests and aptitudes, and we need a range of schools to offer them the best opportunities

If the consensus became stretched rather than broken by the changes heralded by the manifestos of 1987 and 1992, it had certainly changed in character. The Conservatives had slowly adopted comprehensive schooling, yet worked to undermine the concept consistently from entering office in 1979. The system was still recognisably a state comprehensive system into the 1990s, as far as Labour manifestos were concerned. In 1992 the party's greatest concern was to bring opted-out schools back into local authority control, which is not the only necessary precondition for a fully egalitarian education system.

By the time of the 1997 General Election new Labour had partially adapted to the Conservative's position, even to the extent of repeating a phrase from the 1979 Conservative manifesto: "The Labour Party is still obsessed with the structure of the school system, paying too little regard to the quality of education". In new Labour's 1997 version, it was the Tories' obsession with structures which prevented real choice for parents, while new Labour held out the prospect of even more diversity. The Conservative accent on special abilities and aptitudes was echoed to some extent by new Labour, although the Conservatives alone offered "a grammar school in every town".

Year	Labour	Conservatives
1997	We reject the Tories' obsession with school structures: all parents should be offered real choice through good quality	Since 1979 we have created a rich diversity of schools, to serve the varied tastes of children and give parents choice within that diversity,

	schools, each with its own strengths and individual ethos. There should be no return to the 11-plus. We must modernise comprehensive schools. Children are not all of the same ability, nor do they learn at the same speed. That means 'setting' children in classes to maximise progress, for the benefit of high-fliers and slower learners alike. The focus must be on levelling up, not levelling down.	because we believe that parents know what is best for their children. [A] grammar school in every town where parents want that choice. Schools are stronger and more effective where head-teachers and governors can shape their own agenda. Sometimes that means developing a specialism in some subjects. Sometimes it means selecting children by their aptitudes... special abilities should be recognised and encouraged.

Both the major parties had moved some distance on comprehensive education, from a consensus position that believed comprehensive education was the fairest system to one which sought to diversify comprehensive schools. For new Labour the system would still remain comprehensive; the key concept here is modernisation in response to changed circumstances. The 1997 Labour Party manifesto echoes the concerns of senior Labour figures in the 1960s by portraying reform as "levelling-up, not levelling down"- the 1964 manifesto portrayed comprehensivisation as "grammar school education... extended". As we shall see in Chapters Three and Six of this thesis the desire for fully egalitarian education was not universal within Labour's own 'broad church'.

Local Management of Schools and Grant Maintained schools

Another aspect of the debate on comprehensive reform relates to changes introduced by the Conservatives during the 1980s. Here, as we might expect from an Opposition party, there is movement by Labour towards the Conservative position. Local management of schools (LMS) was first floated by the Conservatives in the 1987 manifesto. Once again we can see the necessary time lag as Labour responded in 1992 by promising LMS for all schools- an appropriately egalitarian response. In 1992 the Conservatives concentrated on another new scheme to diversify comprehensive schooling, introducing the theme of Grant Maintained schools and City Technology Colleges. Although selection of pupils by aptitude and extra funding were central to the controversy that ensued over GM and CTC institutions, these formed no part of the manifesto presentation which concentrated on the new freedom such institutions would enjoy:

Year	Labour	Conservatives
1987		Within five years governing bodies and head teachers of all secondary

		schools and many primary schools will be given control over their own budgets. They know best the needs of their school. With this independence they will manage their resources and decide their priorities, covering the cost of books, equipment, maintenance and staff; we will allow state schools to opt-out of LEA control
1992	We will reform the Conservatives' scheme for the local management of schools All schools will be free to manage their day-to-day budgets, with local education authorities given a new strategic role	We have further increased diversity by: Giving schools control over their own budgets and encouraging new types of school. Allowing schools to become independent of local councils, by applying for Grant-Maintained status if the parents involved so wish. By mid-1992, over 200 GM schools will be up and running. Creating a number of highly popular City Technology Colleges Existing schools which opt for GM status will be able to emulate City Technology Colleges and attract private technology sponsorship.

New Labour's response in 1997 was to accept the reality of Grant Maintained schools (although they were to be renamed) but promise fairness in funding. As in previous manifestos new Labour was concerned to retain a role for local education authorities, while a major theme of this part of the manifesto was emphasising choice and down-playing fears of changes to admissions policy. Once again the issue of selection was ignored by new Labour, but the Conservatives (perhaps responding to new Labour's acquiescence on GM schools) promised to extend the scope for selectivity and specialisation. Interestingly, the Conservatives in 1997 also reacted to Labour's 1992 pledge to offer LMS to all schools. Though not a radical policy change, it is indicative of new Labour sharing the agenda with the Conservatives by 1997, rather than the Government setting an agenda for Labour to follow, as had been the case with manifestos between 1979 and 1992.

Year	Labour	Conservatives
1997	Schools that are now grant maintained will prosper with Labour's proposals, as will every school.	We will encourage more schools to become grant-maintained... we will give all grant-maintained schools greater freedom to expand and to

	Tory claims that Labour will close these schools are false. The system of funding will not discriminate unfairly either between schools or between pupils. LEAs will be represented on governing bodies, but will not control them. We support guidelines for open and fair admissions, along the lines of those introduced in 1993; but we will also provide a right of appeal to an independent panel in disputed cases.	select their pupils. Local authority schools are benefiting from our policy of local management of schools. We will extend the benefits of greater self-governance to all LEA schools.

In consensus terms, LMS and GM schools are part of the comprehensive modernisation process that both parties were keen to be associated with by 1997. Although there has been a high degree of movement by both parties on comprehensive secondary education structures, some aspects of the original comprehensive settlement remained. For instance, the Conservatives were not keen to talk openly about selection in election manifestos (although they were in the wider educational discourse), remembering that it was the perceived unfairness of selection by 11+ that formed the basis of the argument for comprehensive reform. Even while the Conservative Party sought to undermine the system the party was unwilling to become associated with re-creating a deliberately tiered education system, preferring the language of offering choice. For Labour the emphasis was on adapting to changed conditions and making the proposals work more fairly (for instance by allowing every school to manage its own finances) and retaining a core role for LEAs. By eliminating funding unfairness new Labour could still claim to be egalitarian in intent. Movement within consensus over a long period of time does not happen in a policy vacuum, and both parties moved on comprehensive education because they shared some of the same concerns about outcomes. The clearest message that emerges from a reading of the 1997 Labour manifesto is that structures should not be set in stone or defended if they failed to optimise standards, the central concern of the next set of issues.

Raising standards and teacher quality

This set of issues is characterised by movement towards the Conservative's position by Labour. On the issue of standards of education, the Conservatives in Opposition and in Government were

consistent in their critique of the education system, particular teachers. Apart from one general statement in 1966, Labour chose not to highlight school standards until 1983:

Year	Labour	Conservatives
1964		
1966	Our educational aims.. are the highest possible standard of education for all children	Judge proposals for reorganisation on their educational merits.
1970		Concern about teacher training is widespread. We wish the teaching profession to have a career structure which will attract recruits of high quality into the profession, and retain them.
1974a		Because of our concern over reading standards we have set up an enquiry... to report on all aspects of the teaching of English. Higher standards of education can only be achieved through more and better trained teachers. We wish to move the debate away from the kind of school which children attend and concentrate on the kind of education they receive
1974b		Many parents are deeply worried about the quality of education which **their** children receive- in particular about standards of learning, conduct and discipline. We must take speedy action to raise the standards of teaching and education. This will involve considerable strengthening of the system of school inspection. National standards of reading, writing and arithmetic will be set
1979		We shall promote higher standards of achievement in basic skills. In teacher training there must be more emphasis on practical skills and on maintaining discipline

As we can see, the Conservative attacks at first concentrated on poor teaching and teacher training. The October 1974 manifesto introduces a new theme to the discourse, highlighting for the first time parental concerns of an individual nature about the comprehensive system. This has to be seen alongside the party's developing critique of comprehensive education in the last section.

In the area of standards the emphasis was to be on the publication of school inspector's reports. Labour's statement in 1983 was presented in the context of "fully comprehensive education" with the pledge to raise standards for all. Labour responded to the new Conservative standards agenda in 1987 with the promise of a standards council, even while the Conservatives had moved on to the question of why some schools performed better than others with the same resources:

Year	Labour	Conservatives
1983	We shall encourage a higher standard of achievement among all pupils in the variety of academic and other activities which are essential parts of fully comprehensive education	Until now, HM Inspector's reports have remained secret. Now we are publishing them.. We are not satisfied with the selection or the training of our teachers. We shall encourage schools to keep proper records of their pupils progress... and carry out externally graded tests
1987	[W]e shall work with local education authorities to secure a... School Standards Council, and a new profile of achievement recording individual progress through school for all pupils.	[M]oney alone is not enough. Increased resources have not produced uniformly higher standards. Parents and employers are rightly concerned that enough children can master the basic skills

By 1992 Labour had begun to take a serious interest in raising the standards of educational outcomes, setting targets and promising to introduce the expensive Reading Recovery programme. However, standards would improve as the result of a combination of traditional Labour preferences; smaller classes, more teachers and more equipment:

Year	Labour	Conservatives
1992	By investing in better teaching, smaller classes and modern books and equipment we will raise education standards. To make sure children are reading by the age of seven, we will create a National Reading Standards programme, with a national Reading Recovery Programme to help those in difficulty. [W]ithin five years, we want four out of five 16 to 18 year olds to be able to achieve at	Regular and straightforward tests will be in place for all 7,11 and 14 year olds by 1994. As the first step in the reform of teacher training, postgraduate students will spend much more time in the classroom, learning their skills under the practised eye of senior teachers

	least five GCSEs at grades A, B, or C, or their equivalent.	

The 1992 manifestos show Labour again making more of the new opportunity to develop policy for improving standards by issuing a longer statement, while the Conservatives relied on the simpler messages of regular and straightforward tests and teachers taught in the classroom, rather than in the colleges of education.

This trend towards longer, more detailed statements from Labour was continued in 1997, with promises to radically intervene where schools were failing, and new responsibilities for LEAs to manage improvement. Baseline testing for new school entrants was highlighted and for the first time. Labour also promised to reform teacher training. The Conservative statement reads as a watered down version of the Labour one, even though most of the imperatives of the Labour statement mirrored Conservative concerns; for example, the 'fresh start' policy of Labour was based on the experience of the closure of Hackney Downs school in 1995 by an Education Association appointed by Conservative Secretary of State Gillian Shephard and headed by Labour adviser Michael Barber (itself evidence of inter-party consensus). The Labour commitments to reform LEAs and teacher training are tougher than the equivalent statements from the Conservatives, who continued to put faith in the standards-raising power of parental demand:

Year	Labour	Conservatives
1997	Standards, more than structures, are the key to success. Labour will never put dogma before children's education. Every school has the capacity to succeed. All Local Education Authorities (LEAs) must demonstrate that every school is improving. For those failing schools unable to improve, ministers will order a 'fresh start' to close the school and start afresh on the same site. Every school needs baseline assessment of pupils when they enter the school, and a year-on-year target for improvement. Schools are critically dependent on the quality of all staff. The majority of	Our decision to test children and publish the results has allowed standards to be measured and exposed. [W]e will require every school to plan how to improve its performance and to set targets. Parent power is a vital force for higher standards. Sometimes schools are failing because the LEA which runs them is failing... [these LEAs] will be required to set out plans to raise standards. We will establish a more rigorous and effective system of appraising teachers.

	teachers are skilful and dedicated, but some fall short. We will improve teacher training, and ensure that all teachers have an induction year when they first qualify, to ensure their suitability for teaching.	

Once again here we can see the opposition party using more space in the manifesto to explain its new position. As with the Conservatives' slow response to the reality of comprehensivisation in the 1970s, the reactive party has furthest to move and has to take care to couch its new positions within existing party ideology. Therefore the size of statements is an indicator of new thinking and policy movement.

National Curriculum

The National Curriculum was introduced by the Conservative Government in the 1988 Education Reform Act. From the start there existed a consensus about the need for a national curriculum, but while there has been no movement, there is clearly a tension within the consensus with the parties having different aims for the curriculum. Labour made it clear before the passing of the Act that the party had thought of a national curriculum first, so in manifesto terms there was no time lag. Therefore this issue has a high degree of consensus, with Labour able to stay on the sidelines criticising the implementation while not countering the principle, in much the same way as the Conservative Opposition reacted to comprehensivisation in the 1960s. There is some tension in the 1997 manifestos, with Labour pledging to vocationalise the curriculum for non-academically minded children, while the Conservatives concentrated on basic skills and high standards:

Year	Labour	Conservatives
1987	[W]e shall work with local education authorities to secure a flexible but clear core curriculum agreed at national level...	[W]e will establish a National Core Curriculum... between the ages of 5 to 16 to study a basic range of subjects- including maths, English and science. We will consult widely among those concerned in establishing the curriculum
1992	Labour will modernise the national curriculum and apply it in all schools. From the age of fourteen, pupils will study five essential subjects: English, mathematics,	For the first time in our history, we will soon have a National Curriculum which will require the main school subjects to be covered thoroughly

	science, a modern language and technology.	
1997	We must recognise the three 'r's for what they are the building blocks of all learning that must be taught better. ..creating new opportunities for children, after the age of 14, to enhance their studies by acquiring knowledge and experience within industry and commerce.	We are revising and simplifying the National Curriculum in primary schools to emphasise high standards in the basic skills. We will.. introduce a new test for 14 year old children that covers the whole National Curriculum..

Overall, on compulsory education issues relating to structures and standards there is some evidence for a consensus in the 1960s with divergence during the 1970s. The Conservative government enjoyed the opportunity to move the framework of comprehensive education between 1979 and 1992, drawing Labour closer to its own agenda. What the 1997 manifestos illustrate on most of the issues so far discussed is Labour making more robust and detailed promises to reform the system. Labour have slowly adapted to the Conservative's position on testing and inspection for standards, backed up by rigorous teacher training and providing opportunities for schools to innovate; in effect, new Labour adapted to the new consensus and then appeared more serious about policy implementation. The Conservatives, by contrast, seemed to run out of steam after 1992, with many of the 1997 manifesto pledges shorter and more perfunctory than the Labour counterparts; again the parallel for this is provided by Labour statements on comprehensive schooling and the abolition of the 11+ which grew shorter and more perfunctory during the 1960s and 1970s as the Conservatives increased the tone of its the critique of the system with longer explanatory statements.

In concluding this examination of compulsory schooling policies, we have seen the demise of some areas of consensus and the formation of other areas of consensus. Most of the movement by the Conservatives, whether within consensus or movement which took the party beyond the consensus, occurred in the earlier manifestos when that party was in opposition (1964-70, 1974-79). On teacher supply, class sizes and nursery provision Labour has been consistent throughout the series. However, there are a group of issues on which Labour has moved quite considerably closer to Conservative ground, again coinciding with a long period of opposition. It is fair to say that in 1997 there was general consensus on grant maintained (or Foundation) schools (including their partially-selective character), local management of schools and the need for higher standards backed up by rigorous teacher appraisal and ongoing tests of performance. On comprehensive

education, both parties have moved considerably in their efforts to reconceptualise the state secondary school. Despite evidence of tension within the consensus, the comprehensive system has developed in such a way as to change the nature of the education system, without it being publicly denounced or revoked by either party.

It is clear that the Government sets the agenda and the Opposition responds to this either critically or by absorbing popular policy, but it should not be forgotten that on several issues the acceptance of a new consensus position by the opposition can be put down to economic constraints (ie radical reform might be expensive) or because no other alternative policy seems viable. A summary of the evidence or consensus and tension or movement within consensus can be seen in Table 5.

Table 5: Consensus in compulsory education.

Issue	Early consensus? (1960s)	Late consensus? (1990s)	Tension?	Movement by?
Class size	Yes	No	No	Conservatives
Nursery places	Yes	No	No	Conservatives
Comprehensive schooling	No	Yes	Yes	Conservatives and Labour
LMS & GM status	No	Yes	No	Labour
Standards and teaching quality	No	Yes	No	Labour
National Curriculum	Yes	Yes	Yes	Neither

Post-compulsory education and training issues

Further education provision and A level reform

In this set of issues the parties began the period sharing the desire for expansion, but once again there is divergence after February 1974 when the Conservatives highlighted the economic circumstances:

Year	Labour	Conservatives
1964		More and more who have the ability to benefit will stay on to 17 and 18 and go forward to higher education
1966		
1970	We have never believed that education and educational opportunity should stop at the school leaving age; nor that further education should be confined to full time students in colleges and universities.	
1974a	[A] big expansion of educational facilities for 16-18 year olds..	The expansion of further.... education will be less rapid than planned because of the reduced demand for places and the prevailing economic circumstances, but numbers will continue to increase
1974b		

In 1979 Labour was content to rest on its record, claiming to have increased FE places by 25,000, while the Conservatives made no pledges relating to the sector. The General Election of 1983 produced the beginnings of a new approach by the Labour Opposition. Plans to reform the A-level system and widen access in consecutive manifestos went unanswered by the Conservative Government:

Year	Labour	Conservatives
1987	We will spread the provision of a comprehensive tertiary system of post-school education. There will be maintenance allowances for 16- to 18- year olds whose family circumstances would otherwise impeded their further education.	
1992	[W]e will establish a five-subject A level and bring it	We will defend the well-respected A-levels examination, which

	together with technical qualifications into our new Advanced Certificate.	Labour would destroy. We are giving further education colleges and sixth form colleges in England and Wales autonomy, free from council control. We also value our school sixth forms and will ensure they retain their place in the new system

The 1992 Conservative manifesto reacted to attacks on the A-level system but did not respond to Labour's 1987 message about widening access. For the Conservatives, the favoured option was the freeing of FE institutions from local government control to so that they might better respond to demand. There is also a key commitment to maintaining Sixth Form colleges which had come under pressure in the wider educational discourse for costing more per full-time student than the FE colleges.

Interestingly the 1997 Labour manifesto did not threaten Sixth Forms but continued with the theme of broadening A-levels. However, to counter accusations that Labour would dilute the 'gold standard' the manifesto contained key references to standards and the teaching of key skills within a revised syllabus. The Conservatives' position was one of defending tradition against attack:

Year	Labour	Conservatives
1997	In schools and colleges, we support broader A-levels and upgraded vocational qualifications, underpinned by rigorous standards and key skills.	We will continue to uphold the gold standards of A-levels and ensure that the great classics of our literature are studied at A-level

On FE provision there was a comparatively weak consensus during the 1964-74 period when expansion was seen as both possible and a 'good thing'. However the Labour concentration on access and syllabus reform demonstrated a breaking away from consensus until 1992. Therefore we can conclude that there existed a broad consensus about expansion (when economically feasible), and whilst Labour introduced tension with its reformist language, the 1997 positions were closer together.

Training provision and funding

Training provision is one area where there has been almost continuous consensus about the personal and national requirement for more and better training. However, the two main parties

diverged to some extent in terms of why training is important. While both manifestos of 1964 stress the individual's right to training, by 1974 the Conservatives' language stresses the changing basis of demand for labour:

Year	Labour	Conservatives
1964	Most young people, and particularly girls, are still denied either adequate training at work or release for further education and technical colleges. [We will implement] The right to first-rate industrial training with day and block release for the young worker; The right to retraining for adult workers.	Steps will be taken to increase the number of industrial workers under 18 who are released during the day to attend technical and other courses

Year	Labour	Conservatives
1974a	...redundant workers must have an automatic right to retraining; redundancy should then lead not to unemployment, but to retraining and job changing	For the nation as a whole we have introduced the Training Opportunities Scheme... We have nearly trebled the numbers being trained and retrained under government auspices. Our Employment and Training Act has provided industry with help in increasing its own training, related to actual labour needs, through the newly established Manpower Services Commission.
1974b	Redundant workers must have a automatic right to retraining, with redundancy leading not to unemployment, but to retraining and job changing.	One possibility, which we will want to examine closely, is to allow children of fifteen the opportunity of taking up an apprenticeship or training as a first step towards taking a job

In response the demands for a new type of labour force, the Conservative's October 1974 introduces the new idea of vocationalising compulsory education in the later years. Labour continued to be preoccupied with rights throughout out its long period of opposition, and slowly introduced national requirements while softening the language somewhat by replacing 'right' with 'entitlement' in 1992:

Year	Labour	Conservatives
1987	British industry now carries out less than half the training of our competitors. Labour will therefore establish a national training programme to bring about a major advance in the spread and standard of skills.	
1992	Learning must become a lifetime opportunity, with new chances to update skills at work. Sixteen year olds not in full time education will be entitled to a new traineeship lasting for up to two years, with an option of another two years. Every young person in employment will be guaranteed the right to Learn While You Earn	We will... continue to develop new high-quality National Vocational Qualifications, and introduce a new post-16 diploma which recognises achievement in both vocational and academic courses. Now we are offering young people aged 16 and 17 vouchers they can use to buy approved courses of education or training, and which will put the power of choice in their hands

In Labour's 1997 manifesto the emphasis is on the funding of training, with 'primary responsibility' residing with companies. For the individual, the entitlement of 1992 had been further redefined with individuals being given the power to invest in their own training, through specific schemes such as Individual Learning Accounts and the University for Industry. For the unemployed there was to be a programme (the New Deal) offering four routes to employment, education or training. The shift in emphasis towards the individual providing his or her own training is exemplified by the concluding sentence:

Year	Labour	Conservatives
1997	Employers have the primary responsibility for training their workforces in job-related skills. But individuals should be given the power to invest in training. We will invest public money for training in Individual Learning Accounts which individuals... can then use to gain the skills they want. We will give 250,000 under-25s opportunities for work, education and training. Four options will be on offer.... Rights and responsibilities	We will give students between 14 and 21 a learning credit which will enable them to choose suitable education or training leading to recognised qualifications up to A-levels or their equivalents. We will also introduce National Traineeships and encourage employers to offer more Modern Apprenticeships.. We will continue to support the network of Training and Enterprise Councils.

	must go hand in hand, without a fifth option of life on full benefit.	

Once again Labour's statement is more detailed and concise than the Conservative's version. Despite the tonal differences, this provides evidence for a quite remarkable change in Labour's position over time. From 1964 the existing inter-party consensus exhibited tension on a rights-national need axis, but from 1992 and then especially in 1997 new Labour moved into Conservative territory and sounded more evangelical about the possibilities. This is similar to the movements on comprehensive education and on standards that we observed in the previous section. Consensus exists, but its basis has changed over time.

Human capital and value-for-money

Several of the manifesto statements examined in the last section refer obliquely to human capital. This is taken to mean concerns with the correct use of manpower in the national interest, including the planning of industrial output. The Conservative statement of 1964 highlights the sometimes competing expectations from education. Clearly the changing basis of demand for labour is central to the ongoing consensus exhibited in the statements:

Year	Labour	Conservatives
1964	Labour believes the national plan will require a faster rate of change in industry. To meet the human needs that will arise it is essential to combine with our education reforms a revolution in training	Education is the most rapidly developing feature of our social outlay. This reflects our view of education as at once a right of the child, a need of society, and a condition of economic efficiency.
1966	The universities are being assisted to make a growing contribution in science, technology and social studies	
1970	This increased [educational] expenditure reflects our belief.. that it will make a contribution the welfare, quality and happiness of our society. We are in transition to a new era where higher education could become available to wider section of the	Modern industry imposes new and heavy burdens on all levels of management. Good management is essential not only for efficiency and the proper use of capital resources, but also for the creation of good industrial relations

	community. This expansion will require very careful planning.	

In 1987 Labour specifically linked the changing basis of demand for labour to education funding and provision, while the Conservative's highlighted international competition:

Year	Labour	Conservatives
1987	For modern, wealth-creating industry we need a well trained workforce. Education for life through a well funded adult education service will help to provide the means by which rapid economic and social change can be embraced	[W]e must meet the nation's demand for highly qualified manpower to compete in international markets

Human capital concerns emerge in terms of training and further and higher education, and in 1992 Labour evoked the qualifications that our children receive. For Labour the 1997 manifesto statement most clearly puts the case:

Year	Labour	Conservatives
1992	Good education is the best investment in Britain's future. We want every child to get qualifications that count	Last year we launched the new Employment Action programme, which will help more than 61,000 people in a full year
1997	Education... is not just good for the individual. It is an economic necessity for the nation. We will compete successfully on the basis of quality or not at all. And quality comes from developing the potential of all our people. It is the people who are our greatest natural asset. We will ensure they can fulfil their potential.	Britain's prosperity depends on the quality of [children's] education. Competitive markets demand high skills. If Britain is to win, we need to encourage learning and give people the opportunity to go where their interests and inquiring minds take them.

The emphasis on national requirements by Labour manifestos can be seen to balance the training emphasis on rights we saw in the previous section; therefore Labour acknowledge the Conservative's point that education and training serve more than one purpose. Human capital is

perhaps easier to identify as a consensus issue largely because it is not a specific policy but a narrative framework or paradigm within which assumptions are made. It is consequently difficult to identify much in the way of tension or movement in these statements, although once again Labour used the more rhetorical language and produced the longest statements as it emerged from Opposition. Table 6 summarises post-compulsory positions:

Table 6: Consensus in post-compulsory education and training

Issue	Early Consensus? (1960s)	Late Consensus? (1990s)	Tension?	Movement by?
FE provision and A level reform	Yes	Yes	Yes	Labour
Training provision and funding	Yes	Yes	No	Labour
Human-capital	Yes	Yes	No	Neither

Higher Education

Higher Education expansion

Once again, at the beginning of our period of analysis two-party consensus prevailed around the need for higher education expansion. The early manifestos of both parties include specific promises of expansion. There is some overlap with statements about further education in these manifestos which reflects the generalised nature of many manifesto statements and perhaps the lower political salience attached to further and higher education. Once again, also, the 1974 manifestos of both parties either omitted pledges or made reference to the economic conditions, after which there is a difference of emphasis with Labour stressing widening access:

Year	Labour	Conservatives
1979	Labour will substantially increase the opportunities for	We are aware of the special problems associated with the need

	people from working-class backgrounds.. to enter higher education.	to increase the number of high-quality entrants to the engineering professions.
1983	Our policy for education after 18 is expansion with change. We will reverse the Tory cuts and restore the right of all qualified young people seeking higher education to secure places. We will also substantially expand opportunities for adults in both further and higher education.	More of our young people are now entering full-time degree courses than under the last Labour government .

While the Conservative Government was content to stress its record in office in 1983, it felt the need to promise expansion in 1987 as Labour highlighted increasing opportunity, especially for adults. For Labour the 1992 and 1997 manifestos contained quite different themes. Firstly, Labour made specific pledges to create more places for young people; in fact the number Labour pledged (one in three young people) was actually being met already according to the Conservatives. But by 1997 Labour was only concerned to demonstrate that expansion was not possible with the current funding arrangements. A realisation that this was the case may be evidenced by the Conservative's equally short statement on maintaining 'world class research'.

Year	Labour	Conservatives
1997	The improvement and expansion needed cannot be funded out of general taxation.	We have world class research in British universities which we will continue to support.

Labour's emphasis on widening access, which challenged the inter-party consensus, was not highlighted at all after 1987- although a fuller understanding of higher education policy is provided by an examination of the party's treatment of funding issues in the following section.

Higher Education funding and student loans

The funding of universities and maintenance for students are separate issues which are not always sufficiently differentiated in the statements. In common with the sometimes vague language, these statements can be interpreted as evidence of a weak consensus which has changed over time. On the funding of universities, Labour had no comment to make until 1987. The Conservatives had stressed the need to improve finances in October 1974 and quality in higher education by 1979,

and had begun to review student grants (with a view to raising them) in Government between 1970 and 1974. In 1983 the party introduced value-for-money concerns, perhaps justifying the higher education cuts of 1981-1982:

Year	Labour	Conservatives
1979		Much of our higher education in Britain has a world-wide reputation for its quality. We shall seek to ensure that this excellence is maintained.
1983		The very large sums of public money now going to higher education must be spent in the most effective way.

In the 1987 manifesto Labour entered the debate by stressing the need to maintain standards, but at the same election the Conservatives began to address student finance for the first time since February 1974, floating the idea of student loans:

Year	Labour	Conservatives
1987	We will also invest in research in higher education, in order to provide the facilities and opportunities necessary to sustain standards of excellence.	As part of aim to widen access to higher education we have begun a review of student support... No final conclusions have been reached, but we believe that top-up loans to supplement grants are one way, among others, of bringing in new finance to help students and relieve pressure on their parents.

Labour responded after the usual time-lag of one election manifesto, criticising the loans system as unfair and unlikely to help widen access. However, by 1997 new Labour had come around to the idea that students would have to repay some of the state's contribution to their maintenance; here the accent is on the inefficiency of the Conservatives' scheme, not its inequity:

Year	Labour	Conservatives
1992	The student loan scheme deters many bright youngsters from poor families. We will replace it with a fairer system of student grants and targeted help for housing and vacation hardship.	We will continue to provide generous support for students and to expand our student loans commitment. The new system will steadily reduce the proportion of student's living costs that their parents are expected to meet.
1997	The costs of student maintenance should be repaid by graduates on an income-	

	related basis, from the career success to which higher education has contributed. The current system is badly administered and payback periods are too short. We will provide efficient administration, with fairness ensured by longer payback periods where required.	

In this example of a changing but usually weak consensus there is a development away from the overall costs of higher education into a concern for the quality of education offered as expansion continued during the period in question. As with comprehensive education, the Conservatives first worried about the costs of expansion, and then raised standards as an issue. Despite the repeated concern in Labour statements on FE and human capital about access, specific pledges for widening access to higher education appear only in the defensive context of opposing student loans. The paucity of statements about the financial problems faced by the HE sector demonstrates that both parties ignored the issue until the student loans system offered a partial solution. The other solution to HE funding, tuition fees, which were controversially introduced by new Labour in July 1997, went unmentioned in either of the 1997 manifestos. Given these omissions, it is possible to see higher education funding and student loans as another example of Labour adapting to Conservative Government initiatives. These positions are summarised below:

Table 7: Consensus in higher education

Issue	Early consensus? (1960s)	Late consensus? (1990s)	Tension?	Movement by?
HE expansion	Yes	Yes	Yes	Labour
HE funding and student finance	No	Yes	No	Labour

Overall then, we see a degree of inter-party consensus on some educational policy issues as outlined in the party manifestos. What these statements show (and the remainder of the thesis bears out) is that consensus can shift over time, either in response to changes in economic circumstances (which impact on demand for labour and social demand for education) or in response to Governments with a secure period of at least two terms in office and with the inclination to develop and implement long-term changes to the education system. The greatest

movement occurs among opposition parties, as we might expect given the need for the Opposition to increase its share of the vote and to react to new legislation.

Chapter Two will examine the construction of new Labour in more detail, to flesh out the changes observed in manifesto statements. The remainder of the thesis is structured thematically and chronologically. Chapters Three, Four and Five look at the historical development of Labour's policies on, compulsory, post compulsory and higher education up to the natural break point of 1994 and the advent of new Labour. The next three chapters, Six, Seven and Eight examine contemporary policy development and look in detail at how new Labour's leadership autonomy was used either to adhere to the consensus, or, where populist solutions were available, alter policies so as to maximise electoral support.

Chapter Two

The construction of new Labour

This thesis discusses new Labour's appeal to a wider support base than was traditionally available to the Labour Party. This has necessitated a definition of voters which the party then targeted. The thesis suggests that new Labour targeted the aspirational middle class with certain education policies, particularly in the use of market signals which helped separate the aspirant from the traditionally less aspirant and less educated working class[9]. Since the election, the Labour Government and its intellectual supporters have continued the theme of appealing to the aspirational parents, particularly with its emphasis on parental involvement in education. Launching 'Family Learning Day' in September 1998, Junior Minister Charles Clarke announced that:

> In the past education was seen as the responsibility of schools and teachers. There is a much greater realisation now that everyone has a part to play- with parents increasingly working in partnership with schools and colleges[10].

Other parents without the time or the education to navigate school admissions procedures, however, are able to take less of an involvement. A recent study showed that:

> ...a significant proportion of parents do not, therefore, appear to have the necessary information or knowledge to be able effectively to exercise their power in relation to choosing schools[11].

Clearly, no major party could afford not to be seen to be concerned with education; not only is it more pervasive (in terms of numbers involved in the delivery or receipt of the service) than almost any other policy area, but public education is one of the largest elements of government expenditure. In addition, even those not directly involved with education would appreciate the social and economic importance of the skills level of the workforce. Education, then, is one of the

[9] Many writers have commented on the difference in motivation for education among social class groups, for example see Anne West, Hazel Pennell & Philip Noden, *Secondary schools: Who's doing the choosing- parents or schools?* Centre for Educational Research, LSE to the British Educational Research Conference, York, 1997.
[10] *New Materials for parents to help them improve children's learning- Clarke* DfEE press release 419/98, 10/9/98.
[11] see West,A Pennel,H & Noden,P (1997) p.10

key issues in British politics, not least because, in addition to the general reasons set out above, all major parties think that they have a potential to maximise their share of the vote through changes (or proposed changes) to the existing system.

The context: Conservatives in power

Prior to the 1997 General Election, the Conservative Government believed they had a vote-winning strategy for education with their emphasis on testing, standards and selection in schools. Appealing to the self-interests of individual parents, Conservative reforms introduced since the Education Reform Act of 1988 (ERA) have opened the door for real consumer choice for parents; basic testing of knowledge attainment by pupils has provided a 'price list' league table of schools which operate a uniform national curriculum, while increased selectivity allowed by schools since the introduction of Local Management of Schools (LMS) and the directly funded Grant-Maintained schools mean that some institutions can now openly advertise their results, not only to the local community, but to the wider pool of aspirational parents who value a good start for their children[12]. The corollary of this, that some schools are failing to provide similar results from a similar intake, allowed the Conservative government to castigate the professionalism of some teachers, and, by extension, the whole profession, the teaching unions and the famed 'progressive teaching methods' of the 1960s[13].

Whilst in many policy areas the Labour opposition could attack the government for failing over eighteen years to improve life in Britain (economic growth and unemployment, for example), in areas of public policy like education and the National Health Service, the Conservatives could claim that marketisation and choice had only recently been introduced to these services. This allowed the party to criticise its Labour opponents in two ways; firstly as 'permanent revolutionaries' who would not allow the new reforms time to bed down and demonstrate an improved service; and as ideological 'luddites' who want to destroy what is new merely because it impinges on the collective interests of the 'producer' unions who delayed the implementation of these necessary reforms for so long.

From the opposite perspective, the Labour Party traditionally benefited from voter salience on educational issues (evidence) as much as it has benefited from association with the National Health

[12] Aspirational parents in the sense used by West,A Pennell,H & Noden,P *op cit*, p10, Anne Schneider & Helen Ingram, *Social construction of target populations: implications for politics and policy* American Political Science Review, Vol.87, No2, June 1993 and Sally Tomlinson, *Education dilemmas in a post welfare society*, Renewal, Vol.6, No.3 Summer 1998, pp.28-35.

[13] For example, child-centred, small group teaching methods (collectively known as 'Plowdenism') as opposed to whole class rote learning.

Service[14]. It was Labour legislation in the 1960s which allowed for the huge expansion of higher and further education opportunities, and often Labour local authorities which pioneered the introduction of comprehensive community education throughout the country over the following two decades. Like health and social services, education is seen as safer in the hands of Labour than the Conservatives. Labour wanted to capitalise on this voter salience but also emphasise the economic importance of education: "The absolute number one priority for domestic policy is education and skills. We will win by brains or not at all. We will compete on enterprise and talent or we will fail"[15].

For Labour, attacking Britain's record in producing a skilled workforce could make education policy the centrepiece of its national modernisation strategy. In the 1997 General Election campaign, both party leaderships stressed the role of education in the steady improvement of the nation. In fact for the Conservatives, the introduction of the post-1988 reforms and the introduction of quasi-markets[16] in the post-compulsory sector meant that for the first time since the introduction of comprehensive schooling they were able to fight the election on what the party saw as a positive agenda. As this thesis will demonstrate, the Labour Party also believed in the electoral popularity of many of the Conservative's changes, and went on to couch its opposition in terms of efficiency and performance rather than by challenging the philosophical underpinning of the Government's education reforms since 1979.

Many of the issues here touched upon will be examined in more detail as this study aims to look particularly at how the Labour Party has put together its portfolio of education policies. The outline of this initial chapter will be to introduce the two main approaches that will be utilised in this study, especially as it relates to social democratic parties in Opposition. This first approach involves surveying the existing literature on theories of power within the Labour Party and social democratic parties in general. The second approach will survey the recent changes to the party's constitution and policymaking practices, and how these changes might be explained by theories of modernisation and the creation of 'new' Labour[17].

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[14] In the 1992 General Election campaign Robin Cook, then health spokesman, told a US observer that Labour did not have to develop any policies as it already had an approval rating of 72% without a policy. As reported in Dickson,N Lansley,S & Maltby,P *Tory medicine quietens the NHS & The broadcast of nightmares*, New Statesman, 6/9/96 pp.28-9.

[15] Tony Blair speaking to a CBI Conference as reported by Elliot,L *Business warns Blair on fees*, the Guardian, 12/11/97.

[16] Defined as the 'private management of public money' by Evans,B (1992) pp.127-131, echoing Heclo,H & Wildavsky,A (1981) The Private Government of Public Money, MacMillan, London.

[17] For the purposes of clarity, this thesis treats all Labour Party policymaking prior to the accession of Tony Blair to the leadership in 1994 as emanating from Labour and all such policymaking after Blair as the output of new Labour. Therefore, the historical chapters refer to Labour and the contemporary (1994-98) chapters refer to new Labour, except in historical references.

Approaches

The main focus for discussion about the Labour Party since the accession of Tony Blair to the leadership has been about the concept of 'new' Labour. This has been taken to mean something beyond the previous 'modernisation' process which is said to have begun under the leadership of Neil Kinnock (1983-92) and continued under John Smith (1992-94). If not qualitatively different to his predecessors, Blair has, at the least, accelerated the process of change within his party, with an emphasis on both reinterpreting core values and altering the institutional structures of the decision-making process. Education and training represents the ideal case study as far as new Labour is concerned; as noted above, it is central to Blair's renewal and modernist rhetoric (of both party and nation) in terms of values, and also central to the 'supply-side socialism' which forms the party's main economic policy initiative.

Both of these aims of Tony Blair presented challenges to the support and loyalty of many who would consider themselves 'old' Labour, and the leadership's control of the public statements of senior party figures during the last years of opposition showed the validity of Lewis Minkin's model. His study of the relationship between the Party and trade union actors highlights the electoral cycle and the enormous pressure for all elements of the party to 'all sing from the same songsheet' in the face of a hostile media in a pre-election period[18].

The advent of the new Labour phenomenon has led to a reappraisal of the Labour Party's Policy Review period, which began after the 1987 defeat. Many commentators at the time portrayed policy movement in relation to social democratic modernisation, a return to normal politics after the excesses of the Bennite period of the early 1980s, or as an inevitable process of neo-liberalisation in the face of apparently popular Thatcherite policies[19]. Beyond the Policy Review, however, this thesis will concentrate on new constitutional arrangements set in train by Neil Kinnock and his successor John Smith, which could be seen to have taken Labour policy a stage further in bypassing the usual party affiliates. Therefore, this thesis also has to consider the possibility of new Labour as literally a new party.

The main questions this research hopes to answer, and other issues it would hope to contribute to the discussion about, will be covered more fully in the concluding paragraphs of this chapter. The next stage, then, will be to introduce and discuss some of the major theoretical expositions of power which can be applied to the Labour Party.

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[18] Minkin,L (1980) The Labour Party Conference, Edinburgh University Press, *passim*

[19] for a sample of these arguments, see Smith,MJ & Spear,J(eds) (1992) The Changing Labour Party, Routledge, London, Smith,MJ (1994) *Understanding the 'Politics of Catch-Up': the Modernising of the Labour Party*, Political Studies, 1994, Blackwell Publishers, Oxford and Hughes,C & Wintour,P (1990) Labour Rebuilt: the new model party, Fourth Estate, London.

Theories of power in the Labour Party

Robert Michels' *Political Parties*, published in 1915 to reflect on the first forty years of the German Social Democratic Party, forms the theoretical basis for future analyses of power in Left parties. Michels outlines some universal problems associated with organisation in the world of mass politics, believing that only mass democratic parties could hope to represent the interests of the labouring classes:

> Organisation, based as it is upon the principle of least effort, that is to say, upon the greatest possible economy of energy, is the weapon of the weak in their struggle with the strong.[20]

Only through collectivising individual strengths in a democratic socialist organisation could the weakest members of a society realise their potential. Other democratic forms are less inherently collectivist. These include direct referenda or plebiscitary democracy. For Michels this is flawed because the party membership could be open to suggestion by the ruling group or party who are in a position to set the questions. The ruling group have access to more information than the mass of the people, and the information tools (press, professional presentational skills) to direct the message in such a way as to reinforce their own prejudices. Thus, the holders of power maintain control.

This concentration of power is replicated within the party, as the hierarchy develops a separate interest from the mass membership. The party membership has formed around a particular set of basic principles, involving a mixture of defending their existing position and improving their current labour market and social situation. Beyond this basic core position, a schism emerges between the people who organise and act *ex officio* for the party's ends, and those who are content to be members with less direct involvement. So the very mechanism which legitimates the organisation (strength through unity) acts to strengthen the leadership, because every incremental gain in membership and the party's interests makes the activities of the party more complex. This complexity reinforces the tendency to leave decision making in the organisation to highly specialised sub-committees. Even the growth of membership alone, through extra contributions to the treasury, accentuates the trend which invests more power in the leadership. Thus, for Michels, hierarchy is purely technical outcome of proper and normal party behaviour.[21] By setting the agenda for their memberships and controlling the access to media outlets, modern party leaderships can amply demonstrate the dangers of external referenda.

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[20] Michels,R (1962) Political Parties; a sociological study of the oligarchical tendencies of modern democracy, Collier-MacMillan, London p.21
[21] ibid, p.35

Another alternative form to mass party democracy is representative democracy, inspired by writings of Rousseau, Robespierre and Proudhon in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This also raises problems for Michels because *permanent* representation (as witnessed in the early decades of the SPD) can amount to dominion over the subject or citizen, in which the views of the represented are only listened to during an election campaign. The presence of this potential difficulty demonstrates the parallel between democracy as a whole and individual party democracy. Neither are what they claim they are to be, for: "Social democracy is not democracy, but a party fighting to attain to democracy. In other words, democracy is the end, not the means"[22].

Indeed, the means are aristocratic, reflecting the new tendencies of the leadership, who share with the membership the belief that they are the most mature and capable of all the members. They then no longer form a *representation* of the party but a group of individuals conscious of their own value to the whole, an aristocracy of the party.[23] For Michels, then, political organisation is the realisation of power, and power is always conservative in the parliamentary situation because the basic aim of any party adhering to such rules is to maximise the party vote, which necessitates the recruitment of new members. For a democratic socialist party, this means going beyond its original and unique interests in an attempt to appeal to the interests of others; this is the motive force for such parties moving to the centre of the political spectrum and the sense of betrayal which then develops among some of the membership[24].

Every increase in the party under the new broader appeal accentuates the need for centralised control of the party message; there is now a larger number of differences within the party for opposing parties to exploit. During periods of opposition discipline becomes the paramount virtue, within the framework of a rigid hierarchy which performs a dual function; to reinforce the discipline and to 'shadow' the government it wishes to replace. The original aim of the socialist party was to overthrow state centralisation, and the method used was the establishment of an organisation to further those ends; but, as the party becomes a centralised whole, organisation has moved from being the means to becoming the end itself.

Angelo Panebianco's theory of power in political parties is based on a less deterministic view of organisations than Michels, for whom parties inevitably disenchant their members and are reconstituted by periodic *coup*. Panebianco stresses not the ties that are broken but the ties that bind a party together; where Michels explains continual usurpation, Panebianco describes continuity in a fluid political situation. Panebianco also accounts for rational choice theories developed since the

[22] ibid, p.89
[23] Therefore the new oligarchy or ruling elite will always develop whatever changes occur in the future of the party. ibid, pp.89-90
[24] ibid, p.367

1950s which attempt to simplify the motivation of parties as vote-maximising organisations which carry no ideological or emotional baggage[25]. Between the extremes of the pessimistic Michels and the economism of the rational school (exemplified by Anthony Downs), Panebianco describes a more naturalistic system.

Taking his cue from the firm, he sees organisations as structures which react to the various demands of their stakeholders, and which attempt to reach a satisfactory balance between them. This means, in practice, that firms are not only maximisers of profit, but need to placate suppliers and their workforces; thus, the goals are *varied* not *fixed*[26]. With political parties there is a complication in that they have usually a set of declared goals, in the form of a written constitution, which Michels would characterise as a *facade.* Panebianco recognises this, but he does not stress the betrayal of a fixed code, more the movement of party factions around the epicentre of a broad belief system; this, for him, is all part of an internal debate around party direction rather than a 'substitution of ends'[27]. The key factor in understanding organisations like social democratic parties is the understanding of incentives and how they vary within such parties. Again, he accepts differing incentives separating the leaders and the rank and file members, realises how Michels' oligarchic tendencies might emerge, but the umbilical cord which connects the interests of leaders and the led is only stretched rather than broken by changes in the balance of forces.[28]

The shared, collective incentive of the party may be relatively small, based around the need to achieve government and ameliorate the sufferings of the working class, but there are two major motivational factors which keep the party together. Firstly, in an hierarchical organisation like a social democratic party aiming for parliamentary success, there is usually no alternative route to that end; however narrow the identity between the leaders and led, there is no *substitution of identity*. The second factor stresses Panebianco's recognition of a tendency to oligarchy, but questions the Downsian thesis that party leaders dominate through absolute control of homogenous memberships; in fact the primary object of leaders is to safeguard what control they have by listening to their members. Organisational stability is their aim and it is achieved through a compromise between this stability and other ends pursued by more radical members. This internal balance of power is termed the *dominant coalition* and its exact nature depends upon the environmental factors surrounding each individual party.[29] The key point is that however driven

[25] For instance Downs,A (1957) An Economic Theory of Democracy, Harper Row, London, Dahl,RA (1971) Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition, Yale University Press, New Haven and Dahl,RA (1985) A Preface to Economic Democracy, Polity Press, London.
[26] Panebianco,A (1988) Political Parties; organisation and power, Cambridge University Press, p.8
[27] ibid, p.9.
[28] ibid, pp.10-11
[29] Panebianco (1988) pp.42-45

social democratic party leaderships are to the centre, they are still obliged to take into account the ideological imperatives of the party membership. Therefore, the leadership has to maintain the umbilical link to at least part of the party's historical support base. In the British example, the Labour Party has traditionally identified with a wider political base than some continental social democratic parties, given the first-past-the-post political system which offers no representation to minority parties. However far towards the centre Labour might drift, they would suffer less from political exit than comparable parties in multiple party (proportional representation) systems[30].

Panebianco's theory is therefore natural in that it does not imply a universal model for social democratic parties, even less for organisations as a whole. It accounts for intra-party debate and occasional leadership challenges if the present dominant coalition have stretched the umbilical cord too far beyond the collective interests. This reinforces the idea of a party as a balance of forces and may help to account for the longevity of social democratic parties. It is also more naturalistic than the rational choice model which fails to account for minority or principled parties in multi-party systems, which could never expect to form a government and would never aim for the centre ground vote.

Which of these theories might account for the British Labour Party in the 1990s? Panebianco developed his idea of the dominant coalition by comparing the historical development of European social democratic parties in action. In the case of the Labour Party, the dominant coalition is uniquely dependent on an outside actor, the trade union movement, to which many early party MPs were more emotionally attached than to the socialist Labour Representative Committee. The balance of forces, then, was between the first party leader, Kier Hardie, and the union leaders, whose membership had the potential to damage party cohesion through the workings of the Annual Conference. If the party hierarchy could control the Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP) and the unions control their delegates, this reciprocal system could almost guarantee stability. The introduction of individual membership in the 1918 constitution weakened the overt connection to the unions enough to incorporate other socialist and reformist groups and ensure their loyalty.

However, with Labour and the Trade Union Congress (TUC) locked together in an institutional and financial relationship which constitutes a dominant coalition of apparent strength, the division of incentives which emerges when Labour is in government necessarily causes damage to the relationship, which is inherently weak for Panebianco because of its dual hierarchy. Trade union incentives, built upon their members shared experience of exploitation and incremental

[30] This is in contrast to the belief of some who believed that an overtly electoral strategy would cost social democratic parties as many votes as they would gain, see Przeworski,A & Sprague,J (1986) Paper Stones: a history of electoral socialism, University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

improvement, can be at odds with a government forced into following economic orthodoxy; this is termed a "disturbance of the equillibria" by Panebianco, and leads to crisis.[31] The outcome of the crisis is a change to the dominant coalition, perhaps with redefined goals, a discrediting of the old coalition and some institutional restructuring of the party. In the case of the Labour Party, these can all relate to a change in the party-trade union relationship.

In his disagreement with Michels, Panebianco would stress the continuity and relative success of social democratic parties throughout the twentieth-century, and challenge the idea of large schisms between leaders and led; it is his systemic fluidity, the constant refinement within the dominant coalition that also allows him to critique the rational actor position. In the abstract world of electoral modelling, the logical inference is that voting will peak at a central point between the positions of the major political parties in the system. This is based upon four main Downsian assumptions: that the only desire of political actors is the attainment of office; that all voters and parties are preference maximisers; that there is only room for two major parties in a system; and that the two parties will always move to the median voter position. The British and American cases, without the option of *exit*, are almost written to fit the theory[32].

In Downsian parties, the main determinant is the use of ideology to shape the preferences of those who vote. The tension created by the need to adhere to the ideology while attaining office causes the two main political positions to close together. There are two motive factors at play: initially, the internal homogeneity of both parties (presupposing absolute power for the leaders) allows the parties to move freely, but this is counteracted by the institutionalised power of the governing party, which can change state policy; and as the opposition is identically motivated to attract those voters who would be accommodated by the new policy, they follow suit. As the governing party can henceforth accrue no advantage from changing policy, this should logically lead to the end of political movement and should result in the main parties settling at the centre of political agreement. What has been observed, however, by Ian Budge's division of policy manifesto pledges into a left-right composition, is that the 'median voter' has failed to remain fixed in the middle ground[33]. Instead, public opinion shifts around often quite dramatically, despite relative immobility among the parties.

[31] Panebianco,A (1988) pp.242-243, in the case of the Labour Party, we could see 1931, 1969-70 and 1976-79 as examples.

[32] Although of course the rise of the Liberal/SDP/Lib Dem votes since 1974 offers potential exit where the centre party is a realistic second place. First-past-the-post still favours the rational choice model.

[33] Budge,I *The Spatial Theory of Voting and Party Competition* given at University of Sheffield, 15th February 1996.

These findings would reassure Panebianco whose critique of the Downsian model is based on its oversimplification. It contains little on the specific role of parties as it is based upon a universalisation of the weak-party American system, ignoring all the institutional trade-offs which characterise European labour parties. Also, elections are treated as one-offs by Downs; there is little account taken of loyalty, party ethos, integrity or policy-identification which Sprague and Prezowski demonstrate as crucial to the long term success of parties[34] The very uncertainty of the world and the problems that can emerge (the post-1973 oil price shock, the collapse of communism) are missing, along with the role of ideology which helps anchor voters to a particular theory of the world, and which attracts members to voluntary parties. The history of the Labour Party, as shall be demonstrated in this thesis, shows that one party can contain within its parameters more than one 'ideological position', and that during the 1994-97 period there was more than one position of anchorage that new Labour could adopt without sacrificing its core vote.

One of the major Labour theorists of the post-war era is Lewis Minkin, who is most concerned with the internal politics of the party, specifically the relationship between the leadership and the trade unions. His findings about the balance of forces between the main actors offer support to the Panebianco thesis although Minkin refutes some of the latter's ideas about the plurality of decision making. Key for Minkin is the ethos of the trade union wing of the Labour 'movement' when the party is in government. In his study of Conference resolutions, he found that this ethos, which allowed for acquiescence during periods of governance, could be betrayed if the leadership had to apply economic orthodoxy to appease the financial markets. The unions, socialist societies and Constituency Labour Parties which make up the remainder of the Labour 'Movement'[35], would see such action by a Labour Government as a betrayal of emotional, perhaps irrational familial commitments, and this would explain the undisciplined nature of previous periods of Labour rule. Like Eric Shaw[36], Minkin questioned whether Labour could continue if the balance of forces within the party coalition was altered by external factors such as the state funding of parties or the introduction of proportional representation followed by a coalition with the Liberal Democratic Party. In common with rational choice theory, the key factor here is the relationship between internal, institutional actors and the constitutional powers available to British governments; they

[34] Sprague and Prezowski's main conclusion are that social democratic parties lose their voter salience (over time) when they abandon certain issues, doing damage to their historical trustability by exchanging one set of votes for another, Przeworski,A & Sprague,J (1986) Paper Stones: a history of electoral socialism, University of Chicago Press, Chicago..

[35] as defined by Minkin,L (1980) The Labour Party Conference, Manchester University Press, Manchester, and Minkin,L (1991) The Contentious Alliance; Trade unions and the Labour Party, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh.

[36] Shaw,E (1994) The Labour Party since 1979, Routledge, London, fearing the demise of the old party ethos at great cost in terms of electability.

have so far determined what Labour's ethos has become, and, logically, will determine what new Labour's ethos will become.

For Henry Drucker, loyalty is the key theme of Labour's ethos, and this has developed out of an opposition to the exploitation of the managers and bosses in the workplace; this has helped to construct a defensive 'us against the world' mentality among the working class. The defensiveness is Janus-like, both an attempt to fight off further exploitation and protect that which the workers have already achieved; this suggests that the instigators of the Labour Party were non-revolutionary in nature[37]. They were not calling for an overthrow of capitalist society, but for radical reforms to the existing system. For Drucker, Labour in the 1930s and 1940s had developed a necessary 'social glue' of nationalisation, a compromise political hook to attract the uncommitted voters, while addressing the internal dilemma of satisfying socialists and non-socialists seeking a better life in the existing society. This thesis will argue that Labour in the 1960s and 1970s also used comprehensive education as a form of social glue to hold together egalitarians and meritocratic liberals, in an almost unspoken (or at least rarely questioned) compromise position between fundamentally diverse positions. It then goes on to argue that new Labour have utilised the same approach, with the new dominant coalition using individual opportunity, widening access and the need for modernised education and training system as the unifying force which acts to obfuscate the intellectual divide while providing a rationale for reform.

The theories so far discussed can be characterised as explaining two broad methods of political change; firstly, the Michels, and later, rational choice position, which would suggest that the Labour Party in Britain today attempted to maximise its share of the vote through adopting centre-ground policies. Secondly, the Panebianco challenge to this, perhaps borne out by Budge's findings, suggests that this might be mistaken, as the movement of public opinion is more prevalent and volatile than movement of political stances by the parties. This suggests that political education of the electorate, appealing to their hopes for a better future rather than a better managed present, might be more successful in the long run. Any new dominant coalition within Labour could attempt to attract more of the electorate through an appeal to a mixture of policy proposals and a restatement of core values.

However, chasing the consensus (or median voter) position is not a guarantee of success because, as Richard Rose recognised, consensus is a moving target [38]. This is partly because the

[37] Drucker,HM (1979) Doctrine and Ethos in the Labour Party, George Allen & Unwin, London, pp.110-116

[38] Methodologically similar to Budge *et al,* Rose used manifesto pledges to measure the ability of governments and opposition parties to introduce what they had set out to introduce pre-election, see

context keeps changing as well, leading to differences of priority, and changes to what we might term the 'consensus' position on a given issue. Several major policy issues in the ensuing chapters of this thesis are concerned with changing consensus positions. Opposition parties, if they seriously hope to attain executive power in two-party systems, have to respond to the new consensus, and in some cases can even advance the consensus before entering office[39].

In a series of related projects, Budge and others have concentrated on the manifestos and 'Queen's Speeches' of many electoral campaigns across the post-war era in an effort to explain the apparent failings of 'representative democratic theory'. This is taken to mean that parties represent the people, gaining a mandate from them at elections, which they then implement (as far as is possible given external constraints), and have their actions accepted or rejected at subsequent elections.[40] One way to measure the usefulness of this proposition is to look at the implementation of the various manifesto or governmental programme pledges.[41]

In a volume co-edited with David Robertson and Derek Hearl, Ian Budge presented findings by Colin Rallings which concentrates on a comparison of the United Kingdom and Canada (both of which use the 'Westminster model'). In terms of pledges, Rallings found, like Rose, that in normal circumstances (where a Government is relatively secure in its position), between 80 and 100% of the declared programme was implemented.[42]

However, during periods of intense Governmental unpopularity, such as 1977-78 in Britain, the rate averaged only 63.7% (although this rose to 72.7% for governments of over two years duration between 1964 and 1979). The electoral verdict is then decided by a comparison between the promises of the party in its manifesto, and its subsequent performance over a possible five-year period[43]. The analysis of Rallings, then, is less dependent on the statements of the manifesto than in Rose's earlier studies; for a variety of reasons, manifestos should be treated as a useful guide to separate the parties, rather than a full explanation of what the government will do.

Rose,R (1974) The Problems of Party Government, MacMillan, London and Rose,R (1984) Do Parties Make a Difference?, MacMillan, London, *passim*.

[39] One such example, explored in chapter 6 of this thesis, was the ratcheting up of expulsion periods, first by David Blunkett, and then by Secretary of State Gillian Shephard, during 1996 as part of the consensus on behaviour and standards.

[40] The definition here used is from Kavanagh (1980) cited by Budge,I, Robertson,D & Hearl,D(eds) (1987) Ideology, Strategy and Party Change: Spatial Analyses of Post-War Election Programmes in 19 Democracies, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

[41] Governmental programme is here to be taken as the equivalent of the 'Queen's Speech'.

[42] Rallings cited in Budge,I *et al* (1987) pp.9-11. Some interesting British exceptions are 1969-70, when only 50% of the programme proved 'doable' by the Labour Party, and 1973-74 when the Conservatives were also unable to implement more than half of their intentions. The worst recorded period was during the 1977-78 session when Labour were constrained or buffeted into conceding so much that only 27.3% of the programme was enacted, although they recovered to 50% in the last year before the General Election of 1979.

[43] ibid, p.13.

This is taken a stage further by Budge who added extra dimensions to manifesto analysis. Firstly, salience (taken to mean the attraction between policies and particular groups of voters) can only be determined by plotting the manifestos over time; only then can conclusions about the *mobility* of parties across the spectrum be made. There is less free movement across the continuum than Downsian analysis would suggest, partly because parties are as likely to want to stress policy differences from other parties as they are to stress their similarities. This is partly to do with tactical positioning, but as Budge (echoing Panebianco) emphasises, office seeking is not the total goal for most politicians. Individual political actors are driven by the desire to pursue certain policy goals; they might judiciously de-emphasise some aspects of their policies in manifestos (ie. the costs) but on the whole there is little room for policy manoeuvring[44]. Like Panebianco and Minkin, Budge provides a causation for movement which is circumscribed by the basic historical position of the party, personified by the membership, ethos, institutions, constitution and (as the former would emphasise) the balance of forces within the coalition.

Thus Budge hopes to demonstrate that movement is tied to history through the policies that are on offer. Extreme volatility of electoral pledges should be most visible during times when the party is unelectable (Labour after 1931 and 1983), while least movement should be expected when a party wishes to demonstrate the near-consensus between it and its opponents (Conservatives in 1951 and 1955, Labour in 1964). A further condition for partisan statements would be the chances of success; it is easier to make radical statements of intent if you are either totally confident or have no chance of winning power. If a close election result is expected parties should emphasise consent[45]. This forms the basis for the 'modified office seeking model' which was applied by Budge *et al* to case study elections from nineteen industrial democracies over the post-war period.

The major finding was that the left-right continuum was the most prevalent factor among the countries studied; however, this failed to lead to policy convergence at the centre-ground (as Downs would expect) and in fact there was no definite trend. Where the two main parties in the United Kingdom were at their closest, in the 1950s they were both trending to the left of centre while in the mid-1960s they were both moving rightwards. In the 1980s, Budge found, they began to move apart once more, with the peak of the departure occurring around 1982, after which the Labour Party began to move rightwards again to close the gap. The only occupation of identical ground occurred when the Liberal Party oscillated between the two polar positions; there was no

[44] Ibid, p.28.

[45] This seems to have been the interpretation that new Labour understood prior to the 1997 General Election, after which they entered Government with a modest set of proposals in comparison to the majority of seats won in Parliament.

'leapfrogging' among the parties competing for power[46]. This allows for several conclusions to be drawn about party behaviour and motivations.

Firstly, though parties move, they do not move very much; the biggest movement noted in this international survey was by the Conservative Party in Britain. Social Democratic parties do tend to move towards the centre, but within a tighter framework or "temporal variance of programme" than avowedly centrist parties[47]. Secondly, parties are ideologically stable; they generally stay quite apart, which in turn suggests that they have particular policies to pursue which they are not willing to jettison in the manner that Downs had supposed. They are 'policy pursuing' rather that 'office seeking' in a situation where Downsian assumptions do not apply: there is a unidimensionality, but it is in the nature of a simplification of policy differences for the electorate; there is actual uncertainty about the whereabouts of the median voter, so parties pitch their appeal according to their ideologies; and the ideologies themselves lead to relatively fixed policy positions which they are reluctant to change. The conclusions that flow from these assumptions for Budge *et al* are that parties do not converge on the median voter position, but the party which nevertheless gains the endorsement of the median voter will have won enough to form a government or a coalition, which occurred in 80% of sample elections.[48]

While this is a useful introduction to theories of power and how parties ought to behave given the proclivities of the electorate, this thesis argues that new Labour failed to act in the manner expected by Budge's theory in several ways. Firstly, although surely confident of victory, if not of the margin, Tony Blair and the party leadership kept a firm grip on policy pronouncements and decided on a vague series of policy aims to fight the election on, rather than a bold series of specific policy changes as we should expect in such circumstances. The unique extra factors which applied in the case of the Labour Party are the breadth of its ideology and the peculiarities of the British electoral system. This ideological breadth (the space which contains moderate egalitarians and meritocrats) allowed new Labour to shift policies in the name of modernisation and changed circumstance, without exceeding party boundaries and provoking exit. Modernisation, the expression of changing circumstance, thus rationalises a changing ideology and makes straightforward right-left snap-shot comparisons difficult; this thesis argues that new Labour use modernisation as a smokescreen for certain policy changes, as well as rhetorically for the benefit of the electorate.

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[46] Budge,I, Klingemann,H & Hoffbert,RI (1994) Parties, Policies and Democracy, Westview Press, Boulder, on right-left trends. The Liberals were followed by Liberal Democrats or Alliance in post-1979 elections with similar behaviour.

[47] ibid, p.266

[48] Budge,I *The Spatial Theory of Voting and Party Competition*, paper given at University of Sheffield, 17th February 1996, p.7.

Secondly, new Labour defied Budgeian expectations by choosing to fight the election on broadly Conservative grounds, especially with regard to key policy areas such as education and training (more emphasis on standards, discipline, choice and a value for money), crime and disorder, asylum law, economic policy, public spending restraint, defence, and over the need for a referendum before adopting the Euro to replace the pound. New Labour seem to have tapped into the concerns of former Conservative voters, portraying themselves as a corruption-free and more efficient version of the same managerialist type of Government. How did the Labour Party manage this transformation, and does this offer evidence for a Downsian or Michelsian conclusion? The next approach this chapter will discuss will trace the relationship between party structure and policy outcomes.

Institutional changes to the Labour Party

As we have observed the Downsian model of party change is largely based on the American two-party system. In Britain the parties are stronger in terms of their organisational structure than in the US model, so any changes to policy or policymaking practice have to be discussed in relationship to changes to the institutional structure. The contemporary structure of the party at any given time constitutes a constraining factor on policy change. The case that institutional changes to the Labour Party are connected to a rightward drift of policy rests on the assumption that Labour has developed from a socialist past to a liberal, even neo-conservative present. This would be manifested both in Michelsian terms, where the party's democratic organisation had been eroded by a centralising leadership, and also in terms of political ideology, where a case could be made that the party had previously stood for and introduced in government, definite socialist policies which it now finds itself unwilling to offer the electorate. In terms of constraints on action, the suggested movement of the party across the electoral spectrum should be made easier by the removal of or restructuring of party institutions. In order to ascertain the effects of such changes, this section will concentrate on the major developments within Labour's institutions over the recent past, incorporating the role of the National Executive Committee and Annual Conference, the Joint Policy Commissions and the National Policy Forum.

The National Executive Committee (NEC) is the supreme body of the Labour Party for the fifty-one weeks of the year that the Conference does not meet. The NEC officially has two basic functions within the structure of the Labour Party; policymaking and party management. The latest constitutional changes to the NEC suggest more of an administrative and campaigning role, so the balance has shifted towards a management function:

> It is the core objective of the NEC to ensure that we enter the next election in an equally strong or stronger position. The crucial management of the party's staff and resources remains a core responsibility of the NEC[49].

The 1918 constitution set up the NEC as a bulwark against the power of trade unionists within the party. During the policymaking period covered by this thesis (1994-1997) it was still the case that of the 29 members of the executive 18 effectively relied on trade union support for their seats at the table, even though only twelve were directly elected trade union representatives. Five more NEC members were chosen by the votes of constituency parties, while five women and the treasurer were elected by the whole conference, of which trade union votes counted for 50% (on a downward trend from 70% after 1993 and 90% before then). The socialist societies elected one member, and also for a representative of the Young Socialists. As Denis Kavanagh notes, the unions were all pervasive within the party, whatever the niceties of the wording of the constitution.[50]

In total, thirteen places on the NEC were occupied by MPs. However, there was no representation for the Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP) built into the constitution, although that was corrected by the first elections after the *Partnership in Power* changes. Previously the majority of MPs elected tend to come from the shadow cabinet. This is because of the way the NEC elections are carried out, with candidate profiles circulated to the mass membership who often selected the most famous faces or names on the ballot[51]. Members of the Trades Union Congress General Council, which constitutes the General Secretaries of the largest unions, were barred from standing, and there were no representatives of Labour's 12,000 councillors[52], the women's conference or ethnic minority sections during the most recent policymaking period.

The affiliated trade union's representatives tended to be placemen, in that they were on the NEC to represent the interests of the union concerned on the basis of the size of their memberships. It is a deliberately representative body, at least of the blue collar, male party that Labour once largely was, designed in the 1918 compromise to keep the oligarchic tendency of the PLP leadership or the trade union block in check. Unfortunately, while it could perform this negative task, the NEC did not become a positive source new policy ideas, and representatives who have sat

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[49] The Labour Party (1997) *Partnership in Power*, B/030/97, pp.8-9

[50] Kavanagh,D & Jones,W (1994) in Jones *et al* Politics UK, Second Edition, Harvester Wheatsheaf, London, p.253.

[51] This was well illustrated by Peter Mandelson's unsuccessful attempt to get elected onto the NEC in October 1997, after an unusually high profile summer of key speeches, often with socialist undertones, which drew attention to the reason for his actions for some commentators.

[52] at the time of Evans,J (1995) *Let's see executive action* in Tribune, 30th June, article.

on its subcommittees tended to be valued for defending positions rather than advancing policy or widening the interests represented on that body[53]. Hence the many attempts to change the structure of the NEC in recent years, from a variety of political standpoints[54]. Designed as a constraint, the NEC was intended to contain the balanced forces, but according to one internal critic:

> It has changed a lot over time, not so much in the constitution of the party, but in practice it is markedly different now. [In the early 1970s].... I worked for the NEC and there was a chasm between NEC on the one hand and the Parliamentary leadership on the other, it was quite ridiculous that there were people like me working specifically for the NEC..... you could find yourself in very real difficulty at times if you were appearing to help the shadow cabinet. [55]

From a later period (1978, with Labour in government), Tony Benn's diaries recall the type of problems which could occur when the trade unionists on the NEC thought that the PLP leadership was ignoring their interests:

> Frank Allaun opened for the NEC announcing that it had unanimously agreed on monthly joint meetings between the cabinet and NEC. Jim [Callaghan].... commented dryly: 'Why not meet in continuous session?' Jim said that he did not see the need for monthly meetings and he was not willing to let the NEC be either the co-government or the alternative government.[56]

This was, of course a turbulent period featuring many uninvited economic difficulties for the 1974-79 Labour Government, and as Lewis Minkin has pointed out, the closeness of the party-union relationship always tends to vary in relation to Labour's ability to deliver labour friendly outcomes in office[57]. In contrast to these conflicting views about the sometimes abrasive nature of the NEC's relationship with the leadership, for some party critics the problem is that co-operation between these two bodies tend to squeeze out the other constituent elements of the party. In fact, during the long opposition phase an incestuous relationship was said to have developed so that the body had become moribund and frequently inquorate.[58] Hence the moves to reform the main policy and decision making body of the Labour Party during the 1980s and 1990s. These can be expressed

[53] An example of this is given by Ken Spours' evidence in Chapter Seven.
[54] for instance we have Tom Sawyer's version, as reported in New Statesman, 12/7/96 which evolved into *Party in Power*, and the radically different set of procedural changes posited by Hain,P (1995) *Fingers in the pie*, New Statesman and Society, London, 18th August 1995.
[55] Phil Wyatt of the GMB, interview with author, Wimbledon, 29/10/96.
[56] Monday 23rd October 1978, from Benn,T (1990) Conflicts of Interest: Diaries 1977-80, Arrow Books edition, 1991, pp.374-375.
[57] Minkin,L (1980) The Labour Party Conference, Manchester University Press, Manchester, *passim*.
[58] Evans,J (1995) op cit.

by the examples of two models of democracy, one from an inclusive, bottom up perspective, the other from a party-managerialist perspective. Peter Hain's appeal to democratise the NEC mirrors the concerns of Michels by making a causal link between hierarchical policymaking structures and the amount of policy input at local, grassroots level. Citing Seyd and Whiteley's findings that Labour performed better at the 1992 General Election in seats where there was committed activist campaigning,[59] Hain saw this as a testimonial for the party management role of the NEC. In the policymaking process, Hain also wants to extend the party reach to the grass roots, even beyond the party itself:

> Sympathetic outsiders could be invited to attend these policy meetings (for instance local GPs or school governors) to provide extra expertise and to involve the wider community in the party. There are plenty of people with skills and others who are opinion formers who like to be involved and consulted...[60]

In such a scenario, representations to the NEC would be far more informed and democratically valid than in the Conference resolutionary procedure where a statement was appended to the local meeting's agenda and then "dispatched to the National Executive where it is ritually noted and ignored"[61]. Hain went on to recommend that Labour policy be made with such a local focus as to make the appeal particularistic and conditional, while the NEC itself would be reformed in a purely representative manner, with quotas appended to the mass membership elections. This would clearly create a channel of communication between the grass roots and the leadership which would consolidate the kind of NEC constraint on Labour in government which would prevent the leadership from acting beyond the interests of the rank and file.

An alternative reform model for the NEC was put forward by the party's General Secretary Tom Sawyer, who also wanted to see the new, bigger local parties represented on the NEC so that Labour could represent the whole community, and a bar on (shadow) cabinet nominations for NEC elections so as to allow the PLP some official representation. However, Sawyer saw little future role for the NEC in the policymaking sphere, rather:

> I think we would have to see the NEC as the governing council of the party. I would expect there to be a heavy burden of responsibility for the administrative functions connected with

[59] Seyd,P & Whiteley,P (1992) Labour's Grass Roots; the politics of party membership, Clarendon Press, Oxford, cited in Hain, (1995) p.20.
[60] ibid, p.21
[61] ibid, p.20

> the party organisation. But it is clear that the lead responsibility for the policy and the message will come from elected leaders.[62]

In this scenario we have the same concentration on widening the constituency that Labour can hope to represent in the communities, but in contrast to the Hain model, the concern here is to avoid a situation where decision making power is devolved to the wider party. Many of Sawyer's recommendations were incorporated within the consultation document *Labour into power: a framework for partnership* which emerged then as *Party in Power*. Raising the spectre of Denis Healey having to return from Heathrow Airport to address and win over a hostile Labour Party conference, Sawyer wanted a Labour Government to benefit from the kind of swift manoeuvring the Conservatives were capable of because they lack such internal democratic constraints: "Labour does need a democratic structure, but one that allows ministers to respond quickly and effectively"[63]. The result of these reforms have produced a situation where a mass membership party is ostensibly more democratic in its inclusiveness and representation on the key executive body, and yet is less democratic in its executive function if actual policymaking is to be centred around (shadow) ministers and their advisers. This would clearly result in the removal of the NEC as a counterbalance to leadership autonomy.

A recurrent theme of the ongoing debate about Labour's constitution relates to the practice in government. Hain, for instance, did not believe that the Cabinet should have to reassemble at the NEC every month. Making the Michelsian point, he states that:

> A Labour government will require the support of extra-parliamentary movements (trade unions, community and single issue groups) and wider popular opinion if it is to overcome hostile forces [to act as a] valuable countervailing pressure against influence from the City and civil service.[64]

Hain and members of a relatively new pressure group within the party, Labour Reform, clearly view the wider public opinion to be closer to their own socialist values; like Michels they believe socialism (or true democracy) can only emanate from below, but from the perspective of Labour Party leaders, this dissolution of power even beyond the party membership would make coherent policymaking in opposition or executive decision making in government far more difficult.

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[62] New Statesman ,interview with Sawyer, 12/7/96 p.20.
[63] ibid, p.21
[64] Hain,P (1995) New Statesman and Society, 18/8/95, p.21.

Paradoxically, while the party leadership were keen to keep policymaking power at the apex of the party, and representatives of the rank and file, like Trevor Fisher of Labour Reform and Vladimir Derer of the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy, wanted to see more extra-party involvement with the community, it is on the question of outside influence on policy that many of the 'old' Labour left fear the democratic deficit[65]. With less direct NEC influence on the policymaking processes following *Party into Power*, the trade unionist contingent and the few backbenchers among parliamentary representatives feel further from power now than under the previous system, before the Policy Review of 1987-89 consolidated Neil Kinnock's introduction of policy commissions designed to connect policy and presentation.

In the classic, and now historical, version of the role of the NEC in policymaking the executive maintained permanent sub-committees for distinct policy areas, so as to feed the Conference with new policies as required. Policy was typically made over a nine-month cycle, with the sub-committee served by a chair who was the regular parliamentary spokesperson, a secretary from the research department, interested members of the NEC evenly balanced to avoid political partiality, with some extra MPs and academic advisers brought in as necessary. Papers were drafted and circulated to the unions and other affiliates, and then full drafts were presented to the relevant subject (for example, Home Policy) Subcommittee, after which they were redrafted for the perusal of the full NEC and then set out for Conference to vote on[66]. The salient feature was that political balance and broad representation of party institutions were incorporated within the committee. The democratic constraints on the NEC power base consisted of the ability of the wider Conference to change the membership of the executive over time by election, and the fact that Conference could put items on the agenda of the party by way of the public domain[67].

The process effectively begun with an NEC resolution to change or review an existing policy, and the relevant subcommittee was charged to carry out the review under the aegis of the shadow cabinet spokesperson. Unfortunately these subcommittees, like many purely representative committees, were beset by interests which tended towards the status quo or paralysis at best. Following the 1983 election defeat, the Kinnock leadership and some modernising MPs (including many with democratic socialist credentials) and activists urged Labour to update its procedures and remake the connection between policymaking and presentation[68]. The full-scale policy review of

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[65] see Derer,V *Quick Change*, Tribune, 8/11/96 and Fisher,T *Central problem of where power lies*, Tribune, 19/4/96 or *Labour drifting to dictatorship*, Chartist for democratic socialism, September-October 1995, for their detailed critiques of the centralisation of new Labour.

[66] Minkin,L(1980), pp.49-53.

[67] ibid, p.317

[68] see Hughes,C & Wintour,P (1990) Labour Rebuilt: the new model party, Fourth Estate, London for a study of the mainly cultural changes introduced during this period. Policy and presentation had been

1987-1989 introduced into practice the idea of giving more power to the shadow cabinet in Policy Commissions which would meet monthly over a two-year period to establish a new set of policies for the 1992 election. Unfortunately they were considered unwieldy organisations, consisting of up to forty members, mainly because they were broad commissions, for example, the social policy commission involved health, education and social services.

These were in fact virtually disowned by many of the key actors who had to work on them; they were seen as sclerotic as the old sub-committees but even more unwieldy. According to David Blunkett who sat on the Social Policy Commission as Health and then Education spokesman:

> In my view the commissions have not worked, including the commissions on economic policy, social policy, environment and foreign policy, I don't believe that they have functioned more than for the first six months or so and I think they need reviewing...[69].

The institutional structure of policy development can be seen to have been informed by direct experience; not only did the previous NEC system work imperfectly in that it tended to be in reality "shadow cabinet plus London intelligentsia-led" according to Blunkett, but the policy commissions fared little better:

> My abiding memory is the constant meetings where we met fortnightly, even weekly in the build-up to the policy document in 1989, *Meet the Challenge, Make the Change*, we spent endless hours in meetings and discussion, and when you looked at it in the end, distilled into the document, you wonder whether all that time was fruitless, and then when you lose an election on the back of it, it does sometimes lead to demoralisation, so the present structure has partly risen out of immediate past experience, people wasting their time...[70].

The method used by front benchers in the most recent pre-election policymaking period, 1992-97, began with policy need being established by a meeting of the Joint Policy Commission, which had the crucial role of co-ordinating policies. For example, Labour decided to develop new policy positions in reaction to Government changes to the National Curriculum, opted-out schools and on nursery education vouchers, and made it the task of specialised, 'mini-commissions' under the relevant front-bench spokesperson to develop such policies. They were typically unofficial, (in terms of not being purely representative of the party institutions) and free to take evidence from

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connected before, during the Gaitskell/Wilson opposition phase, so this aspect of modernisation has to been in the context of the 1979-1983 period when ideological policymaking was more prevalent, see Rose, R (1974) The Problems of Party Government, MacMillan, London and Rose, R (1984) Do Parties Make a Difference? 2nd Edition. MacMillan, London for a fuller picture.

[69] David Blunkett, MP, interview with author, Sheffield 22/8/96.

[70] ibid

where its members saw fit[71]. The main question of whether this represents a more or less democratic policymaking structure might seem to rest upon whether Labour looks beyond its own perimeters for advice more so than in the past, to such an extent that party institutional bodies are effectively bypassed. Much of the evidence in the later chapters of this thesis is designed to answer this question.

By the 1990s the NEC policymaking system had deteriorated (or evolved) into a situation where the shadow cabinet member had a large degree of autonomy, certainly with regard to the advisers he or she would seek out, and to what extent the affiliates were listened to or consulted during policy initiation and development. After the advent of Joint Policy Commissions and the National Policy Forum system (in 1992-93) there still existed a system where the shadow cabinet member dominated the policymaking agenda, but if anything it was now more open. As the GMB's political officer Phil Wyatt put it:

> .....the party constitution still says the NEC is the font of policy, and of course the policy document that go to conference do go on behalf of the NEC. The drafting comes from the shadow cabinet member, and they get to decide who sits on the mini-commissions thrashing out the policy and drafting the paper...[72]

Although the NEC retained its pre-emptive position as the Conference when it is not sitting, it is far from being the only channel of communication between major policy actors. Quite apart from the Policy Forum which we will discuss in the next section, the Joint Policy Commissions and the Economic Policy Commission provide opportunities for the major trade union leaders to come into contact with the parliamentary leadership and have policy input.

Due to its central constitutional and policymaking role, the NEC was a representative body of the whole party, and as such a real constraint on the ability of the PLP leadership to make policy contrary to the interests of the rank and file. During periods of difficulty in government, it often became an alternative power base for trade union or Constituency Labour Party (CLP) interests; however, during times of quiet opposition, the NEC has on occasion become moribund as trade unions and the leadership worked together to modernise the party, squeezing out, in the time honoured manner, those minority elements of the party structure who wanted more democratic control of the party. This, in essence, is Lewis Minkin's historical model of the *de facto* party

[71] In her Early Years Enquiry Team, Margaret Hodge, MP used a team of about 15 advisers and interested people, and she held a series of seminars of around 40 individuals who were invited to discuss certain aspects of the issue. These consisted of the various pressure groups and LEA representatives. Her reaction to suggestions that it was not representative of the party was that the policy had to work on the ground and had to appeal to the country not the membership.
[72] interview with author, 29/10/96.

constitution, with centralised effectiveness most apparent when the trade unions acted in concert with the leadership to close the gap between the two halves of Panebianco's dual hierarchy. The NEC itself, deriving most of its power from the fact that trade unionists were represented on it, could only act as an effective counterbalance so long as trade union interests were separate from those of the PLP leadership. Once trade union interests were subsumed into the leadership's electoral strategy, based as it was on new ideas about flexible workforces and supply-side socialism, the trade unions had less direct influence (reflecting the changing basis of demand for unionised labour) within the party. Chapters Four and Seven of this thesis explore this new relationship with regard to vocational education and training policies.

In the 1994-97 period, what seems to have replaced the flawed NEC policymaking system, with its heavy reliance on the shadow cabinet and their intellectual influences, is another form of policymaking which also is heavily reliant on a few chosen leaders and an increasingly sophisticated lobbying system which gives equal opportunities to elements of the Labour movement and non-affiliated pressure groups to influence policy. The NEC has less constraining power than it had before, and this is consolidated with the latest institutional changes.

One developing factor has been that the leadership in shadow cabinet had access to far more independent research, financed by the state's 'Short Money'[73], which made it easier for front-benchers to develop their own policies from research funds, which were said to have equalled the official party's research capacity at Walworth Road by the time of the climax of Labour's preparations for government[74]. This, of course, gave the leadership a degree of financial independence from trade union influences. This widens the possible external influences which can impact on the policymaking commissions, allowing the leadership to be more responsive to the electorate's concerns. Hence, lobbying power, either internal or external in origin, became greater while the institutional input of the trade unions through Conference and the NEC has declined. In Michelsian terms, the NEC could break the oligarchic stranglehold by acting as an interpreter of affiliate concerns, thus flattening the hierarchy. However, at times the NEC has itself helped form the oligarchic structure, in the name of electability, even while its intention was to check the leadership. The reduction in trade union influence makes it easier for the leadership to develop policy unchallenged at the apex of a steeper hierarchy.

[73] awarded to the Opposition parties on a scale determined by relative share of the vote and seats won in Parliament, introduced by Edward Short as Leader of the house of Commons in 1975, Ewing,KD (1987) The funding of political parties in Britain, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp.119-120.
[74] interview with Bryan Davies, Secretary to the Parliamentary Labour Party 1979-92, at Westminster, 3/9/97.

One of the implications of a lobby system of policymaking is that it is not mere size, voting power or even party affiliation which can have effect. Euphemistically at least, the quality of the argument should determine its validity or influence, rather than the source of the argument. The Policy Forum system, which allows for more representation by the 'minnows' of Labour's constitution, particularly the constituency parties (CLPs), might seem to offer more opportunity for minority party interests to off-set the external lobbyists and the trade unions, yet it has attracted criticism from those who see it as a constraint on party democracy rather than a constraint on the leadership. Potentially, however, Forum could act in the manner the NEC was designed to, as a Michelsian brake although through a lobbying mechanism rather than a voting mechanism. This new institution will form the focus of the next section.

National Policy Forum

The Policy Forum concept of policymaking in the Labour Party can be seen to have been born out of the democratic failings of the original constitution. It is a feature of the ongoing constitutional debate within the party that no-one can legitimately refer back to a period when the old structure worked 'perfectly'. In fact the Policy Commissions and Policy Forum mechanisms set up during the Neil Kinnock and John Smith leadership's were established, at least in part, in response to democratisation calls from individual parliamentarians like Peter Hain, pressure groups like the (originally Bennite) Labour Co-ordinating Committee and some trade unionists, notably John Edmonds of the GMB and Bill Morriss of the Transport and General Workers union, the T&G[75].

Official party documents[76] concentrated on the democratic deficit implicit in the imperfect operation of the pre-existing system, and stressed that Labour were "responding to demand" because the policymaking process excluded large sections of the movement, and the policy outcomes were often "muddled, even self-contradictory, of unclear status and arguable authority"[77]. The main concerns were that women, ethnic minorities and the European Parliamentary Labour Party (EPLP) were among the groups that were ignored and reforms set out to address this. On the new Joint Policy Committee, (JPC) the emphasis was on setting clear parameters for new policy development, to oversee policy co-ordination. The JPC does not, as such, threaten the sovereignty of the NEC in the way that the National Policy Forum (NPF) seemed to do; for example JPC output

[75] Interview with Phil Wyatt of GMB confirmed the origins of these modernising ideas, and Hain pointed out his own contribution at the may 1996 Policy Forum, research notes.
[76] Labour Party (1990) *Democracy and policy making for the 1990s*, Conference 90, Labour Party (1993) *Meeting the challenge of modern times: a brief guide to policymaking within the Labour Party*, The Labour Party, London, August 1993, and Labour Party (1994) *Extending Party Democracy*, The Labour Party, London, March 1994.
[77] Labour Party (1993) which goes on to outline the excluded constituents.

was presented to the NEC in draft form before the NPF, and the policies still have to ratified by the next Conference.

The problems which the NPF have caused among party members can be broadly categorised as concerned with either representation, constitutionality or secrecy, or some combination of these. Again, the *Party in Power* reforms after the 1997 Annual Conference were partly intended to deal with some of these concerns, particularly by anchoring the NPF within the constitution. In terms of representation, the initial NPF in May 1993 had a total of 81 elected members, of which 41 were women due to the minimum requirement for each category. The breakdown was:

The structure of the provisional National Policy Forum (1994)

	Number Of Reps	Minimum Women
England regional CLPs	18	9
Scotland CLPs	2	1
Affiliates	1	
Wales CLPs	2	1
Women's organisations	11	11
Black and Asian	4	2
Youth and Students	2	1
PLP	6	2
European PLP	3	1
Local councillors	8	3
Socialist societies & Co-ops	2	1
The Co-operative Party	1	1
Trade unions	20	8
Total	**81**	**41**

Table reproduced from 'Extending Party Democracy', Labour Party, March 1994.

At the latest comparable pre-election meeting in May 1996, with a membership of 87 the ratios were little changed, with one less trade unionist, the women's organisations representatives dispersed (but at 43 out of 87 women form the same ratio) and more PLP and European PLP (seven

and five rather than six and three) representatives[78]. The most striking feature is the lower proportion of trade unionists in comparison to the NEC and Conference weighting. In a move designed to allow broader party input into policymaking, Regional Policy Forums (RPF) were to be set up, although 'pilot' RPFs were not fully endorsed or directed by the leadership until after new Labour came into office. Prior to the election, organisation and regularity of the forums were left to the individual regions, the issue received a 'hands off' approach from the centre (some of the regions report a similar apathy among members[79]) which suggests that some elements within the central policymaking machinery would not welcome another level of policy input.

One criticism of the way the NPF works, from within the trade union element of the party, illustrates the changing nature of policymaking in the Labour Party. In the classic version of both NEC and AC policymaking, trade unions had the ultimate veto of using their electoral weight at the conclusion of any discussions. This opportunity to exercise a membership mandate in numerical terms is not open to party actors at Forum, where the emphasis has to be on winning the argument and ensuring the chair of each work-shop discussion group notes any recurrent amendments which might have won the assent of the assembled. Phil Wyatt of the GMB was concerned at the fact that "the chair of the Forum, Robin Cook and the Director of Policy.. Matthew Taylor... seem to be very uncomfortable with votes being taken" although he answered his own concern to some extent by remembering that "the Policy Forum is supposed to be there as a sounding board after all, it is not there to make policy, it is there to contribute to the policymaking process"[80]. The new system highlighted the fact that the trade unions were used to wielding their powers within Labour Party structures by the weight of their collective vote, rather than by reasoned argument. The very act of widening the franchise and introducing qualitative discussions through policy fora threatened the trade union power base within the constitution, which in turn prompted questions about the constitutionality of the NPF.

Before the 1997 constitutional reforms, the NPF remained largely mysterious to the wider party because there were no journalists allowed into the proceedings, and many policy actors and even trade unionists did not consider it a serious body. There are two main reasons for this perspective; firstly, there are no 'official' votes taken at the Forum meetings, and as we have observed, this lessens the direct influence of some who are used to getting their view across in that

[78] *Party in Power* reforms suggested almost doubling the size to 175 with more local councillors and regional parties brought on board. The women's sections were distributed among the other elements with minimum quotas (usually 50% of representatives) for women, and 32 seats for the whole NEC itself.

[79] according to a report to the NPF, *'Building on success: The future of the national policy forum'*, Labour Party, May 1996.

[80] interview with author, Woolwich, 24/9/96.

manner; secondly, many policy actors and some trade unionists did not consider it a powerful body because of its lack of a media profile.

For Phil Wyatt, this was a signal that the unions misunderstood the new structure as a whole and failed to see how the elements are connected: "a number of people have criticised the Policy Forum and I think they have not woken up to the meaning of the Economic Policy Commission" (EPC) which drafts documents for the Policy Forum. In fact the Forum was treated by shadow cabinet members as another opportunity to gain some ratification for their position:

> it is very difficult for the Forum to reject material that has come down in a draft document from the shadow cabinet people; the policy documents come ostensibly from the policy commissions but they originate with shadow cabinet members and of course they are building in support for them in anticipation of Forum meetings.[81]

Labour front-benchers could legitimately declare, after discussions at the NPF, that NEC should proceed with these (sometimes amended) documents for ratification at the next Conference; even while unconstitutional, the pre-election NPFs had the effect of consolidating new ideas and policy positions among party members. And as news of new policy developments usually leaked out to the press despite the much heralded 'secrecy', such documents then had to be defended by the party in the public arena, bringing electoral considerations into account as the leadership issued a clampdown on internal dissent[82]. At this unofficial level, the forum meetings could be seen to equate with PC and mini-commission meetings in that the same actors and issues were involved, and to a certain extent what ensues at forums is a semi-public version of these horse-trading sessions[83]. For example, at the May 1996 meeting in Manchester the Manufacturing and Science Federation (MSF) union's delegate came to the training and lifelong learning workgroups with pre-drafted amendments to be added to the papers under discussion, and met with some success in terms of amendments to the wording of the final document.

Fears of the NPF becoming the real executive powerbase of the party were partially assuaged by the *Party in Power* document's interpretation of the constitutional arrangements:

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[81] interview with author, Wimbledon, 29/10/96

[82] At the May 1996 Forum the main story which leaked out to barred journalists concerned Gordon Brown and his plans to means test child benefit; as this caused a furore, it was quietly dropped by Brown until after the election. This illustrates the difficulty of the leadership keeping ideas from the public domain, even though the Forum's main session began with an exhortation to secrecy from Tony Blair.

[83] The workshop discussion groups on training policy were attended by most of the major policy actors, including the leaders of the T&G, the GMB and many other senior party actors who were also represented or present themselves at EPC meetings. The NPF then became another chance to try and win over the shadow cabinet members present, in a more public and less secure situation which raises the stakes of the debate.

> Through regular elections and annual reports, the new National Policy Forum would be firmly rooted in the party and accountable to annual conference as the sovereign policy-making body[84].

The reforms also address some of the democratic deficits of Forum, as many representatives, including the Constituency Labour Parties' 54 members, would henceforth be elected by their own delegates at the annual conference for a fixed, two-year term designed to coincide with the two-year rolling programme of new policy development. In fact, many of those groups hostile to the forum system were warmer to the regional and local versions[85]. The idea of a semi-open talking shop, which could be mathematically inclusive if it incorporated a plurality of CLPs, would mean that the NPF could become what the NEC was designed to be, a body which represented the interests of all party members. The key question is to determine whether this was the intention, or was it designed it contribute to the centralisation of power in the aftermath of the 1997 formal adoption of Forum into the Constitution? While the NEC as originally established could become a thorn in the government's side and a check on oligarchic power, this often failed to materialise, hence the calls for reform. The NPF seems to have been constituted with less direct control over the leadership, yet provides another lobbying opportunity for ideas to coalesce and be tested against government or shadow cabinet proposals in at least semi-public circumstances.

However, the removal of the NEC policymaking power and the reduction of the block votes at Annual Conference acts to steepen the hierarchy and allows the leadership more room for electoral manoeuvre. The apparently more democratic NPF system does not act as a brake on the PLP leadership in the way that the NEC could. The new democratic model, as expressed by the pre-election *Road to the manifesto* endorsement exercise demonstrated how institutions could be bypassed by a direct appeal to the membership- in effect a plebiscitary model of democracy which Michels warned against. Therefore it is the premise of this thesis that new Labour policymaking processes have become more reactive to public opinion concerns because of the electoral awareness of advisers close to the party leadership such as Peter Mandelson and Philip Gould. From the mid-1980s onwards, policies were often changed specifically to meet the needs of a wider section of the electorate than Labour had traditionally appealed to; as ever, the context was created by the election defeats of 1979, 1983 and 1987. As Bryan Davies, frontbench spokesperson on further and higher education put it, different conditions applied in the 1990s than had applied when Labour last held office:

[84] The Labour Party (1997) *Party in Power*, pp.10-11
[85] for example Labour Reform.

> The problem for policymakers really was, what does the party want, and second, how do we square that with the nation. Now, it is, what is the nation willing to support, and then, will the party support this too....[86].

Such thinking was promulgated among modernisers during the 1980s. Wishing to create a policymaking environment where electoral considerations were to the fore, Bryan Gould expressed it thus:

> We all recognise that too often we have brought in groups of experts who tell us what we ought to be doing or saying. We then agree on that policy, and then we think, almost as an afterthought, of how it is to be sold to the electorate.....
>
> What we ought to be doing is looking at where policies ought to come from, where the demand is, what interests we ought to be serving. In that way we make sure that the policy includes its popular appeal from the outset.[87]

Peter Mandelson, serving on the Shadow Communications Agency during 1988, also stressed the need for more emphasis on the selecting policies designed to maximise Labour's share of the vote:

> I believe we have to take a view now of what we want to fight the next election on, and then work backwards in our policy from that. This will also include what we don't want to fight the next election on, but which we have to get right to avoid disqualification at the outset.[88]

The adoption of most of this agenda reflects what is effectively a Michelsian capture of the party by electoral strategists who make Downsian assumptions about the electorate. Pat Seyd has argued that, by changing Labour's constitution, policies, internal structures and image within a few years, Blair and new Labour have made fundamental changes to the British political scene not seen since the Conservative Party adapted to social democracy in the 1950s[89]. This thesis suggests a longer gestation, with new Labour the result of a synthesis between three elements which have created a new party policymaking environment. Firstly, the nature of policymaking which began to change during Neil Kinnock's leadership period. As we shall see, the use of an *ad hoc* policy

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[86] Bryan Davies, interview with author, Westminster, 3/9/97.
[87] Hughes,C & Wintour,P (1990) Labour Rebuilt: the new model party, Fourth Estate, London, p.38
[88] Hughes & Wintour, (1990) p.172.
[89] Seyd,P (1998) *Tony Blair and New Labour* in King,A *et al* New Labour Triumphs: Britain at the Polls, Chatham, New Jersey, pp.49-74.

subcommittee to break a policy deadlock in the Manpower Liaison Committee established a precedent for policymaking which allowed frontbench actors more freedom to override trade union imperatives. Thus it became easier to make an electoral case for policy change.

Secondly, the Policy Review embarked upon after the 1987 defeat helped to consolidate the acceptance of globalisation and the need for supply-side reform, both of which have important ramifications for education and training policy. Acknowledgement of changing economic conditions allowed the Labour Party to use the language of modernisation to be applied to policy changes which downplayed collective interests such as re-nationalisation and trade union rights in the workplace, while simultaneously highlighting new policies which appealed to individual aspirations. As a result of the Policy Review and further developments in economic policy since 1994, individualisation, modernisation and the rhetoric of renewal formed the intellectual case for policy change.

Thirdly, the accession of Tony Blair with his natural liberal, meritocratic instincts and strong ethical repugnance towards the state and the dependency of welfare recipients added a new element to Labour politics. Blair found an unlikely ally in David Blunkett who came to meritocracy from another perspective, and like many Labour figures from the past such as RH Tawney, saw the role of Labour Party social policy as opening up as many opportunities for the betterment of the poorest elements of society as possible. Blair and Blunkett necessarily shared an abhorrence of low standards and outmoded structures, especially when they acted as cover for producer domination of public services. Both also expressed, in their different ways, visions of a more decent society where empowered individuals took advantage of new opportunities within an enhanced code of responsibilities. In this sense, then, Blair and Blunkett (among others) provided the moral case for policy change.

Structural change made it easier to make electorally driven policy; the acceptance, after the Policy Review, of new economic realities gave policy change an intellectual underpinning; the final element, the moral imperative, was provided only after 1994 with the leadership of Tony Blair and key front-bench actors and advisers. The construction of new Labour can therefore best be understood as a synthesis, and the following chapters trace the interaction between this new political phenomenon and the extant policy communities of the education and training arenas.

This new synthesis seems to describe a Michelsian oligarchy which should logically follow Downsian assumptions and come to rest at the centre of any policy distribution. Is this the case with new Labour's education and training policies? To some extent, yes, new Labour effectively gained the support of centre ground or floating voters at the 1997 election, although the direct electoral effect of the policies discussed in this thesis are incalculable. But as we have already seen, the

centre ground in politics is not fixed and the movements it describes are expressed in individual consensus positions taken by professional practitioners and academic theorists. Parties, meanwhile, are largely restrained in their own movement by the existence of party ideologies. This thesis argues that parties (specifically new Labour) adapt to the developing consensus positions and then amend their identity by redefining their ideologies to take into account new factors. Hence, in the cases discussed in this thesis, new Labour use techniques such as the imperatives of renewal and modernisation, or introduce (or adopt) new ideas within the polity such as 'lifelong learning' which can be attached to elements of the existing ideology, such as widening access to education. While lifelong learning can be used as an expression of one of Labour's long standing aims, in policy terms it follows an already established consensus and has in reality implied little in terms of educational reform. In the case study chapters that follow, new Labour use the breadth of its ideological heritage (and the peculiarities of the electoral system) to emphasise how policy changes represent a modernisation of, not a retraction from, social democratic aims. In Panebainco's terms, the new dominant coalition is still attached to the party.

In the historical development of the Labour Party the dominant intellectual themes have been (or can be reduced to for the purposes of this thesis) broadly egalitarian and broadly meritocratic or liberal. Often, Labour Party policy has embraced both these aims simultaneously, and the conflict between these elements is not unique to the experience of new Labour. As Maurice Kogan has pointed out, we should not always assume conflict between ideas, and people often keep contradictory things in mind. The nature of policy implementation also means that intentions do not always translate into the expected outcomes; policymakers cannot pre-guess the cultural influences of policy once they have passed through the boundaried institutions of school, college or university[90]. What is new about new Labour, this thesis will argue, is that the steepened hierarchy of the party makes it easier for the party leadership to follow what it believes to be electoral popularity, or to enjoin the consensus between entrenched positions to a degree necessary to operationalise policy. Parties do not set the agenda through the application of their ideologies, rather, they follow events and intellectual trends, and then amend their ideologies to suit the new conditions.

[90] Kogan,M in Worswick,GDN (ed)(1985) Education and Economic Performance: Joint Studies in Public Policy, Gower, Aldershot, p.136.

Chapter Three

The Labour Party and compulsory education

This chapter looks at the two major themes in regard to compulsory education in Britain since the war, standards and selection. It suggests that Labour was traditionally more interested in the structure of education, with the comprehensive system imposed in an effort to eradicate selection and raise standards for all as a by-product of egalitarianism. However, the standard of state education became steadily more important politically, and by 1997 new Labour had come to believe that standards mattered more than the structure of the compulsory schooling system. To explain this change of emphasis, this chapter asserts that party policy change is most readily understood as an inter-party process of changing consensus among party leaderships and the intellectual influences they are subject to, rather than internally derived. Policy is driven more by events and the changing perceptions of key élite thinkers than by party resolutions and conference decisions. The implication of this is that, in the case of both major parties in Britain, inter-party leadership consensus masks internal dualism over major issues[91].

Consensus is a key theme of this chapter because changing social attitudes towards comprehensive schooling is reflected by positions taken within each of the major parties. Standards in education have become only criterion by which the state education system is measured, with new Labour abandoning the overtly egalitarian aspects of comprehensivisation in favour of more diversity, henceforth believed to promote a higher level of exam passes. Standards, in the context of this thesis, constitute two major elements, the curriculum[92] and the structure of the school system. After 1997, the new Labour curriculum emphasised basic skills and vocational education for schools at the wrong end of performance tables. At the other end of the performance spectrum schools are encouraged to become specialist schools which can select by aptitude and go beyond the normal boundaries of, or ignore parts of the current National Curriculum (NC)[93]. Specialist schools continue the theme of the Conservative's City Technology Colleges and Grant Maintained schools in assuming that higher standards are achievable through such a differentiated system, the assumption of the 1944 Butler Education Act which found some support among Labour leadership

[91] In opposition, parties have more control over policy output and suppression of controversial internal debates. In Government, parties often find that competing wings of party opinion have to be accommodated in legislation and differences are subject to minute attention from the media.

[92] Curriculum is defined here as what is taught and how it is taught, therefore incorporating pedagogy, the art or method of teaching employed.

[93] The National Curriculum is to be reformed after a five year moratorium in 2000, and Labour's new legislative framework clearly sets the context for this next development. It is likely to concentrate on a few 'core' or 'key' curriculum imperatives rather than the ten subjects currently having to be offered; this would be in line with government statements and should be an indicator of the power of the government to shape a changing professional consensus.

figures up to the 1964 election. Therefore, any discussion of the curriculum in education is inevitably also concerned with the structure of schooling.

The Labour Party became associated with comprehensive schooling in the 1950s and 1960s, although such reorganisation had been party policy since 1939. However, key Labour figures expressed doubts about comprehensivisation during the 1950s, so for Hugh Gaitskell, Harold Wilson and Roy Jenkins, comprehensivisation had to be presented as 'levelling up' to grammar schools standards rather than down to the secondary modern norm[94]. While at leadership level there were doubts within the Labour Party, its control of many Local Education Authorities (LEAs) during the 1950s meant that the ideological arguments could be fought out at local level where comprehensive experiments were undertaken[95]. Attempts at comprehensive reorganisation from as early as 1948 were often opposed by the teacher unions, especially if they involved the closure of grammar schools; both the National Association of Schoolmasters (NAS) and National Union of Teachers (NUT) were unwilling to endorse comprehensivisation at their 1954 conferences[96]. Taking an alternative view, the National Association of Labour Teachers (NALT) and the Socialist Education Association (SEA), a party affiliate, worked within the party machinery to promote comprehensive schools. It was noted that "Quite small numbers of teachers, as members of local Labour Parties, had on occasions a very considerable influence promoting the comprehensive school"[97], and this included members of the unaffiliated NUT.

In addition to this teacher union pressure on Labour, interested groups of middle-class parents emerged after 1960 which campaigned for state comprehensive education and against the selective structure which omitted 80% of the age group. This activity included the formation of the Association for the Advancement of State Education (AASE), whose journal, *Where*, educated parents about the issues and told them where they could apply pressure for comprehensive reform. Acting, like the teacher unions, at the local level, an AASE offshoot, the Campaign for the

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[94] despite having been party policy since 1939, multilateralism (comprehensivisation) was questioned by many during the 1950s who feared its electoral unpopularity. At the end of the 1950s, the party leader Hugh Gaitskell defined comprehensivisation not as an impersonal single school, but as an idea that segregation had to be eradicated by whatever solution the LEAs thought appropriate. Roy Jenkins reflected on the uncertainty among party supporters when he wrote that "good, established grammar schools should be preserved as a bridge between the State sector and the private sector", Jenkins,R (1959) The Labour Case, Penguin, in Parkinson,M (1970) p.85. Harold Wilson also chose to repeat Gaitskell's 1958 promise of "a grammar school education for all", *The Times*, 5/7/58, Letters, during the 1964 election campaign.

[95] LEAs were an outcome of the 1902 Act, they were charged with creating or maintaining secondary education places for all types of school, if necessary by paying fees to schools not controlled by them, Brooks,L (1991), Contemporary Debates in Education: an historical perspective, Longman, London pp.128-9.

[96] because of "insufficient evidence that existing comprehensives could prove satisfactory" as Brooks interprets them, ibid, p50

[97] James,PH (1980) The Reorganisation of Secondary Education, NFER, Windsor, p.80.

Advancement of State Education (CASE) was established to lobby councillors and provide information through the various comprehensive journals. These included *Forum for promoting 3-19 comprehensive education*, and the Comprehensive Schools Committee's *Comprehensive Education*, which fed the growing interest in educational issues among concerned middle-class parents who feared their children might be among the 80% of failures. This growing issue salience was reflected in the hiring of education correspondents by most of the popular newspapers[98].

The effect of this pressure is evident in the establishment of what Maurice Kogan has termed "a new educational Establishment" by the late 1950s, consisting of (Conservative Education Minister) David Eccles' Information Division and writers such as Tyrrell Burgess, Anne Corbett and Brian MacArthur who began to have a serious effect on social attitudes:

> The journalists were part of a wider network that grew in the 1950s and 1960s. The impact of the sociologists- Floud, Halsey, Michael Young- and the economists led by John Vaizey, has already been mentioned... before Vaizey published *The Costs of Education* in 1955 hardly a single academic paid attention to education[99].

Evidence that comprehensivisation as a policy option had widespread, even cross-party support despite the official hostility of the Conservatives, can be found in the discourse of Eccles and his successor, Edward Boyle as Education Secretaries. Eccles was the first minister to make the connection between economic efficiency and educational goods, when he noted that educational expenditure was a form of economic investment. This notion was coupled with an active stimulation of demand for education as a consumer durable by both politicians; as Kogan notes, such demand "required no stronger ideology than individual self-interest"[100]. Boyle was, however, untypical of the Conservative viewpoint on comprehensive education, as his 1962 statement demonstrated:

> One of the most important aspects in the educational system is to try to compensate for the inequality of the home environment of children over the country,

and in the Foreword to the *Newsome Report* of the following year Boyle made a statement that has been described as a milestone in Conservative thinking[101]: "...the essential point is that all children

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[98] Shaw,B (1983), Comprehensive Schooling: the impossible dream?, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, pp.50-51.
[99] Kogan,M (1971) The Politics of Education : Edward Boyle and Anthony Crosland in conversation with Maurice Kogan, Penguin, Harmondsworth, p.46
[100] ibid, p.22.
[101] by Anne Corbett in *The Tory Educators*.

should have an equal opportunity of acquiring intelligence, and developing their talents and abilities to the full"[102].

Underlying this structural change which produced a near universal consensus around comprehensivisation was a concern for standards. During the 1960s the Labour leadership could benefit from the ideological division between liberal meritocracy and egalitarianism discussed in Chapter Two of this thesis. Many liberals within the party could celebrate the non-compulsory nature of the Circular 10/65 and the continuation of high standards in grammars' as an example for the rest, while applauding comprehensivisation as a way to raise the minimum[103]. The egalitarians, meanwhile, could confidently await the success of comprehensives and the inevitable decline in the appeal of both independent and grammar systems.

With the introduction of comprehensivisation, standards of education had a lower salience for a decade between the middle 1960s and the middle 1970s as the new system benefited from consensual support[104]. However, the onset of criticisms of the comprehensive system and the inapplicability of many school leavers to the needs of the economy reconnected structures and standards within mainstream opinion. During the 1970s, and particularly after the oil crisis demonstrated Britain's industrial weakness, cross-party calls for a more vocational education[105] came up against the reality of educational professionals' effective control of pedagogy and school examination and inspection systems. Beyond these responsibilities, LEAs operated a light-touch advisory function (to complement Her Majesty's Inspectorate, HMI), set the political framework through the curriculum and resourced the infrastructure with central government funds. Any changes to this situation therefore had to incorporate both central government direction of the structure and the curriculum, which would necessitate changing the role of the LEA and teacher training, so as to reform the pedagogy and content of lessons.

The imperative of higher standards became the political property of the Conservative Opposition during the 1970s because the party had not, at national or even ideological level, become so closely associated with comprehensivisation as Labour, although as the manifesto analysis in Chapter One demonstrates, the Conservatives became steadily less hostile to comprehensivisation. This fragile settlement began attracting criticism from a series of *Black Papers* from 1969, only four years after the Circular 10/65 which declared the governments

[102] Boyle quoted in Kogan,M (1971) The Politics of Education : Edward Boyle and Anthony Crosland in conversation with Maurice Kogan, Penguin, Harmondsworth , p.18.
[103] Circular 10/65 invited LEAs to submit proposals for the comprehensive reorganisation of schools in their districts. It did not compel LEAs to do so, and it offered a variety of models for consideration.
[104] The trade-off is unconscious in that the differences between wings of the party or movement became submerged by other shared goals, and that both sides of the internal debate wished to see standards improve.
[105] Notably the Ruskin College speech of James Callaghan, October 1976

objective to "end selection at eleven plus and to eliminate separation in secondary education"[106]. This 'New Right' critique lambasted the educational establishment and politically-motivated LEA control of education on the grounds of the failure of egalitarian schooling. Failure could be measured in terms of supposedly easier examinations and the higher proportion of students achieving GCE 'O' and 'A' levels and also from anecdotal evidence from employers that education was failing to meet changing labour market needs[107]. Although James Callaghan, Labour Prime Minister in 1976, shared some of these concerns, noting that "there is no virtue in producing socially well-adjusted members of society who are unemployed because they do not have the skills"[108], an Education Act which for the first time made comprehensive re-organisation compulsory was introduced in the same year. Criticism at this stage was focused more on child-centred teaching methods than on the structures of state schooling, but the fragile consensus among individual parents about the nature of comprehensive schooling was premised on its success in raising the standards of *their* children's education.

According to Gallup polling data, in 1976 a doubling of concern about education occurred in terms of the 'most urgent issues facing Britain today' index[109]. For the critics of the right, concerned with the curtailment of freedom of choice in the name of equality, with Labour controlled LEAs and with 'trendy teaching' methods, the comprehensive school system was the common denominator that linked poor standards and structures. This became the starting point for Margaret Thatcher's government after 1979, but for the Labour Opposition, attachment to the comprehensive system and local democracy meant that it faced a peculiar difficulty if it wanted to acknowledge that standards had to improve.

To appreciate the nature of the change in Labour's position and to trace the leadership's accommodation to a new consensus on how to raise standards by changing structures, this chapter will continue with a discussion of what is meant by 'standards'. This will then be traced within the context of Conservative legislation throughout the 1979-97 period and the Labour Party reaction to the new conditions prior to the change of party leadership which brought David Blunkett to the position of Shadow Education Secretary in 1994.

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[106] Department of Education and Science, *The Organisation of Secondary Education*, Circular 10/65 London, HMSO, 1965.

[107] Carr,W & Hartnett,A (1996) Education and the Struggle for Democracy: the politics of educational ideas, Open University Press, Buckingham, pp.105-6 for evidence of Callaghan's openness to the impressions of industrialists; this anecdotal evidence, coupled with the DES's policy advice document, *School Education in England: Problems and Initiatives* were enough to trigger the 'Great Debate' on standards.

[108] Callaghan quote, ibid, p.106

[109] Having ranged from 0 to 3 on the monthly index from June 1971 to December 1975, respondent concern rose from 3 to 6 and fluctuated only within these parameters between November 1976 and December 1984. *GPI Monthly Reports*, various years.

Standards: the politicisation of outcomes

Any definition of standards has to begin with the question; what is education for? Education can be seen as a process, a product, or indeed both. Philosophers of education who focus on education as a product, the end result of teaching and learning activities, look particularly at such factors as goals, aims, competence, effective teaching, and standards. Those who view education as a process are concerned primarily with the quality of the learner's experience, the nature of methodologies, and the relationships between teachers and pupils and among pupils. To some extent, conservative philosophers of education see education mainly as a product, while liberal theorists of education have tended to see it mainly as a process. Others argue that product and process are inseparable; insofar as this is analogous with the dichotomy of standards and structures (the product is measurable against some standard, the process is determined by structure), Labour have most commonly been associated with the idea that they are inseparable. Through the pedagogic process, the curriculum and through egalitarian distributions of talented pupils and teachers, the Labour Party hoped comprehensivisation would raise standards for all.

In keeping with the intra-party divisions and confusion about outcomes and processes, social scientists have had to develop their own definitions of 'standards'. Some common definitions are; standards as a benchmark, a norm of quality and efficiency expected; standards as a minimum or floor, below which pupil performance should not fall, and the point at which remedial action should begin; in a broader sense a standard can be interpreted as a vision or direction for a school system, to which government can strive or plan; equally, standards can be seen as a condition of excellence, in the way that 'O' and 'A' levels are seen as the standard expected of brighter pupils or students [110].

Clearly, these different definitions of 'standards' are themselves subject to changing interpretations. Specifically, there are problems for policymakers who want to see evidence of improvement over time because syllabus content changes over time to take into account changes of emphasis or scientific advance. Hence, subjects once exclusive to university degree courses are regularly tackled at the 'A' level stage and this is replicated throughout the age ranges. Another difficulty is raised when researchers wish to measure acquired knowledge; should it be through curriculum breadth or depth?[111]. If we use the language of 'falling standards', does this mean that

[110] Cooper,BS & Shute, RW *Standardisation or standards: school reform in the USA and England*, in Tomlinson,H(ed) (1992) The Search for Standards, in association with The British Educational Management and Administration Society, Longman, Harlow, pp.49-50.

[111] This is often the concern voiced by defenders of 'A' levels in Britain; if the qualification is to be broadened to cover more subjects in the same time, must there not be a diminution of standards? See

fewer candidates are reaching a standard demanded; for example, that the number of new recruits who have the ability to recite times tables or complete spelling tests on employment is declining? Or does it mean that the standard now seen as acceptable to warrant a certificate is lower than it had been in the past, in terms of practices like poor punctuation going unpunished?[112]. For some, standards are a measure only of performance, while for others the concept of standards incorporates notions of moral and social behaviour[113]. In the absence of a broad working consensus about what standards mean, the political application of standards is coloured by the prevailing ideological atmosphere.

One constant theme of the standards debate has been the requirement of national economic efficiency. On these grounds educational failure has been blamed for economic failures for over one hundred and fifty years[114]. Educational failure, by some interpretations, is a displacement of responsibility, and any 'standards' debate which concentrates on the positive or negative effect of schooling reinforces inequality by transferring blame onto individual pupils and students rather than the economic system[115]. However, it could be argued that the real meaning of standards is dependent on what policymakers wish to see in place of 'failure'. The Butler Education Act of 1944 had encapsulated the consensus view of a tripartite division of ability to match that of the labour market, and educational standards were set to meet the requirements of industry. Indeed:

> In the post war climate, the priority was to hurry as many young people as possible through schooling and into the waiting labour market. Far from regarding the 80% of young people, who in the late 1940s, never attempted any course that would lead to a school certificate.... as a problem, the then Labour government unashamedly set up secondary modern schools to cater for those students "whose future employment will not demand any measure of technical skill or knowledge" [116].

The settlement around the slogan of 'free education for all' (which arrived with Butler in 1944) had the inter-war support of ethical socialists like RH Tawney, who believed that 'equality of

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Vivien Anthony, *The Changing Perceptions of Standards in the Independent Sector: the Impact of the Education Reform Act*, in Tomlinson,H (ed) (1992), pp.106-7.

[112] see, Steadman,S, Abbot,R & Birchenough,M (1989) Setting standards in schools, School Curriculum Development Committee, SCDC Publications, Longman, York, p.2.

[113] ibid, p.2 for a discussion of the varied definitions of behavioural standards and some of the authors who advocate a moral element.

[114] Tomlinson,H, *Industry, politics and the search for standards*, in Tomlinson,H(ed) (1992) The Search for Standards, in association with The British Educational Management and Administration Society, Longman, Harlow, pp.30-31.

[115] ibid, pp.34-37.

[116] Tomlinson,S (1997) *Sociological Perspectives on Failing Schools*, in International Journal of the Sociology of Education, Vol.7, No.1 1997, p.4, citing Ministry of Education 1946, *Our Nation's Schools*.

opportunity' meant the opportunity to get bright working class children into grammar schools to help build the meritocracy, and if this could only be done by taking a measure of pupils' standard of education and selecting them for advancement, then so be it. In contrast to this meritocratic position, the 1960s consensus around comprehensivisation was never as secure or long-lived. It could be argued that, although the pro-comprehensive interest groups such as AASE and CASE worked on Labour indirectly by implanting ideas in society, they had only a direct influence on the party so long as parents were united behind a scheme intended to raise standards for their own children.

This thesis asserts that internal Labour Party or Left debates reflected the changing basis of demand for labour as much as they reflected philosophical differences, and the standards of education required to meet this demand are the minimum requirement for a mainstream party seeking office. However, within this externally-induced framework of change, there are distinct party political differences. The external conditions are set by the changing basis of demand for labour and social expectations, but parties are able to choose how best to respond to them.

During the 1980s an added context for the standards debate was set by demographic decline and open competitive markets, to which states have to respond by the maximisation of human capital. This implies the maximisation of potential, satisfying the Labour Party's ideological commitment to equality of opportunity. The other aspect of the decline in numbers of young people, however, is that school rolls will fall, and the Conservative governments of the 1980s discovered that the application of competition between schools would ensure the worst performing schools would be squeezed by lack of recruits[117]. This would, for the New Right, demonstrate the positive market effect on standards, in particular that selective, differentiated educational systems could eradicate failure and represent value for money, satisfying the demands for lower public spending in other aspects of Conservative rhetoric.

The measurement of school performance led to a new appreciation of the 'school effect' as an educational variable. The 'school effectiveness' movement had been introduced to the possibilities of outcome measurement by the work of the Department of Education and Science (DES) during the 1970s, and especially after the Ruskin College speech of the Prime Minister James Callaghan in October 1976. Calling for greater accountability, DES Circular 14/77 set out to monitor, for the first time, LEAs and their curriculum policies, and the DES began to utilise HMI reports to galvanise the so called 'Great Debate'. The Department's *Primary Survey* of 1978 and

[117] Joanna le Métais, *Quality in Education: Standards in Europe*, in Tomlinson,H(ed) (1992), pp.68-70. Of course, the effects of this would be slow to materialise until the teachers could be more easily moved from one school to another, which was the intention of subsequent legislation.

Secondary Survey of 1979 found that HMI reports contained no measures of attainment or objective measures of performance, and indeed relied upon the individual Inspector's experience[118]. However, from the mid-1970s, HMI had begun to use statistically controlled sampling of schools to plan their inspections and added systematic data-collection methods to their normative reporting. The free dissemination of these reports among headteachers slowly began to nationalise best practice [119].

Thereafter, we can trace the development of the imperative for more school accountability, facilitated by the simultaneous development of data processing methodology. Centralisation grows with the ability to measure outcomes and thrives in times of perceived economic underperformance because of the pressure on public spending and the desire for value-for-money. The ideological aims of the governing party is of less importance than national requirements, although Conservative government after 1979 demonstrated that entrenched consensual ideas about education can be more easily marginalised if the government harnesses new techniques and adopts them within its ideological boundaries. In 1979 new techniques allowed for the measuring of school effectiveness and maximising value-for-money. In order to take advantage of the new conditions, the Conservatives would have to confront the 'producer interest' of the educational establishment and its cherished curricular and pedagogic autonomy.

Effectiveness measurement; the building of a new consensus

Responding to the 1980 Education Act, which required LEAs to make information about examination results available to parents, John Marks, Caroline Cox and Maciej Pomian-Srzedwicki embarked on research into the 1981 CSE and GCE exams results taken by the whole cohort of 16 year-olds[120]. The results were subsequently used to attack both comprehensive assumptions and the educational consensus which preserved such a system. The Marks and Cox study showed that social class characteristics had the strongest correlation with examination performance; specifically that social classes 4 and 5 produced the poorest results. However, they noted the large variation, to a factor of two, between LEAs with the same proportion of social class 4 and 5 pupils; for example:

[118] Pearce,J (1986) Standards and the LEA: The Accountability of Schools, National Foundation for Educational Research, NFER-Nelson, Windsor, pp.66-7.
[119] ibid, p.141.
[120] The survey involved 350,000 pupils who started secondary school in 1976 and took their CSE and GCE examinations in 1981.

....in Mathematics, the range extends from three LEAs where an average of 16% or 17% of pupils attain passes at GCE/CSE Grade 1, to four other LEAs where the pass rates run at 34%, 32% and two at 31%[121].

They then used correlation coefficients and multiple regression to assess other factors generally assumed to influence educational attainment. Selectivity correlated positively, in that LEAs with higher proportion of selection produced better exam results than comprehensive areas, and more controversially, in seventeen of the fifty-seven LEAs in the sample, secondary modern pupils attained more 'O'-level and CSE points than the average for their peers in all other types of schools combined[122]. More surprisingly, they found a negative correlation between expenditure per pupil and high examination results; lower examination results tend to occur in LEAs which spend more on pupils and have lower pupil-teacher ratios. As expected, the percentage of pupils with English as a second language correlated negatively, meaning this category of pupils tended to produce lower examination results[123]. The authors chose not to highlight the possibility that, in areas with higher remedial language spending, this was adding value to pupils' outcomes and in fact narrowing the negative effect of language difficulties.

Indeed, Marks and Cox made a similar value judgement in their overall conclusions, by claiming that the correlation which favoured selection was at least as strong as the class factor effect, and that (within the assumption there are natural differences between pupils) both grammar and secondary modern schools were "in their different ways, enabling their pupils to obtain good examination results"[124]. Therefore diversity, in the form of technical and other types of specialist schools, should be encouraged. Furthermore, they argued for more control of public expenditure on education as a way of measuring the accountability of both teachers and LEAs, and that the time was ripe for experimentation as demographic change (pupil numbers in secondary schools were set to fall from 4 million to 3 million between 1983 and 1990) allowed for some reorganisation and rationalisation[125]. This report has been influential on much subsequent legislation, including ideas adopted by the new Labour Government after 1997. Importantly for the future development of

[121] Marks,J, Cox,C & Pomian-Srzednicki,M (1983) Standards in English Schools, National Council for Educational Standards, Report No.1, p.13.
[122] ibid, p.17
[123] ibid, p.43
[124] ibid, p.116
[125] ibid, p.119. Expenditure on education as a proportion of GDP had actually peaked during 1975/6 at 6.3%, and that when Marks and Cox were claiming, p.119, that expenditure was the highest it had ever been in 1983 (the time of publication) it had in fact fallen to 5.4% of GDP, source, DES *Statistical Bulletin* 4/89, March 1989, quoted in Simon,B (1991) Education and the Social Order, Lawrence & Wishart, London, p.599.

educational policy, the report specifically linked standards as a political issue with the idea that selective provision was the best method for achieving higher standards.

However, the DES reacted defensively to this attack on the comprehensive system. From the point of view of Marks and Cox, the existence of a consensual position which incorporated the DES was evidence enough of a left-leaning educational establishment which sneered at and tried to ignore their findings. The DES statisticians put their official commentary on the Marks and Cox report (containing a destructive critique of their findings) to the Secretary of State, and this was leaked to the press before the authors had chance to refute two allegations, that they used an unrepresentative sample and had made insufficient allowance for social class; indeed Frank Dobson, Shadow Education Spokesman, produced a press release to the effect that

> ... the education world is now rife with rumours that Sir Keith [Joseph's] official statisticians have..... 'rubbished' the statistical methods used in the document casting doubt on their validity[126].

However, within two months the authors were called into the DES and given apologies for certain misrepresentations to the press, and some retractions and corrections were published. This apology allowed Marks and Cox to publish their own highly politicised attack (*The Insolence of Office*) on the Department, supported by leaking officials and biased journalism. The net result was two episodes of publicity for the original attacks on the comprehensive principle and the politicisation of standards in the comprehensive system, because attacking the consensus opened up the field for different policy responses. Despite the clear selective bias of the authors in *Standards in English Schools*, the idea that schooling could be more effective and that what the socialist sociologist Julienne Ford termed "a gigantic experiment with the life-chances of millions of children" must be open to some evaluation, was born[127].

As well as ensuring that LEAs had to be more open about the effectiveness of their schools, other aspects of the Education Act of 1980 set the tone of the Conservative period of government. Realising that parental choice could only be enhanced by giving more information, such as examination results, and requiring governor's to report to parents, government also insisted on the right of parents to challenge an LEA's decision on which schools their children attended. Once again, with a falling number of 11 year olds, and a fixed number of schools, demographic change would allow a market to emerge to rebalance supply and demand. School closures would henceforth be determined by the unpopularity of a school, rather than on the basis of the needs of

[126] Cox,C & Marks,J (1988) The Insolence of Office: Education and the Civil Servants, Claridge Press, London p.29.
[127] ibid, p.8.

the community. It was the piecemeal, voluntarist development of comprehensive education in Britain after Circular 10/65 that helped to obscure the facts of this ideological attack on the comprehensive principle. As a result of this compromise between egalitarian and liberal or meritocratic Left concerns, many excoriated secondary schools were unfairly affected by nearby grammar schools or the growing phenomenon of middle class flight from working class areas, stripping schools of well supported and self-motivated pupils. Schools that were in no sense comprehensive could henceforth be portrayed as failures of the system as their pupils numbers went into decline.

Other parts of the 1980 legislation challenged the authority of the Labour Party's LEA powerbase by beginning the process of removing the curriculum responsibilities from local democratic influence, and encouraging more self-management at the level of the individual school[128]. This in fact found some resonance on the left, especially among educational sociologists concerned with the inability of Education Priority Areas[129] and comprehensivisation to eradicate inequality, particularly racial inequality. A study funded by the DES and the Policy Studies Institute carried out by David Smith, Sally Tomlinson and researchers at Lancaster University between 1981 and 1988[130] incorporated new statistical techniques and came to conclusions which supported parts of the Marks and Cox analysis. When attempting to explain differences between schools with a similar socio-economic background and a similar multiracial distribution of students, Smith and Tomlinson found that pupil teacher ratios were an unreliable indicator[131], something which confirmed the earlier findings of Michael Rutter, who concluded that any class size from 15 to 40 was compatible with good outcomes[132]. They also found that there were inconclusive correlations with resourcing and size of establishment which again echoed the results of the Marks and Cox research.

Among the major positive effects that Smith and Tomlinson identified were the 'management ethos' of the school and its ability to maintain high levels of contact with parents[133]. Hence the 'school effect' became the key variable, even over factors such as the ethnicity of the

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[128] ibid, p.142.

[129] A fruit of the Plowden Committee's report whose basic principle was that funding should follow the needs of the child, rather than following the fact of the child.

[130] Smith,DJ & Tomlinson,S (1989) The School Effect: A Story of Multi-Racial Comprehensives, Policy Studies Institute, pp.1-4.

[131] ibid, p.281.

[132] Rutter,M *et al* (1979) Fifteen Thousand Hours, Open Books, Shepton Mallet, cited in Weindling,R *The Process of School Improvement: Some Practical Messages from Research*, in NFER (1988) Quality in Schools: a briefing conference, National Foundation for Educational Research, Slough, p.69.

[133] A key element of the Smith and Tomlinson study was the time taken to interview all the parents of children in the study and the meticulous accumulation of details of the home to assess the baseline of ability and then develop a way of measuring the *value added* by the school.

child. The policy implication, therefore, was that with the statistical methodology now available to assess the entry or 'baseline' level of each child and variants components analysis to measure the value added during the period in school, all schools could be thus analysed to determine whether they were effective. Continual testing would be required because effective parental choice relies on this kind of evidence of differentials. The concept of the 'failing school' was an essential feature of market rhetoric and declining demand.

As Tomlinson noted later, the intention of her study was not to pillory less successful schools but to encourage best practice[134]. However, a political momentum had built up through the various critiques of the comprehensive system, which questioned high or disproportionate spending, smaller class sizes, and child-centred learning. This momentum threatened the role of LEAs by calling for more management control at the level of the school. By the time of the publication of *The School Effect* in 1989, the government was already planning legislation which would oblige local authorities to publish school examination results, and the language of testing and improving schools was blended with the language of market choice by politicians, including, by 1996 some influential advisers to the Labour opposition like Michael Barber[135]. In common with Marks and Cox, Smith and Tomlinson felt they had been abused by the DES, who had funded the research, but because this time the authors cautioned against using their findings as a 'green light' for publishing raw test results, "within nine months it was being rubbished as sociological jargon"[136].

This marriage of left-inclined research, aimed primarily at raising the educational standards of ethnic minority pupils in inner cities, with New Right rhetoric might appear paradoxical; however, the common factor was the desire for higher standards, always an element of the consensus around the comprehensive principle. As that consensus unravelled, research continued to be based around the dynamic of improved performance, whether in the name of social justice, national efficiency, the application of ideology or through a desire to cut public spending through maximising value-for-money. Again, this was of concern on the left as well as the right. The Inner London Education Authority (ILEA), throughout the 1980s portrayed as a hot bed of 'loony left' trendy teaching methodology and a classic example of 'producer capture'[137] had in fact been at the forefront of the efforts to raise standards in its schools. According to Tessa Blackstone, (later a

[134] Tomlinson,S (1997), p.11.
[135] Barber,M (1996) The Learning Game: Arguments for an Education Revolution, Golancz, London and in various other articles
[136] Sally Tomlinson, interview with author, London, 18/3/97.
[137] Kenneth Baker, launching the Education Reform Act of 1988 told the Commons that the education service "has become producer-dominated", Maclure,S *Parents and Schools: Opting in and Opting Out*, in Lawton,D(ed) (1989) The Education Reform Act: Choice and Control, Hodder & Stoughton, London, p.5.

Labour education minister, Baroness Blackstone) the thinking behind many of ILEA's innovative policies was to be found in the morality of Fabianism (particularly the emphasis on efficiency), long part of the capital's educational culture from the time of the London County Council. This emphasis on efficiency had been augmented in the 1980s by sharply egalitarian, anti-racist and anti-sexist policies; again, raising standards, for the excluded, was the aim. The ILEA was pioneering in nursery provision for three and four year olds and in the recognition of socio-economic factors which the 'school effectiveness' movement built on[138]. However, the Conservatives aimed to move the agenda on and continue reform in the shape of an Education Reform Act based on parental choice and a nationally determined curriculum if the Conservative's were re-elected in 1987.

The mid-1980s political climate in education was also characterised by funding concerns[139]. Teachers' unions, doubly concerned by what they interpreted as a deliberate rundown of the state education service and their own relative pay, had embarked on three years of intermittent industrial action between 1984 and 1987. The general feeling of a crumbling *status quo* and that 'something must be done' played into the hands of government reformers. British Social Attitudes surveys found growing support for Conservative policies on education (in contrast to health) as the 1987 election approached[140]. Labour were perceived as supporting a *status quo* which was seen as failing children[141]. Detailed questioning by the BSA researchers found that people were most concerned with apparently falling resource budgets, despite DES figures which show virtually unchanged LEA spending[142]. The issue of class sizes in primary schools was rated the most important factor for improving schools. More significantly, attitudes to comprehensive schooling and the effects of private schools on the state service were beginning to change. In terms of the latter, the percentage accepting the existing proportion of independent schools as 'about right' grew from 59% to 65% between 1985 and 1987. In terms of the former, the numbers had moved from evenly divided to 52% in favour of selection and only 41% in favour of comprehensives over the

[138] Blackstone,T *The Abolition of the ILEA*, in Lawton,D(ed) (1989) The Education Reform Act: Choice and Control, Hodder & Stoughton, London, pp.86-87.
[139] The British Election Survey for 1987 found that 85.7% of respondents thought the government should spend more on education, 49.1% thought they 'definitely should' , Essex Data Archive CD-Rom version, question v33e.
[140] Paul Flather, *Education matters* in Jowell,R, Witherspoon,S & Brook,L (eds)(1988) British Social Attitudes: the 5th Report, Social and Community Planning Research, Gower, Aldershot, p.18
[141] BES for 1987 showed that 64% of respondents thought standards had fallen since the last election, ibid, p.21.
[142] Flather,P, p.21

same period. Among respondents who were themselves teachers, only 48% favoured a comprehensive system[143].

On the issue of LEA's control over the curriculum, BSA respondents showed movement towards the idea that local democratic control should diminish; even among Liberal Democrat and Labour identifiers there were only tiny majorities in favour of a principle that had been observed since 1902[144]. Labour chose not to highlight educational standards in the 1987 campaign, and its attachment to universalism and the concerns of the teacher unions are clear in the manifesto, *Britain will win with Labour*, which contained the highest ratio of references to education of any manifesto since 1964[145]. In pursuit of their aims for a democratic education system the document pledged that: "Labour will invest in education so that the abilities of all children and adults from all home backgrounds and in every part of the country are discovered and nourished[146]. This was to be in partnership with both LEAs and teachers:

> We will see that teachers are recognised properly as well qualified professionals, in their system of rewards, in their procedures for negotiation of their employment conditions and in participation in the development of education.

LEAs were expected to work with a Labour government to "secure a flexible but clear core curriculum agreed at national level..."[147]. All these actions, and more resources, were to act on standards of education, and it is clear that they suggested higher standards within the existing local authority comprehensive framework. As the polling suggests, the relative popularity of the Conservatives' promised reforms was beginning to polarise opinion along party lines, with Labour identifiers diverging from Conservative identifiers in their responses during the late 1980s[148]. Labour had stood on a platform to "prohibit all forms of academic selection, such as the eleven plus, as a condition of admission to secondary schools" in 1983[149], and this continued at the 1989 Annual Conference and in the 1992 manifesto[150]. Despite the flow of often Left-oriented critiques of the comprehensive system, Labour was consistent in its defence of the existing structure. However, on standards there were elements of an emerging future inter-party consensus in

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[143] ibid, p.22. Figures attending independent sector schools have risen from 5% during the 1980s to 7% in 1997, A.H. Halsey, *Leagues apart*, Times Higher Education Supplement, 6/2/98.
[144] ibid, p.24.
[145] the words education or educational appear 31 times out of a total wordage of 9,379, one mention every 302 words. This compares with one mention every 376 words in 1997.
[146] Labour Party (1987) *Britain will win with Labour*, The Labour Party, London, p.28.
[147] ibid, p.29.
[148] Halsey,AH *Failing education?* In Jowell,R, Brook,L, & Taylor,B with Prior,G (eds)(1991) British Social Attitudes: the 8th Report, Social and Community Planning Research, Gower, Aldershot, p.57.
[149] Labour Party 1983 manifesto, *The New Hope for Britain*, The Labour Party, p.53.
[150] Labour Party (1992) *Its time to get Britain working again*, The Labour Party, London, April 1992, p.36.

Labour's acceptance of the need for a national curriculum, while the principle of testing had been accepted with a recognition of the need for a "profile of achievement recording progress"[151] and greater emphasis on home school contact, both elements of the Smith and Tomlinson analysis and prescription for improving standards.

Evidence of some level of recognition among the Labour leadership that the party had lost the initiative over education emerged during the 1980s. First Giles Radice had begun the process of distancing Labour from automatic support for the teacher unions. Then, following the 1987 defeat, came the appointment of Jack Straw as Shadow Education Secretary. Straw almost immediately changed the party's attitude to the Conservative's proposal for more testing for standards, although not without friction with the office of the leader, Neil Kinnock [152]. This is illustrative of the autonomy shadow cabinet members had begun to enjoy following the 1987 defeat, when there was wide support for some kind of general policy review[153]. One of the problems was that Labour was seen as close to the key teacher union, the National Union of Teachers (NUT) and certain professors of education, indeed, "it was a conscious decision in 1987....[for the Labour Party] to distance itself from the teaching unions to get the establishment out of this cosy relationship" according to Straw's research assistant Richard Margrave.

It was in this context that the Conservative Government passed the 1988 Education Reform Act (ERA). Secretary of State Kenneth Baker's declared intention for the ERA was unambiguous. It represented, in his words, the "fundamental unifying purpose to lever up standards"[154] through the application of parental choice and its effects on competition. For historians Carr and Hartnett, the ERA "represented the pinnacle of New Right thinking",[155] in that it legislated for local management of schools (LMS) which rewarded school attractiveness to pupils by funding, and parental freedom of choice between schools. The intention was to introduce quasi-independent state comprehensives with which ordinary comprehensives would have to compete; these special schools were to be Grant Maintained (like the old Direct Grant schools) and contain among their founding governors businessmen as well as parents. Among the discretionary powers awarded to GM schools were the freedom on how to spend the budget, and the freedom to appoint non-graduate teachers. The level of state funding for these schools was to be at the discretion of the Secretary of State rather than the LEA. A further key provision was for open enrolment, (as opposed to

[151] Labour Party (1987) *Britain will win with Labour*, The Labour Party, London, p.29.
[152] Straw changed Labour policy in an interview with *The Guardian* within three weeks of taking the job according to his research assistant, Richard Margrave, interview with author, London, 25/9/96.
[153] The need for a policy review by Labour was confirmed by the findings of Whitely, Miller, Clarke *et al* in King,A (ed)(1993) Britain at the Polls 1992, Chatham House, New Jersey, pp. 283-84.
[154] quoted in John Horn, *To lever up educational standards?* In Tomlinson,H (ed) (1992) p.125
[155] Johnson,R (1991) *A New Road to Serfdom? A critical history of the 1988 Act*, in Education Limited: Schooling, Training and the New Right in England since 1979, Hyman, London, pp.64-86.

enrolment by catchment area) which meant that middle class children would be allowed to travel and have access to better education outside of their own catchment area, exercising their parents' rights in a framework of market and consumer choice.

The ERA (1988), which contained elements which attracted consensus support and which reconnected standards with selection (the national curriculum, more information for parents, the concept of measurement for effectiveness), can be seen to have several internal contradictions of relevance to this thesis. These can be best be understood by separating out three key themes of the Act and the ongoing debate about compulsory state education.

Firstly, those aspects of the legislation directly concerned with raising standards, such as the national curriculum, continual testing and the introduction of different types of state school. Differential schooling to meet differential pupil needs had been consolidated by the Butler Education Act 1944 (and the Norwood Report which preceded it). In the 1950s the system developed into a straight division between the needs of those thought fit for an academic secondary education and 'white-collar' occupations, and those thought best fitted for a secondary education targeted more openly at the needs of the 'blue-collar' labour market. As we have seen, by the late 1950s this failed to meet the requirements of either the changing labour market or the increasing aspirations of the growing middle class, and secondary modern's and later some comprehensive schools tried to satisfy parental demand by offering cheaper versions of the grammar curriculum. In a similar differential vein, the ERA (1988) allowed for schools to opt out of LEA control and attract extra funding, to the extent that, while an average LEA school received £18,000 from the government's capital programme, in the first year of the opting out process, Grant Maintained schools were eligible for an average of £227,000, with a still significant allowance of £40,000 in the second year[156]. In addition, opted out schools, with the extra facilities and staffing they could afford, soon began to attract the most aspirational parents, thus again lowering the overall spread of abilities in the remaining state schools within an LEA.

Other aspects of the new funding regime worked against the general raising of standards. Average Salary Funding and Standards Spending Assessments both follow the principle that funding should follow pupil numbers, and staffing levels were determined on that basis[157]. Without any attention to the curriculum or other special needs of a particular school, these funding procedures prevented schools from buying in the special services or experienced (and thus more expensive) teachers who could have raised the standards of education for all. Even the apparent

[156] Horn,J *To lever up standards?* In Tomlinson,H (ed) (1992), p.130.
[157] in contradiction to the Plowden Committee assumption that funding should be based on need, an important element of any egalitarian distribution.

virtue of autonomy under the Local Management of Schools (LMS) came up against contradictory resistance in the overall regime of local authority capping.

On the curriculum side, Standard Attainment Tests (SATs) were criticised for taking up too much time and preventing good teaching; the emphasis began to change from professionals delivering their knowledge within a loose curriculum to teachers concentrating on that narrow part of a fixed curriculum required to pass the test. Of course, the extra administrative work involved with SATs testing also reduced the time teachers could dedicate to imparting knowledge[158]. The overall impression was one of a government determined to raise educational standards for all, but settling for raising standards for the children of its natural supporters, with an intellectual underpinning argument (of a division of abilities to match the division of labour) which justified differential funding, helping to disguise the fact of a cheaper state education system. This is the basis for Denis Lawton's critique, that the centralisation of the ERA was as much aimed at value-for-money as it was at a better scrutiny of curriculum and standards[159].

In terms of choice, the new National Curriculum was ostensibly designed to 'weed out' the worst performing schools and improve the remainder through the more intense nature of the market relationship between consumer (parent) and supplier. Some have pointed out the confusion of goals here, reflecting the Conservative's fundamental ideological divide over issues of local autonomy. One strong element within the party clearly saw the ERA as an opportunity to attack the notion and the fact of local government, and therefore centralisation was a good in itself. However, another strand of Conservative thinking valued the apparent redistribution of powers to the local school managers and governors[160]. The pattern of Conservative legislation, from the Assisted Places Scheme of 1981 (a subsidy to the independent sector), through the City Technology College's and Grant Maintained opted-out schools, was aimed at expanding choice rather than raising standards for all. Harry Tomlinson saw this as evidence that the use of meritocratic or egalitarian goals were merely rhetorical, for the benefit of consumers and voters, while the unchanging social class structures ensured that the forces acting against raising standards (for all) were reinforced by the ERA[161].

The final aspect of the ERA's impact was its effect on the individualisation of state schooling in Britain. By opening up individual opportunities among a highly differentiated group of

[158] ibid, pp.132-34, and this is without considering the many debates about the over-prescriptiveness or sheer size of the compulsory curriculum, subject to several reviews in the early 1990s, culminating in the moratorium until 2000 announced following the Dearing Review of 1994.
[159] Lawton,D(ed) (1989) The Education Reform Act: Choice and Control, Hodder & Stoughton, London, pp.1-2.
[160] Smith,P *Choice or chaos?* In Tomlinson,H (ed) (1992), p.142.
[161] Tomlinson,H (ed) (1992) pp.36-37.

pupils and their parents, the Act conveyed the message that the education which the state could provide for all children was inferior to what was available for some, in contradiction to the comprehensive principle of universalism. Individual aspirational and affluent parents maximise the effect of their children's education by moving them into popular and successful schools. They could thus be insured against poor education in the same way as paying private health premiums insured them against resource shortages in the NHS or private pension schemes ensured that retirement would not mean living on the state minimum. All these naturally work against the idea of collective provision, but in education, which projects future opportunities for the recipient (rather than acts as a safety net against the worst effects of past failure) the assumption that some people's children could do better than others conceals the fact that, within the state sector of education, additional resources for one group of pupils means less for another group The hand-picking of high ability children from within a neighbourhood could actually damage the educational opportunities of those left behind. Therefore, in terms of ability and resources, competition within state education can be seen as a zero-sum game. It is for these reasons that state education is peculiarly reliant on the collective view that all parents and children are 'in the same boat'; once the possibility of exit emerges, parents follow the natural urge to maximise their children's opportunities and the collective spirit evaporates[162]. The situation is compounded by the fact that there is very little demand for poorly educated people in the context of the contemporary labour market[163].

The ERA (1988) was only one of a series of key legislative changes introduced by Conservative governments which were intended to introduce markets into social provision. Through the mechanism of choice, the government hoped to act on general standards and utilise the demographic trend to transfer resources between schools in accordance with market signals of success or failure. However, because of the confusion of goals among Conservative thinkers and policymakers, the clearer ideology of markets seems to have outweighed the intellectual confusion about the meaning of standards in the final analysis. The ERA is central to the concerns of this thesis for several reasons; firstly, it continued the trend towards the politicisation of standards; secondly, it introduced the concept of a market choice within the free state sector, which is incompatible with comprehensive schooling; thirdly, it continued and reflected the ongoing

[162] John Gray and former Conservative minister George Walden have criticised Labour for leaving open the 'exit' door when it had the opportunity to abolish independent schools during the 1964-70 and 1974-79 governments. If exit had not been an option the middle class would have stayed and fought for better state provision, Gray,J (1997) *Is equality a lost cause?* New Statesman, 28/2/97, p.44 and Walden,G (1996) We Should know Better, Fourth Estate, London, *passim*.

[163] as Sally Tomlinson, among others, points out, Smith,DJ & Tomlinson,S (1989), p.300

downward pressure on public spending expectations; fourthly, and most importantly, the ERA set the parameters of the education debate at the 1992 General Election and beyond.

As in the mid-80s, so in the approach to the 1992 General Election, the public was concerned about educational standards[164]. With much of the architecture of the ERA yet to be tested in practice, the Conservative's were still able to demonise Labour-controlled LEAs. One new factor was the emergence of critical reports about the comprehensive system of state schools in Left-inclined journals, such as the *Independent* and the *Guardian* which were engaged in competition for the middle-ground, anti-Conservative readership. This led the newspapers to distance themselves from the Plowdenist doctrines of the past. Indeed, Maurice Galton, (writing in 1995) who had been a member of the National Curriculum Council during 1988-90, was able to note the development of a new political consensus around standards:

> What I did not forsee... was the new alliance between the 'Right' and the new 'middle-class' Left (referred to by some as the 'futon socialists'). At various times, in recent years, both main political parties have called for the reintroduction of streaming at the top end of the junior school. ... The *Guardian*, which throughout the debate in the 1970s and 1980s adopted a balanced view, took a particularly hard line[165].

Against this background, the Conservative Party fought the 1992 General Election with an education manifesto which offered choice through diversity, the major theme of the ERA, and on teacher training the twin assumptions were that standards were falling and teacher educators had too much autonomy, isolated as they were in the universities. The solution was for student teachers to spend far more time 'in the classroom' learning the job from senior teachers[166]. Meanwhile, the National Curriculum was to be introduced, complete with tests at age 7, 11 and 14 to ensure that control of the education service was to be further centralised.

By contrast, as in 1987, Labour's 1992 manifesto commitments on education quite clearly avoided linking poor standards with educational structures. Labour had talked of standards rising as a consequence of comprehensivisation and had begun to accept the value of tests and league tables. However, because it traditionally defended educational autonomy, trade union rights and local democratic control, the party was still seen as close to the producer interest. This was reflected in the manifesto; as well as promising better pay and career structure for teachers, LEAs were to retain their influence:

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[164] Gallup Polling Index GPI 381 May 1992 and subsequent monthly reports.
[165] Reprinted in ibid, p.228
[166] *The Best Future for Britain*, The Conservative Party, 1992.

> All schools will be free to manage their day-to-day budgets, with local education authorities given a new strategic role. Opted-out schools will be freed from central government control and brought together with City Technology Colleges into the mainstream of the local school system[167].

Labour endorsed the idea of a national curriculum, and agreed that parents should have the right to complain if the education authority failed to delivery on pre-agreed goals in the form of a home-school contract. There were pledges concerning class-sizes and nursery provision. On structure issues, Labour still promised an end to selection and the abolition of the Assisted Places Scheme. Typically for an Opposition manifesto, *Its time to get Britain working again* was mostly concerned with underinvestment, and generally failed to reflect the intellectual movement towards challenging the pedagogical autonomy of teachers and teacher educators. However, as we have seen, the media (especially the newspapers of the centre-left such as the *Independent* and the *Guardian*) had made it easier to link poor education in the inner cities (particularly London of course) with poor and 'wrong-headed' teaching. This made it politically easier for Labour to change its emphasis later in the decade. In the early 1960s, education correspondents had played a key role in disseminating dissatisfaction with the existing practice and structures[168], acting both to spread new thinking among the direct readership and make educational standards a 'story' in itself. This in turn fed into the general acceptance of comprehensive reorganisation after 10/65. In a 1990s context, the alleged failure of the comprehensive system became a staple of the tabloids, television and radio programmes, in addition to featuring in the broadsheet newspapers.

Labour Party policy process, 1987-1992

To demonstrate its role in a new consensus at time of the 1992 General Election, Labour claimed to have developed many of the ideas associated with the Conservative Government themselves. At the time of the ERA, Jack Straw as shadow secretary of state claimed the national curriculum as Labour's idea[169], and shadow education ministers had long since stopped Labour support for

[167] Labour Party (1992) *Its time to get Britain working again*, The Labour Party, London, April 1992.
[168] See for example Kogan,M (1971) The Politics of Education : Edward Boyle and Anthony Crosland in conversation with Maurice Kogan, Penguin, Harmondsworth, *passim*.
[169] And of course Straw had made himself unpopular with his own party by endorsing tests and tables within weeks of taking over as education spokesman in 1987, according to his advisor and research assistant Richard Margrave, interview with author, London 25/9/96, see above, this chapter.

striking teachers[170]. Labour also promised to extend the Conservative principle of Local Management of Schools by delegating budgets to all schools within an LEA.

Labour was cautious about new ideas from its own left wing. Sally Tomlinson became part of the advisory group selected by Jack Straw in 1989, working closely with Paul Corrigan, Labour's Education Officer. Tomlinson was a research associate of the IPPR from its inception, along with David Miliband. Other members of Straw's closed circle were Christopher Price, MP, Christopher Ball (of the Royal Society of the Arts), Professors Ted Wragg from the University of Exeter, and John Elliot from the University of East Anglia[171]. Straw was succeeded in 1992 by Ann Taylor, and there was some continuity of advisers who contributed. These included Michael Barber, a researcher at the TUC and Bert Clough, also of the TUC. Despite the continuity of advisers, Taylor had a different approach to policymaking and came from a more 'educationalist' background, indeed Richard Margrave believed that "The only time the [ongoing modernisation] agenda changed or was halted was when Ann Taylor came in and it began to slip back to a more 'traditional' Labour view". This might have been down as much to the new party leader after the 1992 defeat:

> John Smith would have been a more traditional type, but I don't think they we're all that happy with the Taylor period of office. John Smith used to say to me, as he was a traditional Labour educationalist, as shadow chancellor, don't worry education will get the priority on the funding side, he was very traditional on that. But certainly it slipped back during Ann's period, I think maybe they took the eye off the ball, maybe John's office were not that concerned.... they had a big modernisation programme which was quite apart from anything education was throwing up[172].

Taylor's methodology did not require a closed cabal of advisors, like Straw, instead she used a collection of individual advisers who would invite colleagues and allies to subject-centred seminars to discuss policy. While Tomlinson was close to Taylor, Estelle Morris and Jeff Rooker, junior spokespersons, also began to utilise the same methodology, meeting as a front-bench team with their own advisers in train, either as contributors to debates or helping with speech-writing and

[170] Peter Wilby, former education correspondent editor of the *Independent on Sunday*, interview with author, New Statesman office at Victoria, 19/3/97.
[171] Colleagues recalled by Sally Tomlinson, interview with author, Goldsmiths College, London, 18/3/97.
[172] Richard Margrave, interview with author London, 25/9/96.

framing parliamentary questions. This is substantially the model that David Blunkett continued with after his appointment in 1994.

Politically, Ann Taylor had a more traditional educationalist background than either Straw or Radice, and spoke out strongly against GM schools and league tables, both of which were to be scrapped. This was in response to the post-election 1992 White Paper, *Choice and Diversity: A New Framework for Schools* which established a quango to channel funding for the GM sector, the Funding Agency for Schools (FAS). The FAS was to share responsibility with LEAs where 10% of an authorities pupils were in GM schools[173]; if the level of 75% GM coverage were to be attained, all children in the authority would be directly under the control of the new Department for Education (DfE). Clearly, it is feasible that LEAs could be eradicated entirely if these plans were to be taken to their logical conclusion.

However, Labour's agenda altered after Tony Blair became leader when he let it be known that both GM schools and league tables might have a future under a Blair led government[174]. In fact, Taylor's document for the Annual Conference, *Opening doors to a learning society*, contradicted Blair's position, calling once again for the absorption of GM and CTC establishments within LEA jurisdiction; it also called for the abolition of several education NGOs, notably the Teacher Training Agency and the FAS[175].

Given Blair's new emphasis it is unsurprising that Taylor was soon replaced by David Blunkett who believed that league tables could be useful in raising standards. Blunkett was then thrown into the row about Tony Blair's choice of a Grant Maintained school for his son, which formed the context for both the development of and reception of *Diversity and Excellence* by the party in 1995.

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that Labour slowly adapted to the Conservative agenda whilst in Opposition on certain key issues during the 1979 to 1992 period, and that this process was accelerated by new Labour from the beginning. Accepting these new positions represents evidence that policy change comes about as a process of changing consensus among professional practitioners and educational researchers, which party leaderships then adopt and present as

[173] This would provide for the situation where the LEA meets in public to discuss future plans for pupils' needs, whilst the FAS meets in secret to discuss the same issues, Johnson,H & Riley,K (1995) *The Impact of Quangos and New Government Agencies on Education,* Parliamentary Affairs, Oxford University Press, p. 291.

[174] Susan Young, *Times Educational Supplement*, 21/3/97, in a review of the opposition years suggested that Taylor's paper was leaked alongside 'hints' of Blair's position

[175] The Labour Party, 1994, *passim.*

emanating from within the parameters of party ideology. Pressure from within the Labour Party is less evident than external pressure from parental or consumer groups, pressure from practitioners and pressure from social and economic demand. This chapter has looked particularly at the developing emphasis on standards and the freeing of schools from LEA control during the 1980s and early 1990s. However, on the structure of the state education system Labour were unmoved prior to 1994. Chapter Six suggests that new Labour continued the process by reacting further to Conservative legislation and what it believed to be popular reforms; in effect accepting the inevitability of structural change.

Chapter Four

Developments in vocational education and training

The main intention of this chapter is to examine the major issues in post-compulsory education and training and the Labour Party's treatment of them prior to 1994. This chapter will discuss three major issues regarding VET[176] provision in Great Britain: the funding of post-compulsory skills education; the development of the voluntarist tradition of funding and provision; and the nature and quality of the qualifications themselves. All these issues are discussed in the context of the changing basis of demand for labour. In addition, this chapter considers the Labour Party's failure to challenge the development of a voluntarist tradition in Britain, and the preservation of an academic-vocational divide. In terms of this thesis, the academic-vocational divide can be seen as analogous with the presence of egalitarian and libertarian Left ideas within the party's broad ideology. In Chapter Seven of this thesis I will concentrate the treatment of these issues in the new Labour era. In tracing Labour's historical response to the demands of VET, the pivotal electoral episode covered by this chapter will be 1964, after the Conservative Government established Industrial Training Boards and the Labour Party took office pledged to make them work[177].

The incoming Labour government in 1964 was unable to compel local education authorities, employers, educationalists or trade unionists to fully rationalise the non-degree post-compulsory sector. As in the compulsory sector Labour tried to establish its favoured concept and encourage other key actors to adopt this as the standard practice, in effect governing through consensus. Unfortunately, in the case of VET provision the changing nature of employment skills demanded by the economy made it far more difficult to provide either a comprehensive, uniform, or coherent system which enjoyed the backing of the whole policy community.

A consequence of the changing industrial demand for labour is intermittent mass youth unemployment, and this has to be taken into account when discussing policy options from the middle 1970s onwards. Unemployment, growing from the late 1960s, was often associated with the inability of British capitalism to change production methods quickly enough. Large employers would then shed excess labour, (and neglect to take on apprentices[178]) but still absorb the capital

[176] Vocational and Educational Training will be used as shorthand for all post-compulsory education for the purposes of this chapter.
[177] The *White Paper on Industrial Training* of 1962, which became the *Industrial Training Bill* of 1963.
[178] Apprenticeships peaked in 1970 at 42% of the age group, up from 36% in 1964, Woodhall,M (1974) *Investment in industrial training*, British Journal of Industrial Relations, Volume 12, March 1974, pp.79-81. Taking the 1966 to 1978 period, Gospel found numbers had declined from 243,700

required elsewhere in the economy to stimulate new industrial investment, which could then retrain and utilise the unemployed in more fruitful market conditions. As a result of growing youth unemployment some secondary education theorists began to question the nature and rigour of comprehensive education and its applicability to the employment market, as part of the 'Great Debate' initiated by James Callaghan's Ruskin College speech[179].

Politically, the emphasis on human capital (the link between education and employment) was rooted in changing basis of industrial demand and the growing inequality of income since the late 1960s[180]. As we have seen in Chapter One, by the 1970s years an inter-party consensus had developed around the idea that VET policies were the most appropriate tools for closing the income gap. In response to this the Conservative Government introduced the Technical and Vocational Educational Initiative (TVEI) in 1983. This was designed to take education for some fourteen year olds out of the hands of educationalists and make schooling more relevant to the demands of employers. TVEI sets the context for the Labour Opposition's treatment of VET issues during the Thatcher period, with the vocationalisation of the secondary curriculum developing as a key theme for Chapter Seven of this thesis. However, to fully understand the complexities of available policy options during the 1994-1997 opposition period necessitates an historical overview with a longer time scale.

The history of VET provision in Britain

There are two major themes in the provision of VET in Britain which this section highlights: firstly, the lack of prestige attached to vocational education; and secondly the preservation of an academic-vocational divide fostered by the voluntarist approach governments have taken. The problem of the lack of prestige attached to vocationalism (as opposed to more academic post-compulsory schooling) in fact goes back into the nineteenth century; the first published account of British workers falling behind in skills appeared from Lyon Playfair in 1852, in conjunction with the observation that too much emphasis was given to universities[181]. As a consequence of Britain's

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to 156,200, and were at the level of 55,000 in 1990, Gospel,H (1995) *The decline of apprenticeship training in Britain*, Industrial Relations Journal, No. 26, pp 32-34.

[179] of October 1976

[180] an analysis of the rising inequality of incomes between the lowest and highest sections of the workforce is provided in State of Welfare (OUP 1998, ESRC Centre for the Analysis of Social Exclusion at the LSE) and cited by Glennerster,H *Priorities for welfare*, THES Opinion 7/8/98. Using 1970 as a the 100 baseline of an index, the incomes of the top decile were worth 180 in 1995, while incomes of the lowest were at 140.

[181] This after the 1851 exhibition designed to show off British superiority. From Keep,E & MayhewK in Esland,G(ed)(1991) Education, Training and Employment Vol. 1: the changing basis of industrial demand, Open University Press pp. 193-4.

early industrial start, the small nature of most enterprises (due to the reluctance of banks to invest in industry) and the lack of a system of vocational education, some historians believed that a voluntarist tradition of apprenticeships emerged which consolidated a cultural constraint against the European concept of vocational education and training.

Brendan Evans summarises the situation prior to the 1918 Fisher Education Act by utilising three explanatory theories, all of which had continuing resonance at the end of the century. Firstly, the belief in the *laissez-faire* tradition of political non-interference during the period of Great Britain's initial industrialisation had become embedded[182]. The liberal legacy of initial industrialisation meant that apprenticeships, which were industry specific, non-scientific and non-academic in nature, kept provision of training balanced between trade unions and employers[183]. Secondly, British capital's reluctance to reinvest after the success of the first wave of industrialisation equates with the reluctance to invest in employee training. This is highlighted by contemporary human capital theorists who attach productivity gains to education and training outcomes; where these are not immediately apparent, training tends not to occur. The third explanatory theory is cultural, suggesting that Britain is infused with an anti-industrial spirit. This thesis is most usually connected with the writings of Correlli Barnet and Martin Wiener[184]. A similar line is taken separately by Goldthorpe and Gerschenkron. For Evans, Goldthorpe's understanding of the unique reactions of national capital to the economic crises of the 1970s made cultural explanations all the more valid in comparison to more general ideological conclusions[185].

Gerschenkron's historical analysis stressed the relative stage of industrial development; while *laissez-faire* state industry relationships might have benefited the first industrial nation, the need for the state to intervene in the economy (and provide technical education) became steadily more prevalent for later capitalising nations[186]. Among later writers, Finegold and Soskice also make the connection between competitiveness and Britain's capitalist development by stressing how the lack of large surpluses and desire to engage in vocational education helped consolidate

[182] Evans,B (1992) p.2
[183] Bash,L & Green,A(eds) World Education Yearbook 1995: Youth Education and Work, Kogan Page, London, p.94, where Green relates that there was no vocational education at all in Britain until the 1880s.
[184] Barnett,C (1986) The Audit of War: the Illusion and Reality of Britain as a Great Nation, MacMillan, London, and Wiener,MJ (1981) English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit, 1850-1980, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge are cited by Evans,B (1992) The Politics of the Training Market: from Manpower Services Commission to Training and Enterprise Councils, Routledge, London, p.1.
[185] Evans,B (1992) p.2
[186] Gerschenkron,A (1966) Economic Backwardness in Historical Perspective: a book of essays, Harvard University Press, Cambridge Mass, *passim* which traces the relationship between banks, the state and industry in waves of industrialising nations.

Britain's 'low skill equilibrium' for the future[187]. The problems of Britain's lack of industrial training or technical college tradition were largely ignored into the twentieth century. By then, the trade unions had become the jealous guardians of the apprenticeship system, and the parallel strength of the employer associations mitigated against any real prospect of state intervention.

The second major theme of VET development in Britain is the piecemeal development of provision, characterised by voluntarism and the preservation of a divide between academic and vocational education. In the years prior to the 1917 Fisher Education Act, the worlds of education and industrial training were virtually unrelated, mainly because of the pragmatism of the voluntarist system, and the simultaneous development of academic sixth-forms in the better Secondary Schools[188]. HAL Fisher, President of the Board of Education during the First World War, attempted to develop plans for part-time further education for those who had only an elementary education to build upon. His efforts were thwarted by a combination of the employers, trade unionists and the lack of support from Labour Members of Parliament. In response to industrial opposition to a 1917 report which tentatively recommended eight hours a week's education for 14-18 year old boys[189], Labour educationalist RH Tawney wrote:

> To suggest that British industry is suspended over an abyss by the slender thread of juvenile labour, which eight hours continued education will snap, that after a century of scientific discovery and economic progress it is still upon the bent backs of children of fourteen that our industrial organisation and national prosperity, and that rare birth of time, the Federation of British Industries itself, repose- is not all this, after all, a little pitiful?

As Tawney pointed out, the underlying assumption here was of the inability of certain types of (working class) children who "like anthropoid apes, have fewer convolutions in their brains than the children of captains of industry" to be successfully educated[190]. This attitude towards the educability of different social class groups was underpinned by the *Spens* (1938) and *Norwood* (1943) reports, which reinforced hierarchical prejudices and helped ensure that vocational training remained outside the "liberal, secondary-university tradition"[191]. Such indifference meant that,

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[187] Finegold,D & Soskice,D *The failure of training in Britain: Analysis and prescription*, in Esland,G(ed) (1991) Education, Training and Employment, Volume 1: Educated Labour the Changing Basis of Industrial Demand, Open University Press, Milton Keynes

[188] Brooks,R (1991) Contemporary Debates in Education: an historical perspective, Longman, London, pp.147-148

[189] *Report of the Departmental Committee on Juvenile Education in Relation to Employment after the War (The Lewis Report)*, in MacLure,JS (1979) Educational Documents: England and Wales 1816 to the present day, 4th Edition, Methuen, London, pp.167-170

[190] Brooks,R (1991) p.148.

[191] ibid, p.148.

despite Fisher enshrining continuing education in his Education Act of 1918, the sharp economic downturn of the early 1920s was enough to derail these expansionary plans[192].

Labour and trade unionists had an opportunity at this point to make the case for vocational education as part of the secondary curriculum. The party's Advisory Committee on Education (ACE) had already concluded that a liberal education should encompass all classes of children, during the 1920s[193]. Evidence of increasing demand for academic further education in secondary schools is suggested by the figures for secondary education, where total rolls grew from 336,836 in 1921 to 470,000 in 1938, by which time one-in-twelve students were in post-compulsory studies[194]. Meanwhile, employers had, by the late 1930s, found that they needed to develop industrial training for young school leavers despite their vehement opposition to obligatory day release or funding. In fact, by 1939 the numbers being voluntarily released by employers during working hours, at 41,000, was the same as those attending the academic Sixth-Forms[195].

During the Second World War, reformers attempted to legislate for a statutory period of day release training to meet the post-war conditions. Herwald Ramsbotham (of the National Government's Board of Education) developed an idea for continuation schools providing for the day-release requirements of the employers, while also offering opportunities on evenings and weekends for general further educational improvement:

> It should have all the facilities necessary to enable all kinds of activities, recreational and cultural, including school societies and clubs to be developed in and around it outside the actual hours of instruction[196].

These activities would give the schools some corporate identity of their own, on a par with academic establishments. However, his successor, RAB Butler, took this idea and developed it into a more ambitious system of County Colleges to provide overarching education and training for all 15-18 year olds. The legal obligation of LEAs to set up such colleges was written into of the 1944 Education Act in the following terms: "The statutory system of public education shall be organised in three progressive stages to be known as primary education, secondary education and further

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[192] under the pressure of the 'Geddes Axe', only Rugby actually offered the full three hundred and twenty hours a year, see Brooks,R (1991) p.149 and MacLure,JS (1979) for the Act itself, pp.171-172.

[193] The Advisory Committee on Education was established at the Fabian Society's meeting of educationalists chaired by Sidney Webb in April 1918. RH Tawney and Percy Nunn, a science and mathematics education researcher, were involved in developing policies for the party within the ACE, see Brooks,R (1991) p.67.

[194] ibid, p.149

[195] ibid, p.150.

[196] Ramsbotham,H, Board of Education Green Book, *Education after the War*, p.22, in Brooks,R (1991) p.150

education"[197]. However, the Act only obliged LEAs to enforce part-time attendance by all when the Minister considered it 'practicable to do so'. Other post-war economic priorities, as in the 1920s, meant that it was never, in fact, 'practical to do so'. Once again, further education was seen as an adjunct to mainstream education (in the secondary-university sense) and failed to establish itself on equal terms[198]. This voluntarist situation had not improved by 1959, when the Crowther Report opened with the line: "This report is about the education of English boys and girls aged from 15 to 18. Most of them are not being educated"[199].

Day release remained voluntary, and Crowther in fact faced the same problems that Fisher had grappled with in 1917. The experience of two world wars and the increasing demands for a technically skilled workforce in the reconstruction years after 1945 had failed to end the practice of voluntary attendance. The Henniker-Heaton report on Day Release (established in the wake of the Crowther Report) recommended the removal of a separate stream for technical education which Butler had imposed. Instead the report hoped to incorporate vocationalism within the curricula of general post-15 education[200]. However, compulsion was again absent, and the report hoped to stimulate demand via the planned raising of the school leaving age to 16 (due in 1970/71) and the tripartite Industrial Training Boards (ITBs) already in the legislative plans of the Conservative Government between 1959-1964.[201]

With all the attention centring on the provision of VET, less attention had been given to the nature of any such education received. In response to their experiences of the First World War, both Percy Nunn, a science and mathematics education specialist, and RH Tawney, came to see a separate system of narrow vocationalism as insufficient, especially if it involved trade unions and employers rather than educationalists in delivery. Nunn was particularly wedded to the idea of a liberal education for vocational trainees, having made the connection that 'continuing education' should be part of secondary education, which should embrace crafts and science as well as art, literature and history[202]. Such a change in the provision and content of VET would involve a degree of central intervention which was not seen as appropriate by inter-war policymakers. However, after the second war the context began to change, producing conditions favourable for reform.

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[197] Education Act, 1944, Part II. 7 reproduced in MacLure,JS (1979), p.224.
[198] Further education's missed opportunity to establish itself during this period was echoed during the 1990s after the introduction of GNVQs, see Alison Wolf's Inaugural Lecture to the Institute of Education, October 1996, reported in Pyke,N *Vocational training rejected*, TES 18/10/96.
[199] Brooks,R (1991) p.151
[200] ibid, p.154
[201] ibid, p.154
[202] evidenced by the Labour Party's Advisory Committee on Education, *Continuatuion Education Under the New Act*, Memorandum No. 6, 1918 on which both Nunn and Tawney sat.

Firstly, by the early 1960s the growing awareness of Britain's declining share of world markets and the paucity of skilled labour obliged policymakers of both left and right to attempt to plan the delivery of industrial vocational training much more rigorously in an effort to make human capital more productive. This implied a compulsory levy system to deliver adequate funding for the first time. Secondly, this funding solution was linked to a narrow vocationalisation of provision by the newly established ITB's which combined the unions and employers, but not the state in the form of the DES. This has been widely criticised by educationalists as exacerbating the problems of poor qualifications. There was finally to be national planning of VET, but with little input from educators, and without a full coverage of industries.

The centralisation of VET after 1964 around the imperatives of industrial planning only partially followed the logic of the Crowther Report which recommended a tripartite body to oversee the rehabilitation of vocational education and the term 'practical'. Therefore the concept of a practical education had to be inspired with ideological initiative, as Gary McCulloch noted, to overcome the stigma attached. Echoing Tawney and Nunn, Crowther had called for "a practical education making progressively exacting intellectual demands"[203] rather than the 'new vocationalism' which emerged. Such was the apparent dislocation of schooling and employment that by the end of the 1960s it had become clear that narrow vocationalism had failed to anticipate or satisfy the changing basis of industrial demand. Meanwhile, on the funding side, state planning had been introduced after 1964 to tackle the voluntarism of the past. For Brendan Evans, this key period of the early 1960s was one where the normal British incremental change was superseded by a realisation that new solutions had to be offered if Britain was to stem its perceived economic decline. The Conservative Government's Command 1892 *Industrial Training: Government Proposals* (which became the 1963 Act) explicitly noted the correlation between economic growth and the level of industrial training, and this planning of human capital investment was endorsed by both sides of the political divide[204]. Ray Gunter, Labour's shadow spokesperson for training, noted that the state, employers and trade unions had each accepted the 'sea change' in ideas towards state intervention[205]. The new consensus on training did not prevent some disquiet about the Act's favoured method of funding, which was to spread the costs of training evenly across industries. For employers, the trade off for the compulsory levy was in the form of the greater level of control they would have over apprenticeships through the tripartite Board which would govern each industry, and also from the pooling of costs. The trade unions had to accede some control over the

[203] McCulloch,G *An alternative road? Problems and possibilities of the Crowther Concept*, in Gleeson,D (1990) Training and its Alternatives, Open University Press, Milton Keynes, p.14.
[204] Evans,B (1992), pp.7-8.
[205] in a parliamentary speech, *Hansard*, 20th November 1963, column 1016.

apprenticeship system, but benefited from being part of the central control over manpower planning which would extend, with the National Plan of 1965, to the whole economy and thus apparently guarantee jobs[206].

Large firms were broadly satisfied in the view of the Confederation of British Industry (CBI), especially in terms of the quality of education and training offered. For others, however, a flaw of the levy funding formula was that, by its very universality, it obliged small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) to contribute, although often the ITB's did not recognise the informal on-the-job training typical of the sector and some small firms saw the levy as another tax on employers[207]. Although attendance at colleges was not mandatory, the intention of the ITBs to increase the levels of provision was fulfilled in terms of Department of Employment figures for 1964 to 1968 which record a 15% growth in the number of workers receiving training, and the growth of apprenticeships from 36% to 42% of the age group between 1964 and 1970[208].

However, the downturn in numbers in training after this time reflected, once again, the changing nature of demand for skilled labour. Despite the CBI's view that the Industrial Training Act had helped to "transform the whole climate of opinion and concentrate far more attention on training"[209], the incoming Conservative Government of 1970 wished to review the need for ITBs and the compulsory grant/levy system on the basis that the necessary cultural change had occurred and there was no longer a need to compel employers, who in any case needed flexibility to meet demand.

Employers' desire for flexibility led to pressure being exerted on the Heath government during the review period, which led to the weakening of ITBs after the White Paper *Training for the Future* in 1972, and their absorption into the new Manpower Services Commission (MSC) which became a tripartite structure. The Government justified the demise of strong ITBs on the basis of their inability to deal with the problem of declining regionally based industries, or to adequately meet the more flexible needs of small businesses. Evans points out the ideological inconsistency of Heath's responses to the economic downturn, in that the White Paper ended the statutory levy/grant system while simultaneously establishing a more powerful planning agency in the MSC[210]. However, the CBI's response to the putative National Training Agency was equally ambivalent; they were happy that funding had become a government responsibility (and thus they

[206] though it should be noted that there was never universal coverage of industries in the British version of exhortative corporatism.
[207] Evans,B (1992), p.8.
[208] Woodhall,M (1974) *Investment in industrial training*, British Journal of Industrial Relations, Volume 12, March 1974, pp.79-81
[209] Evans, p., citing The Confederation of British Industries (1972), *Education and Training Bulletin*, p.2
[210] Evans (1992) pp.12-14.

signed up for the national agency in April 1972) but feared for the possible interventions of the new body.

Although the NTA was the product of a corporatist body, Senker has pointed out that with the establishment of the MSC in 1973 and the introduction of systematic exemptions to the levy/grant mechanism, employer imperatives were to the fore[211]. This is in part explained by the beginnings of a decline in the number of apprenticeships, which correspondingly reduced the leverage of the trade union representatives within the tripartite structure. According to Department of Employment figures, the total number of apprenticeships declined from 243,700 in 1966 to 156,200 by 1978[212], which Gospel interprets as evidence of increasingly competitive markets, rapid technological change and the preference among employers to develop 'firm-specific' training schemes to avoid the poaching of skilled labour. Andy Green emphasises the limited nature of such 'strategic labour planning' in another way, with too little emphasis put on education which exacerbated the academic-vocational divide once again and disillusioned educationalists[213]. In 1976 Labour Prime Minister James Callaghan devoted a major speech to the problem and called for a national debate which in essence shared some of the *Black Paper* doubts about the educationalists' control of the 'secret garden' of the secondary curriculum[214], and also signalled further government intervention in post-compulsory education and training.

Along with Green, Patrick Ainley connects state intervention and centralisation with the advent of mass youth unemployment. This came in the form of the Youth Training System (YTS) which was partly a response to management complaints about the 'restrictive practices' typical of the apprenticeship system[215]. With a Conservative government after 1979, changing demand for labour was allied to growing "governmental antipathy towards traditional methods of skill formulation, which... helped to undermine the apprenticeship system"[216].

This was in the face of international comparisons which for the late 1970s suggested that the ratio of 16 year olds in Britain attending either technical vocational courses in college or vocational apprenticeships in the workplace was far below the level of European competitor nations, with 60% of the age group in Britain either at work or already unemployed. The five other European states

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[211] Senker,P (1992) Industrial Training in a Cold Climate, Avebury, Aldershot, in Williams,S & Raggatt,P (1996) *Competence-based Vocational Training Policy: a case study of the decollectivisation of employment relations*, in the Journal of Vocational Education and Training, Volume 48, No. 4., p.318.

[212] Gospel,H (1995) *The decline of apprenticeship training in Britain*, Industrial Relations Journal, No. 26, pp 32-34, which goes on to note that numbers fell to 53,000 by 1990.

[213] Green, in Bash,L & Green,A (eds) (1995), pp.97-98

[214] see Chapter Three and Shaw,B (1983) Comprehensive Schooling: the impossible dream?, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, pp.3-4 for a sympathetic account of this critique.

[215] Ainley,P (1988) p.105.

[216] Williams,S and Raggatt,P (1996) p.319

compared ranged from 12% to 22% of that age group no longer receiving any form of VET, while from 55% to 76% of them were still in the education and training system[217]. This was voluntarism in practice.

The MSC was to survive into the Conservative era, however, despite the existence of a government ideologically opposed to corporatism, partly because although Evans notes that it was "partly a TUC creation", it adapted to the changing circumstances by developing training schemes and adopting the language and priorities of flexibility by developing the YTS under its New Training Initiative. In fact, although the YTS met with resistance from some trade unionists, those TUC representatives on the MSC believed they were preventing something less palatable emerging. This desire by the unions to "try and cling on to whatever avenues of power remained" allowed the Conservatives to "skilfully exploit the TUC's commitment to its own creation"[218] until they finally withdrew from the Training Commission (MSC) in protest at the introduction of Employment Training in 1988[219].

The gradual if steady diminution of trade union influence within training policy during the 1970s and early 1980s also resulted in a resurgence of employer interests. They were no longer willing to fund training as directed by government unless employer imperatives were central to the curriculum. In the employers' interests new vocational qualifications were launched but unfortunately, few employers were directly involved in their development, or troubled to send their most senior executives to serve on the industry lead bodies. These problems resulted in a low uptake of the new qualifications and financial difficulties for the National Council for Vocational Qualifications (NCVQ) which was charged with marketing them[220].

In parallel with the targeting of training funding at local employment needs was the individualisation of training provision implicit in competence-based qualifications, (such as National Vocational Qualifications, NVQs), being developed from the time of the TVEI. David Mathews, a promoter of an occupational standards approach, interpreted the development of

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[217] Council of Europe (1981) cited by Chandler & Wallace in Gleeson,D (1990) Training and its Alternatives, Open University Press, Milton Keynes, p.92. The balances were made up in each case by post-compulsory attendance at grammar type schools.

[218] Evans,B (1992), p.53

[219] Minkin,L (1991) The Contentious Alliance; Trade unions and the Labour Party, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, p.444 makes the point that the TUC were keen to keep their hands on some of the levers of power even after the advent of Thatcher; they argued that it was a practical source of trade union influence on public policy, often to the disappointment of their Labour Party colleagues.

[220] Williams,S (1997) *The Development of National Vocational Qualifications in the UK: An Institutional Analysis of Policy Failure in Vocational Education and Training*, paper to the Journal of Vocational Education and Training International Conference, July 1997 actually downplays employer imperatives because of the low level of direct input and subsequent problems employers had with the NVQ system. However, at a theoretical level, they were designed for employers' needs as Geoffrey Holland made clear on various occasions.

competencey as leading to a situation where skills are seen as commodities to be utilised by individuals, and only to be judged against performance of those skills[221]. For critics like Williams and Raggatt, this individualisation works against workplace collectivism in terms of knowledge and identity[222].

After 1987 and the introduction of the Youth Training System (YTS), the MSC was abolished and in the words of the 1988 White Paper from the Employment Department, the intention was to "give leadership of the training system to employers, where it belongs"[223]. Hence the role of the Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs), which consolidate both voluntarism and vocationalism by controlling some of the funding which traditionally went via the Local Education Authorities (LEAs) to the Further Education sector. The new structure was designed to oversee the individualisation of qualifications, such as the new NVQs. Individual students or trainees were to be provided with training credits, to be redeemed by colleges or private providers who would then receive outcome related funding (ORF) in instalments. This would allow for student/trainees to become true consumers of their own education; indeed the Government White Paper *Competitiveness: Helping Business to Win* of 1994[224] wished to see this expanded to the whole of the tertiary sector[225].

As Evans points out, the context for replacing the MSC with the TECs was the decline in unemployment after 1987; it was felt that the MSC and its union contingent was useful for labour force planning, but in the context of renewed growth, employers should have the main say in where training funds would be best spent. However, as private enterprise could not be trusted to fund training itself, the state would continue to bear the main burden. In effect, then, the state wished to establish a training quasi-market, regulated by employers to meet localised conditions, yet supported by a centralised bureaucracy to enable credit to follow the individual trainee who would attain nationally recognised qualifications[226].

However, problems soon emerged with this voluntarist model. The first problem was the low value, or 'currency', attached to the new National Vocational Qualifications, by employers and trainees, in comparison to traditional GCSE and A levels. As a result, by 1995, two thirds of Youth Trainees (YTs) were leaving training schemes without achieving even the basic NVQ levels I or II, and in fact, with only 37% of 18 year olds achieving either A level or NVQ level III compared to

[221] Mathews,D (1991) *An overview of the standards development process*, in Fennell (ed) (1991) Development of Assessable Standards for National Certification, HMSO, London, p.4
[222] Williams,S & Raggatt,P (1996) p.322.
[223] Green,A in Bash,L & Green,A (eds) (1995) p.100.
[224] HMG, 1994
[225] GreenA (1995), pp.100-101.
[226] Evans,B (1992) pp.127-131, echoing Heclo,H & Wildavsky,A (1981) The Private Government of Public Money, MacMillan, London, calls this the private management of public money

55% in the equivalent German and French structures, this demand-led system had failed to close the training deficit[227]. The failings of the NVQ were recognised by the introduction of General National Vocational Qualifications (in pilot form from 1993), based not on workplace competence but on transferable academic skills[228]. This also, however, attracted criticism for falling between two stools; on the one hand, as a college based vocational A level it was seen as too narrow without its links with employment[229], while for other critics, the narrow vocationalism of the GNVQ means it is merely a work accreditation certificate which does nothing for British competitiveness[230].

Alongside the unpopularity of the NVQs, a second problem emerged because of the voluntarism of the TECs, which only had the power to persuade and exhort training. Without input from any other 'social partners' (such as the state, local government and trade unions), the narrowness of the achievement measuring system of competence only met the requirements of employers in the short term. Neither the economic need for more trained workers to help Britain's competitiveness, nor the imperative of a better educated workforce had been satisfied by the introduction of TECs.

Confusion over the place of vocational qualifications, the voluntarism of the British experience and the role of education as a tool of international economic competitiveness have characterised the provision of VET in recent years. In fact, the same debates about VET provision which were stimulated by the First World War were still alive in the policymaking discourse between 1994 and 1997. There were many who would call, like Percy Nunn and RH Tawney in the inter-war era, for the removal of employer and trade union influences and for the return to educationalist imperatives. This view was most coherently exemplified in the 1990s by Josh Hillman, who pointed out that Britain suffered because of an imbalance between primary and secondary spending which institutionally disadvantaged the student body by failing to adequately fund the early years of compulsory schooling[231]. An important part of this critique was the emphasis on a vocational secondary education and the separation of students (and the curriculum)

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[227] Green,A (1995), p.102

[228] NVQs have been accused of being too specific in design so that 364 of the 794 have never been completed by anyone and 43 by only one person, this while 16,000 qualifications remain outside the NVQ coverage, yet the Beaumont Report of 1996 said that only 4% of the total workforce were involved in NVQ process in 1996.

[229] according to the Alison Wolf study of 1997 for the Further Education Development Agency, FEDA, which found that GNVQs had narrowed to effectively only four subjects and offered few links to employment, while only 20% of GNVQ holders going on to University, see Russell,B (1997) *Vocational A-level 'has failed'*, Times Educational Supplement, 9/6/97.

[230] Alan Smithers, cited by Beard,M (1996) *Yet to achieve a state of disgrace*, Times Educational Supplement, 6/9/96.

[231] Hillman,J (1995) *An agenda for education*, Renewal, Volume 3, No.4, October 1995, *passim*, in which he claims there is a differential ratio of 41% between primary and secondary in Britain as opposed to an OECD average of 24%, with the USA at 16% and Japan at 10%.

into vocational or academic 'tracks' at the early age of fourteen[232]. However, some defenders of an academic-vocational divide (usually in celebration of the primacy of the A level) also believed in a stronger role for educationalists, thereby continuing the meritocratic tradition of Tawney and Nunn[233].

On the other hand, there were many who saw education purely in economic (human capital) terms, either for the benefit of the individual, the firm or society as a whole. These can then be subdivided into two camps, those who wanted the state to invest more investment on education and training, improving the academic standards of all school leavers so as to make them more easily retrainable by employers; and those sceptical of the role of education and training as a tool of empowerment or economic competitiveness[234]. This latter group were conceptually closer to the initiators of an employer led training environment, such as Britain developed following the demise of the MSC, although they would question either the political emphasis given to the role of the state, or the actual validity of a role for the state. Once again, the underlying assumptions were that education and training policy had to be reactive to the changing basis of demand, and that the only response to such demands was flexibility among the workforce.

The concerns outlined above form the parameters of the contemporary debate surrounding VET policy, and the context within which Labour has tried to develop a distinctive and workable set of proposals. However, Labour's reaction to economic events and the particular situation of opposition (since 1979) have to be traced from the key moment of 1964, when, as we have seen above and in the manifesto analysis in Chapter One, Labour came into power committed to the new consensus of planning the manpower requirements of the nation in a relatively stable economic environment.

Labour and training policy since 1964

In government or in opposition, Labour has contributed to two major periods of inter-party consensus since 1964. The first was the planning imperative following the realisation that Britain was entering a period of relative decline of its share of world trade share, exemplified by the Crowther Report, the Robbins Report and the Industrial Training Bill of 1963, all of which were

[232] this was the logic of the Dearing Review into 16-19 education which reported in the Spring of 1996.

[233] see Alan Smithers of Brunel University, *GNVQs lack coherence and don't lead anywhere*, Times Educational Supplement, 13/6/97. He called for the preservation of different 'tracks' to match the types of pupils at age 14, in company with the Dearing Review of 16-19 Qualifications, 1996.

[234] Within in this broad school are those on the left, such as Will Hutton *Educated guesses are wide of the mark*, The Guardian, 8/1/96, and on the right, Shackleton,JR (1992) Training Too Much?; a sceptical look at the economics of skill provision in the UK, Institute of Economic Affairs, Hobart Paper no.118, *passim.*

based on human capital assumptions. The second period of consensus has developed since the middle 1980s, with the acceptance of employment flexibility as a response to open international markets. In response to this latter factor, moves to reform VET qualifications have been paramount.

Labour entered the 1964 General Election in broad agreement with the government's plans for industrial training. The party's training spokesman Ray Gunter pointed out that Labour were willing to use manpower planning in order to improve Britain's competitiveness through productivity gains. Indeed, with Labour's ideological commitment to the planning of the wider economy, the introduction of Industry Training Boards would have been more rational for Labour than the Conservatives. In line with the Croslandite moderniser's assertion that nationalisation was not the only road to socialism[235], Labour accepted the requirements of changes in capitalist development, but found no reason to fear them:

> Labour believes that the national plan will require a faster rate of change in industry. To meet the human needs that will arise it is essential to combine with our education reforms a revolution in training[236].

Such was Labour's confidence in manpower and output planning that it felt able to promise a charter of rights for all workers including that of the right to "first-rate industrial training with day and block release for the young worker"[237]. Clearly, although the authors of the manifesto realised the need for flexibility, the emphasis was on retraining for the new kinds of jobs that dynamic capitalism was producing. But where unionised jobs remained, the corporatist structure of the ITBs ensured that trade unions interests would be represented.

The new charter of rights emphasised the changing basis in demand for labour. They were largely rights for workers in new, less organised industries which did not have strong unionised work-forces. In the British corporatist context, trade union rights and access to training opportunities stemmed not from the legal rights of citizens but from the relative position of the trade unions in particular industries and firms, and a consensus among wider policymakers that employment training was good for society. In effect it amounted to a human capital argument as much as an argument based on the rights of individual employees.

The 1966 manifesto confirmed that employment was central, with Keynesian demand management used for societal ends:

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[235] See for example Crosland,CAR (1956) The Future of Socialism, Jonathon Cape, London, *passim*.
[236] Labour Party (1964) *Lets go with Labour: the New Britain*, The Labour Party, London, p.19
[237] ibid, p.20.

> The level of economic activity in the community must be sufficient to provide jobs for all. Labour has always insisted that this can and will be ensured through intelligent management of the economy[238].

Labour acknowledged that the contemporary employment problem was not 1930s style unemployment but redundancy brought about because of new labour-saving methods in industry. Hence the accent was on retraining disemployed individuals, with a rigorous regional policy to attract industry to areas now in decline. The legislation which ensured compulsory day-release for employees wherever new training grants were to be considered was highlighted in this context. The emphasis for the late 1960s was to be an expansion of training places in response to the needs of the 'new industries'. By the time of the 1970 election campaign, Labour's discourse hinted at new economic conditions with the reassurance that workers should not be: "left stranded by technological change. We must help them to acquire the skills they need to man the new industries; offer them a wider choice of job opportunity[239].

However, the lack of a coherent National Plan was evident in some other areas of the training manifesto, with Labour promising a new National Manpower Service to create new jobs and a Commission on Industry and Manpower. Now, with the training imperative and import resistance, Labour hoped to achieve a faster rate of economic expansion. Training had become an engine for growth as well as a right of employment by 1970. This was coupled in the manifesto with exhortations to large employers towards "managerial efficiency" and the hope that they would become "accountable to the community"[240].

With less emphasis on nationalisation as a policy option, Labour found that exhortation was insufficient in times of economic downturn; as we have already seen, industrial apprenticeships peaked around 1970, and thereafter economic policy was aimed at promoting more growth to stay one step ahead of the changing demands of industry. To this end, Labour also started to develop policies aimed at making British firms more competitive, especially with regard to large monopolistic firms. The incoming Conservative government took this thinking a stage further by recommending a review of ITBs which ended Britain's brief experiment with compulsory VET provision.

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[238] Labour Party (1966) *Time for Decision*, The Labour Party , London

[239] Labour Party (1970) *Now Britain's Strong - Let's Make It Great To Live In*, The Labour Party , London, p.11. Very reminiscent of the 1990s and the stakeholder agenda.

[240] ibid, 12, which finds echoes in the 1997 manifesto where stakeholder capitalists are exhorted to act communally, train and add to Individual Learning Account's of their employees, and provide subsidised opportunities for the long term unemployed, Labour Party (1997) *New Labour: because Britain deserves better*, The Labour Party, London, April 1997, p.7 and pp.12-13.

It is at this point that we can determine a degree of policy divergence between the parties. The Conservative Government's Industrial Relations Act of 1971, which tried to curb the trade unions, was introduced alongside a diminution of the union's role on the ITBs. Labour, who had attempted to curb trade union power (insofar as it was thought to cause inflation) with *In Place of Strife* in 1969, now supported a stronger role for trade unions as the party's Left-wing came to the fore in opposition.

The two manifestos of 1974 reflected the reassertion of workers rights, especially where made redundant, and a promised Employment Protection Bill would protect workers rights to unionise and to receive apprenticeship training. Two other key factors are relevant here; firstly, the Conservatives had weakened the ITBs through the introduction of the MSC. Labour now planned to make that tripartite body stronger in terms of its ability to plan manpower needs; specifically it was to develop and deliver on the pledge that "Redundant workers must have an automatic right to retraining"[241], so as far as the party was concerned, corporatism still had a role. The second key factor in the October 1974 manifesto was the linkage of education and training (with compulsory day release) with its implication that those who left school early were being let down somehow by the education system; indeed, by highlighting this issue, Labour reintroduced vocationalism to the national debate[242].

The rights agenda within Labour VET discourse reached its high-point during the 1979-1983 period. This is related to the prevalence of high and long-term youth unemployment in the wake of the oil crisis. Hence, the main pledge of the Introduction to the 1979 manifesto: "A good job is a basic human right"[243]. Once again, the emphasis was on retraining to attract employment to regions deprived of their traditional industries, and of a National Enterprise Board to create jobs through public ownership. Labour envisaged introducing a universal scheme of education and training for all 16-19 year olds, but it was to be "if necessary backed by statute" in recognition of the government's lack of faith in persuading employers to volunteer themselves[244]. Labour had presided over an increase in Further Education numbers during the recession since 1974 and envisaged increasing enrolment in both traditional Higher Education and the Open University, clearly in response to the lack of demand for employment.

It is also during this period that vocationalism, manifested as a critique of the comprehensive system's applicability to the world of employment, began to point towards the

[241] Labour Party (1974) *Britain will win with Labour*, The Labour Party , London, October 1974 manifesto, p.18.
[242] ibid, p.23
[243] Labour Party (1979) *The Labour Way is the Better Way*, The Labour Party , London, p.4.
[244] ibid, p.19

quality of training programmes on offer. The Conservatives in Government after 1979 answered calls for the vocationalisation of the secondary curriculum, which culminated in the Technical and Vocational Education Initiative (TVEI) in 1983. Labour in opposition reverted to defending the liberal education aspects of the comprehensive principle. The manifesto exhibited a degree of defensiveness, with calls for a return to corporatism in the MSC's role as manpower adviser and for a return to obligatory day-release training. The manifesto exhibited a confusion of aims, promoting liberal educational themes but with a strong role expected for the trade unions. Rights to training, education and to join a trade union were all emphasised in response to the Conservatives' *laissez faire* attitude to employment and intervention. The pledges merged compulsion with incentive. On the one hand, "Employers will be given a statutory duty to provide opportunities for their young employees to receive systematic education and training", while the next line continued; "Premiums will be paid to them to recruit young people and provide them with such opportunities"[245]. This ambiguity of message was perhaps also evidenced by the pledge to "end the scourge of youth unemployment and prepare young people to take up the jobs we will create"[246]; this seemed to suggest that youth unemployment had begun to affect social behaviour adversely (echoing the Conservatives' belief that the young 'don't want to work') yet the manifesto also signalled job creation, suggesting that unemployment was not the fault of the unemployed. On training allowances, Labour were hostile in principle, but offered a specific allowance and promoted trade union input which would have countered the flexibility of state funded training programmes. The unions could actively monitor such programmes, and have the opportunity to negotiate the level of the allowance on an annual basis[247].

This amounts to a misunderstanding of job flexibility and the role of the MSC. The ideological basis of the emasculation of ITBs and the establishment of the MSC was the circumvention of the policy community which had grown up around employment and training issues, specifically the local authorities and the trade unions; this had been confirmed by the passing of the unambiguous Employment and Training Act of 1982[248]. The MSC is best understood then as a quango, whose intention was to maintain control over policy development, to manage public money without public accountability and to entrench employer imperatives.

Labour's policy confusion with regard to the MSC reflects the continuing strength of trade union influence, both within Labour's policymaking process and within the wider economy. The sudden growth in youth unemployment meant that the MSC had extended its own role into the

[245] Labour Party (1983) *New Hope for Britain*, The Labour Party , London, p.57
[246] ibid, p.59.
[247] ibid, p.60.
[248] Evans,B (1992) p.191

realms of local government and the education system, with responsibility for the Youth Opportunities Programme and the Youth Training Scheme after 1983. As Minkin shows, a majority of the TUC leaders showed considerable attachment to the MSC, under which they had more influence over training policy than previously. The TUC could henceforth work with the Confederation of British Industries (CBI) to influence Government policy. In effect, trade unions had more potential power in the economy than their status as Labour Party affiliates would have presented them with in Opposition[249]. This caused friction within the party, with the trade unions defending corporatism and narrow vocationalism against party critics of both left and right.

After the 1983 defeat, moves were introduced to develop a new policy which would unite the factions of the party. However, following a June 1984 meeting of the party-TUC Liaison Committee, the lines were more severely drawn, with the Left on the NEC (who favoured boycotting the MSC) and the Right (wishing to absorb training into an Education and Training Ministry), uniting to counterbalance the uncritical review of the MSC the trade unionists had presented. An attempt was made to clear the impasse with an *ad hoc* meeting of the front bench, the Leader's Office, and the TUC, which broke the procedural guidelines of the Liaison Committee[250]. Although this meeting was inconclusive, the precedent of a smaller policymaking group on education, employment and training involving front benchers and advisers before involving the TUC established the model for future practice, as we have seen in Chapter Two. In addition, by 1985 Labour's use of supply-side reformist ideas led training policy to become central to economic policy, as a response to market failure[251]. Intervention to secure more investment in training was portrayed by John Smith (trade and industry spokesperson) as a vital 'engine for growth'[252]. To avoid the free-rider problem (of employers who poached trained staff from competitors) a levy system was proposed. In 1986 John Prescott, employment spokesperson, succinctly outlined the dilemma and the solution:

> Industry has a responsibility to support training in line with agreed national priorities. And to help pay for it. Since companies refuse to provide sufficient resources voluntarily, some form of levy system will clearly be necessary[253].

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[249] Minkin,L (1991), p.444

[250] ibid, p445. This committee eventually produced the document *A Plan for Training*, the Labour Party, London, 1984.

[251] Eatwell,J *The Development of Labour Policy 1979-1992* in Michie,J (ed) (1992) The Economic Legacy, Academic Press, London, pp.333-334.

[252] Noted as a key phrase in Labour discourse of the time by Wickham-Jones,M & King,D (1997) *Training without the state? British social democracy, New Labour and labour markets*, p.13.

[253] speech in Hull, 22/2/86, Kinnock papers, Box 362, p.5, cited in Wickam-Jones and King (1997), p.14.

Although training was becoming central to Labour's economic policy, details were vague in advance of the 1987 election due to the sensitivities of some trade union leaders who wished to retain a corporatist role for the MSC[254]. In the event, unions' concerns were assuaged partly by Neil Kinnock's reputation as an educationalist, and the emerging *New Skills for Britain* saw the MSC position safeguarded[255]. This document was complemented by *Work to Win*, a TUC-Labour Party liaison paper which proposed a national training fund, part-funded by employers and administered by the MSC. The hypothecated nature of the levy would ensure the necessary investment, but the erosion of full employment and a recognition of the weaknesses of the existing arrangements ensured that unemployment was central to the training section of the 1987 manifesto.

With the national imperative to reduce unemployment and close the international skills gap, Labour did not feel the need to highlight the employer levy (or any funding mechanisms) in the manifesto. This perhaps reflected the lack of issue salience among voters as much as a fear that the Conservatives and their business allies would seize upon the National Training Fund that had been clearly proposed in *New Skills for Britain* and *Work to Win*. Training and continuing education for adults appeared in the manifesto mostly in the context of unemployment. Apart from an Adult Skillplan for those in work Labour pledged to create a Foundation Programme for all 16-18 year olds, and a "Jobs, Enterprise and Training Programme [which] will expand existing programmes for unemployed people with a guarantee of a job or new skill for the long-term unemployed"[256].

Following defeat in 1987, Labour launched a full-scale policy review which placed training issues in the hands of the People at Work group, headed by Eddie Hague of the trade unions and Michael Meacher of the Front Bench. Advised by David Soskice[257], this group further emphasised that "the key to our economic success in the future is good education and training"[258]. The Policy Review document *Meet the Challenge, Make the Change* promised a National Training Fund and, for the first time, details of the levy system to make the fund a reality; henceforth 0.5% of employers payroll would be hypothecated for the new Skills UK agency to use to organise and monitor programmes[259].

Following internal reports that the new policy would prove unpopular (particularly on the internal Business Taxation Committee), party leader Neil Kinnock replaced Michael Meacher with

[254] Wickham-Jones & King (1997), p.14.
[255] Minkin (1991) pp.445-446 Despite the apparent disjuncture in policymaking practice, the TUC were privately informed at each editing stage.
[256] Labour Party (1987) *Britain will win with Labour*, General Election manifesto, The Labour Party, London, p.20.
[257] of the Low-Skill Equilibrium thesis.
[258] Soskice quoted in Wickham-Jones & King (1997), p.15.
[259] Labour Party (1988) *Meet the Challenge, Make the Change*, The Labour Party, London, pp.18-20.

Tony Blair, then employment spokesperson and seen as close to Kinnock, who would be an "engine for ideas" to help settle on an industrial relations policy and avoid further conflicts[260]. Taking advantage of the new policymaking conditions, which allowed front benchers much more leeway in developing new ideas, Blair soon discarded the idea that all firms would have to pay the Training Investment Contribution (levy). It was to be replaced with a scheme in which all employers would have to allocate a given percentage of their own turnover for training; only if they did not comply would they be taxed to fund the skills agency[261]. This was a step back from the universal compulsion of training investment implied in the earlier documents.

Blair went further in 1991, highlighting the quality of training on offer; under this new scheme, good employers who trained to the standards required of the Conservatives' Investors in People award would be exempt from the levy[262]. As well as rejecting universalism, Blair's *Opportunity Britain* document also embraced the idea of individual vocational education portfolios and Personal Development Plans, designed to be independent of employers, with requirements partially met from the skills fund. Training and Enterprise Councils, once earmarked for abolition or at least reconfiguration with a stronger role for trade unions, were to be reinforced, with assurances to business that unions would not be given joint control of organisations whose remit was to remain voluntarist rather than systematically interventionist when it came to employers' training efforts[263]. In general, as Wickham-Jones and King concluded, Labour discourse during the early 1990s was characterised by vague and non-committal language, of gradually introduced taxation changes only after widespread consultations[264].

With the approach of an election in 1992, Labour's manifesto once again concentrated on unemployment and opportunities for individuals to improve their employability:

> We will... establish a work programme combining three days a week work for the unemployed- paid at the proper rate - with two days' training and job seeking. This will benefit the community and ensure that unemployed people are offered a range of employment and training opportunities. The programme which can be quickly and easily established will allow us to start bringing down unemployment immediately[265].

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[260] According to Wickham-Jones and King, Blair would make the working group more amenable to the Leader's Office, (1997), p.16.
[261] Tony Blair *Training PD:2458/March 1990* and *Youth and Training Policy. Policy Development briefing paper, March 1990* and also Labour Party (1990) *Looking to the Future*, the Labour Party, London, p.13.
[262] This was the proposal in *Opportunity Britain*, 1991, clearly aimed at not deterring businesses from supporting Labour in Government.
[263] Wickham-Jones & King (1997), p.17.
[264] ibid, p.18.
[265] Labour Party (1992) *Its time to get Britain working again*, The Labour Party, London, April 1992, p.10.

And to highlight the individual opportunities Labour would henceforth offer the electorate:

> We will establish a new cash-limited *Skills for the 90s* fund with an initial budget of £300 million, to upgrade the training of those in work. Investment will be targeted particularly at areas of skill shortages and will give people who are now unskilled the chance to acquire basic skills[266].

Playing on the *ad hoc* nature of much current Conservative provision, Labour was able to introduce its new funding mechanism in the name of economic rationality:

> Instead of the present series of piecemeal initiatives we will establish a coherent national training policy to meet the needs of industry and provide people with real equal opportunities at work. All employers, except for very small businesses, will be obliged to invest a minimum amount on training their workforce or make a contribution to the local or national training effort[267].

However, perhaps the key phrase of the manifesto in terms of the changes to Labour policy was "Training will be a real partnership between government and industry, not an excuse to shift all the burden onto employers"[268]. The shift towards individual training opportunities was a logical step for a party which understood the flexible requirements of employers. With in-work training mostly exhorted and unemployment portrayed as an opportunity to retrain, Labour could offer the electorate something better than 'Tory schemes', while a more sophisticated reading of the policy documents behind the manifesto led some in the City to praise a new found pragmatism[269].

In the aftermath of still another defeat in 1992 and a change of leadership, Labour policy moved more strongly in favour of a tax to fund training which would apply to all firms, with one document *Labour's economic approach* proposing a levy of up to 1.5% for non-training firms[270]. John Smith's Commission on Social Justice eventually recommended a rising tariff of up to 2% of payrolls[271]. However, these commitments were soon watered down after the death of Smith and his replacement by Blair in July 1994. In the first restatement of Labour policy since Blair's election, *New Economic Future for Britain* retreated from compulsion, given the changing basis of demand for labour which had resulted in over half of Britain's employees working for SMEs, many of

[266] ibid, p.10.
[267] ibid, p.23.
[268] ibid, p.23
[269] as recorded by the bankers SG Warburg, The Market under Labour, 1990, p.19.
[270] Labour Party (1993) *Labour's Economic Approach*, the Labour Party, London, 1993, p.16.
[271] cited by Wickham-Jones & King (1997), p.19.

which had been exempted in the pre-1992 policy. Instead, the document concentrated on the opportunities inherent in Individual Learning Accounts and the need to ensure training was of adequate quality[272].

Conclusion

This chapter has concentrated on the quality of post-compulsory education and training, employers' continuing reluctance to fund training, and the vocationalisation of compulsory education designed to counteract this lack of training in Britain. The constant background context for these developments is the changing basis of demand for labour in an ever more flexible employment market. All these are recurring themes of Chapter Seven. This chapter shows the change in policymaking practice as trade union influence has declined in the economy, in response to such changes in demand for labour.

Labour Party institutions have mirrored this marginalisation of unionist concerns with the new policymaking environment which emerged at the time of the Policy Review. However, as we have seen, even a Labour Party with institutional input from its trade union affiliates had to react to changes in demand, hence the inter-party friction discussed above. Following the Policy Review period Tony Blair clearly had an immediate impact on employment and training issues during 1990-91, prefiguring his premiership with an emphasis on business-friendliness and the individual's responsibility to retrain. John Smith, who was more committed to Labour's trade union links, effectively steered policy back towards a compulsory levy, and employers' responsibility to train the workforce. Party ideology and the perception of electoral popularity were at this stage major constraints on Labour policymaking, even after allowing for the increased frontbench autonomy discussed earlier. After 1994, in the era of new Labour, the continuing decline of the trade unions in the economy and their waning influence within the party, it became easier for the party leadership to marginalise unionist concerns as the party prepared for Government.

[272] Labour Party (1995) *New Economic Future for Britain*, the Labour Party, London, pp.19-21.

Chapter Five

Labour and the development of the British university system

This chapter outlines the Labour Party's attitudes towards higher education. We shall see how the twin concerns of wider egalitarian access and libertarian autonomy are intertwined in Labour positions. Although these two elements of Labour's ideology are not necessarily incompatible, the evidence in this chapter and in Chapter Eight show that it is easier for the party to combine the two concepts in opposition than it has proved in government. Some historical context is required before the position of the Labour Party can be appreciated.

The development of higher education in Britain since the nineteenth century has been characterised by gradual state centralisation of the service and the increasing application of human capital concerns. The relationship between the autonomy of universities, and the ability of policy actors to redirect Britain's tertiary education and thus economic resources, has been the subject of a continual struggle for almost two hundred years. There were many attempts to make the universities more respondent to the needs of the professions and scientific research in the 19th century, but they met with resistance from the traditional and particular view of the university which had emerged in England. This emphasised the humanistic search for truth and the development of a disinterested culture; indeed Newman's Dublin lectures on the role of universities stressed that a university education should have no market value[273]. However, the increasing pressure for more British scientists and engineers, which was partially met by technical colleges, the Scottish universities and state universities in Germany and elsewhere, rendered the two pillars of the British educational establishment, Oxford and Cambridge, less and less relevant to national success in the context of rapid industrialisation[274]. In response to the specific lack of scientific and engineering research (as opposed to the teaching of engineers and scientists), many municipal 'Redbrick' universities emerged in the latter half of the century, particularly after the Paris exhibition of 1867, which galvanised critical national interest in the nature of British education[275].

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[273] Lyons,FS, *The Idea of the University from Newman to Robbins*, pp.114-120, in Phillipson,N (ed) (1983) Universities, Society and the Future, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh

[274] ibid, p.121, for Lyons, the German system emphasised that students could concentrate their spirit on scientific truths. For Herbert Spencer, a veracity for the truth was the moral basis of university education, and for later thinkers like JS Mill this would allow for a broader, more relevant curriculum with the same basic aim of improving the 'gentlemanly culture' of professionals in their everyday lives.

[275] Briggs,A, *Tradition and Innovation in British Universities, c.1860-1960* in Phillipson,N (ed) (1983), p.188. Critical interest was expressed by the establishment of Jeremy Bentham's utilitarian University College of London, established in 1835, which imitated the Edinburgh practice rather than the moral Oxbridge model, in rejecting religious tests and single-subject degrees. It became known as the 'Godless College of Gower Street'.

Thereafter, an academic-vocational divide began to emerge between institutions concerned with pure research and those that were concerned with meeting the requirements of industry. As the state took more interest in the university system, tension developed between the state and institutional autonomy. This resulted in a compromise between the universities and the state which was characterised by institutional variation and plurality as universities and colleges emerged to fill different demands at different times. Competing definitions of the role of universities also developed, reflecting the internal tensions[276]. However, concepts of the university began to converge after 1900, when the new colleges, later to become universities, began to offer traditional humanistic learning programmes, intended to broaden the mind and transmit a 'professional' culture. At the same time the Oxbridge colleges used their extra resources and links to the political elite to establish themselves in scientific research. This is the process which came to be known as 'academic drift'.

The lack of direct state involvement in the university sector prior to the First World War was due largely to the success of the Redbrick universities, established usually after pressure from municipal authorities and initial funding by local entrepreneurial investment. Civic pride ensured that the institutions survived after the patronage of individual capitalists declined, thus preserving autonomy and the voluntarist tradition and remaining outside of the state's purview. However, Britain's wartime experience demonstrated the necessity of scientific, managerial and engineering skills at a level only the universities could provide. In addition, positivist sociology, represented by August Comte, and the idealism of TH Green, began to establish the concept of the social usefulness of higher education and the universities[277]. State involvement in the British university system had begun, albeit in an ambiguous, compromised form, and this set the higher education agenda for the remainder of the twentieth century.

After the war, the vocational and professional training of the universities again came under attack from traditionalists, who feared for the quality of degrees. In 1932 the political scientist Sir Ernest Barker expressed worries about the democratisation of higher education, and the growing belief that universities could solve all social ills. If quality was threatened by the quantitative expansion, universities could lose the freedom to pursue knowledge in a disinterested way. For historian FS Lyons, this was the last rattle of the traditional guard; certainly, science, coupled with the success of wartime planning, had forever changed the concept of the university, and the argument was no longer about whether there should be vocational or professional education taught

[276] In reality this meant that the traditionalist universities gave ground between 1875 and 1900. Women were allowed to enter Oxford after 1870, and Oxbridge managed to establish and maintain their superiority in pure science and engineering through both curricular and structural changes.
[277] Lyons,FS, in Phillipson,N (ed) (1983), p.128

in the universities, but on the correct balance of vocational and liberal learning in each institution[278]. This view was reinforced by the failings of the British economy, especially during the 1930s, to either compete internationally or provide enough employment at home, and the experiences of the second world war.

A reformist view was expressed by Bruce Truscot in *Redbrick university* in 1943, in which he sketched out a future in which there would be a levelling out of resources between ancient and modern universities, a unification of standards at the point of admission, and the free movement of students between the various institutions which would all develop as centres of excellence in specific fields. He married the concepts of research- "a search after knowledge for is own intrinsic value"- and teaching, with the hope that "the discipline of conscientious teaching and application to learning cannot but make men better"[279]. While much of Truscot's thinking was firmly traditionalist and he failed to set it within the context of expansion, elements of credit transfer between institutions and specialisation were to reappear in the Robbins Report of the 1960s. At the time, however, the context of 1943 was set by the White Paper *Educational Reconstruction* which spoke of post-war expansion and argued that: "The aim of national policy must be to ensure that high ability is not handicapped by place of residence or lack of means of securing a university education"[280].

Following the passage of the 1944 Education Act, governments became more committed to education as a tool of manpower planning, and the route towards a coherent system was signalled by a series of reports from Government enquiries. These included the Percy Report (from the Special Committee on Higher Technical Education) of 1945 and the *Scientific manpower* report (from the Barlow Committee). The latter report recommended the doubling of output among scientists, but not at the expense of humanities courses[281]. In response to further reports on the manpower requirements of education, medicine, agriculture and social studies, successive government's expand places from 50,000 in 1938-39 to 100,000 in 1958-9[282]. In 1951 the National Advisory Council on Education for Industry and Commerce reported to the Labour government in 1951, called for what were eventually established after 1956 as Colleges of Advanced Technology (CATs)[283]. The rationale for expansion comprised three elements: increased student demand; the

[278] ibid, pp.129-30. Later, the same balances were to apply between higher and further education sectors.
[279] Truscot,B (1944) *Redbrick university*, Harmondsworth, p..37-49
[280] Lyons,FS, p.131.
[281] Allen,M (1988), p.41.
[282] ibid p.41
[283] ibid, p.41 on the Conservative's reluctance towards such expansion, the White Paper which proposed the CATs did not appear until 1956. By this time the rate of growth has slowed somewhat,

need to improve technical and industrial training; and the growing recognition that much talent was being wasted[284].

Growth in the 'national interest' found its fullest expression in the terms of reference of the University Grants Committee which were widened in 1947 to explicitly acknowledge that national needs should be a factor in the development of universities. However, the development of the state's interest in university education has to be seen in the context of the relatively high levels of autonomy common to British universities. The UGC was seen by some as a buffer between the universities and the state in the pre-war decades, but the general post-war consensus towards intervention was exemplified by the acceptance by the CVCP in 1946 that the efficiency of the economy had to be governments' primary aim for the education service. The general autonomy of universities was maintained until 1964 when the UGC was absorbed by the Department of Education in 1964. This absorption raised the possibility of conflict between accountability and academic freedom and marks the beginnings of the Left's ideological confusion about the social role of the university and the preservation of elite excellence.

Labour's interest in higher education, 1964-1994

This section looks at developments in higher education carried out by Labour in office, specifically the expansion signalled by the Robbins Report (1963) and the establishment of the Open University, both of which illustrate the confusion of aims in the ideology resulting from the presence of egalitarians and libertarians within the Left[285]. Libertarian Left here encompasses Croslandite notions of meritocracy, while the egalitarian Left would see social and education policy as an opportunity to redress class imbalance through wider access and egalitarian funding formulae. With Labour so often out of office, the party leadership was able to conceal the differences, up to the point when, on entering Government, it has been obliged to make 'hard choices'.

This dualism was apparent by 1964. David Robertson contends that the trade off between excellence and the continuing free deliver of higher education allowed Labour thinkers to merge the two themes during the 1960s. Many within the Labour Party assumed that participation in

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from 84,000 in 1951 to 90,000 in 1956, compared to growth from 52,000 to 85,000 in Labour's five full years of Government, CSO, Stewart,WAC (1979) *Higher Education in Postwar Britain*, cited by Simon,B (1991), p.598.

[284] Allen,M (1988), p.41.

[285] This concept benefits from the typology of George and Wilding, who used the phrases 'reluctant collectivists' and 'collectivists' to express the middle positions of a four-point scale on social welfare issues, libertarians and Marxists taking the extreme positions. George,V & Wilding,P (1976) Ideology and Social Welfare, Radical Social Policy, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, passim.

higher education could be driven automatically by success from below, because the grammar school stream promoted the kind of excellence required for university entrance, and believed that fair access to higher education was guaranteed if its provision was free. Some accepted of the rationing of higher education places, rather than their expansion as an entitlement for all[286]. Others believed that it was not necessary to challenge the content of higher education. Indeed academic and institutional autonomy found favour among Left libertarians, as did the belief that voluntarism was the appropriate response to calls for university reform.

The Labour Party's support for the Robbins Committee's report in 1963 was based on various factors. Firstly that Labour MPs and party members had benefited from grammar and university education, and were keen to see further expansion of opportunity as promised in the party's Taylor report to Annual Conference[287]. Although Robbins demonstrated the continued social imbalance of university intake since 1945, the liberal, meritocratic Left believed that the reform of secondary education would correct the social bias, and many did not challenge the belief that only a minority in society had the innate ability to take a university degree[288]. With the presence of A-levels as the university entry mechanism, the concept of open access was transferred away from the university sector and into wider educational discourse, which preferred selection at 18 to selection at 11, and where the illusion of a meritocratic, democratic society with free higher education for the brightest seemed just and benefited from consensus support[289].

The second factor was the need for a reliable supply of teachers, scientists and engineers, and this forms the context with which the Labour Party approached the 1964 General Election. Labour addressed higher education issues in two main ways. The first of these was the establishment of a higher education committee by Gaitskell in March 1962. This included Anthony Crosland, Tyrell Burgess and John Vaizey among Labour educationalists, and reported as the Taylor Report in time for the 1963 Annual Conference[290]. The report benefited from much of the written evidence which had been presented to the Robbins committee, and couched the language of expansion within manpower planning terms: "Economic expansion is only possible if university

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[286] Robertson,D (1995) *Universities and the public interest: Time to strike a new bargain?*, Renewal, Volume 3 No.4, October 1995, pp.40-41.

[287] it is worth remembering that Wilson promoted comprehensive schools by offering 'grammar places for all' (see Chapter Three) which implied the expansion of excellence, and subliminally the expansion of places for new generations of bright children freed from selection at 11.

[288] Robinson,E (1997) *Mass, continuing adult education: three questions for Dearing*, Higher Education Review, Vol.29, No.2, Spring 1997, p.9.

[289] this illusion is spelled out by Whitbread,N, *Towards Equality in Higher Education*, in Rubenstein,D (ed) (1979) Education and Equality, Penguin Education, Harmondsworth, p.289.

[290] The role of radical journalists like Burgess and Vaizey in constructing the consensus is discussed by Kogan,M (1971) The Politics of Education : Edward Boyle and Anthony Crosland in conversation with Maurice Kogan, Penguin, Harmondsworth, p.46.

and technological education expands rapidly and continuously to provide the necessary brainpower and skill"[291].

The Taylor Report also envisaged a unitary future for the expanded higher education sector, with the universities undifferentiated[292]. The second element of Labour's approach became clear with the policy statement *Labour and the Scientific Revolution* produced for the Conference, which presented Labour's plans as modernisation in the form of a popular and democratic expansion of opportunity which would contribute to economic growth[293].

In terms of human capital growth and planning, Labour's 1964 manifesto built on the themes of planning and modernisation, setting out what it believed to be national, and thus consensual truths about the possibilities of education in general:

> This is an age of unparalleled advance in human knowledge and of unrivalled opportunity for good or ill. In ever-widening areas of the world the scientific revolution is now making it physically possible for the first time in human history to provide the whole people with the high living standards, the economic security, and the cultural values which in previous generations have been enjoyed by only a small wealthy minority[294].

Not only was education for the scientific national good, but for the material and cultural benefit of an ever widening section of the population. Labour's promise of "a programme of massive expansion in higher, further and university education" allowed them to be radical, yet firmly within the consensus of the times around the Robbins Report.

The consensus around the Robbins Report broadly consisted of a consolidation of the conclusions of the 1943 White Paper *Educational Reconstruction*, that social demand should govern supply, and that there should be an open-ended commitment to the principle of higher education paid for by the state. Set up with a brief to construct a framework for the future, the Robbins Committee established a set of aims for the universities. Robbins' first priority was for the instruction in necessary skills, but that was buttressed by the other, more liberal, major aims of the report; to produce, not just specialist but cultivated men and women; to further the advancement of the idea of learning as a good; and the transmission of culture. Ramifications of these aims included

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[291] *The Years of Crisis, Report of the Labour Party's Study Group on Higher Education*, The Labour Party, 1963, p.7. (the Taylor Report)

[292] Kogan,M (1971) The Politics of Education : Edward Boyle and Anthony Crosland in conversation with Maurice Kogan, Penguin, Harmondsworth, p.52. This would imply that the new degree-offering establishments would have become universities instead of polytechnics. Validation of degrees in universities is internal, in the polytechnic sector awards were made by the CNAA, an external body designed to ensure degree standards were equivalent across the sectors.

[293] Simon,B (1991), pp.229-31.

[294] *Lets Go With Labour, The New Britain*, The Labour Party manifesto, 1964, p.4.

equal reward for work of equal standards, the removal of all differentations between institutions which provided similar functions, mobility of students within higher education, and the maintenance of standards.

In effect, this meant that post-Robbins expansion was to be societal, in that it would meet the new national requirements for science and technology, but with the preservation of the traditional universities' liberal education role. To this end, Robbins proposed that the Colleges of Advanced Technology, the CATs, should be come Technological Universities, and that five Special Institutions for Scientific and Technological Education and Research should be established, along with recommendations that student numbers grow[295]. Robbins was responding to calls for expansion from two directions, the politically-desired science and technological imperative, and the twin social effects of 'bulge' and 'trend'. The bulge was a manifestation of the increased birth rate during and after the war, which naturally raised demand for places; the trend effect was triggered by more students staying on longer at school (as provided for by the 1944 Act) and taking A-levels[296].

Perhaps the main feature of the expansionist consensus was the perceived need to make universities more accountable. Robbins' recommendation of a Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA) had been accepted by the Conservative Government[297] and the funding of higher education came under the control of the Department for Education and Science at the same time. It is within this framework that the arguments surrounding Labour's introduction of the binary divide can be best understood. It created thirty polytechnics delivering CNAA accredited degrees, which were nevertheless confined to a hinterland between the further and higher education sectors, although officially they were part of the latter. It also allowed the traditional liberal universities to maintain autonomy over what they taught and how they carried out their duties[298].

This binary divide, confirmed and consolidated by Labour Secretary of State Anthony Crosland in a speech at Woolwich Polytechnic on the 27th April 1965, was specifically intended to control that part of higher education output which the Government thought necessary to meet its economic and industrial needs, and was introduced against the express wishes of the Robbins' and

[295] Ashby,E, in Phillipson,N (ed) (1983), p.136.
[296] ibid, p.137. In addition to these pressures were recommendations that the school leaving age should be increased again to 16 in 1971.
[297] indeed the report was warmly accepted in its entirety by Alec Douglas Home in the Commons, Simons,B (1991) p.291.
[298] Robbins himself had expressed his liking of the old Newman principle of understanding for its own sake, see Ashby,E, p.141, and indeed this view of higher education was held by Bryan Davies (now Lord Davies of Oldham), who was Labour's further and higher education spokesman before the 1997 election, and developer of both *Aiming Higher* and *Lifelong Learning*, interview with author, 4/9/97.

Taylor reports[299]. Because it was also intended to maintain the autonomy of the traditional university sector, the binary policy was welcomed by many in the universities as a signal that they could continue 'unreformed'. However, this decision was fiercely condemned by many on the egalitarian Left, such as the communist education historian Brian Simon, who had hoped that the Robbins' recommendation of an expanding unitary system would become the basis for a broad democratic advance[300], a hope apparently dashed if the polytechnics were to be in effect, the second division.

Labour faced difficulty on this issue because the new binary divide seemed to offend equality whilst retaining excellence. Indeed, Crosland later stated that he had been hurried into an announcement of a change of policy by his advisers at the Department of Education and Science (DES)[301] who wished to strengthen the position of the department in relation to the universities by establishing a public sector of higher education[302]. However, at the time Crosland made a spirited case for a dual system of higher education, largely on the basis that the polytechnics would inevitably feel inferior to the universities even if they were within the same structure, "becoming a permanent poor relation"[303]. He also made the social democratic case, that a substantial part of higher education "should be under social control, and directly responsive to social needs". International competitiveness was a further motor of policy. In this sense the Polytechnics were to have a regional role linked to industry's needs and the employment needs of the local population. With an understanding of the need to balance meritocracy with egalitarianism, Crosland concluded his Woolwich speech with an rhetorical flourish: "Let us now move away from our snobbish, caste-ridden hierarchical obsession with university status"[304].

In response to charges that the policy was inegalitarian, Crosland pointed out that selection at 11 was wrong in that it adversely affected the aspirations of most of an entire age group, while selection at 18 for university affected the relatively few who want such an education, and they require quite different types of courses and institutions rather than uniformity. Additionally, egalitarians should not have supposed that naming the polytechnics as universities would have resulted in the greater resources being available to reach equivalent standards[305]. Centralised

[299] ibid, p.32. Robbins was explicitly against a binary divide as part of a system of state planning for both moral and practical reasons and spoke against such a policy in the House of Lords.
[300] Simon,B (1991) Education and the Social Order, Lawrence & Wishart, London, p.249.
[301] Kogan,M (1971) The Politics of Education : Edward Boyle and Anthony Crosland in conversation with Maurice Kogan, Penguin, Harmondsworth, pp.193-194
[302] Simon,B (1991), pp.249-250 notes that the issuing of Crosland's Woolwich speech as an 'administrative memorandum' gave it almost statutory force, as an expression of government policy.
[303] Simon,B (1991), p.248, quoting Crosland's Woolwich Polytechnic speech on 27th April 1965.
[304] ibid, p.248
[305] Kogan,M (1971) , pp.194-195.

control and the need to reflect regional employment needs also implied a role for the Local Education Authorities, which fitted ideologically with the Left's belief in the possibilities of local government. Although local and central government control can be seen as contradictory, where assumptions are shared and accountability is the main concern of the controlling authority, local authority control can be seen as an effective centralising measure when contrasted to institutional autonomy.

Recalling his close observations of the Crosland period, former ministerial private secretary[306] Maurice Kogan raised two further points about the binary policy which help explain Labour's acceptance of what had become a controversial division. Firstly, Kogan believed that "it was a moderately left-wing position to believe in polytechnics... because of the improved opportunities it gave in vocational education and parity of esteem"[307]. Then there was the "vague ideology about the usefulness of vocational education, as against the Ivory Towers mentality of the universities"[308]. These beliefs also connected the antipathy towards hierarchies common on the Left to issues of national competitiveness and wider opportunity for party audiences.

Crosland's higher education policy decisions, therefore, combined egalitarianism and efficiency to secure an inter-party consensus. Problems only emerged at the point of implementation. Thus, Crosland signed the Taylor Report calling for unitary expansion of higher education in opposition, but in Government signed the order for the binary division. Kogan believed the decision to found thirty polytechnics "must have been created by the Department responding to local authority wishes"[309]. The majority of larger city councils were at that time Labour councils and LEAs, and this confusion, or dualism within Labour thinking, allied to the desire to centralise control over public expenditure on higher education (through the use of LEAs), allowed a Labour Secretary of State to overturn agreed party policy in the interests of a wider consensus.

In terms of widening participation and access through the creation of a new set of universities, Labour failed to act radically whilst in office. Richard Crossman's Cabinet diaries recorded his belief that when Michael Stewart became Secretary of State for Education in 1964, he "quietly accepted the departmental line [on the binary divide] because there was nothing in the Party policy about committing us to repeal it"[310] and Crosland entered office after the binary policy

[306] Including Vosper and Boyle, during the late 1950s at the Ministry of Education, and later in the DES until 1967 as private secretary to junior minister Reg Prentice.
[307] interview with author, 29/10/96
[308] interview with author, 29/10/96
[309] ibid, p.52.
[310] Crossman,RHS (1975) The Diaries of a Cabinet Minister, *Volume 1 Minister of Housing, 1964-66*, Hamish Hamilton and Jonathon Cape, London, p.326.

had been regarded by the Department as a *fait accompli*[311]. Although Labour's position on forming the Government was clearly to create an undifferentiated university system, the wider consensus, from the Treasury to the Local Education Authorities, reflected the desire for accountable economic outcomes from an increasingly expensive higher education service This was a consensus which the Department would have represented but which it could not have sustained alone. However, the existence of this consensus allowed the Secretary of State to override party objections, even while drawing on elements of party support (such as Crosland's adviser Tyrell Burgess). Some Labour Party thinkers close to Crosland pointed out that the working classes had always favoured further education over university education, and the thirty vocational Polytechnics would provide the vehicle for expanding access to underrepresented social groups. As a socialist future needed more skilled workers as much as it needed equality, the downward catchment of the new sector would heal social wounds and improve economic performance with one stroke. Burgess had emphasised the skills deficit among the working classes in responding to changing capitalism in the United States, and believed that "this fate awaits the children of manual workers in this country unless we can radically alter the bias of our educational system"[312].

In fact Crosland did not expect degree-level education to constitute a large part of the Polytechnic's workload, and thought that they were intended to fulfil quite other requirements to the universities. In 1972, he believed they had established themselves and were not "trying to beat them [the universities] at their own game. Rather they are playing a different game with a different set of rules"[313]. He was quite indifferent to calls to democratise further and higher education, rejecting both mandatory grants to sixteen to eighteen year old students and calls for selective discrimination for lower academic qualifications as the price of university entry, although there were clearly financial constraints in operation.

Creating the Polytechnics allowed Labour to fulfil expansionist expectations, but it also shows the extent to which the leadership had to take into account the dualism within party ideology. The creation of the Open University, the other major policy development of the Wilson Governments (1964-1970) also revealed the presence of egalitarian and meritocratic values in conflict. David Reisman notes that Crosland was actually indifferent to the promise of an Open University, which was incorporated in Labour's 1966 election manifesto. Michael Foot recalled

[311] Reisman,D (1997) Crosland's Future: Opportunity and Outcome, MacMillan Press, Basingstoke, p.85.
[312] Tyrell Burgess, in Reisman,D (1997) p.86.
[313] ibid, p.89

that "Left to Crosland the whole thing might have been kiboshed"[314] even though the project had the support of Harold Wilson and Michael Young. In fact Wilson could not guarantee funding for this project in the circumstances of the financial crisis of 1966, and he asked his advisers to find private financial support[315]. The Open University was clearly aimed at a widening of access which should appeal to the egalitarian Left among the Labour Party membership. However, the Open University developed in such a way as to replicate the social composition of the traditional university sector rather than to widen access. Its success in increasing the numbers taking degrees should not mask the fact that its timing coincided with the expansionary intentions of the prevailing consensus, (in that it responded to middle class demand), that it was relatively cheap way to fund the Robbins expansion plans[316] because students had to pay their own tuition fees in full. These aspects of the OU system were formed into a new Left egalitarian critique which developed during the 1970s and early 1980s.

The major significance of the establishment of the Open University in 1969 was that it influenced on the development of more traditional higher education after that time, both in terms of expansion to meet social demand and in the modularisation of course structure. Labour's 1966 election manifesto had set out the intentions of the 'University of the Air' to widen entry to give "everyone the opportunity of study for a full degree" while at the same time offering new ways of studying in higher education which did not have to end with the awarding of a full degree[317]. Initially established to increase numbers, the OU also aimed to widen opportunity by only accepting part-time students without the 'normal' (then two A levels) qualifications, and was restricted to students over the age of twenty-one. Thus it was designed to fulfil a social egalitarian function of widening access to underrepresented mature students, but it also realised the social demand which even Robbins had failed to anticipate. The Open University immediately expanded places by 20,000, and this had trebled by the end of its first decade in 1980[318].

[314] Pimlott,B (1992) Harold Wilson, Harper Collins, London, p.514. There is no mention of the OU in the Crosland and Kogan discussions either.
[315] according to Cabinet minutes for February 1966, Wilson asked Lord Goodman to approach various American industrialists and noted that he would use his own contacts with the Ford Foundation and former White House official George Bundy. Times Educational Supplement, 3/1/97.
[316] Robbins made specific recommendations as to student numbers' growth up to 1980-81 and estimates thereafter until 1985-6, *Higher Education* (Robbins Report), Table 30, p.69. These envisaged a rise from 238,000 in 1963-4 to 558,000 in 1980-1 and 697,000 in 1985-6.
[317] The Labour Party *Time for Action*, General Election manifesto 1966, p.35.
[318] Kogan,M & Kogan,D (1983) The Attack on Higher Education, Kogan Page, London, p.22.

In terms of modular structure, the OU was pioneering in this regard precisely because the mode of learning had to be home-based and part-time[319]. This had a number of effects on the way the Polytechnic system developed, targeting mature and part-time students in greater numbers throughout the 1980s, even while the OU itself managed to represent a separate strand within the system mainly because it did not pose a challenge to other degree-awarding institutions[320].

Although the OU's pioneering methods were also utilised by the Polytechnics, neither sector made much impact on the social composition of entrants. Perhaps, then, Crosland's belief that it would be a drain on the finite education budget reflected the fact that the OU was never intended to democratise access or develop Britain's economic prospects[321]. By the middle 1970s, survey findings suggested that the new part-time students were building on qualifications already attained (often they were previously uncertificated teachers upgrading) and came from social groups which were already upwardly mobile in terms of occupation. Only 8% of OU students were working class in 1972/3 and indeed 90% of OU students were from social classes I & II. Even among part-time Polytechnic students the number was as high as 76%[322]. Part-time provision, the basis of the OU, seemed to be leading towards a cheaper, rather than more egalitarian system, without amending either the democratic or national manpower deficits. While the OU did not have a radical effect on the social class composition of higher education students, some contemporary critics acknowledge the OU as a radical measure even while recognising that it could be firmly located within the confines of the prevailing consensus around expansion [323].

The incoming Conservative Government after the 1970 General Election was also committed to expansion. The White Paper issued by Margaret Thatcher, the Secretary of State, in 1972 envisaged 200,000 more students in higher education by 1981, taking the number of the 18 year old cohort up to 22%, as opposed to 7% in 1961 and 15% in 1971[324]. As well as endorsing the consensus around expansion, Thatcher (or her departmental advisers) espoused liberal intentions for the universities:

> Opportunities for higher education are not... to be determined primarily by reference to broad estimates of the country's future needs for highly qualified people... The government

[319] Oliver Fulton, *Modular Systems in Britain*, in Berdahl, RO, Moodie,GC & Sptzberg,IJ (1991) Quality and Access in Higher Education: comparing Britain and the United States, The Society for Research into Higher Education & Open University Press, pp.147-8.
[320] Becher,T & Kogan,M (1980) Process and Structure in Higher Education, Heinemann, London, p.125.
[321] Reisman,D (1997) p.89.
[322] Whitbread,N in Rubenstein,D (ed) (1979), p.293,
[323] Robertson,D (1995) *Universities and the public interest: Time to strike a new bargain?*, Renewal, Volume 3 No.4, October 1995, p.39.
[324] Kogan,M & Kogan,D (1983), p.22.

> consider higher education valuable for its contribution to the personal development of those who pursue it[325]

However, the 1972 White Paper *Education: a Framework for Expansion*, is widely recognised as the high-water mark of growth; even so, during the post-war period, from Butler, to Edward Boyle and Margaret Thatcher, the Conservatives could point to an expansionist record in office at least the equal of Labour[326]. After this time economic difficulties changed the funding environment and expansion was curtailed.

The Labour manifesto of 1970 had also contained promises of expansion and offered new opportunities to challenge the élite nature of university and the possibilities for wider access. Reflecting the economic circumstances the February 1974 manifesto made no mention of higher education, while the language of October 1974 had changed somewhat, with no promises of expansion in higher education, (although a fairer grants system was a declared aim) but more opportunities in further education and training. The preconditions, and perhaps the underlying assumptions, had begun to alter, however: "As in all our plans, economic restraints are bound to influence timing"[327]. The changing economic circumstances after 1972 led to the erosion of the old inter-party consensus which had ensured that higher education, as an undisputed good, was to be protected in all circumstances. For Kogan, this partially reflected latent 1960s grumblings within Labour's egalitarian Left about the unchanging elitism of the university sector, the associated problems of academic drift by the Polytechnics (aping the universities, against Crosland's expectations) and the perceived failure, once again, of further and higher education to respond to social and economic needs[328]. However, there were still arguments for a wider variety of student types realising higher education from within both major parties, which stressed higher education as an equaliser of opportunity, and as a tool of national economic policy which required accountability and responsiveness to changes.

Economic problems during the 1974-79 Labour Government increased the demands on higher and further education to respond to a national crisis. James Callaghan's call for a vocationalisation of the secondary curriculum at Ruskin College in 1976 resonated throughout the tertiary sector as he derided the notion of creating well adjusted citizens who were

[325] *Education: A Framework for Expansion*, Cmmnd 5174, paragraph 118, HMSO 1972.
[326] Kogan,M & Kogan,D (1983), p.23.
[327] The Labour Party, *Britain will Win with Labour*, October 1974, p.23.
[328] Kogan,M & Kogan,D (1983), p.29. The Conservatives never advocated expansion after 1972

unemployable[329]. Government policy reflected this and the tightening economic circumstances as we can see from this table:

Table 12: DES projections for higher education numbers in 1981, 1970-1976

Year	DES declared targets
1970	835,000
1972	750,000
1974	635,000
1976	600,000

Kogan,M & Kogan,D (1983), p.29.

The numbers attending higher education from the 18 year old cohort fell from 14.2% in 1972 to 12.4% in 1978 despite steady rises in the numbers suitably qualified[330]. This was based on the Central Policy Review Staff's evidence that with a falling birth rate, the demand for higher education was bound to decline even if the proportion of 18 year olds entering the sector (age participation rate, APR) continued to rise[331]. Gordon Oakes, the Labour higher education minister in 1978, addressed the crisis of decline with the Brown Paper *Higher Education into the 1990s*, and, for the first time introduced rational planning for the sector based on consultation[332]. One solution for the universities was to expand access among women, mature students and the working classes to accommodate for the falling numbers of 18 year olds between 1983 and 1994, which would mean offering more places throughout the period, but without the damaging peaks and troughs[333].

Labour faced up to the immediate challenge (and rising unemployment) by expanding places in further education by 25,000 before the 1979 General Election, and the language of the party manifesto reflected the Brown Paper with the need to widen access to adults and the working classes in further and higher education. However, the document mostly reflected past achievements and offered only "an extension of the present mandatory grant system" for full time university students. One of the major opportunities for access that Labour offered to prospective students relied on continuing the tradition of self-funded part-time education: "We want to see more workers

[329] James Callaghan, speech to Oxford Union debate, 22/10/76, see for the background of his attack on the 'snobbery' of the education 'establishment' as represented by the TES Editorial pages, Callaghan,J (1987) Time and Chance, Collins, London. pp.410-411.
[330] Kogan,M & Kogan,D (1983), p.25.
[331] *Population and the Social Services*, report by the CPRS, HMSO 1977, quoted in Kogan,M & Kogan,D (1983), p.27.
[332] DES, *Higher Education into the 1990s*, HMSO, 1978.
[333] ibid, p.28, this was the assumption of Oakes' option E.

given time off work for study. To this end, the places at the Open University have increased from 42,000 in 1974 to 80,000 in 1978"[334].

By the occasion of the next election, in 1983, the context had been changed to certain extent by the cuts in higher education expenditure signalled by the Conservative Government in 1981/2. The intellectual agenda had altered too, again in response to the economic circumstances, which signalled an end to the hope that democratisation of access would come though continuing sectoral growth. For Marxist Michael Rustin, this represented a "compromise with the coalition of interests committed to the post-Robbins system" which failed to take on middle-class pressure groups[335]. The egalitarian Left of the Labour Party, represented here by Rustin and Oliver Fulton, were now calling for the comprehensivisation of post-compulsory education, and this emerged in party thinking in the policy document of 1982 *Education after Eighteen: Expansion with Change*[336]. This for the first time talked of blurring the divide between further and higher education through the financial mechanism of a universal educational entitlement. Both Labour and Rustin remained within the consensus because of the emphasis both placed on maintaining standards during a period of expansion, hence Rustin's endorsement of the Open University's role[337].

Consensus on expansion in the 1980s and 1990s

Broadening access became part of the wider consensus of the 1980s largely because of economic and demographic factors; economic need coincided with the current of thinking. While there were unambiguous calls for the higher education sector to be more responsive to the needs of the economy from the CBI and other organisations, the universities and polytechnics had to face the reality of falling numbers of 18 year olds by responding creatively and opening up opportunities for those previously denied. Once again the institutions would have to reform in the face of crisis and external pressure, and once again the challenge was met firmly within the boundaries of a cross-party consensus.

Some elements of this new consensus, combined a commitment to wider access with a heightened concern for better economic responsiveness, was exemplified in Labour's 1983 General Election manifesto. After rejecting Conservative talk of student loans and pledging Labour to improve and expand on the student grant system, Labour promised to:

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[334] The Labour Party *The Labour Way is the Better Way*, 1979 General Election manifesto, p.20.
[335] Rustin,M (1986) *The Idea of the Popular University* in Finch,J & Rustin,M (eds) (1986) A Degree of Choice: Higher Education an the Right to Learn, Penguin, London, pp.52-53.
[336] Labour Party *Education after Eighteen: Expansion with Change*, The Labour Party, 1982.
[337] Rustin,M (1986) p.55.

> Establish machinery to plan and co-ordinate all post-18 education together, and ensure that the bodies funding universities, and planning local authority further, higher and continuing education, are more accountable and representative[338].

To this end, Labour would "Require educational institutions to be more flexible in their admissions procedures and methods of study"[339]. However, the manifesto combines the beginnings of an egalitarian phase which challenged the liberal, meritocratic Left view of higher education, with some confusion about the desired outcomes. The headline promise of the document was to "reverse the Tory cuts" which might well have left the universities unreformed, while Labour also supported the liberal education assumptions of the OU by promising support for such part-time students.

Yet the remainder of the education pledges relate to expanding opportunity for the post-school working classes through paid leave from work. There was no detail behind the proposed changes to university admission procedures, and the 'workerist' tone of the manifesto suggests that, for the 'Bennite' egalitarians in the Labour Party, the workforce needed retraining rather than a university degree, even while the select few who received the latter should be protected from economies. As in other educational areas, the 1983 manifesto bears out the impression of one observer who expressed the view that "policy was made by adding up all the interest demands and putting them out as an A to Z manifesto" and that Labour's lack of coherence during the 1980s was down to a colonisation of the party by interest groups[340].

Labour's policy dualism reflected the lack of a high profile higher education lobby group with a firm ideological agenda among the party's affiliates. Chapter Seven demonstrates that Labour's trade union affiliates delayed reform to training policy, but no parallel force, reformist or defensive, existed in the area of higher education.

Instead, both parties displayed an openness to new ideas which balanced liberal education and vocational expansion in response to employment and social demand. Changing demographic factors noted by the 1978 Brown drew attention to the fact that there would be a decline in numbers of the 18 year old cohort from 1985, when 125,000 initially entered higher education, to a low of 95,000 by 1995, and a rise again thereafter[341]. During the 1980s the Department of Education and Science (DES) realised it would need to fill the student gap in order to maintain the ratio of

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[338] The Labour Party *New Hope for Britain* 1983, p.56.
[339] ibid, p.56
[340] Nick Pearce, interview with author, 8/10/97, who was policy researcher for successive higher education shadow ministers, Jeff Rooker and Bryan Davies in the 1990s.
[341] Department of Education and Science (1986) *Projections of Demand for Higher Education in Great Britain 1986-2000*, DES 2904/86, p.7. Numbers of the 18/19 cohort began to fall in 1982.

graduates, and indeed to comply with the declared aims of increased participation, reiterated in the 1987 White Paper[342].

Pressure for extra students from previously under-represented social groups was not confined to the political Left. Throughout the 1980s the Employment Department[343] presented arguments relating to the needs of employers not being met by university output. Elite interests contested such reforms however, citing the quality of students and extra pressure on academic staff as their main concerns. The solution eventually settled on allowed for expansion at the less prestige institutions, leaving the elite universities free to maintain high entry standards, and this has tended to exacerbate the hierarchy of higher education experience. Much of the language of Employment Department (ED) reports and the debates around access reflected vocational requirements of employers and so did not directly challenge restricted access by the elite Oxbridge universities. Although the precise nature of labour market shortages was difficult to measure, the pressure on ministers and officials often came publicly from employers. Shortages were particularly worrying during periods of high unemployment and recession, and ED surveys tended to concentrate on the imbalance of graduates to employers in specific fields, such as engineering and science[344]. Such reports served not only to examine the often anecdotal evidence for a shortage of certain kinds of graduate, but also to serve the function of examining the effectiveness of higher education in meeting the economy's needs in terms of manpower[345]. In 1989 Jonathan Cope, Minister of State at the Department of Employment acknowledged this pressure from employers for graduates:

> Like every nation we face an urgent need to educate and train at high levels to meet our skill needs and to compete successfully in international markets..... This need is given added urgency by the sharp drop in the number of 18 year olds, over the next five years..... The Employment Department's Training Agency... ....is playing an active role in promoting wider access in higher education in order to meet national skill needs[346].

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[342] DES (1987) *Meeting the Challenge*. Secretary of State Kenneth Baker envisaged doubling the participation rate in twenty-five years, see Employment Department (1989) *Admissions to Higher Education: Policy and* Practice, a Report to the Training Agency by Oliver Fulton and Susan Ellwood, although he subsequently achieved this in five years, 1988-92.

[343] known as the Department for Employment at times, but ED is the shorthand used in this thesis.

[344] see for example, Tarsh,J (1985) *Graduate shortages in science and engineering: A survey of employers in 1983 and 1984*, Research Paper no. 50, Department of Employment.

[345] ibid, Introduction, p.1 where it is recognised that the report is aimed at ensuring value for money from the technical HE sector in particular. Other ED publications aimed at measuring the effectiveness of education and promoting more education for better employment prospects include Elias,P & Blanchflower,D (1987) *The Occupations, Earnings and Work Histories of Young Adults- Who gets the good jobs?*, Research Paper no. 68, Department of Employment.

[346] Jonathon Cope, Employment Minister, Foreword to Employment Department (1989), p.2.

The tone of the ED's report, *Admissions to Higher Education* by Oliver Fulton and Susan Ellwood, consolidated ED pressure on the DES to widen access to meet these requirements. Among the twenty-six recommendations of the report were suggestions to alter entry criteria, so that ability to complete a course should be the basis of entry (threatening the 'Gold Standard of A levels), that rewards should accrue to institutions who successfully graduated 'non-traditional' students, and that course structures should be adapted to fit the new type of higher education intake, for example Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT) and modular structures[347]. Many of these recommendations had appeared in Fulton's earlier work for the Labour Party, underlining the cross-party nature of what by the end of the 1980s had become the new consensus[348].

The DES's own projections of demand after the 1982 decline in the 'traditional student' cohort suggested the possibility that 'Older Mature' students (those aged between 25 and 34) could follow the upward trend they had exhibited since 1970[349]. The report's Projection Q specifically noted that older matures could fill the gap and maintain institutional capacity, indeed: "This would reflect present trends and would allow for more continuing education and retraining for the working population"[350]. However, rather than widening access as a route to further expansion, the projections anticipated a reduction in mature student intake after 1995 when the number of 18 year olds were again due to rise and to fulfil their share[351]. The universities and the DES were willing to take their students from a wider pool of applicants, but wishing to maintain the high A level entry criteria, they chose to temporarily open access to social groups exempted from the usual conditions. The fact that, as Fulton and Ellwood report, many of the universities did not fear a dilution of standards emanating from this manoeuvre is largely down to their expectations of reaping the same proportion of those students with the best A level results, while the colleges of education and the polytechnics would absorb the newer type of students[352].

Clearly, expansion in one sector of the higher education world need not unduly disturb the elite universities and their application requirements. As long as the responsive public sector reacted to the new conditions and widened access, the universities could maintain their supply at the top of

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[347] ED (1989), p.6.
[348] Fulton was influential in the development of *Education after Eighteen: Expansion with Change*, The Labour Party, 1982 according to Bill Williamson, *Who Has Access?*, in Finch,J & Rustin,M (eds) (1986) A Degree of Choice: Higher Education an the Right to Learn, Penguin, London.
[349] Men 25-34 had increased from 6.5% of intake to 10.0%, 1970-1985, women from 7.5% to 10.4%.
[350] DES (1986), p.9.
[351] ibid, p.23, although in the event the numbers of non-traditional students held up in the wake of the Baker expansion period, 1988-92.
[352] DES (1986), Table A6, p. 23, which shows both Projection P (unchanged trends after 1985) and Projection Q (widening access trend) would mean a widening of the gap between the universities and the public sector polytechnics during the lowest years of the demographic shortfall of 18s, with the public sector taking a larger share of all students.

the market. While this might have satisfied the technocrats and the meritocrats, it fell short of the demands of some of the egalitarian Left reformers who increasingly throughout the 1980s began to equate widening access with social justice.

Adding to the general pressure on higher education to react to the challenges the demographic pattern was academic pressure for reform. The Leverhulme study for the Society for Research into Higher Education, published in 1983, was one such body of evidence that proved to be influential in justifying expansion and widening access into the 1990s . This report incorporated the spectrum of political opinion from egalitarian Left reformers who were concerned with access and course structure, the technocrats one either side of the political divide, who were concerned with matching (as far as possible) public expenditure with national economic output, and the needs of employers often left dissatisfied by the over-specialised nature of traditional academic degrees. It seemed that a new consensus was emerging around the idea that the fall-off in the number of 18 year olds in the population would "provide opportunities for the establishment of new patterns of courses within stable budgets"[353]. Diversity could be attempted without harming the excellence of the elite university structure. Thus, the over-specialisation of degrees, which Robbins had not wished to see develop, could be tackled, and replaced by "short basic courses linking more than one disciplinary perspective but of good academic quality" which "would be suited to the needs of many students and many employers in a system of mass higher education"[354]. Widening of access could develop alongside the vocationalisation of higher education, and, incidentally, institutional plurality of governance and funding rather than a unitary system, with a continuing role for local authorities in the direction of sub-degree work[355]. A new set of balances was envisaged by the Leverhulme study, between central and local, public and privately generated funding, and between institutional and professional autonomy, which would combine to produce "a more equitable approach to the funding of institutions"[356].

Given this background, Labour's 1987 General Election manifesto hardly reflected the radicalism of the egalitarian Left, or of the Leverhulme participants, and also failed to anticipate the enormous expansion of places launched by Kenneth Baker in 1988. The manifesto concentrated on more funding for tertiary education and grants for these intermediate students. But alongside

[353] The Society for Research into Higher Education (1983) *Excellence in Diversity: Towards a New Strategy for Higher Education*, SRHE, University of Guildford, Surrey. One of the major contributors was Tessa Blackstone, later as Baroness Blackstone, Labour's further and higher education minister.
[354] SRHE (1983) p.8.
[355] ibid, p.24.
[356] ibid, p.33.

pledges to expand opportunities to a wider social cohort (the actual trend since at least 1970) were genuflections towards maintaining standards and the excellence of British university research[357].

After the election, the Conservative's Education Reform Act (ERA) of 1988 opened up new possibilities for course and institutional flexibility by abolishing tenure for academic staff at the established universities[358]. Expansion was also relaunched with Baker's doubling of the APR from 15% to 30% between 1988 and 1992, which presented higher education with a new set of problems. A mass system would henceforth be funded (and increasingly underfunded) on the same basis as an elite system, which would inevitably increases social demands for accountability. The social cost (to the taxpayer) of higher education rose while the unit cost per student fell by as much as 40%, thus raising the spectre of unaffordability while at the same time creating real financial crises in some institutions[359]. The Conservative's solution to this new set of conditions was to begin the process of transferring the costs from the collective to the individual by the introduction of student loans to cover maintenance.

Although this kind of individualisation and consumerisation of higher education was welcomed by some on the egalitarian Left (such as David Robertson and Eric Robinson) as well as the New Right, the Labour Party found it difficult to challenge the status quo of free university education for all who qualified, the primary Robbins' principle. Robertson's attacks from the market perspective suggested that government and universities were unsuitable institutions to determine the correct distribution of courses. Supply, he suggested, should reflect demand, not be rationed as a 'middle-class benefit' and in the interests of academic autonomy[360]. Allied to the technocratic, human capital arguments about manpower needs, this new egalitarian critique suggested access as social justice, and wished to hasten the deconstruction of wasteful inter-departmental blockages in higher education. Labour market protection for the middle-classes could be swept away as the nation became more competitive and educational opportunity became available for all[361]. The benefits of flexibility and choice could be available to everyone in the new era of lifelong learning, except perhaps the flexible academics themselves.

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[357] Labour Party *Britain will win with Labour*, The Labour Party, 1987, pp.27-31.
[358] Robertson,D (1995) *Universities and the public interest: Time to strike a new bargain?*, Renewal, Volume 3 No.4, October 1995, p.45.
[359] The 40% fall in funding per student in higher education is calculated over twenty years, 1977-97, The Dearing Report, DfEE and GDP deflator, cited by John Carvel, *Oxbridge fights to retain the status quo*, The Guardian, 12/11/97 .
[360] ibid, and Robertson,D (1996) *Paying for learning*, New Economy, Volume 3 No.3 Autumn 1996, IPPR, London, pp.154-157, and Robinson,E (1997) *Mass, continuing adult education: three questions for Dearing*, Higher Education Review, Vol.29, No.2, Spring 1997, pp.7-16, *passim*.
[361] ibid, see also Robertson,D (1994) *Choosing to Change: Extending access, choice and mobility in higher education.* The report of the HEQC CAT Development Project, Executive Statement and

The consensus around a new terminology of flexibility, individual learning entitlements and institutional deconstruction, found expression in Labour's 1992 General Election manifesto, which stated that "Learning must become a lifetime opportunity". Credit transfer was envisaged in the 16-18 age group, adopting some of the Higginson Report's recommendations for reforming A levels, although the main 'headline' higher education statements within the manifesto were a reversal of the Student Loan scheme, with a return to "a fairer system of grants", and assurances about standards. Once again, Labour appeared to be within the broad consensus on access without leading it at its radical 'edge', clearly with electoral caution to the fore[362].

During the 1987-1992 period, Jack Straw had been shadow education secretary, and his media-friendliness may have helped raise the profile of education, while at the same time limiting Labour's radicalism. The impact of raising the question of higher education expenditure was to remind the middle-classes of Keith Joseph's early 1980s threat to introduce tuition fees. For every benefit of raising political issues, there are downsides in the conservatism or indifference of the electorate. However, the human capital consensus ensured that education policies were to the fore by the end of the 1980s, almost regardless of party manoeuvring. The 1992 Labour manifesto contained a far higher proportion of educational themes (almost 10% of the text) than was usual, and was one of only three post-1964 manifestos which felt the need to present the party's education policies in the front half of the document (1970 and 1987 being the others). The rising salience of educational issues referred to earlier in this thesis continued in the 1997 manifesto, which had education as its opening chapter[363].

With the simultaneous growth of a new inter-party consensus around access, and public accountability, and the emergence of tertiary education as a politically salient issue, Labour had to confront some of the ideological confusion and mythology it had previously left unexplored if it was to enter Government. Ambiguities useful in opposition can be seen as weakness in Government. Hard choices would have to be faced, for example on student finance which the Conservatives had raised. Thus, while Ann Taylor was shadow education spokesperson, her junior

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Summary, HEQC, p.8 which recommends credit based educational vouchers, portability of awards and institutional responsibility for quality assurance.

[362] Labour Party (1992) *Its time to get Britain working again*, The Labour Party, London, April 1992, p.39

[363] The proportions referred to have been calculated by the appearance of the words education and educational in the manifestos as measured by a ratio of the whole, for example in 1987 either of those words appeared every 302 words of text, while in February 1974 they occupied only one of every 1,223 words. The relative position of 'the education part' of the manifesto is easily calculated from the total pagination of the document. Normally this occurs about halfway through the document, even in the pivotal year of 1964. The trend towards a higher position, from 1987, coincided with the perceived need to make higher and further education more responsive to both social justice and manpower concerns, elements of the nascent new consensus.

spokesperson Jeff Rooker had to be sacked after considering 'out loud' the possibility of student loans, then contrary to party policy.

By 1994 there was already a cross-party consensus on student financed HE at leadership level, but problematically for Labour, advice to the leadership suggested that opposition to loans among the electorally key middle class groups meant that the party should keep a low profile. Two confidential memoranda were produced for John Smith's Leader's Office early in 1994, the first of which accepted the principle that it was the grant system of funding which rationed access predominantly to the benefit of the middle-classes, and that the individual was the primary beneficiary of higher education. The second memoranda concluded that the solution was to attack the Conservatives' version of the student loans scheme, introduced in 1990, as it was based on "Thatcher's ideological assumptions". Labour could present the policy better, the document continued, if it was portrayed as a more equitable and efficient mechanism to gather graduate contributions to their own education, while at the same time the policy preserved the principle that higher education "should be free at the point of access"[364].

In 1994 Labour was still unwilling to back student loans as policy in *Opening doors to a learning society*, despite many references to unified qualifications structures, coherent frameworks and "genuine parity of esteem between academic and vocational" areas of study[365]. Clearly electoral caution was to the fore, while the Government's operation of an unpopular scheme gradually introduced the idea into society. Labour did not have to take a fixed position in 1994, and preferred to wait until the strength of the argument (that thirty-five percent APR could not be funded in the same way as seven percent APR) began to wear down the resistance of parents and students.

Conclusion

Labour's confusion about higher education was based on the liberal-egalitarian division within the party, and that fact that Labour had few opportunities after 1970 to operationalise policy. The lack of a high profile lobby group within the party made it easier for Labour to stand for things in opposition and effectively do the opposite in Government when external pressures would have more impact. In the 1960s and 1970s the Robbins expansion and the Open University were presented as measures which widened access, but in reality these policies reflected the internal

[364] The documents referred to here were private Labour Party briefing memoranda from John Smith's Leader's Office, filed in David Blunkett's Westminster office, but pre-dating his own involvement with education policy.

[365] Labour Party (1994) *Opening doors to a learning society; a policy statement on education* delivered to the 1994 Labour Party Conference.

party dualism because they did not alter the social intake of higher education. As we have seen, both libertarians and egalitarians could celebrate the OU and many saw the binary divide represented by the new polytechnic sector as appropriate to the needs of the economy as well as opening up further opportunities for the educationally disadvantaged. After a long period of opposition, Labour in the 1990s was fortunate in that student loans and the eventual replacement of grants with loans had been part of the Conservative Government's agenda throughout the 1990s, had indeed become part of the wider consensus (insofar as ordinary members of the non-graduate public were not exercised against loans[366]), and indeed framed the only options for expansion, a traditional egalitarian Left concern. In 1996 the Government asked Sir Ron Dearing to review the whole question of the medium and long term financing of higher education, thus delaying any reforms until after the next election due to held by May 1 1997. Only after winning the election would Labour have to confront again its dualism and make political choices relating to access, funding and quality and standards. The period between 1994 and 1999 will be explored in detail in Chapter Eight.

[366] In fact a MORI poll found that 69% of adults agreed that parents and students should contribute part of the bill for HE in 1997, compared to 38% in 1991, as reported in DfEE (1997) *Tuition Fees; poor will not have to pay*, press release 322/97, 15/10/97.

Chapter Six

Compulsory Education: actors, pressure and policy

This chapter sets out to explain the development of new Labour policy in compulsory education. The two pre-election documents, *Diversity and Excellence* (1995) and *Excellence for Everyone* (1996) form the basis of the 1997 White Paper, *Excellence in schools* and subsequent legislation. This chapter makes clear that new Labour developed new educational polices largely in reaction to the changed context provided by the Conservative period of power. However, as well as expanding its share of the aspirant middle class vote (in Philip Gould's terms), new Labour was concerned to portray its policy development as part of the Labour tradition and thus not deter Labour's core voters. The manifesto analysis in Chapter One has provided an incomplete picture of the detailed changes that the new legislation implied, so this chapter analyses party policy statements and the interaction between the party and other interest groups in order to fully understand the motivation for policy change.

Diversity and Excellence was produced for ratification at the 1995 Annual Conference and was intended to deal with two structural issues which were part of the Conservative legacy. The first issue was selection of a proportion of their pupils by Grant Maintained (GM) schools and City Technology Colleges (CTCs). Labour has been consistently opposed to selection in schools since the 1964 election, but the popularity and higher league table positions attained by such institutions made them popular with aspirational parents. The second issue was how to deal with the disproportionate funding and freedom from Local Education Authority control that GM, CTC and grammar schools enjoyed. New Labour believed that disproportionate funding could not be defended, but local management of schools by headteachers and boards of governors was popular, and so found itself threatening to take powers away from democratically elected local education authorities, many of which were Labour controlled.

Diversity and Excellence suggested that structures (specifically whether there was selection by ability in the system or not) and standards were separate, and that the parental choice aspects of the Education Reform Act (ERA) of 1988 and the 1992 Education Act could be continued without harming the educational opportunities of all pupils in the state sector. *Excellence for Everyone* (1996) was primarily concerned with improving the standards of educational output through improving teaching and learning, developing partnerships with school's surrounding communities, and setting targets for success. Following the election of the Labour Government in May 1997, the party initiated legislation designed to re-integrate the concepts of structure and standards, in the Standards and School Framework Bill and the Teaching and Higher Education Bill. The concerns

in *Excellence for Everyone* relating to teaching and teacher performance appeared in the latter Bill launched in the House of Lords in November 1997. The organisational aspects of raising standards, which changed the role of LEAs in relation to schools, from one of curriculum agenda setting and staffing to one of 'standards watchdog' for central government were in the Framework Bill.

Taken together this new policy environment suggests a coming together of the new Labour and Conservative educational thinking which is expressed in six consensual themes which underlie the specific changes discussed in this chapter. Firstly, new Labour positioned itself in relation to a consensus around the 'school effect'. This consensus was based on the belief that the school effect was greater than social or governmental action in determining performance, and we have already seen in Chapter Three how the development of this consensus threatened the earlier consensus around child-centred learning and comprehensive schooling.

The second major theme is the rising salience of 'standards' in education, which has been partially covered in earlier chapters. Chapter Three showed that first Left-inclined criticisms of teaching practice and educational autonomy in the *Guardian* and other centre-left journals developed during the winter of 1991-1992. Polling evidence analysed in Chapter One suggests that new Labour was correct to concentrate on standards as measures of salience demonstrate a consistent upward trend from 1986.

A third theme is the centralisation of powers in the Secretary of State, also in the name of raising standards, which threatens the independence and function of LEAs and teacher training institutions. Labour was also compelled to address other Conservative policies, such as the local management of schools (LMS), and the autonomy from LEAs which GM schools enjoyed. In addition, the increasing application of targets, tests and published league tables all tended to reduce local and increase central control over education.

Fourthly, the new approach to standards by new Labour also raised the issue of the vocationalisation of secondary education, exemplified by the Education Action Zones policy. This raised fears that groups of pupils in poorly performing schools (or whole LEAs) could be diverted at the age of fourteen from the normal curriculum in the interest of local employment requirements and thus not be able to benefit from the full breadth of academic opportunities.

Fifthly, admissions policy, crucial to the question of parental choice, institutional selectivity, specialisation and the continuation of Grammar schools, is a further area which the Labour Party found it had to address in an effort to attract (wider middle class) electoral support, and another area where Labour would have to confront local authority control. As a consequence, new Labour became committed to a more meritocratic and hierarchical distribution of educational institutions, with more encouragement of specialisation and experimentation.

A sixth and final new Labour theme is social inclusion and exclusion; this was connected to other strands of new Labour's wider social policy which was concerned with equalising opportunity. In education, this implied that statemented children (with special educational needs) would be included in mainstream schools unless other factors applied.

The following section outlines the interest groups, government departments and individual players who constitute the compulsory education policy community, and the Labour Party's institutional relationship to this community. It will then look into the policies in more detail and the legislation designed to implement them. Finally, the Chapter will examine the interactions between the party and the interest groups, and intra-party debates or influences where appropriate.

The policy community

Compulsory education is characterised by a large policy community, consisting of professional producer groups, such as the teaching unions, statutory quality and funding quangos, school governors, consumer groups such as parental organisations, and governmental bodies, such as local authorities, the DfEE and the Treasury. There are also many peripheral or ephemeral groups around the fringes of education which can be described as the issue network. A major factor within the community is resource dependency, because governmental action depends on the compliance of and input from producer interests.

Bodies and individuals within the policy community for the purposes of this Chapter are: The DfEE, The Treasury, the Prime Minister's Office, The House of Commons Education Select Committee, Funding Agency for Schools (FAS), the National Foundation for Education Research (NFER), the Teacher Training Agency (TTA), Basic Skills Agency (BSA), the National Union of Teachers (NUT), the National Association of Schoolmasters/ Union of Women Teachers (NAS/UWT), the Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL), the Professional Association of Teachers, (PAT) the National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT), the Secondary Heads Association (SHA), the National Governor's Council (NGC), the Editors of the Times Educational Supplement (TES), and Times Higher Education Supplement (THES), the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority (SCAA) (now absorbed into the Qualification and Curriculum Authority, QCA) and the Association of Metropolitan Authorities, AMA (now Local Government Association, LGA).

Also among the standing body of interest groups the policy community we can place interest groups such as: the Campaign for the Advancement of State Education (CASE) the

National Confederation of Parent Teacher Associations (NCPTA) the Conservative Education Association, (CEA) the Socialist Education Association, (SEA) the Grant-Maintained Schools Foundation, (GMSF) the Advisory Centre for Education (ACE), the Pre-School Learning Alliance (PSLA), University Council for the Education of Teachers (UCET), and the Campaign for Real Education, (CRE). This group has less influence but always contribute to the debates. In addition, there are a group of working academics and political advisers in the field. Among those influential with new Labour (and the outgoing Conservative government in some cases) have been: Michael Barber, David Reynolds, Tim Brighouse, Leisha Fullick, Andrew Adonis, David Miliband, Sig Prais, Alan Smithers, Howard Glennerster, Nick Tate, and journalistic commentators such as Peter Wilby, a former education correspondent and later editor of the *New Statesman*, Melanie Phillips, George Walden, MP and the philosopher John Gray.

Finally, the issue network consists of groups not only interested in education, but who make occasional contributions to debates, includes: the Social Market Foundation (SMF), DEMOS, the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) the Institute for Economic Affairs (IEA), the Fabian Society (FS) the CBI, the TUC.

Policy networks theory offers little guide as the position of institutional Labour Party figures and organisations in the schemata of influence. It should be noted that internal party organisations, such as the SEA, are not central to the community, although as an affiliated organisation, the SEA does play a part in the politics of the Labour Party Annual Conference[367]. In terms of parliamentary representation during the opposition phase, from 1994 to 1997 Labour's education spokespeople were David Blunkett, Margaret Hodge and Estelle Morris, on nursery and primary issues, Peter Killfoyle, the education whip, and, to a lesser extent on compulsory education issues, Stephen Byers, who was spokesman for training. After May 1st 1997, Blunkett became Secretary of State, Byers became Minister of State for Standards, Morris became Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Standards, while Margaret Hodge continued to have influence through her leadership of the House of Commons Education and Employment Select Committee. These individuals constitute the state/party executive with whom the policy community interacts. With this in mind, the remainder of this chapter will look at the development of Labour policy over the 1994-97 period in terms of documentary output.

[367] Usually by being supportive of the leadership and presenting platform friendly resolutions. See other chapters for SEA impact on higher education policies. The Conservative's CEA had little impact on the 18 years of government, in fact its leader Dimitri Coryton was publicly at odds with the idea of offering more selection in the 1997 manifesto, see Simon,B *The Tory Bill*, Forum, Volume 39, No1, 1997, pp.4-6 and Jeremy Sutcliffe, TES News Focus, 3/10/97, *The Conservative Inquisition*.

From open doors to diversity

The Labour Party's *Opening doors to a learning society*, produced by Ann Taylor and her team in 1994, was a traditional Labour education policy document, and represented a reassertion of 'educationalism' after the Jack Straw period[368]. The document was traditional in that it was concerned with access, quality, equity, continuity and accountability. It used the language of partnership between professional teachers and local and central government. The document also promised a "dramatic extension of nursery education" so that there would be places for all three and four-year-olds whose parents wanted nursery provision[369]. There was the usual concern with class sizes and improving outcomes that we have observed in manifestos since 1964. One new element was the setting of individual targets for achievement, such as that for 80% of young people to achieve the equivalent of GCSE A-C grades in core subjects, emphasising the pupil-centredness of traditional Left policy[370]. These targets were to be pre-agreed by the parents, children and the school, and would be aimed at reflecting each pupil's improvement within his or her potential[371]. .

Opening doors also specifically pledged Labour to "replacing overburdensome and educationally flawed tests with assessment procedures..." which would preserve a larger role for teacher's professional and autonomous judgement. The tone of the remainder of the document was also strongly educationalist, attacking league tables and OFSTED, the recently established inspection service, which Labour feared was not independent enough of central government. In contrast to Conservative policies over the previous fifteen years, Labour saw the LEAs as having a major role to play in inspection, advice and the provision of services. By far the largest change in the LEAs role would be to take back GM schools and City Technology Colleges into the local democratic framework, and, crucially, to "ensure that the funding of every school is equitable"[372].

There would be no further use for the Funding Agency for Schools (FAS, used to direct central government money into the GM sector), nor for the Assisted Places Scheme (APS) which "subsidises the independent fee-paying sector at the expense of the public sector and denies equality of opportunity"[373]. The GM schools, Labour reported, were often referred to as having

[368] As discussed in Chapter Three.
[369] Labour Party (1994) *Opening doors to a learning society; a policy statement on education* delivered to the 1994 Labour Party Conference, p.6.
[370] this preserved the tradition of Plowdenism. Ironically for a collectivist service such as comprehensive education, individualism underpinned the notion that each pupil should maximise his or her own choice and opportunity, whereas the Conservative inspired individualisation of the school structures relied on the collective test-results of entire year groups for its market signalling. The tone of the remainder of the document was also strongly educationalist,
[371] ibid, p.16.
[372] ibid, p.27
[373] ibid, p.27

'opted-out' of local authority shackles, whereas in fact these schools had *opted-in* to DfE control; the positive side of the equation, local management of schools by headteachers and Governors, would be maintained in principle and improved upon. Labour chose to present the debate thus: "The choice is clear: more Tory nationalisation or Labour's strategy for locally managed schools"[374]. The election of Tony Blair to the leadership after John Smith's death in 1994 changed the context of education policy in a number of ways. Smith did not envisage education becoming central to Labour's electoral appeal, except to the extent that the party would succeed with a traditional programme, pledging more resources and capitalising on the unpopularity of the selective aspects of Government policy. Tony Blair and David Blunkett had other concerns with the education system.

Blunkett moved into his new opposition brief shortly before the controversy over the Blairs' choice of a Grant Maintained school for their eldest son[375]. As he told the TES in September 1995, "In general I am left-wing and radical on economic policy but conservative on social matters"[376]. He was appointed because of his views on education rather than as Blair's uncritical spokesperson, and represented neither the liberal educationalist nor the teacher-unionist strands of educational thinking, especially when producer interests harm the educational opportunities of the working classes. Rather like Tawney, he saw the education service as the one chance for the poor to be helped out of their predicament; the how is less important. Despite their markedly different backgrounds, both socially and politically, Blunkett and Blair shared a desire to change the Labour Party's accepted educational positions. Central for new Labour was to be, not what ideology could provide a centre-left government, but what would provide improved school standards; this can be interpreted as a restatement of equality of opportunity.

Blair and Blunkett: a new agenda

Personalities are important in opposition policymaking, in particular the relationship between leader and responsible shadow minister: Jack Straw had a more modernising agenda for education than Neil Kinnock, while Ann Taylor's approach caused less friction with John Smith who did not interfere with her work on education policy. As we have seen, Blair contradicted Taylor's anti-GM policy immediately on taking office as Leader of the Opposition. Despite the wording of *Opening doors*, he changed the language of education policy by his contributions to the debates on parental choice and selection, and soon replaced her with Blunkett, although the document stood as party

[374] ibid, p.30
[375] David Blunkett had been Shadow Health Spokesman previously.
[376] for example he voted against the lowering of the age of consent to 16 for gay sex during the 1992 to 1997 parliament and was absent when the issue came up for a free vote in 1998.

policy[377]. Tony Blair did not share John Smith's assessment of the 1992 election defeat, belonging firmly to the modernising camp, for whom 'one last heave' was not thought appropriate, and he placed a renewed emphasis on education and the labour market. In addition to an emphasis on individual improvement, in national, collective terms, Blair's view was that "education is the best economic policy there is for a modern economy"[378], indeed he told a group of business leaders that: "The absolute number one priority for domestic policy is education and skills. We will win by brains or not at all. We will compete on enterprise and talent or we will fail"[379].

After coming to the leadership of the party, Blair also stated the need to modernise the comprehensive principle by making "a determined break from the monolithic comprehensives that symbolised Labour's past"[380]. The intention of Blunkett and his colleagues on the Education and Employment Policy Commission during 1994-1997 was clearly to tackle the tough decisions that he felt Taylor had ducked[381]. Shadow spokespeople clearly need the support of the party leader in order to deliver radical changes. In contrast to the John Smith-Ann Taylor relationship, that between Blair and Blunkett was one in which it was recognised by both parties that the party leader would set the agenda because of the higher importance education would have for new Labour[382]. To this end Blair had his own set of education advisers, including Michael Barber who was also influential with the Conservative Government and its attempts to improve standards in schools.

The extent to which the educational agenda of new Labour developed during the first year of Blair's leadership could be seen from public statements on GM status and the taxation position of public schools in the intervening period[383], which revealed that the new Labour leader viewed parental choice and institutional diversity as the way forward for comprehensive education. However, *Opening doors to a learning society* stood as official party policy until *Diversity and Excellence* was presented by David Blunkett in June 1995. The new document set out four principles to guide policy; schools were to be responsible for managing themselves; accountability must exist locally as well as nationally; funding must be fair and open; and admissions procedures must be fair, with no return to selection through the 11-plus. The main aim of the paper, the reform of school structures, was underpinned by a bold assertion:

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[377] Margaret Tulloch of CASE claimed that Blair ditched Taylor's paper *Opening doors*, the first one to have the benefit of a full consultation, "within a month of taking over", interview with author, London, 30/10/96.
[378] As reported by Frank Webster, THES Opinion 5/9/97 *The elitism of 'people like us'*
[379] Larry Elliot, The Guardian, 12/11/97 *Business warns Blair on fees*.
[380] Tony Blair, in The Times, 7/7/97
[381] David Blunkett, interview with author, 22/8/96.
[382] As was related by David Blunkett, interview with author, 22/8/96.
[383] Blair had contradicted Blunkett's assertion that independent schools might have to pay VAT in January 1995, see Peter Kellner, *Lesson number one for Blunkett*, The Independent 2/1/95.

> The whole notion of LEA control of schools- on which the drive for GM status started- is a thing of the past. LEAs do not control schools. Schools do. LEAs provide the local democratic framework and need to become agencies and advocates for improving standards in all schools[384].

All schools were to benefit from local management and an increase in the proportion of delegated spending, to a minimum 90% of the LEA formula. In the new configuration of secondary schools, Community status would replace LEA or county status schools, Aided would become the new name for Voluntary Aided and Voluntary Controlled (mostly denominational) schools, while Foundation status would replace GM status. The biggest changes were in the ending of the extra funding that schools could receive for opting out of LEA control, and the requirement for the new Foundation schools to be inspected by and reported on by LEAs (in addition to national OFSTED inspections); to that extent, GM (Foundation) schools would be returned to the LEA fold. On admissions, the other contentious issue of GM status, *Diversity and Excellence* portrayed GM schools as being able to set their own admissions policies, without recourse to the LEA: by contrast, in the Foundation sector, admission policy was to be based on parental preference and agreed in consultation with the LEA, which restricted such schools' ability to select a proportion of pupils[385]. On funding, the document granted Foundation schools the freedom to develop resources through trust funds and promised that: " Foundation schools will offer a new bridge between the powers available to secular and church schools. They will offer flexibility and devolution within the local management system"[386].

On the more detailed issues surrounding parental preference and admissions procedures at oversubscribed schools, the document recognised that school effectively made choices anyway, based on sibling attendance, local prioritisation or attendance at a feeder school. However, given that "Labour has always encouraged schools to play to their strengths" and pledged to open more 'technology schools', the document recognises that parental preference "will always take account of the specialism and expertise that exists in a school where a child has a particular aptitude"[387]. This would be seen, so long as equal opportunities are not infringed "as an acceptable part of an agreed admissions policy"[388]. This implicit message, which celebrated specialisation and accepted that such schools would have the right to select by aptitude, was reinforced by the hope that

[384] Labour Party (1995) *Diversity and Excellence: a new partnership for schools*, The Labour Party, London, p.1.
[385] ibid, p.21, Grid 2.
[386] Ibid, p.2.
[387] ibid, p.11
[388] ibid, p.11.

Foundation schools "would have an opportunity to develop within the local education system the ethos which many GM schools feel they have developed."[389]

For some observers on the Left, this amounted to acquiescence to Conservative ideas about selection, in the guise of specialisation, and represented a change in the party's positions for electoral purposes. Caroline Benn and Clyde Chitty noted that:

> On both the Centre Right and the Modernising Left, the return of selection is justified as the only means of enlisting the support of large sections of the middle and professional classes for state-provided education[390] .

Specialisation was developed by the Conservatives and had been launched by legislation in 1992. It had clearly become a new Labour theme by 1995, and its influence had fed into *Diversity and Excellence* as Secretary of State John Patten suggested it should. As he told the *New Statesman*:

> ...selection is not, and should not be, a great issue of the 1990s. The S-word for socialists to come to terms with is, rather, 'Specialisation'. The fact is that children excel at different things; it is foolish to ignore it, and some schools may wish specifically to cater for these differences. Specialisation, under-pinned by the National Curriculum, will be the answer for some- though not all- children, driven by aptitude and interest, as much as ability[391]

New Labour adopted this agenda with its welcoming of 'schools playing to their strengths', and also planned to allow the fifteen CTCs and the planned language and technology colleges to continue to select a proportion of their pupils, subject to a ballot of affected parents. However, the main purpose of *Diversity and Excellence* was to take the political sting out of the argument about structures and reinforce "fairness and equity of funding". This allowed for the continuation of the Local Management of Schools (LMS) principle, which Labour admitted was popular and which had effectively depoliticised structures by removing the opt-out incentive for many schools[392].

On grammar schools and their ability to select, Labour was able to sound disapproving but felt obliged to maintain the concept of parental choice:

> Our opposition to academic selection at eleven has always been clear. But while we have never supported grammar schools in their exclusion of children by examination, change can

[389] ibid, p.15.
[390] Benn,C & Chitty,C *Alive and well and destined to survive*, Forum, Volume 38, No.3, 1996, p.69.
[391] John Patten, *Who's afraid of the 'S' word?* New Statesman and Society, 17/7/92, p.10
[392] ibid, p.7. Only 5.6% of secondary schools in England and Wales had opted for GM status by 1994/5.

only come about through local agreement. Such change in the character of a school could only follow a clear demonstration of support from the parents affected by such decisions[393].

Fair admissions policies were promised, but again with local appeals mechanisms and independent arbitration to ensure the primacy of parental choice, and the principle of local community determination involving partnerships between LEAs and parents, following "clear national guidelines [set] by the Labour Government for all schools"[394]. This allowed Labour to leave the issue of national admissions guidelines and how to ballot the relevant parent groups aside until well after the 1997 election[395].

However, former junior education minister Roy Hattersley raised the issue of this clear endorsement of two-tier schooling during the summer of 1995 and at the Annual Conference, becoming a hero of the egalitarian Left[396]. This prompted Blunkett to make the response: "Watch my lips, no selection by exams or interview under Labour" from the platform, but Hattersley's accusation, that such a policy would maintain the status hierarchy of schools, would not easily disappear from the political agenda because it represented a radical change from the egalitarianism behind the original comprehensive reorganisation programme and later policy document and manifesto commitments.

Despite the presentational emphasis on modernising comprehensive education, new Labour now openly stood for an education system which offered a hierarchy of institutions in eight categories: independent schools; grammar schools; City Technology Colleges; Foundation (GM) schools; specialist state schools (including Beacon Schools); Aided (church) schools; comprehensive schools; and secondary modern schools in areas where grammar schools persisted. Of these eight categories, seven would be state funded, while all but comprehensives and secondary moderns would select a proportion of their intake by ability, aptitude or religious persuasion[397]. As many have pointed out, selection by identifying an aptitudinal specialism within a pupil is fraught with definitional difficulty. The Oxford English Dictionary lists the first definition of ability as aptitude and the third definition of aptitude as ability[398]. Hattersley declared that "by building its policy around different classes of school, Labour is endorsing selection" and pointed out the

[393] *Diversity and Excellence*, p.11
[394] ibid, introduction
[395] although admissions policy was to rear its head during a by-election at Wirral South in the months before the May 1997 General Election, proposals were in consultation until September 1998.
[396] Egalitarian and libertarian, meritocratic Left are used here as defined in Chapter Two.
[397] Beacon Schools are specialist schools which are designed to disseminate good practice to their neighbouring state schools and offer extra-curricular support to the best performing pupils within their catchment area, see DfEE (1999) *Prime Minister and David Blunkett launch action plan for inner city education*, pn. 126/99, 22/3/99.
[398] OED, Oxford University Press 1998.

corollary, that "once a hierarchy of schools is established, those perceived as 'best' always receive more than their proper share of the national resources"[399].

More assiduously for the general thrust of specialisation and new Labour policy, Tony Blair chose to echo John Patten by making the link between the idea that all children do not learn in the same way with proposed radical changes to the way schools and teachers treat differing abilities. During a speech in June 1996, Blair told his audience:

> Not to take account of the obvious common sense that different children might move at different speeds and have differing abilities is to give idealism a bad name. The modernisation of the comprehensive principle requires that all pupils are encouraged to progress as far and as fast as they are able. Grouping children according to ability can be an important way of making that happen[400].

This allowed new Labour to link the structure of schools with poor educational standards, much more traditional Labour territory, and portray any objectors as 'old Labour' supporters of the producer interest who were contributing to the harm of, not only school children, but the economic future of the nation.

In the year following the publication of *Diversity and Excellence*, Peter Mandelson and Roger Liddle's, *The Blair Revolution*[401], (which was endorsed by Blair on its publication) also suggested that more schools should introduce setting in some academic subjects, and that "where there are ideological presumptions in favour of mixed ability teaching, these should be abandoned in favour of what achieves the best results in schools"[402]. Despite the rhetorical use of mixed ability teaching as the problem and setting as the solution for comprehensive education, the assumption that the majority of state schools employed mixed ability teaching to any great extent had been disproven by Benn and Chitty's historical survey of comprehensive schools in operation, *Thirty Year's On* [403].

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[399] Benn,C & Chitty,C (1997) *The White Paper: missed opportunities*, Forum, Volume 39, No.3, 1997, p.71-72. Hattersley was able to return to this theme after Labour came into power and he had taken a seat in the House of Lords, telling Baroness Blackstone during the passage of the School Standards and Frameworks Bill: "It seems to me a matter of logic rather than ideology that if some schools are selective, by definition, those next door cannot be comprehensive" Frances Rafferty, *Lords quiz Blackstone on selective semantics* TES 17/4/98.

[400] as reported in John Carvel, *Blair rejects mixed ability teaching*, The Guardian, 8/6/96.

[401] Mandelson and Liddle were key advisers to Blair, Mandelson later becoming a Minister, Liddle taking a post in the Downing Street Policy Unit.

[402] Mandelson,P & Liddle,R (1996) The Blair Revolution- can new Labour deliver? , Faber and Faber, London, p.94.

[403] cited in Benn,C & Chitty,C (1996) *Alive and Well and destined to Survive*, Forum for promoting 3-19 comprehensive education, Cambridge University Press, Volume 38 Number 3 1996, p.70. The report also demonstrated the adverse effects that grammar schools had on the GCSE scores of nearby 'comprehensives' which were in effect secondary moderns.

Having settled the issue of school structures and introduced progressive-sounding moves on specialisation, in *Diversity and Excellence*, new Labour next turned its attention to standards. By establishing that poor performance was linked to the failings of comprehensive education, (the autonomy of teachers and ideological direction from the LEAs), new Labour had gone some way to recognising the concerns of (usually urban) middle class critics of the state system. Sally Tomlinson demonstrated the power of such groups in helping Labour build a consensus for the abolition of the 11+ examination system in the 1960s and recognised that the aspiring middle class was again responding to Conservative legislation by exercising its rights[404]. Also echoing the Conservatives, new Labour's emphasis on poor teaching and ideological pedagogy allowed it to introduce the 'school effect' caveat that money was not the dominant variable in the performance of the school. School improvement would henceforth come, not just from more money, but better spent money through a central interest in the delivery of education in the classroom.

In terms of school structure, standards would best be raised by releasing better students from the shackles of their less-able peers, but within the single-school structure which was now seen as the main advance provided by the original comprehensive reorganisation[405]. In fact, egalitarian Left critiques of Labour's enthusiasm for setting were in some ways spiked by Benn and Chitty's research, which found no comparative advantage (independent of other factors) accruing from mixed ability teaching, in fact the "type of grouping policy used made no appreciable difference to a school's examination performance..."[406]. The most egalitarian Left position, that there should be no setting within a school, had often been observed only in the breach, and new Labour's enthusiasm for setting had the advantage of sounding radical and progressive to prospective parents while offering no real threat to the practice in the majority of comprehensive schools[407].

New Labour policy thus far can be characterised by an oversimplification of the arguments around standards and the 'school effect'. In an effort to sound modernising and critical of the existing structures, new Labour exaggerated, and then attacked the image of monolithic

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[404] Tomlinson,S (1998) *Education dilemmas in a post welfare society*, Renewal, Vol.6, No.3 Summer 1998, pp.28-35, looks at the role of the educated middle class in consensus making, first with relation to comprehensivisation in the 1960s, and later in the 1990s with middle class awareness of the education market that Conservative legislation had introduced. This is interpreted as the middle class reading market signals of opportunity to avoid vocational education for their offspring.

[405] Maurice Kogan emphasised this, reconceptualising most comprehensive schools as really 'multilateral' schools under one roof, and believed that Crosland's intention was for streaming within one school, interview with author, Islington 29/10/96.

[406] Benn,C & Chitty,C (1996), p.70.

[407] ibid, p.69, at Years 10 and 11, only 3% of schools surveyed used mixed ability rather than streaming, setting or banding. The authors cite OFSTED figures which showed that for the two years prior to GCSE only 6% of pupils were in mixed ability classes for maths.

comprehensives, allowing it to challenge both old Labour and the Conservatives. New Labour was positive in offering a degree of specialisation and continuing freedom for GM schools after the demise of that status. Meanwhile, it was negative about the dogmatism of the Conservative Government, which seemed likely to offer more selection as a proxy for market signalling, and the dogmatism of the old left who wanted a return to the (largely mythical) certainties of circular 10/65[408]. The mechanism which allowed new Labour to achieve this new synthesis between the positive and the negative was the high-profile emphasis on standards in an ongoing media campaign by new Labour figures.

Both the party's enemies, 'old Labour' and the Conservatives, could be blamed for the failings of the past, while new Labour radicalism would emerge through offering choice for parents and freedom for school heads and governors. Specialisation was used to attract the aspirational middle class voters Blair had identified with, along with the emphasis on the failings of inner-city comprehensive schools. By his own actions (choosing the London Oratory, a GM school, for his eldest child) Blair had shown that dogmatic approval of the state system as it existed in 1995/96 was irrelevant to the values of new Labour, sending the message that it was right to maximise one's own opportunity and choice. To reinforce this message, and to resist the tide of criticism from within the Party, new Labour had to play heavily on raising standards for *all* pupils, if necessary by redistributing wealth and opportunity to the worst performing areas of the country.

Standards, standards and standards

The work of Sally Tomlinson and David Smith, cited in Chapter Three, had been used by an earlier Conservative Government to challenge the Left assertion that extra resources alone could improve the education of the poorest performers in tests. In 1995 and 1996, another academic researcher, also from the 'school effectiveness' movement, helped provide new Labour with a further justification for its changing policies. As with other areas of new Labour's social policy (compulsory pensions, vocational training, higher education funding), improving standards were to benefit from international comparative policy studies. David Reynolds' *Worlds Apart?* report and the Third International Maths and Science Survey (TIMSS) supported the view of David Blunkett when he asserted that Britain was falling behind others in Europe and Asia in the foreword to

[408] Mythical in the sense that 10/65 left reorganisation up to LEAs. The Education Act of 1976 was the only legislation which sought to impose comprehensivisation.

Excellence for Everyone[409]. This concentration on other countries' educational systems and what Britain could learn from them, although not new, seemed a natural progression for a party that embraced globalised financial structures and free trade. If knowledge capital was to be the determinant of national competitiveness, then education had to become key to economic policy.

New Labour's next policy document was specifically designed to address falling standards. Again produced under the aegis of the Education and Employment Policy Commission (which included David Miliband from Tony Blair's office) *Excellence for Everyone* set out to offer educational opportunity for "the many, rather than the few... Quite simply, not enough schools perform like the best"[410]. Using comparative studies and national statistics, David Blunkett argued that the long tail of British underachievement was caused by low expectations of socially deprived pupils and that the solution, excellence for everyone, could come about through the spreading of existing best practice, which would involve more whole-class teaching in the core skills of numeracy and literacy. To facilitate this, new Labour emphasised the need for heads and teachers to be highly competent, and offered a combination of pressure and support to the professionals. The tone of the document left no doubt that teachers were at least part of the problem, with new headteacher training programmes and "a National Register of teachers qualified to be heads to ensure greater consistency in standards"[411]. Teachers were offered a General Teaching Council to represent their profession, but in exchange Labour threatened to root out bad teaching and streamline dismissal procedures:

> It is neither in the interests of pupils or teachers themselves that the small number of teachers who at present drift through years in the profession, often suffering acute personal difficulties, should continue in the classroom[412].

Alongside the pressure that this entailed, support was to come through an opportunity for experienced practitioners to become Advanced Skills Teachers rather than to leave the classroom in search of promotion or new challenges. A new Teachers' Centre was proposed, using new technology to allow teachers to add to their qualifications, and the adult-child ratio in classrooms was to be improved by the encouragement of more Classroom Assistants and Teaching Associates. The latter group were to be industrialists, technologists or researchers who could be 'in residence'

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[409] Labour Party (1996) *Excellence for Everyone*, the Labour Party, London, p.1. Reynolds,D & Farrell,S (1996) *Worlds Apart?*, OFSTED, London and Harris,S, Keys,W & Fernandes,C (1997) *Third International Mathematics and Science Study, Second Report*, National Foundation for Educational Research.
[410] Labour Party (1996) *Excellence for Everyone*, the Labour Party, London, pp.3-4.
[411] Ibid, p.8.
[412] ibid, p.11

at particular school during set hours for advice and expertise in subject teaching[413]. Information Technology was to be used more thoroughly and thoughtfully in the classroom, with the appropriate training for staff and Internet links supplied by the private sector.

Labour also planned to alleviate classroom problems by guaranteeing enough funding to lower class sizes for all five, six and seven year old pupils to no more than thirty, to be paid for from the abolition of the APS. Here were combined two of Labour's longest standing education pledges; the APS had been opposed in every manifesto since its introduction in 1981, and lower class sizes were promised in almost every manifesto since 1964[414].

Partnership was a further theme of the document. Home school contracts and associations were to be introduced to instil parental responsibility. This built on the findings of the House of Commons Education Select Committee which

> highlighted the importance of high parental expectations in improving achievement. High expectations from Asian parents in Britain, for example, have been cited as a contributory factor to better exam results in their community. Similarly the greater staying-on rates after 16 in Germany have been put down to greater parental expectations.[415]

As part of their responsibility, parents would have to ensure that new homework guidelines were adhered to, and where this was not possible due to work commitments or a lack of space and quiet in the home, homework clubs were to be established after school. Further, new Labour expected schools to teach good parenting as part of the curriculum and through the examples set by adults working in schools. Governing bodies should work in tandem, forming families of schools, while the LEAs would set strategic Education Development Plans (EDPs) which detailed how they would raise standards in their area, subject to Secretary of State approval[416]. In this sense, the role of the LEA was to be further prescribed, as the centre, in the shape of the DfEE, would henceforth set "clear national targets, with action taken where targets are not being met locally"[417].

In the section headed *Setting targets for success*, new Labour returned to the theme of linking educational improvement with renewal of the comprehensive system, which meant that:

> Labour will encourage schools and their pupils to play to their strengths. Schools have rightly rejected forms of streaming which have labelled some children as failures throughout their schooling, and some as successes, regardless of the strengths and

[413] ibid, p.12
[414] except in the two 1974 manifestos, the first of which was very short in response to an emergency election and the second introduced against the backdrop of the oil price crisis.
[415] Labour Party (1996) *Excellence for Everyone*, p.15
[416] ibid, p.19
[417] ibid, p.21

> weaknesses they may have had in different subjects or disciplines. But some pupils progress much further in some subjects than in others, and can flourish in one area, whilst falling behind in others. .... A bright pupil must be allowed to work at a faster pace and high fliers given the extra help to succeed in a diverse and comprehensive system.[418]

And while setting by subject was recommended for individual schools, they were also exhorted to become specialist schools, developing into centres of excellence whose resources could be shared with other schools within the 'family'. New Labour hoped to achieve diversity within one campus and between schools, which would allow individual pupils to stretch themselves academically through the use of nearby-schools' specialisms- either as part of the school day on in the pupils' own time[419].

Tackling pupil underachievement would build on the emphasis on inclusion and responsibility, with a paragraph inserted in later drafts of *Excellence for Everyone* promising a new category of exclusion, as a half-way house between the extant fifteen days limit and permanent exclusion, with parents having to agree to a programme of education in the home. New Labour later reacted to Secretary of State Gillian Shephard's decision to set the new exclusion limit at 45 days by declaring a limit of 60 days in any one year, the equivalent of one full term[420]. Following this period the Pupil Referral Units (another Conservative innovation) would have to develop plans to reintegrate pupils in the mainstream. In terms of institutional failure, new Labour did not want to go as far as the Government which had closed Hackney Downs school in March 1995[421], instead believing that

> ....a fresh start for the minority of failing schools will prove a much more decisive way of improving opportunity for pupils than more prolonged measures, once a range of school improvement measures have failed to make a difference. Pupils in a school that has reached rock bottom do not have the time that it can take for protracted measures to achieve results.

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[418] ibid, p.26

[419] on the assumptions that schools would stay open in the evenings as a community resource.

[420] See Smithers,R & Carvel,J *Shephard offers tough ways to deal with unruly pupils*, The Guardian, 11/10/96 and for Labour's developing thinking, David Blunkett's speech to the ATL's Annual Conference, Easter 1996.

[421] Hackney Downs was ostensibly closed for failing to improve its educational standards in a given time period. The head of the Government 'hit squad' which carried out the closure was Michael Barber, then an adviser to Labour and later head of the Standards and Effectiveness Unit within the DfEE. The closure was largely seen as a response to falling numbers of pupils, and more about cutting costs and sending the message that schools unpopular with parents would be treated in the ways of the market, ie be allowed to go to the wall. For a discussion of the affair, see Tomlinson,S (1997) *Sociological Perspectives on Failing Schools*, in International Journal of the Sociology of Education, Vol.7, No.1 1997.

> It is a positive alternative, therefore, to the government's 'hit squad' or to the closure of a valued community resource. Our policy is aimed entirely at giving young people the kind of opportunity which others take for granted and which a failing school denies them[422].

'Fresh Start', in this context, would involve formal closure in July, and a reopening in September of the same year under a "new name, new headteacher, new staff and a revised governing body" although existing 'good' staff could be re-employed. Innovation, to prevent the schools going back into old habits, would be provided from the LEAs concerned.[423]

Over a two year period since Blair and Blunkett came into their respective offices, new Labour had quite radically altered many aspects of compulsory education policy. *Diversity and Excellence* had made it clear that changes to school status and admissions policies would result in less interference from LEAs and a broad choice of schools for parents, with league tables retained (albeit contextualised) as an additional market signal. Diversity would show parents where to send their children in search of excellence. *Excellence for Everyone* further modernised the comprehensive principle by institutionalising setting and streaming within schools, (to demonstrate that aspirational parents' children were not being hampered if they were bright enough) and by the encouragement of specialist schools.

New Labour aimed to satisfy its core vote with the hope of better education standards for all by talking of policies 'for the many not the few', by making specific pledges on the availability of nursery places for all, class sizes for the early years and by pledging some redistribution to the poorest performing areas of the country. Inclusion was another theme likely to satisfy more traditional Labour supporters. But such commitments were outnumbered by the policy innovations aimed at satisfying the middle class demand for higher standards. The two documents challenged the producer interests of teachers, heads and officials through the use of 'pressure and support', which implicitly threatened poor teachers with removal; and target setting, coupled with Local Management of Schools (LMS), which would simultaneously remove political interference from the LEAs whilst making them responsible for the realisation of improved school performance. Also likely to appeal to new Labour supporters were appeals for parental responsibility, and the opportunities provided for remedial action via home-school contracts and homework clubs. New

[422] *Excellence for Everyone*, p.33.
[423] ibid, p.33. LEAs were not eventually given this role, however, in the broader context of education action zones introduced in 1998.

Labour stood for greater centralisation of powers in the state, with the intention of improving Britain's knowledge capital base and thus economic performance; it also offered further individualisation of the education process for the benefit of consumers. Institutional autonomy, in the shape of the teaching profession and the power of their unions, was threatened by the exhortations that professionals utilise 'best practice' rather than their own experience, and this was underlined by the flood of international comparative research studies which prescribed whole class teaching methods[424].

The Labour Party's manifesto for the 1997 General Election, *New Labour: because Britain deserves better*, highlighted education as the key policy area for a new Labour Government, with the education section opening the text for the first time. The focus was to be on levelling up, not levelling down; standards, not structures, were the key to success; and new Labour would not put dogma before children's education. Standards, though, were mainly the concern of poorer performing schools, not those that succeeded or benefited from some kind of selective intake:

> Our approach will be to intervene where there are problems, not where schools are succeeding. Labour will never force the abolition of good schools whether in the private or state sector. Any changes in the admissions policies of grammar schools will be decided by local parents[425].

The major focus for standards was to be in the early years, with the scrapping of nursery vouchers and the guarantee of nursery places for all parents of four year olds (with plans to extend this down to three). Primary schools, where the core of the curriculum, maths, English and science are introduced, would benefit from the extra funding for teachers released by the abolition of the APS, and would be expected to respond in kind by achieving targets in numeracy and literacy. The concept of education action zones (EAZs) was also launched in the manifesto, as vehicles for "recruiting the best teachers and head teachers to under-achieving schools"[426] and by providing vocational education opportunities in industry after the age of 14. The manifesto explicitly denied that Labour would close GM schools although "the system of funding will not discriminate unfairly either between schools or between pupils"[427]. The manifesto highlighted the traditional Labour

[424] Blunkett signalled his awareness of the literature, see Rafferty, F& Pyke,N *Blunkett sets his sights on 'lab' schools* TES 15/11/96 an article based on plans to reform teacher training which was partly based on David Reynold's work. Reynolds was then offered a seat on Labour's Numeracy Task Force.
[425] Labour Party (1997) *New Labour: because Britain deserves better*, The Labour Party, London, April 1997, p.7
[426] ibid, p.8.
[427] ibid, p.9.

polices of class sizes and nursery education for all, and spoke of maintaining the spirit of a 'modernised' comprehensive principle by preserving inclusion in one campus. Teachers, by implication, were a problem that could be tackled, partly through judging them by pupils' test results and inspections, partly through a stronger role for parents on governing boards and partly through the introduction of "speedy, but fair, procedures to remove teachers who cannot do the job"[428]. Parental choice of school was also highlighted, with guidelines for open and fair admissions introduced which followed the spirit of the 1993 guidelines, although with more extensive appeals procedures[429]. The manifesto message was clearly and accurately aimed at both traditional Labour supporters and the new voters the party hoped to attract. Bearing in mind this appeal to a new, wider electorate, new Labour had adopted what it perceived to be popular among Conservative policies. LMS, partial selection, specialisation, grammar schools, parental choice and league tables were all accepted; to this new Labour had added elements drawn from party ideology in the form of targeted help at the poorest performing areas (universalism-plus), action on class sizes, the abolition of the assisted places scheme and commitments towards inclusive education. The next section of this chapter will trace new Labour's key educational themes identified so far in relation to the policy interest groups within the community.

Manifesto to legislation

As we have seen the key issues new Labour concentrated on during the pre-election period were: (1) smaller class sizes, to be funded out of the abolition of the APS; (2) the expansion of free nursery provision; (3) greater choice on admissions for parents; (4) the eight category hierarchy of schools; (5) the introduction of a General Teaching Council; (6) reforms to teacher training; (7) the changing LEA role as standards enforcers; and (8) the emerging EAZ policy. Issues (1) and (2) were long term Labour Party imperatives; (3), and (4) represented market signals for aspirational middle class parents; (5) and (6) eroded professional teacher autonomy; while (7) and (8) removed political meddling by LEAs and centralised services in the DfEE. To what extent did these key issues accord with the interests of other policy actors? Firstly, let us look at how new Labour dealt with long standing Labour Party pledges.

Class sizes and nursery provision

[428] ibid, p.9.
[429] the guidelines accompanied the 1993 Education Act which launched GM schools.

Class sizes had long been a contested point among educationalists, especially since Michael Rutter's assertion in 1979 that good education was compatible with class sizes of any number between 15 and 40[430]. However, many teacher unions and educational research organisations argued that class size was crucial to improving school performance. The growing consensus around the class size question among pressure groups emerged alongside the constraints imposed on public sector spending and caps on local authority discretionary spending which typified the Conservative period of office.

A long campaign by interested parties and policy community actors was joined by the Labour Party in Opposition, in accordance with successive manifesto commitments. Among these policy actors were Peter Blatchford and Peter Mortimore (of the Institute of Education at the University of London) who produced a paper for the National Commission on Education in 1993. This stimulated the joint commissioning of a report by the Campaign for State Education, (CASE), ATL, NAHT, NASUWT, and the Professional Association of Teachers (PAT)[431], and carried out by Exeter University. NAHT also presented its own evidence, asking why OFSTED, which possessed the largest database of performance and resources statistics, would allow no other researchers to access its findings[432]. Adding to the institutional pressure, new Labour' pre-manifesto endorsement document, *The road to the manifesto,* highlighted research by the NFER which confirmed that the additional teachers could be afforded from the money saved by the proposed abolition of the APS subsidy to independent schools. This was reported to be in opposition to OFSTED findings which suggested that the policy was ill-costed, one of many political interventions which made the 'independent' OFSTED unpopular in educational circles[433].

All this research emphasised that there was a consensus on the effect of large class sizes (specifically over thirty) on learning. The Exeter study also noted that local management of schools (LMS) was failing to halt a growing trend towards larger classes as it involved schools competing for pupils, and that parents were becoming increasingly concerned. International evidence, in the form of the Stay to Achieve Results (STAR) project in Tennessee was also regularly highlighted in the education press, and seemed to show long term positive effects from an early years

[430] Rutter,M *et al* (1979) Fifteen Thousand Hours, Open Books, Shepton Mallet: see Chapter Three of this thesis for a fuller discussion of the debate.
[431] Bennet,N (1994) *Class size in primary schools: perceptions of headteachers, chairs of governors, teachers and parents,* University of Exeter, September 1994.
[432] NAHT & University of Nottingham School of Education, (1996) *Class Size Research and the Quality of Education*, NAHT.
[433] Rafferty,F Carlton,E, Montgomery,J and Gardiner,J, *The road to Sanctuary Buildings....* TES, 12/7/96

advantage[434]. In the case of class sizes, only the Prime Minister's Office, the DfEE and successive Conservative Secretaries of State among the policy community did not accept that children's education could be damaged by being taught in classes of over thirty. By highlighting other factors, such as poor teaching skills, and the success of some schools with large classes and poor socio-economic characteristics of their intake, the Conservative Government held out against prioritising spending in such a way. There was no mention of class sizes in the Conservative's manifesto, so this represented a breakdown of consensus on this issue as we noted in the manifesto analysis in Chapter One. Certainly, new Labour believed that it were responding to public disquiet on class sizes[435], and had anyway targeted reductions at 5, 6 and 7 year olds, where even OFSTED had agreed, in 1995, that "small class sizes are of benefit in the early years of primary education"[436]. Rather than offering a radical solution, (class sizes of thirty for all age groups, for example) new Labour was merely integrating the majority of evidence with a long-term pledge.

New Labour in Government also used spare capacity in schools to justify threatening closures on the basis that poorly attended schools were clearly not achieving high enough standards to attract pupils (or their parents)[437]. Another element of the class size question was the 'whole-class teaching versus small group teaching' debate, in which new Labour came down on the side of more whole class teaching as best being able to deliver the required improvement in standards[438]. This was traditional Conservative territory, used to deflect the class size debate, because whole class teaching is not as number-sensitive as small group teaching.

The abolition of APS was another long-term party pledge that new Labour was able to satisfy, although it felt obliged to make reassuring noises to independent schools, notably on their ability to retain charitable status. School Standards Minister Stephen Byers offered financial incentives to independent schools to become partners and beacons of excellence for nearby state schools[439]. The most serious debate among educationalists was around the issue of whether the new government would raise enough money from the abolition to fund the extra teachers required to

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[434] for example, see *School Effectiveness*, TES preview of International Congress for School Effectiveness, 2/1/98 and Bosley,S *Labour fights for standards*, The Guardian 15/4/97 which was part of a pre-election series on the main new Labour policy areas.

[435] This was Liz Allen's interpretation of the party's approval rating on education, private polling for the Labour Party, interview with author, Millbank Tower, 29/10/96

[436] As reported in Bosley,S above.

[437] Such pressures were expressed in DfEE, *Action on surplus places to boost standards and parental choice- Byers* 103/98, 26/2/98 .

[438] David Reynolds, author of *Worlds Apart?* believed that the correct application of whole class pedagogy could eradicate failure with his concept of the 'highly reliable school', see Whitehaed,M *Wanted: Reliable self-starters*, TES, 17/7/98.

[439] DfEE *Burying old prejudices with £500,000 boost for private/state school partnerships- Byers*, press release 393/97, 26/11/97.

lower class sizes[440]. The problem of ensuring that class sizes did not rise above 30 without producing classes with an uneconomically low number of children, also remained to be solved, and some educationalist and economic commentators noted that even this apparently egalitarian policy would actually benefit former Conservative voters[441]. This was because it was predominantly Conservative controlled LEAs (which predictably achieved better results) that that had allowed class sizes to rise in response to LMS and parental demand, while many inner city Labour controlled LEAs (which contained many of the worst performing schools) had already introduced such a limit. Schools which had deliberately opted for classes just above thirty and spent the wages-equivalent £4,000 on books would henceforth be rewarded, which would represent both poor value for money and a waste of resources[442].

New Labour routinely used focus groups and private polling to test the policies it was developing, after drafting, but certainly before such policies appeared in the manifesto[443]. Even if this effect had been noted by focus groups analysts and welcomed as a subliminal message to former Conservative voters (who were apparently satisfied with the education their under-eights were receiving in places such as Bromley, Solihul and Dorset), new Labour found its greatest difficulty was in squaring parental choice with the prescription that no school should have classes with over thirty children[444]. After the election the White Paper *Excellence in schools* provoked a hostile reactions from some policy actors who had supported the drive to lower class sizes, because of what they saw as an unnecessary emphasis on parental choice by the new Government[445]. Among these Graham Lane of the Local Government Association (LGA) warned the new Labour Government that "it has to change the law on admissions and appeals- that means reducing parental choice. If it is not going to face that, it is not going to deliver the [class size] targets"[446]. The response from Ministers was that choice was not to be inhibited by the class size recommendations[447]. The LGA commissioned accountants Coopers and Lybrand to offer solutions to this problem, and the only option compatible with parental choice and not overspending involved effectively trading off class sizes with a degree of mixed age classes. This would mean that the

[440] In fact it emerged with the publication of the Comprehensive Spending Review in July 1998 that the APS money had not been sufficient, see Hackett,G & Thornton,K *Brown's billions to reduce class sizes*, TES 17/7/98.
[441] Wilby,P & Szreter,S *Adding and taking away in class*, New Statesman, 3/10/97
[442] Meadows,P *Lessons for education*, the Guardian 14/7/98 pointed out the economic anomalies in this and in concentrating education targets at 80% of pupils expected to achieve, at the expense of the 20% who really needed the help.
[443] As reported by both David Blunkett and Liz Allen of the Policy Directorate, interviews with author.
[444] Kirsty Milne in *The parable of the 31st child*, New Statesman, 9/1/98 pointed out the difficulty
[445] Dean,C & Rafferty,F *Blunkett's Bill is ready for take-off*, TES White Paper Reactions, 10/10/97.
[446] Thornton,K *Class-size pledge puts choice at risk*, TES 5/6/98.
[447] Thornton,K *Class size cannot limit choice, minister warn*, TES 12/6/98

class sizes in the whole school could be recalibrated by shuffling pupils around at the margins of age groups, which might lead to inappropriate teaching pressures and, ironically, offend the principle of parental choice[448]. The DfEE's *School Admissions Interim Guidance- Consultative Draft* of June 1998 simply declared that popular schools would receive extra funding for teachers and buildings[449], and there would be elaborate appeals procedures. We shall return to this area when looking at school admissions policy as a determinant of parental choice and institutional diversity.

The other long-standing policy pledge new Labour was able to meet on entering Government concerned free nursery provision for all parents of four-year-olds (in the first instance) who wanted it. This was in line with the 1992 Manifesto commitment to offer places for three and four-year-olds "by the end of the decade"[450]. However, in 1997 there were two complicating factors. First, the Conservative's Nursery Voucher Scheme and, second, new Labour's ambivalence towards providing universal nursery provision in the public sector. As far as vouchers were concerned, new Labour promised to honour the value of those already distributed but no new ones would be issued[451].

The document *Early Excellence* benefited from much group support at its launch in November 1996. Pressure groups such as the Pre-Learning School Alliance, (PSLA), National Childminding Association, Health Visitors Association, NUT[452] and AMA (later the LGA) were enthusiastic about the plans to merge child-care with nursery education through an Early Years Unit. However, the Campaign for State Education (CASE) did not agree with some of the basic precepts of the document, preferring the incorporation of all nursery provision within the LEA purview.

Despite the generally warm welcome for the *Early Excellence*, the development of the paper illustrates some tension within new Labour. Margaret Hodge had originally established a mini-commission of advisers on early years issues known as the Early Years Enquiry Team,

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[448] ibid.

[449] DfEE *School Admissions Interim Guidance- Consultative Draft*, DfEE Publications Centre June 1998, p.6 merely says that money will have to be found, presumably from a combination of other schools (as funding is based on numbers), the APS and Standards Fund money.

[450] Labour Party (1992) *Its time to get Britain working again*, The Labour Party, London, April 1992, p.33.

[451] Labour Party (1996) *Early excellence; a head start for every child*, The Labour Party, London. At a speech to the PSLA David Blunkett said that Labour's alternative was inclusion, meshing childcare and nursery education, and bringing voluntary and private sectors in with parents and LEA's. He also promised to return the money to LEA's as soon as practicable. Margaret Lochrie of the PSLA expected Labour to be able to have a new system in place by September 1998, see Blackburne,L *Labour threat to nursery vouchers*, TES 22/11/96.

[452] Although Neil Robinson of the NUT was concerned about the language of pupil/adult ratios instead of pupil/teacher ratios, interview with author, London, 20/8/96.

although she acknowledged that the Leader's Office and David Blunkett acting in liaison would have the final say. This enquiry team represented a mini-commission in the sense that we have observed in other case studies in this thesis (notably on training policy, Chapter Seven). Hodge was under no obligation to include party affiliates or pressure groups in the consultations, which generally involved around 15 advisers and seminars with up to 40 contributors[453]. The series of seminars ran for nine months from the beginning of 1994 according to participants[454]. However, David Blunkett replaced Hodge with Estelle Morris during the autumn of 1996 apparently because the long-delayed document was not appropriate and was too polemical[455]. Blunkett actually pointed out that Hodge had not been part of the team, while Morris had been used as a shadow spokesperson before. The messy replacement of Hodge with Morris was believed by some pressure groups as significant. Margaret Tulloch of CASE noted that whenever she approached Blunkett for information on the early years document she was "passed to another member of the team, never Hodge"[456], and that Hodge appeared to be working alone after the series of seminars had finished. For CASE the continuing delays suggested that new Labour was unsure about which position to take. Such was the distrust about new Labour's reactiveness to media influences, at one point during the pre-election period CASE came to expect a pro-nursery voucher document from new Labour because it had adopted much of the anti-single mother rhetoric then prevalent in the media. Margaret Tulloch believed that: ".....they think public opinion is shifting against women going out to work and they don't want to be seen to say something which makes it easier for women to go out to work.".[457]

CASE also believed that the LEAs could have pushed harder for the immediate abolition of the Nursery Voucher Scheme. Graham Lane of the local authorities association AMA (LGA), a consistent supporter of the party leadership, responded by saying that he could not, during 1996, say why LEAs were not coming out against vouchers[458]. Mansfield interpreted this as a lack of courage at the centre of new Labour policymaking from the beginning of the scheme:

[453] Margaret Hodge, answer to written questionnaire, September 1996.
[454] Melian Mansfield and Margaret Tulloch of CASE, interview with author, Bloomsbury, 30/10/96.
[455] noted by Margaret Tulloch and Melian Mansfield of CASE, interview with author, Bloomsbury, 30/10/96 who complained that when questioning the delay introducing an early years paper, they were passed on to Estelle Morris, MP.
[456] Margaret Tulloch, interview with author, Bloomsbury, 30/10/96
[457] Margaret Tulloch, Executive Secretary of CASE, interview with author 30/1/96.
[458] Wearing his other hat, as head of the SEA, Lane believed that his organisation was involved in an all-party attack on vouchers, "but you have to build that up to get clout, you have to get people behind you", interview with author Sheffield, 11/9/96. He was clearly not willing to be in advance of Labour Party policy at this stage (before the Labour Party conference of October 1996).

> ...if Labour Party policy had been much clearer they should have been adamant... when the government came out with it in the summer of 1995 and said we are against it, Blunkett and Hodge could have stuck to their guns throughout from summer 1995 through the Bill process.[459]

Such ambiguity was also noted by Peter Wilby, who related the issue to the wider one of new Labour telling aspirational parents what they wanted to hear. He points out that new Labour strategy was to say:

> 'we won't go any further than this, nursery vouchers have not yet started so we can stop them', but if they had been up and running and middle class parents were happy with them, Labour would not reverse them[460].

New Labour's developing policy had in fact concentrated initially on treating all pre-school provision including childcare equally, with the emphasis on increasing the educational content of all early-years provision. A 1994 policy statement noted the valuable role which such diverse institutions as nursery education, reception classes, day nurseries and childminders could perform, encompassing the statutory, voluntary and private agencies at work. Rather than call for all such provision to be incorporated within LEAs, the document suggested that:

> All local authorities should designate a lead department to co-ordinate childcare provision between the different providers and agencies: public, private, and voluntary[461].

Already, new Labour's attitude towards local authority control of services was clouding the nursery education picture. The party did highlight the successes of its LEAs around the country, and produced a further document in 1995 which ridiculed the Conservative's attempts to encourage provision for all four year olds. Anticipating the introduction of nursery vouchers (NVS), new Labour concentrated on splits between right-wingers in the Conservative Party and the Secretary of State Gillian Shephard, who was quoted as saying "I must say I am very conscious of the unwieldy nature of vouchers. You don't want the machinery to overshadow the policy" and as late as April 1995 she stated that vouchers "are not the favoured option"[462].

However, Tony Blair failed to distance new Labour from the vouchers debate when he stated that "Vouchers are a mechanism, not an answer", (perhaps remembering that vouchers have

[459] Melian Mansfield, CASE, interview with author 30/10/96. The bill process referred to the Nursery Education and Grant-Maintained Schools Bill, 1996.
[460] Peter Wilby, interview with author, Victoria, 19/3/97.
[461] Labour Party *Early learning* Policy Statement, December 1994, p.8.
[462] The two quotes are from the Independent, 19/10/94 and the TES 7/4/95, cited in Labour Party *The best start: Labour leads the way in nursery education*, The Labour Party March 1995.

a distinct history on the left[463]), and chose the same speech in June 1995 to highlight what could be learnt from best practice:

> I believe we can learn from the huge range of local initiatives that are taking place, the central lesson being that education and care should be brought together to ensure a quality offer for children while also meeting the needs of parents[464].

Once again, new Labour declared that the aims, in this case of better quality and parental freedom to work, were sacrosanct, while the means were merely technical and non-ideological- vouchers, a mere mechanism, would not be ruled out *a priori*. This tone continued with the launch of *Early Excellence: A head start for every child* in November 1996. This document concentrated on the value of early years education (with international evidence) and the lack of nursery provision in Conservative-controlled LEAs, despite Secretary of State Margaret Thatcher's 1972 pledge to provide free places for all three and four year olds. The Nursery Voucher Scheme was criticised, but new Labour stopped conspicuously short of pledging to abolish the scheme, instead promising new partnerships between providers and the exhortation of fathers and grandparents to take on traditional supportive roles. New Labour highlighted meeting the needs of working families (through 'wraparound' services) and the benefits of diverse provision[465]. Meanwhile new Labour made political capital from the voucher system currently being piloted, with David Blunkett taunting the Government at the Labour Party's 1996 Annual Conference in Blackpool:

> Who could dream up a dafter scheme than nursery vouchers? Millions of pieces of paper circulating round the country. Money taken from high providing local authorities where places exist and circulated through a voucher which no-one can redeem if the places are not available.

And here, Blunkett came close to proposing abolition when he stated that "Early excellence is the way forward, rejecting the voucher scheme and putting children before gimmickry"[466]. New Labour had arrived at their formulation of policy for the 1997 manifesto, but once again it had travelled a tortuous route. Having failed to openly attack the NVS during its parliamentary passage, (perhaps due to electoral caution, as CASE believed), new Labour calculated that, with an introduction date of April 1997 for the national scheme, it would be safe to promise instant

[463] which can be traced back to Christopher Jencks' Inequality in 1971.
[464] Quoted from a speech to the Institute of Education, University of London, June 23rd 1995 in *PLP Briefing on Nursery Vouchers*, from the office of David Blunkett MP, July 1995.
[465] Labour Party *Early Excellence: A head start for every child*, The Labour Party, London, November 1996
[466] Extracts from David Blunkett's speech at Blackpool, 2/10/96, issued by the Labour Party Conference '96 Media Office.

abolition in the manifesto in the knowledge, (as Wilby pointed out) that it had not had time to become popular with the middle class.

Talking about the forthcoming *Early Excellence* David Blunkett seemed to want to distance himself from an open attack on nursery vouchers as late as August 1996:

> Yes, we will talk about the vouchers, but I will produce a draft circular to local authorities on the voucher scheme and its aftermath so the whole of our policy document doesn't get tied into dealing with the Tories, and is a perspective of the future and an alternative. The idea of a shadow circular, which is not usually done, is a way of dealing with the practical problem of the vouchers themselves[467].

Such a circular would have the effect of letting LEAs know the parameters of what they could embark on if they had to reorganise nursery education- like the DES circular 10/65, it would avoid the political pain of openly abolishing one practice and enforcing another. In the summer of 1996, new Labour launched the *Road to the Manifesto* document, designed to garner support among the membership and publicity for new policies; again, the language on vouchers was weak: "we do not favour vouchers" although "our aim is to guarantee nursery education for all three- and four-year-olds"[468]. However, a stronger line – "we will scrap the nursery voucher scheme"- appeared in the membership magazine *New Labour, new life for Britain*, also in summer 1996[469], and this was the formulation that appeared in the General Election manifesto. This might suggest that the electoral strategists around the Leaders' Office were closer to final policy than the education team centred on Blunkett, who himself admitted that "if I was dealing with an area where Tony and I disagreed,.... in those circumstances, the leader wins"[470]. Sometime between summer 1996 and the spring of 1997 new Labour decided to go strongly with a policy of abolition. Until that time, the party had appeared cautious. The political calculation of a serious opposition party, offering an alternative point of view, creates its own constraints on policy. Certainly, by the spring of 1997 new Labour decided to dispense with the deliberately vague position it had taken previously. The final eradication of vouchers came with the publication and passing of the School Standards and Frameworks Bill launched in December 1997.

[467] David Blunkett, interview with author, Sheffield, 22/8/96.
[468] *Road to the Manifesto*, abridged version, The Guardian 5/7/96.
[469] Labour Party *New Labour, new life for Britain*, Summer 1996, p.6
[470] David Blunkett, interview with author, Sheffield, 22/8/96.

Parental choice and the hierarchy of schools

The previous section set out to deal with the apparently simple transition of long held Labour policies into new Labour Government action. Although the issues were not controversial with the public, in that no group argued against lower class sizes or in favour of nursery vouchers, (bar the Pre-School Learning Alliance) new Labour still found it had to present its policies in such a way as to reassure potential voters that the party was not reactionary. The problem for new Labour in the second category of issues, which continued with Conservative trends towards parental choice and a hierarchy of educational experiences, was to prevent attacks from its own Left flank. We have already seen how new Labour managed to obfuscate the question of school structures with its emphasis on raising standards, but many institutional actors within the policy community wished to influence the direction of party policy.

Among the groups involved with this issue, there is a clear division between, one the one hand teacher and headteacher institutions; and on the other hand, Labour Party institutions and some of the party's favoured academics. The teaching unions NAS/UWT, ATL, NUT, PAT and the headteachers organisations NAHT and SHA all argued against new Labour's new Foundation status and the general principle of parental choice as encouraged by party documents, even, in some cases, when the interest of union members clashed with the stance of the organisation.

On the other side, the SEA (like the LGA, headed at this time by Graham Lane), the Labour Party Policy Directorate, the SMF's Stephen Pollard and David Reynolds, an academic chosen by new Labour to lead both the pre-and post-election Numeracy Task Forces, all suggested that Blunkett's position on selection and specialisation were correct. Others, including Peter Wilby and Sally Tomlinson, saw the electoral logic of new Labour's position in the light of the individualisation of social policy provision.

Following the 1997 election the NUT, in its response to the Government's White Paper *Excellence in schools*, noted that new Labour had perhaps miscalculated the unpopularity of the Conservatives' policy of 'opting out', and had itself helped prevent further selection by GM schools by refusing to allow swift passage of the Education Act (1997) prior to the election. The kind of "instant solution to a political problem" which *Diversity and Excellence* represented in 1995 was no longer relevant. Indeed "the Government appears to insist on proceeding with a structure which is wholly out of tune with its wish to remove debates about structure from the agenda"[471]. The teachers union urged the Government to revert to only two types of school, community and aided, and noted that the manifesto had made no references to a change in school

[471] NUT response to *Excellence in Schools*, paragraph 280, website version www.teachers.org.uk/data/eis

status[472]. The NUT were clearly concerned with employment issues in the main, and the clause which would allow Foundation schools' governors to become the employers of teachers had also recategorised voluntary controlled schools as Foundation, so that such schools "will automatically assume employer status whether they like it or not"[473].

On admissions, the NUT wished the LEAs to maintain the right to vary admissions criteria to meet the needs of the local community and circumstances, and called for equity in the allocation of school places. This would involve the modification of the Greenwich Judgement[474], which upheld the right of parents from outside an LEA not to be discriminated against by automatic preference for those living within LEA boundaries[475]. The NUT also warned that specialisation by schools often led to admission on a selective basis; it preferred schools to admit openly and then develop able pupils through the schools' specialism as they demonstrated an aptitude for that specialism. This would avoid the problem of schools attracting aspirational parents in a marketplace.

The NUT position was typical among teacher organisations. Exemplifying the consensus among the unions on this issue, even the Association of Teachers and Lecturers (formerly the grammar schools teachers' union), voted against selection at their 1996 Annual Conference[476]. NASUWT, traditionally a more membership-concerned union, and like the NUT affiliated to the TUC, were also disappointed with new Labour's developing policy: Eamonn O'Kane, Deputy General Secretary of the union believed:

> ....they could have taken a stand on principle over GM schools, it was ground that was defensible and principled, and it would have struck a cord in public consciousness that it wasn't right that schools could drift off and become financed by the state but in effect run like quangos. They are at the end of the day public institutions, why should one group of parents in one particular town get to decide the form of that school for the next X number of years. They could have arrived logically at a defensible position, but they have lost that particular battle[477].

While he did not expect new Labour to come to electoral harm over the issue, O'Kane believed that the party had broken or watered down the comprehensive system which had emerged

[472] ibid, para 287.
[473] Ibid, para 284.
[474] Which dates from 1989.
[475] Ibid, para 356, this anomaly was to be rectified by the institution of a Code of Practice to address the problems of over-subscribed LEAs.
[476] According to Richard Margrave of the ATL, interview with author, London, 25/9/96.
[477] Eamonn O'Kane, NASUWT, interview with author, London, 24/9/96.

in the 1960s, but this was not necessarily the result of ideological conversion among individual party actors:

> I think that was simply the rationalisation of what was going to happen anyway, there was a growing feeling in the upper echelons of the Labour Party that much of what the Conservatives were asking for, they (new Labour) agreed with... if Tony Blair had children ten years older it would have been someone else, this fits with his ideology of the power of the individual, it was symbolic as much as anything else. Jack Straw would be at one with this, and he sends his kids to comprehensive schools in Camberwell, he would agree with this policy of choice for the parents, it was definitely on the agenda anyway[478].

The change in Labour policy could in fact be traced back to the end of Ann Talyor's period as Front Bench spokesperson: NASUWT and the Labour Party had combined in campaigning against the introduction of GM schools and on the funding imbalances between primary and secondary schools at the time of the 1993 Education Act. Despite this example of resource dependency between the teacher union and the party, O'Kane noted that hereafter relations between the party and the union began to decline with new Labour's wish to distance itself from producer interests.

The headteacher unions, NAHT and SHA, traditionally had a more ambiguous relationship with the Labour Party. In common with all organisations that exist to serve the interests of their members (and who are in direct competition for members) they have to balance philosophy with pragmatism. Rowie Shaw of NAHT explained that:

> We are not easy bedfellows with GM schools nor with the City Technologies Trust, because, as with the other teacher unions there is a slight tension between what as an association we think is philosophically correct to provide an educational service, balanced against protecting the interests of our members, because we are not going to turn away GM heads and CT College principles, so we tend to keep a low profile on all of that[479].

The NAHT balanced those concerns in the same way as SHA, whose position was that heads of GM schools could not be assumed to be philosophical adherents of the status hierarchy that was created, rather, they had adopted GM status because "they saw it as the best thing for their school at the time"[480]. Shaw, apparently employed for her Labour Party connections[481], and as

[478] Ibid.
[479] Rowie Shaw, NAHT, interview with author, London, 21/8/96.
[480] John Sutton, General Secretary of the SHA, interview with author , Leicester, 23/9/96.
[481] In her own interpretation because one of her referees was a Labour MP, interview with author. The growing phenomenon of policy actors and lobbyists employing Labour people was noted by Richard

former headteacher in two inner-city comprehensives, felt that new Labour policy had let schools down:

> ...both my governing bodies, which were Labour dominated, voted against going GM because they thought it was Labour Party policy for schools not to opt out, and have therefore prejudiced themselves financially, because the GM schools do a whole lot better.... [482]

GM schools also benefited from the unfair allocation of technology and art specialist status. The new Labour policy of continuing with a hierarchy of schools also met with disapproval from Shaw and the NAHT's official position:

> Middle class members of the Labour party should not be seen to be giving their children advantages that other people, people on the estates that I have worked with all my working life can't do, and I think it stinks. Our official words for it is 'arrant hypocrisy'[483].

The NAHT and SHA also mentioned the London orientation of much of new Labour's policy influence. Shaw believed that new Labour's acquiescence to GM status, in the face of the decisions by Harriet Harman, Tony Blair and Michael Barber to send their children to such schools, had directly led to the Conservative Government's 1996 White Paper which envisaged a 'grammar school in every town'; in fact, she believed that "these three people in the whole of London have caused this policy"[484].

At the SHA, John Sutton realised that a combination of the Blair and Harman decisions and the belief that there were votes to be won in a number of key constituencies were behind new Labour's decision, but was unsure how deliberate it all was:

> It is hard to believe they would be so naive.... The problem though is the London bias of so much of what goes on in education policy. London is simply a special case, and unfortunately too much legislation is made on the back of London to the detriment of the rest of the country[485].

Margrave of the ATL who had moved on from advising Jack Straw in 1992, the last time there had been such a premium on Labour connections.

[482] Ibid.

[483] Ibid.

[484] The grammar school clauses in the Education Act (1997) were among those lost when new Labour refused to allow the Bill speedy passage prior to the election.

[485] John Sutton, SHA, interview with author, Leicester, 23/9/96.

On selection, the SHA demonstrated a further aspect of the teacher unions' ability to balance the needs of their members with a political stance:

> ....some of our members have strong philosophical commitments; many for example feel passionately that we need to have comprehensive education, not all. We have all types of schools represented, we have a large swathe of GM schools and independents, some get steamed up that is one thing, but we also have a strong pragmatic spirit and awareness of political positions.

This leads SHA to take a position that shifts the emphasis slightly:

> ....we don't say all selection in education is bad because that would upset some members, so what we said, we are against the extension of the principle of selective education. [And on grammar status] we say, if a whole community votes for selection in all of their schools, they can have it, it is democratic; but if one school wants to go selective, that is not democratic because it is having a knock-on effect on the other schools in the rest of the community. Virtually any of our members will sign up to that, that is the way we do it[486].

Despite the ability of actors to remain flexible in response to diverse memberships and a fluid policy environment, as players in the policy community the teacher unions were clearly marginalised on these issues in the policymaking process. As with the Early Years Enquiry Team, such organisations were not consulted by right before *Diversity and Excellence*, although they were free to send documents of their own to the party and use lobbying opportunities such as conferences and the media. On the other side of the debate the SEA initially expressed reservations about the decisions of the Harmans and Blairs, and said so publicly, but Chief Executive Graham Lane drew a distinction: "if the party decided to do something fundamentally wrong, like bring back grammar schools, ...we would have a public row". Highlighting the pragmatic nature of policy, and the nature of consensus in education, Lane noted in 1996 that:

> in the 1960s the reason why Labour did not get much benefit from education was that comprehensives were not a party issue, some Conservative councils introduced comprehensive schools, and now Dimitri Coryton (of the CEA) is furious about Conservative emphasis on grammar schools because most pupils won't get in and their parents know that. Coryton has told Major to his face that he will lose the party votes with

[486] John Sutton, SHA, interview with author.

this policy, and put it in print in *Education* magazine which he edits. There are lots of Conservative MPs who are pro-comprehensives, the CEA is headed by Mark Carlisle, an ex Secretary of State, it [comprehensivisation] was all about raising standards for everyone and selection was not delivering[487] .

New Labour's position relative to the educational consensus around standards was also highlighted by Liz Allen, Education Policy Officer of the Labour Party, speaking in 1996. Again the consensual desire to raise standards was portrayed pragmatically:

> ..we all feel very strongly that we are here to think about the interests of and the uses of the education system, and the providers have a role, but we are not led by them. The bottom line is that what we are doing in the interests of the users[488].

This implies that, if raising standards for the users is the end, selective or specialist means to that end would be compatible with Labour Party principles as well as aspirational parents. Allen reiterated the fact that Labour had always contained people who believed in selectivity: "the balance hasn't changed at all, the climate at the moment with the Tories needing to make an aggressive lead on selection makes it easier for people to talk about selection"[489]. The key thing for the party leadership "is as much to lead and encourage development thinking among the party membership as it is outside". Allen believed that: "the Party membership needs to move on in its thinking, it doesn't if all we do is reflect party membership, all it will do is just fossilise"[490]. Instead, new Labour should concentrate on the dogma of the Conservative's plans, particularly the selection and extra incentives which GM schools enjoyed.

This sense of a dual focus in new Labour policy was personified by David Blunkett. He believed that new Labour needed to simultaneously retain the enthusiasm of its supporters and attract new ones. Recalling 1995, when he had to sell *Diversity and Excellence* to a sceptical party, Blunkett highlighted the problem of language:

> You have got to be very careful. It is more a question of not expressing the language in a way that is not designed to appeal to the activist**,** but is designed to appeal to people outside politics, and that is sometimes misunderstood by activists who want to hear the language

[487] Graham Lane, SGA, interview with author, Sheffield, 11/9/96.
[488] Liz Allen, Labour Party Policy Directorate, interview with author, Millbank Tower, 29/10/96.
[489] Ibid.
[490] Ibid.

they grew up with, they want to hear the buzz words or trigger words which make them feel secure[491].

....on *Diversity & Excellence* and *Excellence for Everyone* we have actually gone round the country listening to people and asked them what they wanted, and they may not have always got what they wanted in terms of language, but they certainly got the reflection of what they want, so they say, "we want you to be much more positive against selection" and I point to them the words that appear, and they say "but they don't appear often enough" or "they don't appear at the front"...[492].

Therefore new Labour believed it had put enough safeguards in place to appeal to the core vote and the potentially Labour-voting aspirational middle class. Further support for new Labour's changing policies on parental choice and the creation of a hierarchy of schools was supplied by David Reynolds, professor of education at Newcastle University. Linking the need for in-school streaming, setting and differentation with social change, Reynolds reiterated the claim of Tony Blair:

> [That] the comprehensive school is too monolithic to meet the conditions of the 1990s in terms of parental wishes, and the increased range of student achievement. The common or comprehensive school first emerged in Scandinavia where historically you have a very restricted range of achievement and a highly homogenous population... [on reading achievement] we have a bigger range now than twenty years ago.... the evidence about parents is that they are probably more varied in what they want out of school for their children... the Tories opened out choice and you cannot take away this power to celebrate diversity[493].

Here are merged the political and the academic arguments for new Labour's emphasis on choice and diversity. Reynolds believed that new Labour should resist both streaming in schools and selection by ability, and put its faith in greater standards delivered through value added league tables[494]. New Labour could fairly argue, Reynolds thought, that such tables would put all schools

[491] David Blunkett MP, interview with author, 22/8/96.
[492] Ibid.
[493] David Reynolds, professor of education and head of the Numeracy Task Force before and after the election, interview with author, Newcastle, 17/3/98.
[494] Reynolds, interview with author, which would identify those schools with a better-off intake who do not achieve satisfactory added value, premised on baseline testing at five and outcomes at 16.

on an equal footing "in ways that potentially vast numbers of resources given to them wouldn't"[495]. This amounted to an alternative 'social democratic', new Labour way of raising standards for all, and one which would avoid endorsing selection[496].

However, from the right, Stephen Pollard of the Social Market Foundation (though formerly of the Fabian Society) doubted the honesty of new Labour advisers and thus new Labour itself. In his reading of *Diversity and Excellence* during the pre-election period, he detected a:

> ..great split in Labour policy between perception and reality; the overwhelming perception is that they are moving towards selection, but.... people confuse that fact that Labour is moving towards a more traditionalist approach to teaching methods with their approach towards the structure of the schools themselves[497].

New Labour's endorsement and encouragement of setting within schools, and specialisation between schools, with the retention of Foundation, CTC and Grammar status, clearly meant that potential voters would note the hierarchy of opportunity. However, for Pollard, new Labour were only adopting the 'selection' agenda for political reasons, "they buy into it only in terms of rhetoric but not reality"[498]. For Pollard, a supporter of selection, the real differences between GM and Foundation schools were in the latter's structural attachment to LEAs, through funding. New Labour's dishonesty about specialisation was evident, because "as soon as you try to pin them down, what does this specialisation mean without selecting who goes there, the whole thing unravels"[499]. This, of course, was also the egalitarian Left critique.

It is worth reiterating at this point just what new Labour were proposing on admissions and school structures. The DfEE produced a draft consultation paper *School Admissions: interim guidance* in June 1998. This contained several key principles, the most important ones for the present purpose being that arrangements should "meet parents' preferences for the schools of their choice to the maximum amount possible" and that local admissions authorities should consult and co-ordinate their arrangements, including over the "rapid reintegration wherever sensible of children who have been excluded from other schools"[500]. On the first point, admissions criteria for oversubscribed schools reinforced the Greenwich Judgement (of 1989), stating that "It should not

[495] Reynolds, interview with author.
[496] Reynolds, interview with author .
[497] Stephen Pollard, SMF, interview with author, London, 3/3/97. Having argued in favour of selection at a Fabian Society debate, he was asked to write a paper on the subject. The FS subsequently declined to publish this and Pollard and the argument moved to the SMF. (interview with author)
[498] Ibid.
[499] Ibid.
[500] DfEE *School Admissions: interim guidance (consultative draft)*, June 1998, p.5

be assumed that admissions policy should simply reinforce the local social mix"[501]. This had been countered to a degree by the Rotherham Judgement of 1997, which stated that it was not unlawful for LEAs to operate catchment areas in the event of oversubscription- however, the judgement also drew attention to admissions authorities' need to encourage parents to express a preference, as there is no legal requirement for parents to express a preference for a specific school. The draft consultation warns that "authorities will need to be cautious about making guarantees to parents of places in the local catchment school if these parents do not express a preference for the school", and continues:

> Admission authorities may not automatically give priority to allocating parents a place at the school in whose catchment area they reside where those parents had not positively expressed a preference for that school.

After those that have expressed a preference for an oversubscribed school:

> ...parents living outside the catchment area who express a preference for that school must come next, ahead of those within the catchment area who have expressed no preference[502].

By expecting parents to volunteer a preference, the draft guidelines could in effect 'weed out' parents who either do not bother to exercise this choice, or are unaware of the ramifications of not expressing a preference. As we have already seen, middle class parents are known to pay more serious and sophisticated attention to local catchment guidelines than some of the disaffected poor, who traditionally value education less[503]. The draft guidelines, in this respect, make it easier for a well performing school to change the nature of its intake over time as aspirational parents respond to such market signals.

From the point of view of schools compliance with parental preference, the unchanged nature of partial selection in the new Foundation and Aided status schools becomes clearer:

> Under the new schools framework, GM schools will choose a new category from September 1999. In the meantime [they have a duty] to comply with parental preference.

[501] ibid, Annex A, para 3.
[502] Ibid, paras 8-9.
[503] It was of course middle class parental demand that led to the consensus behind comprehensivisation, as discussed in Chapter Three. As for poorer parents DEMOS research suggested that localised poverty helped to cement the school-community divide, with education less valued by working class parents, see Tom Bentley *Learning to Belong* in the DEMOS pamphlet *The wealth and poverty of networks: tackling social exclusion*, 1997.

> That is, an application must be accepted unless admissions would be incompatible with any arrangements for selecting pupils by reference to ability or aptitude[504].

As if that was not a clear enough signal of exclusivity, the warning that partially selective schools must admit up to their approved admission number was reinforced by comparison to Grammar schools: "Only schools which are wholly selective by high academic ability or aptitude can keep places empty if they do not receive sufficient applicants of the required standard"[505]. The clause on former GM schools could be interpreted as meaning that even if numbers applying do not meet the partially selective requirement, such schools would be free to fill their selective quota with pupils with slightly lower entry requirements, before they would have to consider taking from the general population. The same could also apply to school with a specialist status.

> On the second point, the reintegration of challenging pupils, the document notes that: Some schools with spare capacity may find that they are required to admit an undue proportion of pupils whose behaviour can be challenging. Other schools may find that they are unable to take a share of such pupils as they are oversubscribed[506].

Although it is "highly desirable" that LEAs and schools should find ways of balancing things better, the market signal is clear; that undersubscribed schools are at one end of the standards (and behaviour) continuum, and oversubscribed schools are at the other. The School Standards and Framework Act (1998) disallows parental choice for parents whose offspring have been permanently excluded from two or more schools, which again allows oversubscribed schools to be reactive to demand from aspirational parents[507]. The problem of children with behavioural difficulties and Special Educational Needs accumulating in 'sink schools', could only be exacerbated by these changes. Parents and governors of successful schools are likely to resist any changes to LEA policy which forces them to admit more problem pupils, especially given that the interim guidelines highlights other market signals: "it is clear that the annual school performance tables help inform parents over admissions decisions"[508]. There are also potential caveats built into the requirements for potentially disruptive pupils, which state that "Admission authorities may legitimately refuse to admit a child where to do so would prejudice the provision of efficient

[504] DfEE *School Admissions: interim guidance (consultative draft)*, June 1998, Annex B para 12.
[505] Ibid, Annex B para 14.
[506] Ibid, para 33
[507] School Standards and Framework Act (1998), Section 87 disapplies the duty of school governing bodies to comply with parental preference in cases of permanent exclusion; Section 94 disallows appeals procedures involving such cases.
[508] DfEE *School Admissions: interim guidance (consultative draft)*, June 1998, para 40.

education or the efficient use of resources"[509]. The undefined phrase 'efficient education' is used throughout the document, and could be construed differently according to the educational achievement norms of particular schools: it is easy to imagine the clause being cited by a high achieving school against a poorly performing pupil who needed disproportionate (non-efficient) help, and simultaneously used by an undersubscribed school to defend its educational record by reference to the lower quality of its intake.

The interim guidelines do manage to clarify some of the questions surrounding class sizes. While the LGA's Coopers & Lybrand report suggested mixed-age teaching as the only cost-neutral way of meeting the commitments to class sizes *and* parental preference, the document makes it clear that "some extra teachers and capital will need to be focused on schools for which there is strong parental demand and where a good standard of education is offered" which squares the circle as "more parents should have their preferences met in primary or rural schools, with the added benefit of lower class sizes"[510]. New Labour makes it clear that parental choice and class sizes can be satisfied simultaneously, but it implies a redistribution of funds (which are tied to the pupil) from undersubscribed schools to oversubscribed ones. While the previous Government were content to let crude market signals, such as league tables and open catchment policies, guide the aspirational parents, new Labour openly committed themselves to a purer market model with money following the child to the best schools.

Another crucial aspect of the interim guidelines are the rules on selective admissions. As far as Grammar schools are concerned, the selective procedures operated by such schools were to continue, although the School Standards and Framework Bill would mean that, from September 1999, it would be up to a ballot of local parents to decide whether to remain wholly selective. For those schools which partially select, the situation would be less clear: "The Government has withdrawn previous guidance which suggested that admission authorities might introduce up to 15% partial selection without publishing statutory proposals"[511].

This says nothing about how a new Labour Secretary of State might look upon published proposals, merely that schools could not go ahead without publishing; however, there were clauses which allowed for the adjudicator to "be empowered to end partial selection when the practice is referred to him by local admission authorities or by parents"[512]. Specialist schools would be empowered to select by aptitude up to 10% of the relevant school age group in a regulated range of subjects.

[509] Ibid, Annex A para 17.
[510] Ibid, para 14.
[511] Ibid, para 25.
[512] Ibid, para 26.

Again the adjudicator would have to ensure that schools comply with the Government position that "aptitude should not be used as a replacement for, or as a cover for, selection by academic ability"[513]. This recalls Lord Hattersley's contribution to a House of Lords debate, quizzing Government Minister Baroness Blackstone:

> Can my noble friend give us a definition of aptitude which is different from the definition of ability? She knows, because she is the great expert on these matters, that in practice whichever test is imposed produces virtually the same result[514].

This new Labour would dismiss as missing the point; what mattered was a quantifiable improvement in educational outcomes, not semantics about the means to an end. Further, as Michael Barber, a key adviser to Tony Blair later brought in to head the Standards and Effectiveness Unit at the DfEE believed, the new Government should take advantage of the extension of central power the department had accumulated since the ERA of 1988 and establish priorities within education policy. Writing during the pre-election period, he recommended that: "A potential government should set out its chief priorities before an election and treat them afterwards as a non-negotiable core of policy"[515]. Barber came to this conclusion after speaking to former Conservative Secretary of State Kenneth Baker about the introduction of the National Curriculum in the face of almost universal educationalist hostility: "we had a mandate", he simply replied, referring to the pre-election published proposals to do just that. Elections are not won or lost on education, but unread manifesto pledges can carry more weight than academic opinion. On the other hand, selected academic opinion, in this case Barber and Reynolds, would carry more weight than other interested parties, individual or corporate. Here, the combination of electoral need and selected academic research allowed new Labour to significantly change party policy in the name of raising standards.

The next series of issues of concern to educators which exercised educators in the pre-election period were reforms to teaching practice and the role of a General Teaching Council. They are political questions in education because they impinged on professional autonomy and increase the powers of the Secretary of State. Reiterating the main theme of this Chapter, the battle for improved standards was the central justification for policy change.

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[513] Ibid, para 29.
[514] Cited in Rafferty,F *Lords quiz Blackstone on selective semantics*, TES 17/4/98
[515] Barber,M (1997) How to do the Impossible: A guide for politicians with a passion for education, Institute for Education, University of London, p.33

Teachers' regulation and control

The promise to introduce a General Teaching Council for teachers was again a long-standing one from the Labour Party but new Labour's GTC emerged within the context of a pre-existing Teacher Training Agency. A GTC had been seen by some as an opportunity to build a professional, rather than trade union, organisation which could represent teaching in the same way as the British Medical Association represented doctors and the Law Society represented lawyers. The president of the SHA, Bruce Douglas, argued that the GTC should be independent of both the Government and the teacher unions to further its ability to fulfil such a function[516]. According to others, a GTC should stand for promoting higher professionalism, safeguarding the public interest through a registration system for teachers, helping professional teachers to change and developing a shared purpose of confidence and trust in the future[517].

In fact, a GTC had been on the political agenda since the 1860s, with pressure culminating in the inclusion of a register of teachers in the 1899 Education Act. A voluntary Teachers Registration Council, (later the Royal Society of Teachers) was established but was wound up in 1949. After attempts to establish such a council in Scotland in the 1960s, the DES in 1970 launched another campaign, replicated by the House of Commons Select Committee for Education, Arts and Science in 1990. This helped consolidate another voluntarist commitment which had been arranged by the teacher unions, and including NATFHE, in the form of a private company dedicated to the establishment of a GTC in law[518]. The Labour Party had promised a GTC since the 1992 manifesto[519] and new Labour, influenced by Michael Barber, realised it was an opportunity to unite all the disparate elements of the teacher unions into one coherent teaching force able to take on the task of raising standards. But the danger was clear if the teacher unions prevaricated and engaged in turf-wars: "the chance has been missed on three previous occasions this century and if it is missed again it may never come again"[520].

To fulfil Barber's electoral criteria (discussed in relation to Baker above), the GTC would have to specific and well defined, pre-announced in the manifesto and then a working group should be given "no more than 18 months to report". Barber was sceptical about the teaching unions (having worked for the NUT) and wanted the GTC to be tied into the standards agenda as quickly as possible:

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[516] Douglas,B *Careful with that acorn*, TES Platform, 17/10/97.
[517] Lee,M *Government moves to safeguard standards*, The Lecturer, NATFHE, July 1997, p.7
[518] ibid,p.7
[519] Labour Party (1992) *Its time to get Britain working again*, The Labour Party, London, April 1992, p.34.
[520] Barber,M (1997) p.32.

> Though the teacher unions currently [1996] have a tentative agreement in favour of a GTC, there is no guarantee that it would hold once a specific GTC with a defined constitution and job description was put forward. ... Furthermore, trade union history, not just in education, teaches convincingly that the power of the unions to prevent change is infinitely greater than it is to drive it[521].

Some on the unions' side would have like the GTC to supersede the Teacher Training Agency, but Estelle Morris, junior minister for standards, made it clear soon after the election that co-existence was the Government's preferred option[522]. This declaration of intent was *during* the consultation period for the introduction of a GTC, signalled by the White Paper *Excellence in Schools*. Stephen Byers, writing in the foreword to the consultation, set the context:

> Our aim is to set up a professional body which will encourage all teachers to play their part in the challenging programme of reform mapped out in *Excellence in Schools*. The GTC must represent the highest professional standards and speak out where standards are not what they should be. We are not interested in a talking shop for teachers or a body to defend the way things are. An effective GTC must be an engine for change and a powerful driving force behind our new deal for teachers[523].

Having outlined what the GTC was to be, new Labour set out to build a consensus among groups through inclusion and by narrowing the consultative opportunities. For example, after a paragraph which outlined the GTC's role in raising standards, respondents were asked to share their views on "how the GTC might assist in the Government's drive to raise standards", not whether standards raising should be the main aim of the organisation[524]. Another suggestion was that the GTC could impact on standards through working in partnership with the TTA to change teacher training and in-service training. The idea of a General Teaching Council as a discursive council representing all aspects of education policy had been reduced to another motor for improving standards. The GTC would act to drive up standards in the profession by playing a key role in disciplinary procedures, even being expected to hasten the dismissal of poorly performing teachers[525]. David Blunkett had raised this possibility in a speech to the NASUWT at Easter 1996,

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[521] ibid, p.32.
[522] Gardiner,J *Minister's pledge on teacher training*, TES 12/9/97.
[523] Stephen Byers, Minister of State for Standards in DfEE, *Teaching: High Status, High Standards* DfEE Publications Centre, London, 1997.
[524] Ibid, Standards in the Profession, para 6.
[525] ibid, Regulating the Profession, paras 18-19.

again as part of the concerted public campaign to put education standards at the top of the political agenda [526].

The biggest area of controversy in the GTC proposals concerned its membership. Many of the teacher unions wanted to send their own nominees onto the Council, while new Labour made it clear that it would favour regional ballots for the heads and teachers who were to attend[527]. This would reduce the chances of organisational factionalism by appealing directly to teachers and thus bypassing activists.

Clearly, new Labour shared the Conservative's resistance to a single lobby group which could present an alternative education agenda, but even in the pre-election months there were attempts to place proposals for a GTC on the Conservatives' 1997 Act, so consensual had the idea become[528]. By December 1997, however, with the GTC launched in the Teaching and Higher Education Bill, it became clear that the centralising agenda of new Labour had outweighed any fears from a centralisation of the teaching profession. A TES editorial, *Control of buyers and sellers*, predicted that the GTC would be a government appointed board for regulation, not a free standing professional body like the British Medical Association[529], and this seemed to be confirmed in April 1998 when Stephen Byers announced the construction of the Council, even while the House of Lords was introducing an amendment to the Bill which would have toughened the independent status of the GTC[530] . The Council was to consist of 55 members, 20 elected by teachers, 9 appointed by unions, 13 appointed by representative bodies, and 13 appointed by the secretary of state. The nine appointees from the teacher unions would have to be current classroom teachers "or have recent classroom experience" in an effort to depoliticise the Council[531]. Rather than a grand council of all the teaching interests, the GTC was to be rich with classroom knowledge, and, as Michael Barber had proposed, it would act as the profession's self-policing agency. This fitted closely with the long developing standards agenda which had attacked the quality of teaching.

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[526] Published as Blunkett,D *Teacher 2,000: Labour's New Compact with Teachers*, The Labour Party, 1996

[527] Even the headteachers organisation SHA were in favour of union nomination, see Hackett,G *Unions bid for greater teaching council role*, TES, 10/10/97. NASUWT were also cited as campaigning for this.

[528] Carvel,J & Thornton,M *Council for peace*, The Guardian, 21/1/97.

[529] TES Editorial *Control of buyers and sellers* THES 19/12/97.

[530] Rafferty,F *Education Bill; Three defeats leave fences to mend*, TES, 3/4/98.

[531] DfEE *Balanced membership of general Teaching Council proposed- Byers*, press release 198/98, 22/4/98. The accompanying Consultation recommended the nine places to go to: two each from the NUT, NASUWT and the ATL, and one each from the PAT, NAHT and SHA.

The role of the GTC in standards raising further consolidated the ideas of the 'school effectiveness' movement. David Reynolds, one of the school effect academics close to new Labour, recognised the influence of the movement:

> ... part of the appeal is that we talk about the school independent of what type of school it is, and what we say is that good schools make a difference, wherever in the structure they are found... the within-system variation is probably greater than the between-system variation.... yes we fit, well it is not just that we fit new Labour's ideology, its just that's where the evidence is. ...what we were saying was politically in tune with the climate of the times[532].

In an age when so little seemed to be economically 'do-able' and school structures mattered less than how children were taught, concentration on the nature of teaching could be seen as inevitable. The emphasis on poor teaching was multifaceted, containing three distinct elements. Firstly, blaming poor teachers shifts the emphasis away from Government, thereby displacing responsibility. Chris Woodhead, head of OFSTED, had publicly cited '15,000 poor teachers' (which in reality was 15,000 hours of bad teaching in the year and implied around 2-3% bad teachers) and this had been repeated by Blair. Woodhead had been continually criticised within the profession for not being independent enough of the Conservative Government, but new Labour soon made it clear that it would resist moves to sack him. For some, Woodhead had identified himself too closely with selection after writing for *Politiea* and taking the New Right position in debates[533]. In a TV interview with David Frost prior to the election, Blair was asked directly if he would sack Woodhead: unprepared, Blair blustered defensively about Woodhead's contract. It was widely believed among educationalists that Woodhead's press officer had planted the question to bounce the Labour leader into a decision he could have avoided[534]. Woodhead's continuing role was not calculated to foster confidence in the future professionalisation of the teaching service; he had consistently and publicly made clear that school autonomy and teacher professionalism were barriers to improving performance[535].

The second element was the implications for school funding implicit in the school effectiveness movement. Henceforth new Labour neglected the older Left arguments about poor standards being caused by the systematic underfunding of primary education relative to the secondary and tertiary sectors, preferring to highlight the 'school effect'. Robin Alexander, a

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[532] David Reynolds of the Numeracy Task Force, interview with author, Newcastle, 17/3/98.
[533] Including one hosted and recorded by UCET, as reported by Ian Kane, interview with author, Manchester 17/3/97.
[534] Ian Kane of UCET and Robin Alexander, formerly with Woodhead as two of the 'three wise men' both held this view, interviews with author.
[535] Woodhead,C *A memo to David?*, New Statesman, 18/4/97.

professor of education and adviser to the DES on teacher training since 1983, also highlighted the Treasury context of much policymaking in the early 1990s, with reforms always in the context of no extra money[536]. This of course was another continuation of Conservative practice, leading Alexander to reflect the view of many of his fellow professors of education, that new Labour stood for "not only... policy convergence, there is also process convergence, the same steamrolling view of the policy process"[537].

Cost neutrality, displacement through blaming teachers and the difficulties of altering parental behaviour all pointed new Labour towards efforts to improve the practice of teaching, the third major element of the attack on low standards. This was the role written for the Teacher Training Agency in 1994[538]. The TTA was to improve the teaching of trainee teachers, which had traditionally been the preserve of the universities and the professors of education, and to raise the status of teaching as a profession. Gillian Shephard, as Secretary of State from 1994, had continued the establishment of the agency with the aim of developing a national curriculum for teacher education. Again, consensus had developed around this idea in an effort to raise standards in schools, however Robin Alexander recalled that teacher training reform had been on the agenda since 1984 (when he served on the Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education, CATE). Indeed, the regulations had been subsequently tightened up in 1989, 1992 and 1993. He therefore felt that Blunkett, when in Opposition, could have pointed out the failures of the reform process so far and questioned the need to carry on in the same vein[539]. Blunkett, however, chose not to challenge the government on the reform of TT; it fitted naturally with the general pressure new Labour applied to teachers, and equally to the universities and colleges of education which exercised a degree of professional autonomy which, as we have seen with Woodhead, was widely construed as part of the problem. For a representative of the University Council for the Education of Teachers (UCET), such as Ian Kane, it was clear that central government was planning to wrest control away from the universities. The Dearing Review into Higher Education had established a TT study group during 1996-97, the constitution of which made the intention clear. It was to be chaired by Sir Stewart Sutherland, a former chief inspector of schools:

> [who was] known throughout the system as being the sponsor of Anthea Millet to get the TTA job, as guardian angel; then, lo and behold he has two assessors, one of whom is David Hargreaves of Cambridge who regularly does proselytising lectures for the TTA and leads the assault from within the universities, the other is Lawrence Montague..of the

[536] Ibid.
[537] Robin Alexander, interview with author.
[538] The TTA was established by the Education Act of 1994.
[539] Robin Alexander, interview with author

> School Centred Initial Teacher Training (SCITT) [movement]. You couldn't pick two people who would form a more formidable assault on the universities' role in TT[540].

Without the independence of university teacher training, Kane feared, the Secretary of State could interfere directly in the curriculum of a part of higher education. He also feared that the Dearing initiative would lead to TT becoming the preserve of Further Education, and that new Labour would probably go along with this agenda, given the savings that would accrue from this and the moves towards more school based training. Colin Picthall MP, who was not a front-bench shadow spokesperson, was asked to produce Labour's pre-election TT paper. During his consultation Picthall, a former teacher and teacher trainer, had approached UCET and meetings were held with NATFHE, AUT, the teacher unions, Bryan Davies (further and higher education spokesperson) and Blunkett, during which UCET tried to move the agenda away from standards and onto teacher supply[541]. New Labour declined the advice and the TT paper was delayed until the eve of the election.

Once again, policy on teacher training had been subordinated to the much wider policy aim of raising standards as new Labour came closer to the realisation of power. After the election, new Labour continued to stress the TTA role in standards raising (against the expectations of both Alexander and Kane) and also charged the body with making teaching attractive to new recruits. If the decision to continue with, and even highlight, the TTA's role damaged university autonomy[542], in the public sphere the debate moved on to how to attract the best teachers without adding to the total teacher salary bill. The other major concern was the standard of TT intake. In September 1997 the TTA introduced a five year plan to improve intake, wanting to see at least three applicants for every initial teacher training place by 2002, and declaring that in Bachelor of Education (B.Ed) courses, 80% of intake should come from the top 20% of A level cohort grades. It also recommended that that PGCE students would have to hold upper-second class degrees at least; meanwhile the TTA pledged to raise the profile of the profession by 2002. SCITT was encouraged to get more candidates into the profession[543]. Some of the Government's efforts in this respect relate to the introduction of Education Action Zones, the subject of the next section, and the appearance of the new advanced skills teachers (ASTs) which EAZ's experimental remit would allow.

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[540] Ian Kane of UCET, interview with author, Manchester, 17/3/97.
[541] Meetings were hosted by the Labour Party, at Millbank Tower, and NATFHE.
[542] As it certainly did, see Phil Revell, *Provider beware*, The Guardian, 7/4/98, which reported that the TTA would control TT course funds which would be allocated to colleges and universities on vocational, skills-based criteria, rather than on more theoretical higher educational courses.
[543] As reported by Gardiner,J *Training agency to insist on 2:1 degree*, TES 5/9/97.

The difficulties of teacher recruitment in certain subject and geographic areas would clearly have to be tackled if the TTA was to meet its declared targets. New Labour's initial response was to issue league tables of ITT providing institutions, which would complement OFSTED's inspection service. In November 1997, Estelle Morris announced that:

> Potential trainee teachers should also have information to help them make an informed choice, I have therefore decided that performance tables of ITT providers should be published so that meaningful comparisons can be made. This will be in a spirit of openness and will act as a spur to raise standards[544].

UCET responded with fears that this might actually deter recruitment among mature returners, who would usually only have the option of their local college, rather than have the opportunity to choose the best course for their future employment prospects. They also feared that the next move would be to marginalise B.Ed courses by withdrawing funding from universities which offered the four year specialist teaching degree which produced most primary teachers[545]. This was partially confirmed when it became clear that tuition fees would only be waived for PGCE courses but not the B.Ed[546]. So how would new Labour manage to attract a better standard of trainee teachers, especially against the background of serious shortages in specific subject areas, such as science, maths and modern languages?

The new Labour answer came through the application of performance-related pay. The majority of teachers, though, would not attract pay rises because of the impact on inflation. In a scheme announced in July 1998, David Blunkett proposed to tackle the supply problem in two ways. To reward teachers who were excellent, but had no opportunities to gain promotion other than into non-teaching roles (and even these are not generally available in smaller primary schools) the Secretary of State suggested that performance-related pay could benefit up to half of all teachers, thereby avoiding the problems of divisiveness and elitism of Advanced Skills Teachers and other similar schemes. Then, to attract new teachers into the profession, Blunkett said that pay reform would be backed up by recruitment of classroom assistants and investment in technology and buildings to create a profession attractive to graduates:

> This is not a scheme to reward just those teachers in schools that have good results. It is about giving an opportunity for high-performing teachers to be well paid - even if they work

[544] DfEE *Morris: Tables to monitor teacher training standards*, press release 365/97, 14/11/97.
[545] Gardiner,J *Training league risk to recruitment*, TES, 21/11/97.
[546] Baty,P *Sutherland training idea vetoed*, THES 21/11/97.

in a disadvantaged area where everything about them is falling apart, or in a middle-class school that is coasting[547].

Therefore, new applicants could be attracted financially to a profession often bedevilled by images of underperforming schools and problem children. The message was that if teachers were good enough, they could expect greater reward. On this issue, new Labour had managed to win over the class-teacher unions (who had always been hostile to AST status and its Conservative predecessors) by sheer financial inclusion[548], and the headteacher unions by conferring on their members the power to reward good work. The performance-related-pay announcement came after the 1997-98 Comprehensive Spending Review, which had allowed the DfEE to establish a £1 billion service development fund[549]. Overall the CSR heralded a slight improvement in overall education spending for the remaining years of the Parliament[550].

Clearly, an important element of new Labour's reform programme relied on the support of the profession, (as Barber had shown) and the development which allowed for greater financial rewards tied to performance had the dual benefit of potentially applying to a critical mass (50%) of all teachers, and leading to efficiency gains. In fact, new Labour planned to adopt the PrP principle across the public sector, as Chancellor Gordon Brown told the TUC[551]. Such radical change might have offended the spirit of collectivism, but as the teacher unions were quick to realise, enough individual members would be attracted to the idea, and their representative duty was henceforth to safeguard the assessment process by joining the consultations rather than displaying petulant oppositionism. At one level, at least, new Labour had managed to achieve its preference for a weak GTC and a strong TTA by offering financial rewards to the main teacher union actors.

Taken together, the GTC and the reforms to Teacher Training were ostensibly about improving the profession, giving teachers a voice and providing them with opportunities for advancement and reward. However, these policies have to be seen in the context of a general climate of 'teacher bashing' which emphasised the real nature of policy change. Standards control had been concentrated within the DfEE and its satellite agencies, OFSTED and the TTA. Once

[547] Carvel,J *Heads to judge merit of teachers*, The Guardian 20/7/98.
[548] Indeed there have been suggestions that PrP would allow pay increases to more than 50% of all teachers: Performance-related pay could give "over half the profession" higher pay. "We are not talking about bibs and bobs, but a substantial investment," said Mr Blunkett, ibid. Also reported in Beckett,F *Poor value for the schools*, New Statesman, 24/7/98, p.10.
[549] Carvel,J *Heads to judge merit of teachers*, The Guardian 20/7/98.
[550] Although the headline figures for education were large (£19bn over three years) they only looked impressive in the context of the previous two years, during which new Labour managed public spending on assumptions set by the outgoing Government's last budget. If spending over the five years 1997-2002 are compared to the years 1992-1997, the rise would be minimal and not constitute a significant redistribution of resources.
[551] Milne,S *Perform for pay, TUC told*, The Guardian 21/7/98.

again ‘standards’ set the overriding policy context, and in this case even public spending constraints were to be superseded if the rhetoric of ‘half of all teachers get a raise’ were to be fulfilled. The supremacy of raising standards is also a central concern of the final areas of compulsory policymaking to be analysed in this chapter, the changing nature of the role of LEAs and the introduction of EAZs.

EAZs and the changing role of the LEA

Changing the role of local education authorities and the establishment of education action zones are two areas of policy where Michael Barber proved to be influential. Much of his agenda aimed to build on Conservative policies since 1979 and particularly since the ERA of 1988. LMS and the establishment of the GM and CTC sectors had steadily reduced the LEA function to the extent that by 1996 Barber could hypothesise that “the next government will face the choice of either taking education out of local authority hands altogether or unlocking their creativity”[552]. Preferring the latter course, where LEAs promoted innovation, Barber realised that many would not fill this function and therefore OFSTED and the Audit Commission should inspect them regularly, with the attendant threat from government:

> The minister.... should make clear that any new lease of life for LEAs is conditional on their demonstrating their success in promoting improvement. Continuous improvement, in other words, is more important than the continued existence of LEAs[553].

Barber’s general philosophy for educational improvement constantly emphasises experimentation and change in the classroom and by educational authorities. Along with his recommendation that a new government should ruthlessly prioritise, set targets and commission task-forces (for example, on numeracy and literacy), he favoured the faster sackings of teachers and parent and pupil representation on assessment boards[554]. However, he was not as pessimistic about standards as some of his contemporaries, nor did he advocate selection of pupils by schools on either political or philosophical grounds[555]. Barber’s main purpose in the development of new Labour policy was to embrace best practice and spread the word that education could be improved. This fitted naturally with the new Labour emphasis on ‘what works, works’, which became

[552] Barber,M (1997) How to do the Impossible: A guide for politicians with a passion for education, Institute for Education, University of London, p.30.
[553] ibid, p.31.
[554] Barber,M (1996) The Learning Game: Arguments for an Education Revolution, Gollancz, London, passim.
[555] On standards of new teachers, see Barber,M *Curriculum wars*, TES 27/9/96, while in *The long shadow of the IQ empire*, TES 13/9/96 he argued forcefully against fixed intelligence.

pervasive across social policy. It has been noted that Barber was unusual among professors of education because his influence was not due to research findings or the development of pedagogical methods. Peter Wilby recognised Barber's value to new Labour, and his place in the roll-call of advisers:

> My impression is that there are a few advisers who are influential... Barber has the great advantage from their point of view that he manages to sound tough on standards while also sounding forward looking. He is a very political person, most academics don't rate him as an academic, he also has the advantage of his NUT background so he understands how to get the teachers onside, the Labour Party still finds it important to keep them onside[556].

Nor was Barber's advice restricted to new Labour circles; he had been appointed to the first Education Association set up by the Secretary of State under powers conferred by the 1993 Education Act. This association was given the task of deciding whether Hackney Downs school (which fell within the control of Barber as Chief Education Officer of Hackney LEA) would have to close down in response to poor results and a declining intake. He was already associated with the idea of partnerships to run education authorities, and was selected for the EA to help Gillian Shephard close Hackney Downs[557]. The EA concept was to involve a partnership of local authority and business figures who would take over a 'failing school' or a group who were failing or in 'special measures'[558]. This would bypass the LEA and school governors, and report to the Secretary of State. It is clear that Barber was a key figure in the development of the idea that local authority control of education was not a necessary prerequisite of state education. New Labour's and, in particular Tony Blair's, endorsement of Barber's ideas, suggests that the party was moving into political ground that was fertile with radical new thinking and at the same time distanced new Labour from the 'loony left council' image of 'old Labour'. The most significant aspect of the Barber's involvement in the Hackney EA, however, was the similarly between the EA and the emerging new Labour policy of education action zones.

While the Hackney Downs closure saga continued, official Labour policy was more restrained. *Excellence for Everyone* merely spoke of a 'Fresh Start' for schools. However, the political raising of the 'standards' stakes had continued to the extent that Education Action Zones

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[556] Peter Wilby, interview with author, Victoria, 19/3/97. Stephen Pollard of the SMF contemptuously said of Barber: [he is] "utterly shallow, every new idea he says is good, I have never heard him criticise a new idea, anything new is good", interview with author, 3/3/97.

[557] See Tomlinson,S (1997) *Sociological Perspectives on Failing Schools*, in International Journal of the Sociology of Education, Vol.7, No.1 1997, p.14.

[558] The definitions of 'failing' and 'special measures' are given in DfE circular 17/93, inspectors follow OFSTED *Handbook for the Inspection of Schools (Technical Paper 13)*, OFSTED 1995.

made their first documentary appearance in the 1997 manifesto. Already, by the end of 1996 some of the constituent elements, such as spending disproportionately in poorer areas and local partnerships, had been well highlighted by Barber, drawing on the ideas of another key Blair adviser, Geoff Mulgan of Demos[559].

From the local government perspective, Graham Lane of the LGA and the SEA was (*pace* Barber) also more impressed by the possibilities from changing education than defending existing practices. Lane and the local education officers who met with him in 1995 to discuss *Diversity and Excellence* had declined to take an oppositionist stance about GM/Foundation status[560]. Again echoing new Labour policy, Lane believed that:

> What we should be doing is holding schools to account: why are your exam results not good enough?; why can't your kids read?; and that is a much more difficult thing to do, and much more interesting. That is our role, and it is interesting, because that is where we want to be and [what] has developed in the last few years. The government [in 1996] is now supporting us, they are now saying the role of the LEA is to raise standards... I think LEAs are in a much more powerful position than they have ever been, and they are using it...[561].

The SEA was content to balance the return of GM and CTC schools into the LEA fold and the new 'standards enforcer' role against the autonomy steadily lost through LMS[562]. While some in local government may have hoped new Labour would devolve power once again, in reality, what was proposed did not involve any further reduction in influence[563]. Allowed to tender still for services, LEAs would also be responsible for admissions procedures, central administration, transport, special educational needs, the provision of musical education, and of course standards and effectiveness[564]. In this latter function they were to develop their own Education Development Plans (EDPs). For new Labour, further devolved budgets meant accepting that the right of democratically elected authorities to prioritise certain aspects of education would have to be lost. Prioritisation in this context means the autonomy for LEAs to decide on whether to favour primary over secondary schools, on how much of an emphasis to place on multiculturalism, special needs statements, whether to introduce class size limits or leave policy up to heads. These are all political decisions, taken at a local level. In the new regime, accountability for education officers would

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[559] Barber M, *How to achieve the impossible*, TES Platform, 13/12/96.
[560] Graham Lane of the LGA, interview with author, Sheffield, 11/9/96.
[561] Ibid.
[562] SEA *A tale of two manifestos* in Education Politics, Issue No. 29, Summer 1996, SEA, London, p.3.
[563] In fact there were even reports that this could involve LEAs recruiting extra staff to cover the standards enforcement role.
[564] DfEE *Byers outlines plans for new 100 per cent delegation*, press release, 271/98.

henceforth come through educational failure rather than electoral unpopularity (which has little effect in one-party dominated councils). This in turn would make LEAs even more vulnerable, however, for if their role was merely as standards enforcers they would replicate the work of voluntary school governors and EAZ boards (Action Forums); for some critics on the political right, without real autonomy LEAs would merely be agents for central government, and they had no legitimacy in such a role[565].

Stephen Pollard of the SMF was not convinced by new Labour's talk of not abolishing GM status were largely concerned with this political interference in the true local management of schools; funding that came via LEAs would not constitute freedom from his perspective[566]. In contrast, the new EAZs were not only to have real local autonomy, but they would benefit from the input of local business entrepreneurs who understood the market and the concept of failure.

EAZs were officially launched by the White Paper *Excellence in schools* in July 1997. The emphasis was on targeted support at the areas of the country which most needed such support. New Labour would continue to offer a universal and free education system, with targeted additional help. However, EAZs also implied a radical shake-up of the educational system: potentially the end of a national curriculum, through the narrowing or vocationalisation of curricula in zones; changes to the structure of the school day and year, requiring a renegotiation of the teachers' contracts; the introduction of Advance Skills Teachers on a higher salary; and 'superheads' responsible for all the schools in a zone, and paid accordingly. Only in January 1998 did David Blunkett reveal that EAZs were also to bring in private sector money, services and expertise to the running of local education services[567]. At the same time, Barber, now head of the DfEE's Standards and Effectiveness Unit (a role he literally wrote for himself) suggested private finance might play a part in a speech to the local government-dominated North of England Education Conference:

> Education Action Zones offer the opportunity for a radical reappraisal of education within a variety of geographical locations. Today we are inviting a range of organisations such as businesses, local education authorities, Training and Enterprise Councils, and schools/further education colleges to participate in EAZs. .... Innovation will be a clear component of each EAZ's strategy to address local problems and to focus on teaching and learning. This is a great opportunity for the business world to play a direct and central role

[565] A view put by Neil McIntsoh of CFBT Education Services during a Guardian debate which advanced the motion: "The availability of good schooling for all our children does not require the involvement of locally elected politicians". The Guardian, 30/6/98.
[566] Stephen Pollard, interview with author, London, 3/3/97.
[567] DfEE *Invitation to help invent the educational future-Blunkett*, press release 003/98, DfEE 6/1/98

in the management and leadership of EAZs. EAZs are an exciting move forward in education and may well form a blueprint for education in the next millennium[568].

In the event few of the first batch of EAZ bids involved creative use of private money, and fewer still featured private companies actually offering investment. The early signal that this was likely to happen was when the Government announced that the original financial arrangements, of £500,000 per zone, half each from the public and private sectors, became £750,000 with £500,000 from the state. Later, when the bids were announced, it became clear that the £250,000 private input could be 'in kind'; many on the Right, such as Pollard, took the poor quality of private bids as evidence of LEAs clinging to power and withholding information from potential bidders[569].

Others, like Frances Beckett in the *New Statesman* noted that private finance had been evoked before, in 1986 with the City Technology Colleges, when, after announcing that the private sector would put in £8-10 million, Kenneth Baker than had to lower this to £2 million plus control of the buildings and employment contracts[570]. In this interpretation, new Labour's invocation of the primacy of business is part of a long term and failed attempt to deny that the state is the best provider of education. The evidence suggested that the private sector was unwilling or unable to make a profit out of compulsory education, but it suited new Labour to promise of freedom from restriction as an example of its willingness to be radical, innovative and experimental. On an ideological level, it was yet another clear signal that new Labour was a best agnostic about local authority control. The EAZ agenda was all about depoliticising the role of local authorities and centralising control in the DfEE and No.10 Downing Street. It was also about raising standards; to this end, local democracy was but another failed means, this time because it was associated with the monolithic comprehensives of old. This was reflected internationally in the intellectual trend towards policies favourable to individualism. In 1998, even the French Education Minister was moved to declare that "equality is achieved neither through egalitarianism nor sad uniformity, but through diversity"[571].

Graham Lane reacted to the announcement of EAZs with voluntary and business input by raising fears that it would mean the end of local democracy[572]. Once again, it seemed, Lane, often a key figure in supporting new Labour innovation, was unaware of the policy process itself. Some ambivalence towards the plight of LEAs was also expressed by interest groups and educationalsist.

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[568] ibid.
[569] Pollard,S *Opening bid for better zone policy*, TES Opinion, 12/6/98.
[570] Beckett,F *Business snubs Blunkett's Big Idea*, New Statesman, 19/6/98, pp.8-10.
[571] Education Minister Clause Allegre, quoted in Simon Verer *French devolution*, The Guardian, 12/5/98.
[572] Rafferty,F Action zone news is broken in the lions' den, TES 9/1/98.

Contemplating LMS, Rowie Shaw of the NAHT was pragmatic: "....if greater delegation means that more money comes into schools to reduce the stress... we support that, but we do not have a policy of taking schools out of LEA control"[573].

For Maurice Kogan, LEAs in the 1990s had little influence, and because they were financially unable to give schools the level of support they had wanted (due to funding redirected through OFSTED and LMS) schools no longer mourned their further decline[574]. New Labour had managed to continue the process of long decline in local authority control of education which had begun with the publication of test results after the 1980 Education Act. Government needs central control of the education system in order to better respond to the changing basis in demand for labour; local government, as we shall see in relation to further education colleges in the next chapter, can be seen as a barrier to rapid change. Sally Tomlinson made the connection between raising standards and the national economy as she believed new Labour interpreted it :

> education is just as important and as material as economic capital; and is in fact economic capital. Knowledge and information is capital to earn material wealth. I suppose the Labour Party actually understands that better than the Conservatives[575].

Conclusion

In developing compulsory education policy, new Labour, in both Opposition and Government has clearly been influenced by Conservative reforms which are evidenced by the six themes outlined at the start of this chapter. Taken together, these themes form a consensus about education policymaking which exceeds the temporary and fragile consensus about comprehensive education which formed in the 1960s and 1970s.

Firstly, the school effect. Adherence to the Conservative legacy was evident in the emphasis on the 'school effect' consensus which downplayed the effect of resources in schools and placed the onus on schools, teachers and educational researchers to identify, spread and utilise best practice.

Secondly, new Labour added to the politicisation of standards, which remained a salient theme with the electorate well after the 1997 election. The new aspect for new Labour is that standards would henceforth be raised by concentrating on how teachers taught and how the school was organised, in contrast the Labour's traditional emphasis on resources and equality of treatment

[573] Rowie Shaw, NAHT, interview with author, London, 21/8/96.
[574] Maurice Kogan, interview with author, Islington, 29/10/96.
[575] Sally Tomlinson, interview with author, Goldsmiths College, 18/3/97.

for all pupils. ‘Raising standards’ was also used thematically and even symbolically, in an effort to disguise selection. Selection was also used to send market signals to the aspirant middle class of where they might use state education without undue harm to their children.

Thirdly, centralisation, which was manifested in several ways. One aspect implied further autonomy for schools through LMS but at the same time a continuation of centralisation, especially through the prescription of pedagogy in the name of the numeracy and literacy task forces. Another aspect of centralisation has been the establishment of targets of achievement for schools, along with the assumption that advice and specific funding from the Ministry would help repair the damage done locally by 'inept' teachers, heads and local authorities. Building up the public mood of national renewal, new Labour promised to ‘modernise the comprehensive principle’ which implied a changing role for LEAs, as part of a new emphasis on the users of education rather than the producers. New Labour in Government would henceforth to use its central control to regulate the relationship between consumer and producer. There has been less professional input than in the past as many of the producer actors reported process convergence to go with policy convergence, as consultation was narrowed, shortened and generally ignored. Another aspect of centralisation is the political one; on certain issues, the strategists around the party leadership had decisive effect on education policy, in fact, key advisers, such as Barber, had more direct influence on Blair than on Blunkett, who then responded to Blair’s agenda, rather than setting the agenda as previous Labour shadow secretaries and Secretary of State’s have done.

Fourthly, vocationalisation. Within the context of a meritocratic society, vocationalising post-14 education represented both a desire to equalise opportunity and meet the changing demands of the future labour market. As we have seen, a key theme in the centralisation of education policy has been the distancing of new Labour from the ‘producer interests’, as teacher associations and professors of education were styled, which theoretically makes it easier for business and employment interests to have some say in the establishment of Education Action Zones.

Fifthly, changes to admissions policy and its effects on selection and specialisation. Continuing the trend since 1980, many of new Labour’s policy changes were aimed at developing a series of market signals for aspirational parents. The consolidation of the hierarchy of schools outlined earlier in this chapter has been furthered by post-election developments, not least the announcement of a huge expansion of the specialist and Beacon status schools early in 1999, along with recommendations that schools should use setting to “meet individual needs aptitudes and

abilities"[576] and also offer gifted pupils (the top five to ten percent in tests) the opportunity of master classes and "world class tests" to stretch them[577].

The sixth and last theme relates to inclusion and exclusion. The expansion of the Beacon School and specialist school sectors after the election were partially aimed at individualising the setting of education for each pupil. However, these announcements were made alongside proposals to target help at the poorest performing schools and underachieving pupils in the six largest inner-city conurbations around the country. This represented a degree of redistribution and inclusion, although at the expense of further highlighting educational failure and departing from the comprehensive principle of universal provision. Another aspect of inclusion is the emphasis on educating statemented pupils in mainstream schools wherever possible; however, partly in contradiction to this is new Labour's pledges to make it easier for schools to permanently exclude disruptive pupils.

Politically new Labour portrayed many of the changes within the corpus of Labour Party ideology, for example, on class sizes, nursery provision, the abolition of the APS, and improving standards through best practice and 'what works, works'. It is clear that the general thrust of new Labour policy, though it may have moved towards convergence in some matters, remained within the Labour Party's traditional political space by offering some redistribution and amelioration to the poorest performing pupils, and that much of the additional aid would be triggered by socio-economic indicators. Therefore new Labour were able to change the perceptions of what the Labour Party stood for educationally in the public consciousness. In terms of internal party institutions, we have seen how, even without the changes implied by the National Policy Forum, the party leadership was easily able to garner support from such bodies as the SEA and override the concerns of those who wanted more overtly egalitarian outcomes. Through the use of standards as a 'catch-all' concept for education policy, new Labour managed to send two clear messages to the electorate: the old ways had failed; and the new party were not beholden by producers to maintain the *status quo*.

[576] The language linking 'abilities and aptitudes' goes further than new Labour ministers were prepared to go in 1998, see footnote 154.

[577] DfEE (1999) *Prime Minister and David Blunkett launch action plan for inner city education*, pn. 126/99, 22/3/99. The expansion of the Conservative specialist school scheme was from 365 to 800 institutions by 2002/3, while the number of new Labour's own beacon schools were to grow from 75 to 1,000 during the same period.

Chapter Seven

Post-compulsory education and training: actors, pressure and policy

This chapter is concerned with the development of new Labour's policies towards vocational education and training (VET) and post-compulsory education. The three main issues discussed here are post-compulsory qualifications, training policy and lifelong learning. The relevant documents issued by new Labour were *Aiming Higher*, which examined new proposals for the post-compulsory qualification structure, and *Learn as You Earn*, which was concerned with the provision, funding and quality of qualifications offered to employees in the workplace. In addition, post-compulsory and VET issues were covered in *Lifelong Learning*, the higher education document. Analysis of these documents and evidence from policy actors will form the bulk of this chapter, which traces new Labour policy into Government.

In keeping with the way such post-compulsory issues have been traditionally treated, this chapter sets out to examine the different policy environments and interest group clusters in three distinct, but inevitably overlapping areas. The first section will look at the issue of post-compulsory qualifications; the second section is concerned with the development of new Labour's training policies; the final section is concerned with lifelong learning which, for new Labour, acts as a thematic and symbolic vision which promises personal fulfilment and economic modernisation. Each section will commence with a breakdown of the main policy actors who have impacted, or tried to impact, on developing policy, and much of the evidence relates to actors' changing perceptions of policymaking.

New Labour and the development of post-compulsory qualifications

The context for reform of the post-compulsory (or indeed post-14) qualification structure can be traced back to Callaghan's Ruskin College speech and the Conservatives' efforts at making British education more relevant to employment. As we have seen in Chapter Four of this thesis, one of the main historical problems policymakers have had to deal with is the academic-vocational divide, the perception that following any other route than A levels at sixteen is a signal of failure. Many attempts have been made to modularise the qualification structure so as to make units of educational attainment transferable, whilst at the same time satisfying the needs of employers, who remain attached to a high level of entry-skills and task-related training. The Conservatives' most serious attempt to reform the qualification structure was Sir Ron Dearing's *Review of*

Qualifications for 16-19 Year Olds, published in 1996[578]. New Labour's response to this was *Aiming Higher*, which centred the party firmly within a developing consensus around the need for reform, but without harming standards.

The policy community

Many organisations are interested in post-compulsory qualifications; the CBI, the Institute of Directors (IOD), the TEC National Council, the National Council for Vocational Qualifications (NCVQ, which became the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, QCA), the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC), the National Association for Educational Research (NFER), the Further Education Development Agency (FEDA), the Joint Council of National Vocational Awarding Bodies (JCNVAB), the National Institute for Adult Continuing Education (NIACE), the Local Government Association (LGA), and the Teaching & Learning Technology Support Network (TLTSN). In addition are the teaching unions, the National Union of Teachers (NUT), the National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT), the Secondary Heads Association (SHA), the Headmasters Conference (HMC), and the National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education (NATFHE).

Individuals who provided advice with the intention of affecting new Labour policies include Ken Spours and Michael Young, Helena Kennedy, Bob Fryer, Terry Hyland, Josh Hillman and business members of the Commission on Public Policy and British Business (CPPBB) such as Lord Hollick, George Bain, Christopher Harding and David Sainsbury. Other academics whose work contributed to the debate during the 1994-99 period include Alan Smithers, Alison Wolf, Gilbert Jessup, Sig Prais, David Soskice, Johann Schmitt, Will Hutton and John Kay, JR Shackleton, Andy Green and David Jaffe of the National Commission on Education (NCE), and the members of the Beaumont Review of vocational qualifications. Many of the individual actors represented think tanks, such as the Institute for Economic Affairs (IEA), the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR), and the Social Market Foundation (SMF).

Issues, policy and practice

The political divide this chapter is concerned with is between meritocrats who value excellence and egalitarians who value wider opportunities through a greater appreciation of vocational skills. This divide can be witnessed between the parties and also within the Labour tradition. Four main issues

[578] Dearing,R (1996) *Review of Qualifications for 16-19 Year Olds*, SCAA, Hayes.

discussed in this chapter also illustrate the divide; human capital; excellence and standards; value for money; and centralisation versus professional autonomy.

The context for new Labour policy development was largely set during the 1980s with the development of modularised and unitised vocational awards, in response to the changing basis of demand for labour, and employers' unwillingness to fund what they saw as inappropriate training. By 1989 there was a broad consensus around the idea that, as the CBI noted: "There is a need for a quantum leap in the education and training of young people to meet both their aspirations and the needs of the economy in an increasingly competitive world"[579]. This was echoed by the Trade Unions Congress: "Britain is facing a skills challenge greater than any since the industrial revolution... By the year 2000 we will either be a superskills economy or a low-skill, low pay society"[580].

In the same year, Labour Party leader Neil Kinnock declared:

> Education and training (are) now the 'commanding heights' of every modern economy... now and for all time in the future, human skills and human talents will be the major determinants of success or failure- not just for individuals but for a whole society in its social, cultural and commercial life...[581]

The modularisation and unitised philosophy of the new vocational qualifications offered a potential solution for those seeking to reform the qualification structure to meet these demands. The concept was consolidated with the introduction of National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) after 1986. These are based on measuring the competence of workers against a set of criteria for the task laid down in national guidelines set by Industry Lead Bodies. The criteria include demonstrating an understanding of the underpinning knowledge behind the activity, and observed performance of these tasks under a range of conditions so that competence can be accurately judged. The NVQ formula appealed to potential reformers of the qualification structure because individual units of competence could be used either as lateral credits towards alternative NVQs, or vertically to build towards higher NVQ levels. This principle was expanded after 1992 with the introduction of General NVQs (GNVQs) as 'applied A levels' which are composed of taught units; moreover, the separate pathways of vocational and academic qualifications could be bridged to some extent by the inclusion of 'common learning outcomes' in both GNVQ and A level

[579] CBI, cited in Jessup,G (1991) Outcomes: NVQs and the Emerging Model of Education and Training, The Falmer Press, London, p.7.
[580] *ibid*, p.7
[581] *ibid*, p.7

syllabuses. These common outcomes were often expressed as the 'core skills' which the CBI had called for the introduction of in all post-14 education since 1989[582].

In academic circles, the need for greater national competitiveness and the changing basis of demand for labour which the globalised economy had heralded also produced calls for reform. Against a background of an educational system geared to employment patterns now long gone, many thought that old curriculum and teaching styles also had to be renewed[583]. Richardson, Spours, Woolhouse and Young's *Learning for the Future* study, begun in 1993, was based on the premise that the status quo worked against efforts to maximise those with the knowledge, skills, enterprise and ability to learn. The education system, they believed, separates knowledge from its application, accepts too readily the position of universities as the only generators of knowledge, equates learning with time-limited teaching, and accepts the barriers represented by the artificial division between academic and vocational learning and the assumption that more breadth always means less depth of understanding[584].

To address these shortcomings, a fully redesigned system of post-compulsory education would have to support and encourage high levels of participation and attainment, and establish coherent and flexible frameworks to address funding, quality, assessment and accreditation. It should also connect knowledge with practical skill, and reflect the knowledge that comes out of workplace experience. In terms of the individual, the redesigned system should also develop learners' skills of connectivity, collaboration and risk-taking, and promote individual motivation and capacity to learn throughout life[585]. Indeed, to ensure parity of esteem and equity among learners, nothing short of an overarching qualification to encompass all post-compulsory qualifications would suffice[586].

Similar recommendations had been made by David Raffe of the National Commission on Education (NCE) in 1992[587], and indeed the producers of the 1990 Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) report *A British Baccalauréat*[588]. This then forms the intellectual context for the Dearing Review and for Labour's response to it. The party document *Opening doors to a learning*

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[582] CBI (1989) *Towards a Skills Revolution*, Report of the Vocational Education and Training Task Force, cited in Jessup,G (1991), p.81.
[583] Richardson,W, Spours,K, Woolhouse,J & Young,M (1995) *Learning for the Future: Initial Report*, Institute of Education, University of London, and Centre for Education and Industry, University of Warwick, November 1995, p.v.
[584] *ibid*, p.9
[585] *ibid*, pp.10-11.
[586] Spours,K & Young,M (1997) *Towards a Unified Qualifications System for Post-Compulsory Education: Barriers and Strategies*, in Spours,K & Hodgson,A (1997) Dearing and Beyond: 14-19 Qualifications, Frameworks and Systems, Kogan Page, London, Chapter Thirteen.
[587] Raffe,D (1992) *Participation of 16-18 year olds in education and training*, National Commission on Education, NCE Briefing No.3, May 1992.
[588] Finegold,D *et al* (1990) *A British Baccalauréat*, Institute for Public Policy Research

society, issued under John Smith's leadership in 1994, adopted much of the reformist agenda, pledging to develop "genuine parity of esteem between the academic and the vocational"[589] and also responding to the "universal call to replace the present over-specialised A level"[590]. This in turn built upon the 1992 General Election manifesto which suggested an Advanced Certificate to incorporate both widened A levels and technical qualifications and even held out the prospect of transferable credits[591].

The establishment of the Dearing Review therefore took place within a context of a consensus for reform which transcended left and right and took in a variety of organisations. It also built on the experience of a decade of vocational qualifications and a new sense of urgency about the quality of education and training other than A levels. In response to human capital concerns, and also in the interests of providing opportunities for individual recipients of education and training, the Conservatives presided over a radical phase in the development of post-compulsory qualification structures which had the effect of raising the profile of vocational education. This also had the effect of raising the alarm amongst defenders of the supremacy of A levels as a 'gold standard'. During the review period, new Labour sought to carve out a position for itself, and released *Aiming Higher* earlier than planned so as not to seem reactive to Dearing[592].

The Dearing Review

In one sense the Dearing Review can be seen as the culmination of the reformist drive towards broadening opportunities through vocational education. Any further movement would have unbalanced the consensus. Although there were many academic advisers and practitioners throughout the 1980s who helped develop the unitised structure of vocational qualifications and helped spread the modularisation of A levels, by 1994-6 the reaction from the pro-A levels lobby had created an atmosphere in which it became difficult for Dearing to suggest a merging of the qualification pathways. In fact, an overarching diploma on the baccalaureate model was contemplated by the Committee, before objections from right-wingers and some head-teachers

[589] Labour Party (1994) *Opening doors to a learning society; a policy statement on education* delivered to the 1994 Labour Party Conference, the Labour Party, London, p.22.
[590] *ibid* p.22. an example of the ongoing nature of consensus around reform was Institute of Education Press Release of 26/9/97, *New Consensus on Reform at 14+* on behalf of the Association of Colleges, ATL GSA (girls schools association) HMC (headmasters conference) NAHT, NASUWT, NATFHE, NUT, PAT, SHA, and SHMIS (society of heads and headmistresses of Independent schools) in which all the major players agreed to 15 fundamental principles in the statement *Key Principles for Curriculum and Qualification Reforms from 14+*.
[591] Labour Party (1992) *Its time to get Britain working again*, The Labour Party, London, April 1992, p.37.
[592] according to David Blunkett, conversation with author, 23/3/96.

reduced it to only one of three suggested options[593]. The right were also pleased by the review's calls for tougher standards in arts A levels, stricter external assessment of GNVQs and the introduction of more 'core' 'key' or 'general' skills (numeracy, literacy and communication) which all qualifications should have embedded within them.

Above all, Dearing consolidated the three 'tracks', the academic, the applied educational and the vocational, which co-existed in post-compulsory education[594]. Although these were brought closer together by some of the recommendations of the review, the underlying assumptions were that they would remain unmerged. The reaction among defenders of the A level on the Review committee found broad support within the policy community. Part of the problem was that, since the 1980s, A levels were perceived to have become easier, and any attempts to merge A levels with applied GNVQs would only weaken them further. There is certainly some justification for the perception that A levels have changed since their introduction in 1951, when they were taken by only three percent of under 18 year olds, with a one-third built in failure threshold[595]. By the 1990s a substantial proportion of the age group entered, and nine-tenths passed. This is because in 1982 the overt marking policy which created the 30 percent failure rate was ended. Further, say the detractors, during the 1980s a wider variety of 'less academic' subjects came on offer; even more seriously, and in response to the reformist calls we have already noted, course modularisation and time relaxations had apparently made it easier to pass, as had the growth of assessed coursework and the opportunity to re-sit final exams.

Although it is clearly very difficult to judge changes over time (mainly because syllabuses change), what matters for some is the *perception* that A levels had become easier. Dearing, however, responded to the Institute of Directors (which mostly represents small and medium sized business, SMEs) by ensuring that all A level syllabuses were to be raised to the standard of the toughest. The worst problems of modularisation, especially with regard to re-sitting examinations and coursework accounting for over 70% of the total marks, were tackled. An important argument for the defenders of educational excellence was provided by National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) evidence for Dearing suggested that many of those which dropped out of A level courses (amounting to 80,000 a year) were unable to cope with the demands. Six out of ten failures had received "poor examination results during the course" according to the NFER[596]. This

[593] Pyke,N (1996) *ibid*.
[594] For a discussion of the development of the triple track system, see Hodgson,A & Spours,K (1997) *From the 1991 White Paper to the Dearing Report: A Conceptual and Historical Framework for the 1990s*, in Dearing and Beyond: 14-19 Qualifications, Frameworks and Systems, Kogan Page, London.
[595] Walker,D (1996) *Time is the great A leveller*, The Guardian Analysis, 18/8/96.
[596] Nash,I (1996) *Drop outs on 'wrong course'*, TES 29/3/96.

suggested that either GCSE students were receiving poor careers advice or that they had simply chosen the wrong course for their abilities.

Given this apparent misapplication of resources, the NFER's call for better initial career guidance and better tracking of drop-outs, along with the modularisation and a breaking down of A level and GNVQ units so that they are comparable (and thus transferable) at the lower level, could be contemplated without any fear that A levels would be disturbed at the top of the hierarchy. A Gatsby Foundation study, again for Dearing, specifically looked into the transferable possibilities between the two strands, but found themselves hidebound by the remit to "keep A levels pure"[597]. For Alan Smithers, usually a critic of vocational qualifications, there was little to fear from any apparent weakening of A level standards because, despite their evolution, they still represent 'coinage', evidence of a filtering-out process that employers, admissions tutors and parents want from the qualification system[598].

The preservation or consolidation of more than one educational track by Dearing became the key political legacy of the review. The three recommended options, to be decided by "the market"[599] were effectively; retention of the status quo; a National Certificate to record attainment towards training targets; and a National Diploma rewarding a set number of passes, in the manner of the baccalaureate. Perhaps with one eye on the forthcoming General Election, Dearing refused to name his own preference, although the National Diploma was regarded by commentators as putting in place the platform for genuine overarching reform should an incoming Labour government wish to use it[600]. The floating of plans for an overarching National Diploma was enough to raise the alarm among conservative critics such as Melanie Phillips who claimed it would merely blur the divide and devalue the A level[601]. Highlighting educational standards reinforced the belief that A levels needed to be defended against alternative qualifications.

Aiming Higher

The Dearing recommendations were echoed to some extent by the *Aiming Higher* policy document which had been issued a week earlier to reinforce the impression that new Labour was not following, but leading events[602]. This thesis contends that new Labour has its own agenda for post-

[597] Gardiner,J (1996) *A cast of 80,000 failures*, TES 29/3/96.
[598] Smithers, in Walker,D (1996) *Time is the great A leveller*, The Guardian Analysis, 18/8/96.
[599] Dearing's phrase, cited by Pyke,N (1996) *One hand tied behind his bac*, TES, 29/3/96.
[600] Pyke,N (1996) *ibid*.
[601] Phillips, in Rikowski, p.20.
[602] As related by Ken Spours, interview with author, Institute of Education Post-16 Centre, London, 20/5/97.

compulsory education and training, based on standards and the vocationalisation of compulsory education. This is implicit in both pre-election and post-election policy pronouncements.

Aiming Higher was written by members of the Education and Employment Policy Commission and the unofficial mini-commission which actually made the key decisions This smaller group included Stephen Byers, MP, David Miliband of the Leaders' Office, Simon Wilson (a research assistant funded from David Blunkett's allowance, and seconded to help Byers on training policy), Michael Meacher MP, (who had held an employment brief) Conor Ryan (Blunkett's longstanding Personal Assistant and adviser), and Bryan Davies, MP (Further and Higher Education spokesperson) and his researcher Nick Pearce. After the election the personnel changed somewhat, and the relevant team was Secretary of State David Blunkett, Andrew Smith, Minister of State for Employment and Disability Rights and Welfare to Work, Alan Howarth, Parliamentary Under Secretary for Employment and the Jobseekers Allowance, Kim Howells, Parliamentary Under Secretary for Lifelong Learning, Investors in People, education and training targets, and Baroness Blackstone, Education and Employment in the Lords, Further and Lifelong Learning.

Aiming Higher began by acknowledging the existence of a triple-track system, of A levels for academic work, GNVQs for applied education, and NVQs for the work-based learning pathway, and in this sense *Aiming Higher* echoed the Dearing Review. However, new Labour's concentration on vocationalisation of the National Curriculum in areas where it had apparently failed less academic pupils before Key Stage 4 (the age of 14) implies a meritocratic rather than egalitarian distribution of opportunities, and this is reinforced by the emphasis on standards. Among the key aims new Labour identified in the paper were:

> to provide education and training of the highest standards... to meet the demands of all individuals... and in the long term 80% of 21 year olds (should) receive advanced level (level 3) qualifications[603].

Other declared aims were "to establish continuity with pre-16 studies" and ensure that "all students attain a high level of basic and core skills"[604]. To these latter ends, it was proposed that Training and Enterprise Councils (once threatened with reform or abolition by Labour) should establish bridging courses which would allow young people from the age of 14 to take NVQs in FE colleges whilst remaining the responsibility of the schools. These proposals, on standards and the vocationalisation of 14-16 education, and on ensuring core skills and meeting individual demand

[603] Labour Party (1996) *Aiming Higher*, The Labour Party, London, p.8.
[604] *ibid*, p.9.

illustrate the convoluted nature of new Labour's position; like Dearing himself, influences on new Labour suggested that vocational education was the most appropriate for disinterested pupils, many of whom, as the document points out are "young males in areas of socio-economic disadvantage"[605]. This of course implies not so much a meritocratic division of educational opportunity as one dictated by the requirements of local employers and the socio-economic history of the area.

However, new Labour also held out the prospect of an evolutionary development of a single qualifications framework aimed at raising participation as well as standards. This involved breaking down A level achievement at the lower level, equivalent to NVQ level 3, with an advanced level which would lead to the award of an Advanced Diploma at the equivalent NVQ level 4. To facilitate this *Aiming Higher* pledged to modularise all learning programmes, with ongoing attainment recorded in a National Record of Achievement which would equate to the expectations of the National Education and Training Targets[606]. To this end, there should be an alignment of A levels and GNVQs where they covered the same subject area, and the overall regulation of the framework would be carried out by a National Qualifications Council (later the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, QCA) which would ensure the integral role of employer interests. The problematic area of core skills was to be covered by a Core Skills Unit which would investigate ways to overcome the lack of a skills tradition in A levels[607]. Raising participation and appropriateness could best be facilitated, for new Labour, by a convergence of interest between employers and higher education institutions with regard to 16-19 qualifications. So, for example, while employers demanded more than mere occupational competence skills from new employees, requiring breadth, universities could also help the situation by "more labour market sensitive initial undergraduate provision"[608].

Aiming Higher followed the 1992 manifesto by highlighting the Higginson Report of 1988 which suggested broadening A levels to five subjects, and noted that, with British students spending twelve hours less studying than French or German counterparts, there would be plenty of time to accommodate breadth[609]. In terms of the vocational equivalents, the new Labour document proposed to raise the standards of GNVQs until they were suitable to become Applied Advanced Level qualifications[610]. However, the main recommendations relating to NVQs echo the problems of vocational training ever since the advent of high youth unemployment in the late 1970s

[605] *ibid*, p.9. para 5.8.
[606] *Aiming Higher*, para 5.29.
[607] *ibid*, para 5.32.
[608] *ibid*,*p*.9, para 5.3.
[609] *ibid*, p.10, para 5.16.
[610] *Aiming Higher*, p.11, para 5.23.

(discussed in Chapter Four) by linking vocational qualifications with workplace training as a right for 16 to 17 year olds. It is difficult to trace the educational continuity between baccalaureate-style five subject A levels as a university entry mechanism, and NVQs which are essentially the only labour market credential for those low-skilled or poor enough to have to go into employment at 16, especially as this part of new Labour's plans runs into the New Deal requirements for "young people who have left the formal education system"[611]. This is clearly in contrast to vision of qualification unification such as Spours and Young, who argued that:

> ...to limit a large proportion of young people to the current forms of vocational education from the age of 16 (or even 14) is to exclude them from access to the kinds of skills and knowledge they are going to need to be effective citizens and workers..[612].

Overall *Aiming Higher* certainly moved in the direction of radical reformers such as Spours and Young, although it fell short of proposing to submerge all qualifications, including the key market signal of A levels, under one all-encompassing qualification with different roots to attainment. They noted that *Aiming Higher* represented only a modest reform agenda, but recognised that new Labour have made a unified system an aspiration[613].

Developments in government

After the 1997 election new Labour initially set in train a consultation exercise, in the form of DfEE paper *Qualifying for Success*, aiming to build on the manifesto commitments to broaden A levels and upgrade vocational qualifications by underpinning them with rigorous standards and Dearing's new term, 'Key Skills'. Some have criticised the demise of 'core skills', which implies skills which would have an underlying role in all aspects of an overarching qualification structure[614]. Key skills are seen to imply something inherently vocational and necessary to gain employment. For instance, Dearing envisaged key skills of communication, numeracy, literacy and information technology to be part of the Advanced Diploma, in the sense that they are required skills for employment, although they were not to be made compulsory in NVQs (where their introduction would be prohibitively expensive) and were to be introduced only carefully in A levels

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[611] *ibid*, p.12, para 5.27. This paragraph ends with a promise to publish separate proposals for young people, which became *Getting Welfare to Work*, the precursor of the compulsory New Deal programme for the unemployed.

[612] Spours,K & Young,M (1997) *Towards a Unified Qualifications System for Post-Compulsory Education: Barriers and Strategies*, in Spours,K & Hodgson,A (1997) Dearing and Beyond: 14-19 Qualifications, Frameworks and Systems, Kogan Page, London, Chapter 13.

[613] Spours,K & Young,M (1997) Chapter 13.

[614] Rikowski,G (1997) *After Dearing; the review of 16-19 qualifications*, Forum, Volume 39, No.1, 1997, p.20.

so as not to "distort the integrity of individual subjects"[615]. This suggests key skills are specifically targeted at GNVQs, not the whole qualifications system[616]. Therefore, different notions of 'key skills' made the unification of qualifications more difficult

As a result of the DfEE's consultation, which included submissions from many of the policy community identified earlier, the Quality and Curriculum Authority and Baroness Blackstone announced changes to the A level and GNVQ curriculum in April 1998. The main recommendations were for the A level to be broken down into three-unit Advanced Subsidiary (AS) qualifications as the first half of full A levels- this would then match the new six unit (as oppose to twelve unit full) GNVQ. Measures were highlighted for combining GNVQ units with other vocational qualifications "whilst retaining the distinctiveness of the GNVQ"[617], which would damage any chances of merging NVQs with GNVQs. The Minister also went on to invite the QCA to examine further the possible development of an overarching qualification, replicating the aim of the Dearing Review[618]. While it is clear that there were progressive measures incorporated in the new qualifications structure, the main impression was of the government failing to implement radical strategies, and by asking for a further review, delaying reform.

There are two main reasons for the relatively weak positions taken by new Labour in Government, one educational and one political. Firstly, reforms to the A level had begun to meet resistance in the shape of concerns about maintaining standards. In educational terms, the *Qualifying for Success* programme had come up against the same problems faced by the Dearing review; how to balance the interests of those who wanted to maintain excellence and the clarity of A levels as a market signal to parents, potential students and university admissions tutors, with the interests of those who sought a more open, egalitarian system which values the abilities of all. Although the ground had shifted considerably during the course of the Conservative years in power (which witnessed the introduction of modular, 'easier' A levels, assessed coursework and less emphasis on final exams), the reform process had by 1994 reached the stage where the primacy of A levels would have to be challenged. As Alison Wolf has noted, once a critical mass of students have chosen the academic route (university education), the only successful market signals are academic ones and vocational qualifications are doomed to low public esteem[619].

This situation emerged in Britain especially (although the growth of mass higher education is a global phenomenon) because of the increased politicisation of standards across the party

[615] Dearing cited by Rikowski (1997), p.21.
[616] *ibid*, p.19.
[617] DfEE (1998) *Blackstone announces A level improvements*, PN 170/98, 3/4/98, pp.1-2.
[618] *Ibid*, p.3.
[619] Professor Alison Wolf, Inaugural Lecture to the Institute of Education, reported in Pyke,N(1996) *Vocational training rejected*, TES, 18/10/96.

spectrum. As we shall see in Chapter Eight, the meritocratic, liberal elite lobby in the university system used the image of excellence in UK universities to resist most attempts at restructuring the sector. In the post-compulsory sector, the 'gold standard' of A levels is used in the same manner, representing the last word in any 'standards' debate and the ultimate market signal to potential consumers. The insistence of tight public expenditure controls also mitigates against the experimental offering of broader opportunities to all; the filtering effect of the A level effectively reinforces the notion that it should be restricted, with valuable resources more realistically targeted at vocational or applied post-compulsory education for most school leavers. The celebration of excellence necessarily limits the possibilities of egalitarian reform.

Secondly, changes to the way the Labour Party made policy as it moved from Opposition into Government meant that new Labour relied more on Shadow Cabinet members and their selected advisers than on party institutional sources, and this made it easier for the leadership to react to external interest groups' concerns. In some policy sectors, party groups such as the trade unions acted as a powerful lobby for their own agendas. In the low-salience post-compulsory education sector, however, there was little evidence of a sectional interest which could successfully carry the fight over A levels. In keeping with the broader consensus identified earlier, it was implicitly accepted on the left that meritocracy and egalitarianism could be merged under the broad umbrella position of maintaining excellence and widening opportunity at the same time.

One strategy for maintaining such an unspoken compromise position is to keep Opposition policy statements vague. As Ken Spours, closely involved with the party process since 1991, realised, even *Aiming Higher* had to bridge the gap between being merely a set of principles and becoming a strategy for government. To overcome the inevitable reaction from defenders of A levels and those wary of revolution, the post-election Spours and Young plan to Ministers would come in two phases of reform, an improvement preparatory stage, followed by an introduction of greater reforms in the second term of Government. As we might expect the policymaking environment changed after the May 1997 election.

In the immediate post-election period Spours and Young were invited to outline their plans for an Advanced Diploma to Ministers and senior Civil Servants. Spours noted that the party structure no longer played any part in the debate: "there is no relationship with the party now, the party has gone, it is now the government and the think tanks and the academics"[620]. This was not only a reflection of the transition between opposition and government, however, but the result of changes in policymaking practice during the 1990s. Working with David Miliband (Leader's Office

[620] Spours, interview with author, Bloomsbury, 20/5/97

education adviser in the pre-election period and co-author of *A British Baccalaureate*) Spours found that policy was developed more by talking to party figures rather than specialist educational advisers before 1990. After the 1992 election defeat, things were relatively quiet until the Dearing review galvanised leadership thinking once again. During 1995 new Labour followed the Conservative Government in merging the education and employment portfolios, after which the party policy group discussing post-compulsory issues (in effect, a smaller version of the official Policy Commission) contained new faces and views. The new interest among front-benchers was fed by Spours and Young's findings from the *Learning for the Future* project which offered "potential solutions.... with a staged approach"[621].

It is worth reiterating that the latest stages in the reform process, Dearing and the Spours and Young agenda, were not in any way stimulated from within the Labour Party's institutional structures. The influence of new ideas which new Labour would absorb were external, as they had been in 1992 when the manifesto reflected some of the "big bang strategy" of the baccalaureate plans; with *Aiming Higher*, the party was going out for expertise and advisers were chosen from a network of personal contacts: "In a sense the relationship wasn't forged by the political party having certain needs, it was actually being able to relate to people..." This contrasts to the situation before 1990 when Spours felt that "[t]hey depended on people who have their own political projects and don't know enough, and who can't write good documents" and this was exacerbated by the "heavy hand of the unions as well. The people who were appointed [to policy commissions] were movers and shakers in that respect". The situation began to change during the 1990s with the appointment of new types of research staff, and this trend was accelerated by the arrival of Blair and Blunkett: "..there was a period when they relied less on the internal apparatchiks and more on the outsiders, and the outsiders established a relationship of trust by virtue of what they gave"[622].

This account of the policymaking practice of new Labour gains some support from other evidence in this thesis, and from other players in the post-compulsory field who saw it as problematic. John Sutton of the Secondary Heads Association (SHA) noted that it was often difficult to get hold of Labour front-benchers because of a hypersensitivity about being seen as influenced by pressure groups, particularly teaching unions. Instead, Sutton believed, new Labour relied "on the handful of gurus whom they identify and trust to lead them on policymaking". Even before coming into office, he believed that "they [new Labour] haven't got a policymaking apparatus of their own... which makes it difficult for people like ourselves to identify at any one moment who the key players

[621] *ibid*, the *Learning for the Future* report was a joint project over three years and between the University of Warwick and the Institute of Education's Post-16 Centre.
[622] Spours, interview with author, 20/5/97.

are"[623]. The National Association of Headteachers reported two things common to interest groups which contributed to this thesis; the perception of closer direct links between key advisers and Tony Blair than David Blunkett (who was officially head of the relevant Policy Commission) and the perception that there was no formal machinery of interaction between interest groups and the party, despite the fact that the organisations were free to contribute to and produce documents for the Education and Employment Policy Commission. The two headteacher organisations believed that they had less influence on policy than in the past because of new Labour's desire to distance itself from teaching or producer interests, and also because of the personal nature of developing policy which effectively meant that very few people within the organisation could be aware of the latest position[624].

This created the impression among other policy actors that, in the absence of any party input new Labour were not grounded in principle. In the opinion of Alison Wolf "they [new Labour] don't actually have an analysis from which they derive things", therefore "once in office they will just be buffeted by what happens next"[625]. Therefore, on such specific issues as the employer imperative domination of vocational qualifications "they are not challenging it, not because they have any deep emotional commitment to it, but because there is nothing on the surface that they want to go against". Without a grounded position of principle, Wolf expected new Labour not to challenge the tripartism of Dearing, which centralised power in the DfEE, because "governments don't give away power..."[626].

This section has outlined a policy agenda dominated by standards and the economic imperative of value for money, best facilitated by more centralised control of education spending. Hence, the increasing trend towards recommending vocational qualifications, sometimes in the workplace, for students who have yet to have the opportunity to take academic qualifications at 16. This might be seen as appropriate in human capital terms; after all, in a meritocracy it is more important to have everybody in the employment roles appropriate to their individual abilities, rather than to expensively allow everyone to explore their artistic and academic potential through the A level syllabus. New Labour's policy development offered little encouragement to radical reformers. At the base, the emphasis on standards and key employment skills worked against reform, as did the continuing emphasis on excellence at the top where the A level remained unchallenged. Overall

[623] John Sutton of SHA, interview with author Leicester, 23/9/96.
[624] Reported by Rowie Shaw of the NAHT, interview with author, Westminster, 21/8/96 and this view was endorsed by all the teacher union and lecturer union representatives approached. Liz Allen of the Labour Party Policy Directorate confirmed this distancing was intentional, interview with author, Millbank Tower, 29/10/96.
[625] Alison Wolf, author of an influential and critical report into GNVQs, interview with author, Institute of Education, 10/3/97.
[626] *Ibid*.

the Dearing process and the support of key advisers such as Spours and Young helped shift the agenda towards an overarching qualifications structure, but this has been limited by new Labour's attachment to standards (leaving them open to the forces of reaction) and to the demands of employers, both on retention of A levels and on different skills requirements[627]. This section has looked in some detail at a policy area which had low political salience, in that it raised no specific problems in the minds of the electorate. It is also a policy area in which there seemed to be little input from elements of the party whose opinions might reflect an internal left-right divide. By contrast, the next section looks at an area of policy with a large inbuilt institutional interest in the form of the trade union affiliates.

Vocational Education and Training: the Policy Community

The main players in the training policy community differ from those in other case studies which make up this thesis. Trade unions, many affiliated to the Labour Party directly, and all affiliated to the Trades Union Congress (TUC), had direct input into Labour Party policy on training policy; therefore, internal party concerns have a higher profile here. Other major non-party policy actors include many of those educational groups and individual academic commentators referred to at the beginning of this chapter. As we have seen in Chapter Four, training policy has always been a subject of controversy between educationalists and those whose concerns are related to employment needs, so as well as trade unionists the policy community contains employer organisations such as the CBI and the IOD.

The funding of workplace training

This part of the chapter will examine the detailed policymaking which allowed new Labour to continue the changes to the funding and provision of vocational education and training (VET) which were explored in Chapter Four. It is clear that Tony Blair, with Opposition responsibility for training policy between 1989 and 1991, saw workplace training and education as both a key motor of economic policy and an expression of an individual's right to retrain. This was reiterated after Blair became leader of the Labour Party and appointed David Blunkett to his shadow education post. New Labour's concept of individualised human capital maximisation implied planning and an active labour market strategy, as opposed to the market-led solutions of the Conservatives or the

[627] Reflecting the ongoing nature of the key skills debate, the LSE's Centre for Economic Performance found that many employers were not concerned to broaden the education of employers they themselves employed, and from the academic front, Alan Smithers was similarly unconvinced by the skills emphasis of the Government , McGavin,H (1999) *Business opposes A level reform*, TES Further Education, 19/2/99.

perceived obstructionism presented by trade unions in rigid corporatist bodies. An active labour market strategy implies a flexible workforce, while planning takes the form of constructing the correct qualifications and training structure to provide that flexibility. Despite the emphasis on new solutions to meet new conditions, the guiding principles and defining problems of VET remained largely the same as in 1964: coverage of provision, funding and quality remained the key issues.

New Labour consolidated its training plans with the publication of *Learn as You Earn* in May 1996. This was largely developed by the team which produced *Aiming Higher* meeting in closed sessions of the mini-commission. The main actors were Stephen Byers, MP, and his research assistant Simon Wilson, Michael Meacher who represented the employment brief, and David Miliband of the Leader's Office. As with the Liason Committee paper *New Skills for Britain* in 1984, (see Chapter Four) *Learn as You Earn* was developed prior to any official intervention by trade union affiliates, which only came when the paper was presented to the Joint Policy Commission and Economic Policy Commission during March and April of 1996. Prior to this, Blunkett had engaged in many personal discussions with Shadow Chancellor Gordon Brown about the costs of the proposed new funding regime for training. The title of the document changed several times during the drafting stage, perhaps reflecting the influence of the Leaders' Office, although David Blunkett suggested the first change from *Training and Learning for Work* to *The Skills Revolution*. The document was also endorsed by the party's National Policy Forum in May 1996 and was officially accepted as party policy by the 1996 Annual Conference.

The document controversially ended the uncertainty which had surrounded the training levy policy since Blair's time as Employment Spokesperson by emphasising the individual responsibility that workers could exercise through the proposed 'learn as you earn' smartcard. This placed the onus for training on individuals, and by removing from employers the obligation to fund training, new Labour placed much faith in the voluntary contributions they could make with the help of tax incentives. Indeed, the document began by hoping that the surviving Industry Training Boards which had continued voluntarily after 1982 should remain in place[628]. The expectation was that good, large employers would continue to train their workforce as usual, while individual employees of smaller companies (SMEs) could take the £150 state funding (triggered by a £25 contribution from the individual) wherever they liked to improve their employability. It was left to the firms themselves decide whether to add to this training. Although the £150 million budget for these Individual Learning Accounts was to come from the funding previously earmarked for Training and Enterprise Councils, the TECs were to retain their role as part of the institutional

[628] Labour Party (1996) *Learn as You Earn; Labour's plans for a skills revolution*, The Labour Party, London, p.3.

structure of occupational training, further reinforcing voluntarism. In 1991, however, Blair had rejected such a scheme: "The Tories believe in a purely voluntary approach and I just can't see how such an approach is going to work"[629]. Reflecting this for new Labour, voluntarism was partly countered by the proposed new Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) which would simultaneously direct some of the funding at education and training to meet local employment needs, and thus centralise powers within the DfEE. For the first time, the funding of the FEFC and the TECs would become dependent on improvements in flexibility and accountability in the delivery of training.

Despite the overall emphasis new Labour place on lifelong learning and seamless continuities between vocational and educational qualifications, much of the emphasis on individuals in *Learn as You Earn* is focused on the possibility of future unemployment. We have already noted the implicit links between failure at Key Stage 4 and the New Deal in *Aiming Higher*. This was interpreted in Government by new Labour in the language of targeting training in designated Employment Zones. In these zones, conceptually similar to education action zones (EAZs, see Chapter Six), partnerships bidding for DfEE funding would have to provide 'Learning for work', defined as training and education to improve employability, and 'Business Enterprise' to help with moving Jobseekers Allowance recipients from welfare into self-employment[630]. A separate initiative was the expansion of the Conservative's Workskill Pilots which provided JSA recipients with funding to take up any one-year, employment related course they chose; however, the future employment had to meet local needs, restricting the possibilities for a broader employability to be gained through education[631].

New Labour also introduced moves to improve the quality of training. Within a few months of the election, the Government established a Standards Council emphasising quality vocational education and training, aiming to portray Modern Apprenticeships as the equivalent of the 'gold standard' A levels[632] and to act as a watchdog for the activities of TECs and private training providers[633]. This re-emphasises the problems associated with an educational hierarchy with employment skills at the base, hence the suggestion in *Learn as You Earn* that many employees "lack the basic education and skills, so find it difficult to retrain and face the hazard of long-term

[629] Blair, in Labour Party (1991) *Training in Crisis*, Labour Party News, No.23, January/February 1991, pp.18-20.
[630] DfEE (1997) *Employment Zones: New help from welfare to work*, press notice 276/97, 15/9/97.
[631] DfEE (1997) *Up to 12,000 unemployed to receive education or training and keep benefit*, press notice 264/97, 1/9/97.
[632] DfEE (1998) *Modern Apprenticeships- the popular choice for school leavers*, DfEE, 574/98, 11/12/98.
[633] DfEE (1997) *New Standards Council set to boost training*, press notice 260/97, 26/8/97.

unemployment"[634]. This is the reality of a flexible workforce. Not only is unemployment henceforth treated as a 'hazard' of the economic system, the following paragraph refers to unskilled employees being "vulnerable when their jobs change.." and this in turn "places a burden on the Exchequer"[635]. Thereafter the individual's educational failings would also be a brake on national prosperity.

Here the need to stress the quality and validity of training highlighted the tensions about training as a human capital exercise. Many studies throughout the 1990s questioned the relationship between training investment and the economy. An OECD survey showed that, internationally, managers were far more likely than manual workers to receive workplace training, and for the 30% of manual workers who received it, the training was highly task-specific[636]. Other studies asserted that the already highly educated received most training from employers, and that the best returns accrue to the individual learner rather than the firm[637].

These all provided evidence to support the new Labour view of the importance of providing opportunities for individuals. However, the automatic link between the economy and education or training was doubted by many[638], while flexibility was seen to exacerbate the skills shortfall because short-term workers receive the least workplace training[639]. From another perspective, Howard Glennerster cast doubts on the financial gains for poor recipients of training, because a sudden rise in the numbers of low skilled workers (up to NVQ Level II via the New Deal programme for example) would only lower the market value of these in comparison to the unskilled, thus driving down wages[640]. Others share the concern that improving the supply of skilled labour does not in itself lead to investment; lower wages are more important. Francis Green showed that, during a period of declining investment in Britain compared to the East Asian 'Tiger' economies (1985-95), Britain actually produced a rise from 33% to 57% of the relevant age group entering further education and from 12% to 27% receiving higher education[641]. This exponential rise in education was not matched by workplace training, which was more closely correlated to the changing basis of demand for labour in the economy (particularly during the 1989-91 recession),

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[634] Labour Party (1996) *Learn as You Earn; Labour's plans for a skills revolution*, The Labour Party, London. p.9, para 2.1.
[635] *ibid*, p.9, para 2.2.
[636] OECD (1997) *Labour Market Policies: New Challenges*, OECD press notice 162.
[637] Institute of Fiscal Studies (1998) *Work related training provides big rewards for those who get it*, Press Release, 11/3/98 citing research by the ESRC.
[638] See for example Hutton,W (1996) *Educated guesses are wide of the mark*, The Guardian, 8/1/96 which summarises sceptical opinion.
[639] Atknison,M (1997) *Labour flexibility 'will widen the skills gap'* The Observer, 14/9/97, which cites research using the British Household Panel Survey.
[640] Glennerster,H (1998) *Does training make people poor?*, TES Platform, 27/2/98
[641] Green,F (1998) *Securing commitment to Skill Formation Policies*, New Political Economy, Vol.3 No.1.

according the OECD analysis of the 1984-94 period[642]. Clearly, firms engage in training as and when it is in their perceived interests to do so and withdraw investment on the same criteria

This debate was reflected internally by positions taken by David Miliband and Michael Meacher in the mini-commission meetings referred to earlier. The Miliband position accepted that good firms train to compete, and their success in a flexible market is evidence of the appropriateness of their level of training; Michael Meacher's alternative view was that the existence of training defines the good firm[643]. This is an example of internal party debates reflecting the parameters of the wider debate among economists and between political parties. Miliband's view added to the pressure for less state interference in training which any government attached to the concept of labour flexibility had to take seriously, and would certainly have weakened the case made by Meacher, the trade unionists and some on the employers side tried to make about the skills deficit.

Some of this thinking permeated new Labour policy, to the extent that *Learn as you Earn* was seen by some as too voluntarist. There were doubts expressed about plans for ILAs and the University for Industry and their effectiveness as supply-side measures. Learning accounts and a learning bank had been initially envisaged as a funding mechanism for higher education[644]. As new Labour developed the idea, the emphasis changed in two ways; firstly, the plan was brought into the Treasury's remit (it was intended to be a ringfenced account for the individual) and thus subject to general expenditure constraints; secondly, the idea was applied to training 16 and 17 year olds in the workplace. As the scheme's originator, David Robertson, pointed out, the learning bank or voucher concept works best in areas where consumers are offered a wide choice of courses, as in the higher education system where there is a high yield to the beneficiary. However, in mass education or training programmes where there is often little value attached to outcomes, Robertson believed that it might lead to even less training than when the TECs controlled the money[645]. This lack of demand might be exacerbated by the requirement that employees trigger the £150 with a contribution of £25 themselves; and even then, £175 "buys you nothing"[646]. This was virtually admitted by the DfEE after the election, which calculated that the ILA would probably pay for two days tuition on Windows software[647]. Doubts about the efficacy of ILAs may have been demonstrated by the announcement that the introduction of pilot accounts would not begin until

[642] OECD (1996) as above
[643] This summarises the positions taken during a meeting of the standing commission (mini-commission) at Westminster, 5/3/96, notes.
[644] in David Robertson's plans the state would create a credit system throughout life to fund university fees in any course the student wished to study at any time during his or her life.
[645] David Robertson, interview with author, Liverpool, 14/4/97.
[646] Robertson, ibid, 14/4/97.
[647] As reported by Atkinson,M (1999) *Survival training for the labour market*, The Guardian, 1/2/99.

April 1999[648]. This delay and the equally slow evolution of the University for Industry seems to demonstrate the problem Robertson initially identified with Treasury influence. This means that any assessment of the validity of these supply-side policies would not be possible until well into new Labour's second term of government.

Policies such as those adopted by new Labour had been suggested in Labour discourse during the late 1980s and early 1990s, but were deemed sufficient on their own to close the perceived skills gap with Britain's competitors. Individual training plans as a supplement to employer's schemes were suggested in 1988, while a 1991 document envisaged Personal Development Plans[649]. Individual Learning Accounts were also conceptually similar to plans outlined during the 1990s from the CBI and even the European Commission[650]. By 1996 employer concerns were much higher on new Labour's agenda and can be seen to have been the motivating factor for policy change. As Blair told a business audience immediately after the launch of *Learn as You Earn*, David Blunkett and his training spokesperson Kevin Barron now believed that "a training levy ..... would bring costs and bureaucracy which would probably exceed any benefits"[651]. Crucially in terms of Labour's institutional processes, the Commission on Public Policy and British Business, also in 1996, dropped the levy idea which had been supported by the Commission on Social Justice (see Chapter Four)[652]. The internal party processes behind this policy change will be examined in more detail in the next section.

Other elements of the *Learn as You Earn* package were less controversial within the party, although they masked the clear divide between the imperatives of smaller businesses (SMEs) and larger employers. As with the qualification structure, it was the ambiguity among employers which helped define the positions in the debate. Mary Lord of the TEC National Council made calls to vocationalise education to the extent of obliging college and university lecturers to enter industrial placements because "some... have never had a proper job out in the real world"[653]. At the other extreme many either saw any state intervention as inherently bad in a market system[654] or

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[648] ibid.
[649] Wickham-Jones,M & King,D (1997) *Training without the state? British social democracy, New Labour and labour markets*, paper to the EPOP conference, University of Essex September 1997, p.21.
[650] CBI (1995) *The Training Levy*, CBI, London, May 1995 and European Commission (1995) *Teaching and Learning: Towards the Learning Society*, (White Paper, 1995).
[651] Blair speaking to the Annual Conference of the British Chambers of Commerce, 3/7/96.
[652] The Commission on Public Policy and British Business produced a report, *Promoting Prosperity: a business agenda for Britain,* Vintage, London, in which they called for more spending on education an training, mandatory traineeships up to 19 and up to eight hours a week day release funded by employers.
[653] reported by Baty,P *Big vision of bosses' champion*, THES, 5/12/97.
[654] For example Shackleton,JR (1992) Training Too Much?; a sceptical look at the economics of skill provision in the UK, Institute of Economic Affairs, Hobart Paper no.118.

questioned the appropriateness of training to small firms[655]. It was in recognition of these doubts that new Labour's policy has developed in such a way as to placate both large and small firms but fully satisfy neither. This divide is conceptually similar to the egalitarian versus meritocratic divide identified within the polity and the major parties, although this ambiguity partly reflects the differing needs of different businesses. For example, the CBI was at the forefront of efforts to broaden post-compulsory education and training (including reforming A levels) with the introduction of core skills across all syllabi, yet the Institute of Directors, representing, on the whole, smaller employers were against expanding the scope of NVQs in such a way[656]. The CBI were also among the progressive groups in favour of a more egalitarian higher education as we shall see in Chapter Eight.

The obvious problem for employers of any size, however, is that at a certain level of skills attained, employees were likely to take those skills elsewhere, the so called 'free-rider problem'. An example of this emerged in a Coopers and Lybrand survey of employer attitudes to Investors in People in 1996. They found that while 76% of chief executives thought training was important, only 27% wanted to add to the skills of their own employees if that made them vulnerable to poaching by competitors[657]. The confused nature employer imperatives clouded new Labour's thinking, indeed its intellectual closeness to business values meant that the party came to reflect the ambiguity among employers. Even while party-sanctioned bodies such as the Commission on Public Policy and British Business could recommend statutory education and training up to the age of 19, and statutory day-release for employees at this age[658], *Learn as You Earn* remained resolutely voluntarist on the issue of contributing to employee training, partly due to an awareness of the anti-training arguments. Employers did not, on the whole, want to pay for more training, rather expecting the state to take the responsibility, either through reforming compulsory education, or by funding serious vocational training programmes. Politically, all of this has to take place within a low tax environment and without harming business profitability; this, coupled with new Labour's attachment to modernisation and opportunity meant that the empowered individual would have to pay.

However, new Labour policy has not only been concerned with the individual. To stimulate interest in training by employers within the SME sector, new Labour chose to build on the existing Investors in People (IiP) kitemark and lower the start-up costs which was seen as a deterrent at

[655] Baty,P (1997) *Benefits of training for small firms questioned*, THES, 31/10/97.
[656] some surveys also suggest that training does not benefit SMEs, for example Baty,P (1997) *Benefits of training for small firms questioned*, THES, 31/10/97.
[657] Merrick,N (1996) *Under 25s expect firms to train them*, TES, 18/10/96.
[658] Crequer,N (1997) *Train all workers until 19, says think tank*, TES FE Focus, 24/1/97

£2,000[659]. The *Learn as You Earn* document also proposed to use public procurement requirements to spread the use of such a guarantee of good training practices. The other major idea contained in the document aimed particularly at stimulating SME training was the University for Industry which had been suggested several years earlier by Josh Hillman[660]. In new Labour's version, the UfI would facilitate training and work-based learning through bringing together education providers and helping to distribute packages using CD-ROMs and the Internet, in the manner of the distance-learning tradition of the Open University. Clearly, it would be a useful tool for potential ILA users. However, it was unclear to what extent the UfI would commission or produce material, or whether it would merely act as a clearing house for off-the-peg training programmes. The declared intention was to

> ..spearhead a national drive to bring together business and industry, educational institutions, training providers, TECs and government departments to identify strategic priorities in the development of the skills of the workforce[661].

Using existing TEC and DfEE budgets, the UfI hoped to produce starter information packs and basic skills packs for half a million small companies who were willing to match funding.

The document also contained a promise to assist the further development of the NVQ system and expansion of the recently launched Modern Apprenticeships scheme, clearly in response to large employer imperatives. The main argument, however, reflected Miliband's position, that large employers who already trained their workforces to their own satisfaction were not to be compelled to contribute to a levy, which would fall disproportionately on such firms. The levy had in any case been criticised from the left because of problems of collectability, policing difficulties and bureaucracy[662] as well as being politically sensitive in that it could be portrayed as a tax on jobs[663]. Advice to the frontbench since at least 1988 had outlined the difficulties, and during 1990 employment spokesperson Tony Blair had been rumoured to be backing a credit based system suggested by the CBI[664]. Indeed, the new policy direction did move new Labour towards an individualised training structure, thought to be the most appropriate response to the demand for a flexible workforce, while it benefited from the generally favourable reaction from some egalitarians

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[659] This point was raised by a participant at the closed meeting of the training mini policy commission, Westminster, 5/3/96.
[660] For a history of this concept, see Hillman,J (1996) *University for Industry: Creating a national learning network*, Institute for Public Policy Research, London.
[661] *Learn as You Earn*, p.15.
[662] see for example Wickham-Jones,M & King,D (1997).
[663] This was suggested by Stephen Byers in a closed meeting of the mini-policy commission finalising *Learn as You Earn* at Westminster, Room W2, House of Commons, 5/3/96.
[664] Wickham-Jones & King, p.21-22.

about course modularisation and open or targeted access. Therefore we can see that the development of a consensus about the individual responsibility to train has been paralleled within the Labour movement, even if this was resisted by some groups.

Training: the party input

Not surprisingly, the proposed changes to training policy caused much consternation among Labour's affiliated trade unions. Changes to the party-trade union relationship have be understood as an evolutionary process beginning in 1983. Labour's quietness on training issues during the early 1980s was largely due to the attachment of the trade union affiliates to the corporatist model epitomised by the Manpower Services Commission, as we have seen in Chapter Four. As Lewis Minkin pointed out, workplace training caused one of the major schisms within the party during the 1980s, and this led to front-bench actors presenting written policy to the NEC without the input of the unions or other party actors[665]. This helped set the precedent for developing policy into the 1990s. Partly as a result of this, successive leaders Kinnock, Smith and Blair have progressively become less influenced by the unions than their predecessors, especially after the concentration on the presentation of policies during the Kinnock period[666]. Other factors working against the trade union influence were deindustrialisation, the effects of Conservative employment legislation and rising unemployment; in effect, the changing basis of demand for labour has weakened organised labour in relation to firms and the state.

By the time of Blair's leadership, with the effects of one member, one vote (OMOV) and a reduced reliance on block voting at Annual Conference, the hierarchy of power within the Labour Party had steepened so that few institutional actors could prevent the Shadow Cabinet setting both the broad parameters and overall direction of policy. Phil Wyatt of the GMB and a former NEC researcher recognised the failings of the more democratic former practices which meant that "the shadow cabinet were effectively lobbying the NEC to get policy changed" but regretted that policymaking had become far more centralised in the latter period[667]. This suggests that new Labour built on existing policymaking practice, which then made it far easier to retain power centrally.

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[665] Minkin,L (1991) The Contentious Alliance; Trade unions and the Labour Party, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, pp.444-446.

[666] See for discussion of this Gould,P (1998) The Unfinished Revolution: How the Modernisers saved the Labour Party, Little, Brown and Company, London, Smith,MJ & Spear,J(eds) (1992) The Changing Labour Party, Routledge, London and Hughes,C & Wintour,P (1990) Labour Rebuilt: the new model party, Fourth Estate, London.

[667] As related by Phil Wyatt, GMB, interview with author, Wimbledon, 29/10/96.

Personalities were still believed to matter, however. Speaking about the changes to the levy/grant system, Wyatt believed that

> we would have had success with this until May 20th 1994, when John Smith died... there has been a noticeable change in our influence over the content of policy programmes since Tony Blair became leader..[668]

This was reiterated by other trade union responses, creating a dual impression of personal and constitutional changes culminating in the election of Tony Blair as party leader. In terms of the party constitution, many trade union actors were concerned about the lack of credit they had received for the modernisation process, particularly the introduction of OMOV by John Smith in 1993. During the difficult pre-Conference negotiations about OMOV Smith had impressed some trade union policy actors by his understanding of unionists' concerns. Jenny Pardington of the Transport and General Workers Union (T&G) recognised the existence of an historical policymaking process where it was "not liked or loved but accepted that unions would have their say in policymaking" operating up until Smith died[669]. Policymaking from the 1960s until 1994 therefore took the form of getting union leaders to back the NEC against groups such as the Constituency Labour Parties; this implied a level of personal interaction and shared understanding of solutions within the broad Labour Movement. This was exemplified by the OMOV decision, when "at least two of the unions changed their vote because of the charm" exhibited by Smith in the crucial Conference-eve meeting[670].

Despite taking part in this inherently undemocratic method of deciding which policies the Labour Party should support, unions were among the first to develop alternative models of decision making and felt deeply attached to the modernisation of Labour Party practices[671]. Pardington recalled that from 1979 the TGWU used collegiate policy meetings to bring together the interests of the unions' diverse industrial representation (specifically the road and rail unions), a process facilitated by Peter Mandelson who worked as researcher for shadow transport spokesperson Albert Booth[672]. This was seen by the T&G as an early example of the year-long policy discussion

[668] Wyatt, GMB, 29/10/96.
[669] Jenny Pardington, of the T&G, interview with author, Victoria, 25/9/96.
[670] Jenny Pardington, 25/9/96.
[671] John Mitchell of the Graphical, Paper and Media Union, GPMU, interview with author, Bedford 14/8/96 made the point about modernisation of TUC practices, especially over Europe and employment law.
[672] As recalled by Pardington, 25/9/96.

processes of the National Policy Forum developed by General Secretary Tom Sawyer in the 1990s[673].

Other union respondents also believed that the trade unions generated the modernisation process, but this had been 'airbrushed' from public consciousness after 1994 as part of the presentational construction of 'new Labour' as counterpoint to 'Old Labour' and the Conservatives[674]. This entailed a certain amount of distance between the party and the unions, a situation which was broadly understood by trade unionists, at least as a short-term, pre-election position[675]. The need to avoid 'rocking the boat' worked to nullify alternative (ie more openly divisive) policymaking practices, and this is seen by some as evidence that the trade unions' acceptance of the retreat from the levy/grant system was an example of the reduction in institutional policymaking practices[676]. This could be manifested in several ways; in poor recognition for the trade unions' role in modernising the party; in an omission of trade union concerns at the expense of external advice; in changes to the policymaking structure; and through an understanding of the differing functions of trade unions and political parties.

Many trade union groups within the party are concerned that they have not been credited by new Labour with a positive input into the modernisation project and that modernisation has reached the point where unnecessary changes are made to training policy for fear of upsetting employers. Some union representatives have noted a decline in influence over time but are more exercised by particular policy instances of interest to their members. For example, John Mitchell of the Graphical, Paper and Media Union (GPMU), while against suggested changes in employment law, was satisfied that the wording of new Labour's pre-election statements on training levies left his union with a get-out clause. The levy was not thought appropriate for the majority of industries by the party, but Mitchell would expect the paper and print industry to fall within the minority where such a policy was still thought appropriate[677]. More broadly the T&G was concerned about the emphasis on individual rights in the workplace to the exclusion of collective rights which had formed the basis of their advice to the education and employment training commission. In the final documents, Jenny Pardington complained that: "our stuff was not in there at all"[678].

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[673] Although of course it has to be reiterated that many sections of the party can claim some ownership of the NPF policymaking model, including the then Bennite Labour Co-ordinating Committee and those on the liberal wing of the party such as Peter Hain, MP.
[674] See for example Johnson,J (199) *Weak link takes the strain*, New Statesman, 31/1/97.
[675] This is the position taken by representatives of two of the biggest unions, Pardington of the T&G and Wyatt of the GMB, although their leaders would not have expressed it so openly.
[676] For example, Wickham-Jones and King. They also cite Kathleen Thelen's work on the institutional effect on Labour policy, p.25. A point also made by John Mitchell of the GPMU, interview with author, Bedford, 14/8/96.
[677] John Mitchell, Bedford, 14/8/96
[678] Jenny Pardington, 25/9/96.

In terms of the advice new Labour were subject to, the attitude of many trade union executives was that business concerns were accorded too high a value by new Labour frontbenchers during the policymaking period. One former party insider, Joy Johnson, believe that this was exacerbated by the decline of Labour- trade union liaison meetings[679], although this is countered by representatives of the unions[680]. Some saw the problem as structural, with the leadership becoming less dependent on trade union finance (because of Short money and Blind Trusts) than in previous Opposition periods, and some post-election experiences have highlighted the new government's links with big business which might support that claim[681]. Given this, why do the trade unions adhere so closely to the party? Jenny Pardington likened the party-union relationship to that of the football supporter and his or her team: "Labour is our team, come what may, they may be useless, they maybe should sack the manager, but they are still our team". The ramifications of this are that, in the words of the adage: "when the leader jumps off the cliff, you hold out a safety net"[682]. For Phil Wyatt, with his experiences as a NEC researcher barred from speaking to shadow cabinet members, the arguments that suggest the divisiveness of the party's policymaking structures had in the past been an electoral liability had some resonance. It was sensible to move away from a situation when the party leadership and the NEC "were falling into two armed camps"[683]. The GMB had developed a "consistent record ... in asking for higher levels of participation in the policymaking process and looking more outward than inward for ideas", Wyatt believed. However, even by 1996 this had gone too far:

> Tony Blair's leadership has made a big difference to the way the machinery is now used [it] is dominated by the shadow cabinet. The new machinery was brought in to make the policymaking process less dominated by the NEC and other parliamentarians, it is in fact being dominated by a core group of the shadow cabinet[684].

Despite trade unionist's protestations that they were the leaders of modernisation, there have been limits to their understanding of what this entails, especially with regard to open markets. The GPMU's delegate at the May 1996 NPF complained about transferable vocational qualification units and how they denied trainees the "certainty of incentive" represented by the old

[679] Johnson,J (1997), New Statesman, 31/1/97.
[680] Such as Phil Wyatt who reported good and regular access between the GMB and Blair's office in opposition.
[681] For example Bernie Ecclestone and Cabinet figures Geoffrey Robinson and (Lord) David Sainsbury.
[682] Pardington, 25/9/96.
[683] Phil Wyatt, talking about the Common Market Referendum campaign in 1975, 29/10/96.
[684] Wyatt, 29/10/96.

apprenticeship scheme[685] (presumably a job for life in a subsidised industry). Also the GMB's John Edmonds was reported to have said that he shuddered at the language of flexibility as used by Blair in a speech to the TUC[686].

So despite the reportedly day to day contact[687] between trade union General Secretaries and the Leader's Office in the pre-election period it seems that new Labour were open to wider intellectual arguments than those supplied by the trade union link. This is made easier in areas where there is little institutional opposition to developing policy, as in qualifications structure, and front bench actors were free to go outside of the party for advice. Another factor is the changing shape of the party hierarchy which has institutionalised a separation of functions and has reduced the influence trade union leaders have on actual policy debate. The problem is not so much that trade unions are not represented at meetings as much as they used to be or meet party front benchers less often, it is that policy is substantially decided in mini-commission meetings and personal discussions between senior leadership figures such as Blunkett and Brown, rather than at the official NEC Policy Commissions[688]. During the 1994-97 period with the perceived electoral need to minimise open debate even the Economic Policy Committee (on which trade union leaders sit) was regularly presented with *fait accompli* so far as the details of long thought out policy was concerned. Everything which followed, including the debates at National Policy Forum and Annual Conference (still the official fount of all policy[689]), was *post-hoc* endorsement of broadly agreed policy[690].

Given this new policymaking reality, dominated by the mini-commission of front benchers and their advisers, unions often felt bypassed during the construction of training policy by the timing of meetings. Phil Wyatt complained that the shadow cabinet member would:

> lead the commission, they decide when to meet, they decide to convene meetings when they have their paper ready, or when they think it is going to be ready because they are often hot off the photocopier at some of these meetings. Most of the papers are tabled by the shadow

[685] Authors notes of Gordon Colling of the GPMU, NPF Manchester Town Hall 18-19/5/96.
[686] Atkinson,M (1997) *Labour flexibility will 'widen skills gap'*, The Observer, 14/9/97.
[687] An assertion made by several trade union and teacher/lecturer union representatives who have contributed to this thesis.
[688] These were said to be too large and unwieldy by David Blunkett, and he helped to develop the practice of working with a series of mini-commissions which are not representational of the party institutions, interview with author, Sheffield, 22/8/96.
[689] As Phil Wyatt wished to point out.
[690] This has been partly assuaged by the Partnership in Power project post-election, which sets out a two year rolling policy review which should allow party interests to have more input before documents are presented to Conference for ratification.

> cabinet member, and certainly all the drafts of major policy statements are from the shadow cabinet or a small group based around him or her[691].

Other respondents similarly claimed that meetings were timed to inconvenience General Secretaries, while some union leaders were slow to realise the importance of the NPF system in lobbying for policy change.

Demonstrating more awareness of the process, the Manufacturing, Science & Finance Union (MSF) brought drafted amendments to the NPF discussion on training policy in May 1996, although they were issues on the margins of a generally accepted policy proposal[692]. In a discussion workshop Blunkett opposed an amendment to change the wording of *Learn as You Earn* from 'expect and encourage' employers to train to creating an 'obligation', eventually settling on the statement that employers 'must recognise that they have responsibility' to train. Blunkett and Stephen Byers, then Training spokesperson, both used the occasion to stress the need to avoid the political linkage between the levy as a tax and its potential for job losses, although the provision for future obligation to train should be held in reserve by a Labour Secretary of State[693].

In terms of purely internal policymaking, the closed meetings of the training mini-commission were concerned more with persuading the shadow Treasury team that the levy could be painlessly replaced than with trade union concerns. Funding for ILAs (from the budgets of the FEFC and the TECs) could amount to an annual spend of £460 million, which is 50% more than the levy would have garnered. Byers was at pains to describe the ILA plan as 'cost neutral'. The main theme of one meeting in March 1996, the last before the plans were put to the Economic Policy Commission, (which includes the major trade union affiliates) was how to present ILAs, the new plans for IiP and the UfI in the best financial light, and the meeting broke up with David Blunkett pleased that they had managed to square this particular circle by switching funding from the TECs and FEFC to individuals[694].

There are also differences in the relative roles of parties and trade unions which inevitably lead to clashes over policy. As direct representatives of labour, unions have their own concerns and are often inward looking and particularistic. They are often concerned with the details of policy, which can lead to conflict, rather than co-operation, with other unions, and they are, by necessity, resistant to change if it affects their members. As democratic bodies, they have committee systems of their own for policymaking which are less responsive than a media- focussed political party.

[691] Wyatt, 29/10/96.
[692] Notes from the NPF, 18-19/5/96. Hilary Benn, who tabled the amendments for the MSF was later employed by the DfEE as an adviser on employment issues.
[693] Notes from the NPF, 18-19/5/96.
[694] Notes from meeting of the mini-commission in room W2, Westminster, 5/3/96.

Some General Secretaries see Labour Party as their political representative, not something they should have to lobby (although UNISON and MSF were more aware of the opportunities for lobbying)[695]. Several union respondents reported that meetings did not co-incide with the working arrangements of General Secretaries, and one respondent thought that Gordon Brown, in particular, used his central role on new Labour's electoral machine and on economic policy, and his workaholic reputation, to produce drafts for meetings at very short notice to his own advantage[696]. The impression is that some trade unions feel that the party leadership should make its arrangements around the needs of General Secretaries.

The objective of a political party is different from that of a trade union. It has to be far more outwardly oriented, both in terms of responding to new problems in society and in meeting the needs of its constituency. This often implies the kind of rapid response to quickly developing political situations that recourse to representative committees would render impossible. It is in this sense that sometime leaders have to 'fall off the cliff' and wait for the party to catch them. Therefore, even though some trade unions might have felt that meetings were arranged judiciously to exclude them (with some justification) it is in the intellectual decision to go beyond the interests of trade unions by the leadership, because of perceived changes to demand for labour, that the unionist imperative had already been rejected.

On training issues, new Labour has had to continue to confront the internal blockage caused by the trade union's attachment to corporatism, following the early work done under the Kinnock leadership and by Blair himself as shadow employment spokesperson. As we have seen in Chapter One, both the policy review period and the new Labour period have produced a movement towards consensus around the Conservative's ground so far as individualisation of training and the qualifications are concerned. However, new Labour did not have to go beyond Labour's ideological tradition to enter this consensus; offering opportunities appeals to the meritocrats, while expanding access to those workers in the SME sector currently receiving the least training met some of the demands of egalitarians. New Labour's theme has been the removal of institutional blockages through the acceptance of open markets and flexible employment practices, and the adoption of supply-side socialism as an economic policy[697]. The unions generally did not welcome this, but

[695] Charlotte Atkins, Parliamentary Officer of UNISON, interview with author, Woolwich, 24/9/96 and correspondence with Hilary Benn of MSF confirm this impression.
[696] Phil Wyatt, interview with author, 29/10/96.
[697] For example, see Thompson,N (1996) Political Economy and the Labour Party, UCL Press, London, pp.267-286.

were partly assuaged by the promise of a national minimum wage and Britain's signature on the Social Charter. As Jenny Pardington recounted, "unions are the best compromisers of the lot"[698].

The lifelong learning consensus: politics versus education

Lifelong learning is different to the other aspects of VET covered in this chapter for several educational, political and economic reasons. Firstly, it is partially concerned with access to education, and educationally, lifelong learning cannot be properly realised until there is a single qualification and curricular framework for all post-compulsory learning and training. We have already seen the limits to reform in qualifications at 14-19, while Chapter Eight looks at the limits to reform in the university sector. As such, lifelong learning in educational terms is little more than an aim. Secondly, lifelong learning is used as a political football and an overarching idea by new Labour, and so goes beyond the concerns of further and higher education. New Labour added to the growing rhetorical use of the concept of lifelong learning throughout the late 1980s and into the 1990s. The new Labour emphasis was on the need for lifetime education as a strategy for the modernisation of the British economy[699]. Thirdly, the international ubiquity of lifelong learning as the prescribed strategy to meet globalisation and open trade in all advanced economies means there is nothing intrinsically 'new Labour' about it. There has been an European Year of Lifelong Learning (1996), a World Conference on Lifelong Learning (1997) and in 1998 the Mumbai Declaration on Lifelong Learning. Fourthly, new Labour's use of lifelong learning, and the need for a flexible, retrainable workforce in order to maximise Britain's human capital represents continuity with the previous Conservative government. Although this can be portrayed as capitulation to employer demands, for new Labour, government has no other option in a global marketplace. Firms have to be free to respond to changing markets, and employees cannot expect job security if they are not multi-skilled and re-trainable. New Labour emphasised reform to the supply side of the labour market by putting the right education and training infrastructure in place. A fifth aspect of lifelong learning is that it represents a new consensus, not just between the major parties, but among most policy actors concerned with post-compulsory education and training. The importance of lifelong learning within the polity was evidenced by a clutch of documents from a variety of sources throughout the 1990s. In the absence of a fully formed lifelong learning 'policy community', these reports are evidence of a consensus position about the importance of lifelong learning. These include the Further Education Funding Council commissioned Kennedy Report,

[698] Pardington, Victoria, 25/9/96.

[699] For examples, see Labour Party (1996) *Lifelong Learning*, The Labour Party, London, Foreword and David Blunkett's speech to the Institute of Directors, November 1997, DfEE (1997) *There must be no victims in a modern economy – Blunkett*, DfEE press notice 385/97.

Learning Works published in 1997 after three years of evidence gathering, and Bob Fryer's National Advisory Group for Continuing Education and Lifelong Learning established after the election in 1997 by David Blunkett, and in response to a suggestion from the Dearing Report into Higher Education (NCIHE). Following the Kennedy Report, Anna Reisenberger of the Further Education Development Agency (FEDA) produced *Widening Participation: learning works* in 1998 in response to the FEFC's Widening Participation Committee and the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) produced *Learning Works*. On more specific issues of lifelong learning was the FEFC's Tomlinson Report of 1996 *Inclusive Learning* (for students with learning difficulties) and the Further Education Student Support Advisory Group (with Labour Party local government figure Graham Lane as chair) which produced *New Arrangements for Effective Support in Further Education*. There had, of course, been a raft of documents, referred to elsewhere in this chapter, relating to new Labour's plans in opposition.

Lifelong learning and new Labour in Government

These papers set the context for new Labour's lifelong learning measures in government. But despite the expectations raised by the rhetoric and symbolic use of lifelong learning as modernising the economy, new Labour's response was relatively weak The proposed White Paper eventually appeared as the Green Paper *The Learning Age: renaissance for a new Britain* in February 1998 when it was realised that none of its recommendations (largely the long trailed ILAs and the UfI) actually required new legislation. Major problems have emerged with new Labour's vision, which this section will outline in turn: the financial costs of redistributing opportunity; the continuing emphasis on voluntarism; the continuation of the unemployment link; and the continuation of a stratified qualification system. Given these problems, new Labour has produced distinctly non-radical solutions to the challenges it faced. To explain this, this section will begin with some contextual assessment of the British post-compulsory education situation as faced by policymakers in the late 1990s.

Educational participation has risen in recent years. In line with the assumptions of this thesis, the main spur for participation has been governmental and individual responses to the changing basis in the demand for labour, and social demand for advancement. Among 16-18 year olds the proportion of the age group staying in education or training was 57% in 1986, rising to 75% in 1996. The class distribution showed that 62% of unskilled and semi-skilled families were represented, and as many as 87% of professional and managerial families had children studying between 16 and 18. However, only 45% of 16 year olds attain the equivalent of NVQ level 2, while

30% of 19 year olds had not attained level 2 in any form of post-compulsory education or training, indeed at the end of 1996 437,000, or 25% of 16-18 year olds, were not in education or training[700].

Given the imperative of international competitiveness inherent in new Labour's economic policy, it is important to gauge the British situation in relation to other advanced economies. Britain has a higher level of mature students in higher education than other countries, with almost a third of students over the age of 21, against a European Union average of 15%. However, Britain falls below other countries in the number of 25-29 year olds who have A level or the equivalent NVQ level 3. In 1993, only 50% of 25-29s had attained A level or NVQ level 3 compared to 59% for an average of 11 EU states (excluding Italy)[701]. The training deficit in Britain was evidenced by the Labour Force Survey of 1996 which showed that only 15% of employees had any work-related training in the last month[702]. The World Competitiveness Report judged Britain at 40th out of 48 countries for 'motivation to retrain', 39th for equal opportunities regardless of background' and 35th for 'adequacy of the education system'[703]. Clearly, Britain is producing growing numbers in both FE and HE, but the weak links are in adult education and workplace training.

One of the driving forces behind the lifelong learning concept has been the desire to equalise the cost of post-compulsory studies. Only then would expanding access be a real possibility. An Association of Colleges (AoC) study in 1998 showed that the variable cost of further and higher education ranged from £2,780 per FE student to £4,630 per HE student[704], and that, despite new Labour rhetoric, colleges were expected to make more efficiency gains than either secondary schools or universities. Clearly, as we have already seen with qualification reform, there are important blockages to the full implications of maximising the spread of lifetime learning or even constant retraining given the level of financial redistribution implied.

This is explored more fully in Chapter Eight with reference to attempts to widen access in higher education. One of the main themes for participants in that sector is that HE could ill afford any financial redistribution which might threaten the high quality of British degrees. Of equal importance was the financial influence of the Treasury, thought by many to be behind the downgrading of the White Paper and the subsequent appearance of the Green Paper *Qualifying for*

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[700] Statistical information from DfEE (1998) Further Education Student Support Advisory Group report *New Arrangements for Effective Support in Further Education*, DfEE 19/6/98.
[701] These are Eurostat figures from 1995, cited by Tom Healy of the Centre for Educational Research and Innovation, published in Coffield,F (ed) (1998) *A National Strategy for Lifelong Learning*, Department of Education, University of Newcastle.
[702] Labour Force Survey 1996, cited in Labour Party (1996) *Learn as You Earn; Labour's plans for a skills revolution*, The Labour Party, London, p.8.
[703] World Economic Forum and the International Institute for Management Development (1995) *The 1995 World Competitiveness Report, 1995*, cited in Labour Party (1996) *Learn as You Earn; Labour's plans for a skills revolution*, The Labour Party, London, p.5
[704] Brennan,J (1998) *Needs of the many*, The Guardian, 10/2/98.

Success in February 1998. The high water mark of new Labour's attachment to lifelong learning was probably the Fryer Report *Learning for the 21st Century* which appeared in November 1997[705]. This proposed to act as a stimulus for a cultural revolution, by launching a review into funding, creating incentives for lifelong learning provision in elite institutions and the extensive use of television as a disseminator of information[706]. Fryer believed that he was engaged in a battle for hearts and minds, after which success would be judged by the permeation of lifelong learning values:

> The core institutions have to sign up to it, to the change- that means the Prime Minister and the Government and the Opposition too; it means schools, churches and the legal profession, everybody. It means clear simple messages that become part of the sense of a nation.... Leadership has a role, and so does broadcasting. I'll believe it has occurred when it is in the *Mirror* or the *Star*, not the *Independent* or the *Guardian*[707].

To this end, Fryer recommended a variety of measures which might foster this cultural revolution. For instance, tax breaks on educational equipment, the establishment of a learning centre in every community, if necessary in the local pub or council offices, or anywhere with Internet access. Use should also be made of existing communications structures, such as telephone help lines and a Lottery funded dedicated digital TV channel, all of which could link users of Individual Learning Accounts to the University for Industry. There were also more mundane proposals to establish national targets for lifetime learning, to establish parity of entitlement to grants for full and part-time, FE and HE students. Acknowledging the human capital imperative, Fryer also wished to commission research into the economic value of education at all levels[708].

Learning for the 21st Century appeared at a time when the White Paper had already been delayed several times. For some critics, the report's concentration on voluntarism and the concerns of the individual devalued talk of lifelong learning[709]. John Edmonds of the GMB union believed that the Fryer report had helped cause the decline of the intentions of a White Paper, with training falling off the agenda[710]. Still others thought that the emphasis on individuals improving themselves and the importance of human capital meant that changing higher education had been

[705] Full title was the National Advisory Group for Continuing Education and Lifelong Learning.
[706] Fryer,R (1997) *Learning for the 21st Century*, Report of the National Advisory Group for Continuing Education and Lifelong Learning.
[707] Bob Fryer speaking at the TEC Lifelong Learning Conference *Learning for the 21st Century*, 13-14/11/97, DfEE website.
[708] Fryer,R (1997) *ibid.*
[709] In the opinion of John Edmonds, General Secretary of the GMB.
[710] MacLeod,D (1998) *Confidence trick*, The Guardian, 10/2/98.

omitted from the vision, thus scuppering any real attempts at making lifelong learning a tangible concept[711].

The fallout from the cancellation of the White Paper was damaging for new Labour credibility because it left it open to attack on its strongest ground, education. Don Foster, education spokesperson for the Liberal Democrats, let it be known that he had received a personal assurance that the document would appear by mid-January 1998, but Kim Howells, Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Lifelong Learning, denied there were any publication plans[712]. Perhaps more damagingly, reports abounded that suggested that Blair had a hand in the withdrawal of the document because there was nothing in it for the middle classes whose tuition fees would have to fund much of the redistribution[713]. Others reported that Blunkett had to fight a rearguard action against the downgrading such as ILAs and the UfI, because Blair and Chancellor Gordon Brown thought it contained nothing on standards and examinations[714]. Conor Ryan, David Blunkett's personal adviser took the unusual step of letting his name be attached to efforts to resist No.10 and the Treasury, highlighting the seriousness of this for Blunkett.

Meanwhile, evidence that the introduction of tuition fees had coincided with a fall in the number of mature students did not sit well with the theme of expanding lifelong learning. A Times Higher Education Supplement actually accused the Government of harming lifelong learning by its policies, which were clearly in response to lobbying by the elite universities against any distribution[715].

Ken Spours, one of those most hopeful about the lifelong learning agenda, realised that Fryer's report had been designed to upset no-one, promising lots of cultural change but not willing the means to effect that change[716]. Instead, the emphasis was on persuasion and exhortation, and the hope that different departments would act together to achieve the common aim. The lack of any real sense of lifelong learning was illustrated by the distribution of responsibility for the component parts. For instance, the provision for training would henceforth be partly under the remit of the new Regional Development Agencies, and partly under the remit of TECs. While training and enterprise councils are the preserve of the DfEE, the RDAs come under the Department for the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR). Also involved were the Department of Trade and Industry (in charge of science policy, important because of the new economic responsiveness that universities

[711] Nash,I (1998) *Lifelong learning paper is scrapped*, TES FE Focus, 6/2/98. This is explored more fully in Chapter Eight.
[712] THES (1998) Editorial *Why the mature are cheesed off*, THES, 13/2/98.
[713] THES (1998) *ibid.*
[714] Nash,I, Crequer,N & Russell,B (1998) *Blair bins White Paper*, TES FE Focus, 13/2/98.
[715] THES (1998) Editorial, *Why the mature are cheesed off*, THES, 13/2/98.
[716] Spours, in conversation with author, 5/2/98.

were supposed to demonstrate) and the Department of Social Security who have responsibility for the welfare-to-work aspects of post-compulsory education and training. Turf wars between the DfEE and DTER were said to have reduced the effectiveness of either department in raising the profile of training. Within education, the various state supported sectors fought over the distribution of funds. Above the whole government structure stood the Treasury, the meanness of which was thought by the editor of the THES to be turning lifelong learning from society-wide improvement into compulsory welfare[717].

Once again, the link to unemployment was present; in this case through the compulsory workfare scheme, the New Deal, which would damage the image of employment learning and work against any possibility of unifying provision. Indeed, new Labour's emphasis on lifelong learning was distinctly more employment-orientated than the Kennedy and Fryer reports, both of which stressed the social and personal goods which flow from adult education. It is part of the assumption of the policy consensus around lifelong learning that social demand should be met by increased provision, and the ramifications for the aspirant middle classes would be strongest; as we have seen, this group is already the main beneficiary from post-compulsory education, especially in adult education. One research project into the meaning of adult education found that the majority of respondents taking part in such education believed that the aim was to increased personal opportunity, rather than change the position of certain groups in society[718].

In contrast, for new Labour, the tone was set by the title of its pre-election training document, *Learn as You Earn*. Again, this reflected meritocratic tendencies at play within the party; lifelong learning might conceptually refer to a world in which flexible employees could dip into education as and when they were stimulated to, (indeed, this is part of its appeal) but in the new Labour version this educationalism was subordinated to the human capital assumption that demanded the most appropriate level of productivity from all employees. However, there have been some tangible benefits accruing to post-compulsory education and training through the interventions of new Labour Ministers. In terms of qualifications reform, ministers began to face the inevitable costs of increasing the average teaching time at A levels from 18 hours per week to the European norm of 30, a necessity of any serious reform programme, even as this broadening had to be accompanied by more emphasis on standards and excellence[719]. Also, new Labour in power aimed to redistribute FEFC funding by targeting it at areas of low take-up, and after the disappointment at

[717] THES (1998) Editorial *ibid*.
[718] Benn,R (1997) *Participation in adult education: breaking boundaries or deepening inequalities?* Proceedings of the 27th Annual SCUTREA Conference, 'Crossing boundaries: Research in the education of adults'.
[719] DfEE (1999) *A Level Curriculum will guarantee standards- Blackstone*, pn 125/99, 19/3/99, which introduced the concept of 'world class' tests to ensure the rigour of A level standards.

the time of the Green Paper, there have been some tentative moves towards allowing part-time, older and further education students to borrow on the same basis as HE students, presented in the name of access[720]. There have also been moves to tie funding of higher education courses to the institutions record in attracting non-traditional HE students which have broadly favoured FE colleges and former polytechnics[721]. The 1999 White Paper *Learning to Succeed: a new framework for post-16 learning* attempted to end the funding imbalances between various sectors of education and training by centralising and unifying provision. The Further Education Funding Council and the 18-month-old Training Standards Council would be scrapped, with responsibility passed to a Learning and Skills Council (LSC) operating in fifty county-sized areas of the country[722]. Although this new development was intended to streamline and rationalise post-compulsory education and training, the new Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) and the DETR would continue to have an input, while the Social Exclusion Unit based in Downing Street was reportedly influential in the establishment of an overarching LSC[723]. Therefore centralisation of post-compulsory education does not imply that the Secretary of State for Education and Employment can have an overall control of the service, especially given that OFSTED, the school inspectorate which is answerable to the Crown rather than the DfEE, was given a role in the inspection of 16-19 institutions.

Once again, standards and accountability seem to have been as important as access in determining new Labour government decisions, while the heralded equalisation of funding for the various sectors, which the White Paper was intended to address, stopped short of closing inefficient (disproportionately expensive and small) Sixth Form Colleges because they were seen by Downing Street as popular with middle class parents. Significantly, the Times Educational Supplement greeted this news with the front page headline 'Blair intervenes to save sixth forms'. The White Paper did not refer to higher education so added nothing substantial to any moves towards lifelong learning, and in the DfEE report *Bridging the Gap*, also issued in July 1999, David Blunkett signalled that FE institutions should concentrate on training and traditional FE courses, rather than higher education[724], this only a year after the Government had told colleges that they would be expected to take the bulk of the extra 100,000 higher education places to be offered by 2002, at HNC and HND level[725].

[720] Goddard,A & Thompson,A (1999) *Ministers act as poor jump ship*, THES, 29/1/99.
[721] Thompson,A & Goddard,A (1999) *Elite trumped in access stakes*, THES, 5/3/99.
[722] DfEE (1999) *Learning to Succeed: a new framework for post-16 learning*, July 1999.
[723] Thompson,A, Swain,H & Goddard,A (1999) *The £5 billion super agency*, THES, 2/7/99.
[724] DfEE (1999) *Bridging the Gap*, July 1999.
[725] Thompson,A (1999) *FE told to back off HE provision*, THES, 16/7/99.

Conclusion

This chapter has looked at three distinct, but related subject areas. On two of the areas, lifelong learning and qualifications reform, new Labour have accepted that there is a need for reform but stopped well short of radical responses in the face of elite opposition, and this is developed further in the final case study chapter of the is thesis. Training policy is one area where new Labour had to confront an internal pressure group, the affiliated trade unions, but thanks in part to the groundwork already done by the party since the policy review of 1987-1989 and changes to the policymaking processes of the party, the new Labour leadership prevailed. In all three areas the party leadership portrayed changes to policy within the confines of the traditional Labour Party ideology, given that the changes in the nature of labour required by the economy, and the global trading environment Britain has to operate within, the rhetoric of modernisation was sufficient to ensure that policy change was relatively uncontroversial.

In keeping with other aspects of this thesis, the area of lifelong learning is an example of new Labour concentrating its political rhetoric at the natural territory of the egalitarian left, by couching it in the language of widening access and targeting help at those "who have traditionally not taken advantage of educational opportunities"[726]. Educationally, this was clearly not carried forward in the short term although there is still scope for voluntarism and exhortation to slowly change the culture. For the meritocratic left, this same agenda offered opportunities for social advancement, and also held out the prospect of the unskilled being less reliant on welfare. For the former Conservative voters new Labour relied on to win in 1997, the emphasis on workplace training could be portrayed as punitive action against dole scroungers, as new Labour policies were allowed to be connected to unemployment problems. This had a detrimental effect on those who wished the lifelong learning agenda to challenge the assumptions of the academic-vocational divide and creates a huge barrier to the implementation of more radical plans. Lifelong learning is used by new Labour as an umbrella for the other concerns of this chapter, and many of the same themes are recurrent: the link between training and unemployment; the emphasis on standards which works against parity of esteem; voluntarism in the name of choice and opportunity; and the emphasis on releasing the potential of the individual. All of these areas reflect political concerns which have distorted the educational value of the concept of lifelong learning. By balancing the competing pressures and wishing to make populist connections between ideas in the polity and new Labour modernisation, the party raised, and then dashed expectations.

[726] In Helena Kennedy's phrase

Chapter Eight

Higher Education: actors, pressure and policy

Chapter Five outlined the historical development of Labour's policies towards HE. It suggested that Labour comprised a dualism between egalitarians and meritocratic aims which it balanced in opposition and had to confront in Government. Labour also engaged in periods of consensus for example on the need for expansion. This chapter is concerned with new Labour and its relationship with the policy community and to trace electoral positionality in the context of its proximity to office, and then goes on to demonstrate how new Labour in Government failed to transcend the interests of competing pressure groups in the HE sector by its efforts to stay within the confines of consensus, as the 1960s Labour Government had done.

The policy environment

The intention of this section is to trace the consensus which exists around a core of ideas relating to higher education issues, which came together or had already crystallised prior to the 1994-1997 policymaking period. Three major categories of issues will be considered as case studies in the relationship between new Labour and external pressures. Firstly the chapter looks at two areas where little consensus was possible: the issues of quality and standards of provision; and the shape and structure of the higher education system. The third major issue, the funding of higher education, forms the main focus for the chapter because new Labour embraced a consensus position which could have potentially damaged its electoral appeal.

The policy community in HE consists: the Department for Education and Employment, 10 Downing Street, HM Treasury, and, during the period in question. Because of its proximity to power the new Labour front bench team of David Blunkett, Bryan Davies. Other key policy groups which take a permanent interest in higher education policy are: the Association of University Teachers (AUT), the National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education (NATFHE), the National Union of Students (NUS), the Committee of Vice Chancellors and Principals (CVCP), the Standing Conference of Principals (SCOP) the British Council, the Confederation of British Industry (CBI), the Council for Industry in Higher Education (CIHE), the Committee of Scottish High Education Principals, (COSHEP), the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) the Further Education Development Agency (FEDA), the Further Education, Funding Agency,

(FEFC), the Higher Education Quality Council (HEQC), the National Association for Adult Continuing Education, (NIACE), the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council (SHEFC), the Society for Research into Higher Education (SRHE), the Teacher Training Agency (TTA), the University Association for Continuing Education (UACE), the University Council for the Education of Teachers (UCET), the University Council of Staff Development Association (UCoSDA), and the Labour Party's internal Socialist Education Association (SEA) and Association of Labour Students (ALS). In addition the Times Educational Supplement (TES) and the Times Higher Education Supplement (THES) are influential in expressing the diversity of opinion within the sector[727].

In addition to these core bodies, there was a group of more ephemeral policy actors, either of individual or corporate construction. These are less permanent and interested in either specific issue areas or are concerned with the solution of temporary problems. They include: Sir Ron Dearing and the National Committee of Enquiry into Higher Education (NCIHE), Nicholas Barr and Iain Crawford, the Fryer Report team, accountants Coopers and Lybrand, Helena Kennedy's FEFC report team, the Fabian Society, Labour's Commission for Social Justice (CSJ) and Commission on Public Policy and British Business (CPPBB), David Robertson of Liverpool John Moores University and the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR), and Josh Hillman, also of the IPPR.

Issues, pressures and purpose

As Chapter One demonstrated, there already existed a degree of inter-party consensus on some issues. This chapter aims to establish that is enough broad agreement beyond the parties to determine a set of consensus positions on the core issues, and it is in that sense that we can talk about there being an educational consensus that the Labour Party has to engage with when constructing policy. It is the assertion of this thesis that new Labour, when confronted with this consensus, chose to stay well within its confines Where there was little sense of consensus, new Labour avoided radical options derived from party ideology or reformers.

On some issues consensus was relatively easy to ascertain; as we have seen in Chapter Five, the development of the mid-1990s consensus position had been largely in response to the changing basis of demand, both for labour and for social advancement. The positions adopted by the party reflected the increasing emphasis on individual responsibility for continuing lifetime education and

[727] To a lesser extent the other national broadsheet newspapers and various journals can have a similar impact on specific issues.

an awareness of individual returns on learning. It should also be noted that many of the institutional actors overlap in membership and in the way they co-operate as lobbying organisations, on both research and campaigning issues. At the individual level, also, there are many Labour voters and supporters represented within these corporate organisations, some of whom were appointed to their posts with the advent of a Labour government in mind; in this sense there is a symbiotic relationship between the Party and the 'educational consensus' which has to be taken into account when analysing the reasons for policy change, despite the absence of a specific higher education lobbying body within the Party's policymaking structure. The key question is the extent to which new Labour is affected by the competing pressures of internal and external factors. To this end the next section looks at the three main issues in more detail.

Quality and standards

There is comparatively little agreement on the core definitions of standards and quality or how best to achieve improvements because standards are evoked by defenders of the existing structure against potential reformers. Both new Labour and the National Commission into Higher Education (in the shape of the Dearing Report, 1997) failed to take on either of the extreme views and adopted a central position between them. In a low salience area such as this new Labour did not feel it had to directly take on interest groups. This section looks at the concerns of the interest groups and new Labour's reaction to the policy environment.

Despite the lack of consensus among groups, few bodies were willing to admit that standards were falling in higher education[728], although many thought that would be the outcome of a continued lack of funding. However, there was no evidence of consensus on the issue of quality assurance, where the CBI and the NUS found themselves on the same side in pressing for external assessment of institutions; both would share the student union's view that:

> It is vital for the development of higher education that a degree from University X is considered to be of an equal standard to that from University Y. Nothing could be more detrimental to the future of higher education than if the [Dearing] Committee did not robustly defend this view.[729]

[728] NUS, FEFC and HEFCE thought standards were changing and more differentiated, but not falling, ibid, p.8

[729] QSC/CVCP (1997), *A Special Digest Report: what they said to Dearing*, The Open University, 1997, p.9.

However, the weight of the other interested actors, including the Higher Education Quality Council, was on the side of self-assessment through peer review[730]. HEFCE represented the view that standards must be expected to vary between institutions, but that "this need not matter if the standards aspired to and achieved are well understood"[731]. There were fears that the proposed new Quality Assurance Agency might impinge on academic autonomy, (it was akin to a national curriculum for some[732]) although some of those campaigning for the concept of lifelong learning, like Bob Fryer, see a strong, external quality assurance guarantee as a essential in an era of self-financed students[733]. Strong quality assurance is also necessary for any credit accumulation and transfer scheme, and those groups opposed to either of these elements would be opposed to the other. They pose a clear threat to institutional autonomy; clearly self-interest determines the relative position of actors. While the CBI favoured external quality assurance for the value-added output, the NUS were motivated by ensuring equal labour market potential and equal rights as students for their members.

In opposition new Labour proposed a new Higher Education Quality Agency in the *Lifelong Learning* document and in their own submission to Dearing, which called for a "proper balance between public accountability and institutional independence"[734], with a membership drawn from academics, representative trade unions, student representatives and professional and employer bodies. One of its intentions was to give the Government advice on the development of a national credit framework and professional accreditation for HE teaching[735]. This seemed designed to straddle the divide, with some encouragement of a CAT system (after all, market choice is the corollary of student financed HE and demand-led expansion) yet with a quality assurance agency proposed which would keep most of the signals of market choice hidden within the institutions. The Dearing Committee's own findings also rejected the full market principle on quality:

> Uniformity of programmes and national curricula, one possible approach to the development of national standards, would deny higher education the vitality, excitement and challenge that comes from institutions consciously pursuing distinctive purposes, with academics having scope to pursue their own scholarship and enthusiasms in their teaching. The task facing

[730] This debate has continued on the Nexus website in response to Government's Quality Assurance Agency document *An agenda for quality*, and can be found on **Error! Bookmark not defined.**. The QAA document suggests linking university funding to external quality testing.
[731] QSC/CVCP (1997) p.9
[732] Tapper,T & Salter,B (1998), *The Dearing report and quality control in higher education*, Renewal, Volume 6, No.1 Winter 1998, p.80.
[733] MacLeod,D (1997) *Watchdogs on guard*, The Guardian, 2/12/97.
[734] The Labour Party (1996), *Lifelong Learning*, p.24.
[735] ibid, p.25.

> higher education is to reconcile that desirable diversity with achievement of reasonable consistency in standards of awards.[736]

In this case, the position represented by the policy community groups on quality assurance seems to be one which acknowledged radicalism of market reformers, yet did not relish the full implications of such a change in educational culture. Given this situation both Dearing and new Labour consequently managed to steer a central course well away from the ideas they had both commissioned and sought out in the past[737]. In this case there was no consensus for new Labour to accommodate to.

Shape and structure

In discussions of the second major issue, the future shape and structure of the HE sector, correspondents to Dearing also failed to produce a consensus. While there was broad endorsement of diversification of provision and increased collaboration (AUT, NATFHE, CVCP, CIHE, HEFCE, NIACE, HHEW, SCOP, SHEFC, UACE, and the British Council), other groups went further in wishing to integrate further and higher education. This latter group, (SHEFC, FEFC, HEFCW, HEFCE, NATFHE and CIHE), representing employees, employers and the further education sector, were concerned to eradicate hierarchical forms in tertiary education (especially when 212,00 FE students, 5% of the total, are engaged in higher education[738]). However, representatives of the liberal education sector of the education market, such as the AUT, fear the diminution of the price and social value of HE if it is delivered in FE colleges or even the new, 1992 universities, as the AUT submission to Dearing made clear:

> The advent of single formulae and the cultural wish of newer universities to look in almost all respects like older ones has created mission drift and a narrowing of perspective. We regret this trend....[739]

The new Labour Government has concurred with this view, which coincided with the lifelong learning convention that sub-degree work, the area where Britain is perceived to be falling behind her competitors, should take place predominantly in further education colleges. Tony Blair's speech to the Labour Party Annual Conference in October 1997 promised 500,000 extra places in

[736] *Higher Education in the Learning Society*, The National Committee of Enquiry into Higher Education, DfEE 1997, Chapter 10, 10.3.
[737] Robertson was an adjunct to the Dearing Committee, producing, with Josh Hillman, Report Thirteen on ILAs and the Learning Bank. He was also an adviser to Labour's opposition front bench on higher education issues from 1990 onwards, interview with author, Liverpool, 14/4/97.
[738] *Further into the Future*, Times Higher Education Supplement special report, 14/11/97, p.7.
[739] AUT response to Dearing, QSC/CVCP (1997), p.12.

further and higher education by 2002, and this was later clarified when ministers began to let it be known that FE would be the major beneficiary with 400,000 extra places[740]. Although this decision stored up trouble for the Government as far as funding issues were concerned[741], it allowed them to take account of the divide between those actors representing liberal, meritocratic education and egalitarian education values. New Labour adopted a position in the absence of any consensus on the issue, hoping to balance the claims of the various protagonists

Similar cleavages occurred in the question surrounding status, with NIACE arguing against hierarchies, while at the other extreme the principals' organisation SCOP wished to relax the regulations on the status and titles to be used by HE institutions, whereby any institution beyond FE is classed as a university. SCOP's preference was to make it easier for intermediate groups to become university colleges[742]. New Labour had little to say on this issue. Overall, on the issues of the shape and structure of the HE sector in the future, new Labour in opposition and government steered a centralist course between the entrenched interests of the combatants. In the absence of consensus, the avoidance of open disagreement became the goal.

Student finance

The first two issues show new Labour not taking radical stances or tough decisions in areas of controversy, or more specifically where there was little evidence of consensus. The area of student finance differs in two main ways; firstly there was almost unanimity among interest groups that funding reform was necessary; secondly, adhering to this consensus position put new Labour in a position where it could have provoked electoral unpopularity. New Labour faced this dilemma in the pre-election period by using vague and ambiguous statements and the fact that the Dearing Report was not due until after the 1997 election to defer the impression that it was attacking free higher education.

Not surprisingly, funding issues were of greatest concern to many of the policy actors. Two main concerns dominated the submissions to Dearing: the problem of additional funding needs for institutions; and the problem of student support. Many, like COSHEP, believed they were inevitably linked and any solution should express a balanced approach between state, student and employers which recognised, in the words of the SCOP submission that "improvements in the level

[740] as reported by Lee Elliot Major, The Guardian, 3/3/98. Donald MacLeod & Lee Elliot Major, *Pass the bucks*, The Guardian, 2/6/98 reports that Margaret Hodge's House of Commons Select Committee on Education and Employment recommend 430,000 of the places for FE.
[741] in that the funding of the 500,000 extra places would come from the student tuition fees, effectively transferring new and highly controversial income from one sector to another.
[742] QSC/CVCP (1997), p.12.

of funding are unlikely to involve a greater contribution from general taxation"[743]. These two smaller principal's bodies allied with the CVCP in lobbying for the inclusion of tuition fees within the broad consensus position which accepted the principle of income contingent loans for maintenance[744]. Other organisations used terminology like 'free at the point of delivery' (AUT), 'free to students before and during participation' (NUS[745]) or declared that "we do not favour a policy that depends solely on the students paying more"[746] to express their positions. New Labour itself declared in the 1997 manifesto that: "The costs of student maintenance should be repaid by graduates on an income-related basis, from the career success to which higher education has contributed"[747].

In an echo of the AUT's position and the internal memos from John Smith's office (which suggested that new Labour could keep student maintenance loans on the basis that higher education would remain "free at the point of delivery"[748]) discussed in Chapter Five of this thesis, new Labour believed it could administer the loans system more efficiently and fairly. Ironically, given the post-election furore over free higher education, the largest element of consensus across all the issues so far discussed in this chapter was the belief in a degree of student-financed higher education. Beyond this consensus NATFHE uniquely stood on the principle of the retention of mandatory awards and free tuition[749], Labour's 1992 manifesto position.

The fine distinction between paying for maintenance and paying for fees was not made by all the submissions, especially where they were concerned with the wider institutional funding problems. Many such submissions saw the solution in changing the structure of learning, in line with the two-plus-two model favoured in the United States[750]. The NIACE submission contained a plan to divide HE into cycles, only the first of which would attract public finance, with the specialist levels left to the responsibility of the individual or sponsoring employers. The CIHE also

[743] Standing Conference Of Principles (SCOP) *Quality and Diversity: response to National Committee of Enquiry into Higher Education*, November 1996.
[744] see SCOP (1996), Committee of Scottish Higher Education Principals (COSHEP) *A Vision for the Future*, 1996 and Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals of the Universities of the United Kingdom, CVCP (1996) *Our Universities, Our Future: the CVCP's evidence to the National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education*, CVCP, London.
[745] QSC/CVCP (1997), p.14.
[746] COSHEP (1996)
[747] Labour Party (1997) *New Labour: because Britain deserves better*, The Labour Party, London, April 1997, p.9.
[748] according to private Labour Party briefing memoranda from John Smith's Leader's Office, filed in David Blunkett's Westminster office, but pre-dating his own involvement with education policy.
[749] QSC/CVCP (1997) p.14.
[750] This was what the CVCP's Gareth Roberts erroneously expected Dearing to endorse, interview with author, Sheffield, 10/12/96.

favoured such a scheme in the interest of spreading public funds more equitably[751]. Other groups believed that full course modularisation is the key, with public sponsorship limited to smaller units of learning (COSHEP), while others, such as the AUT with their endorsement of Learning Bonds and the Learning Bank implicitly accept the concept of part-funded education taken in units smaller than the traditional three-to-five year degree[752]. All these examples provide pointers to how a government could operate a system in which students contributed to their own education, rather than merely to the costs of maintenance.

One group which defended the principle of retaining "an element of fully funded taxpayer tuition" was the CBI, which believed that the necessary efficiency gains required in the sector would not accrue if all courses attracted a flat fee. That would best occur under conditions where universities have the freedom to charge differential fees reflecting market demand and by retaining maintenance grants only for the worst off[753]. Once again, the self-interest of policy actors is evident, as in this case the CBI felt they could not leave it up to the universities to make themselves more efficient without some market push, nor did they expect individuals to invest sufficiently to meet industry's demands.

Despite this caveat, it is possible to discern elements of the funding consensus. Firstly, it was largely agreed that free student maintenance was not compatible with the size of higher education sector at the present time or as envisaged in the future. Secondly, it was similarly agreed that students, as the major beneficiaries of higher education, should be expected to contribute something to the costs of their education. Thirdly, it was widely accepted that repayments (be they of maintenance or fees) could be made easier to bear. Fourthly, the Robbins principle that access to higher education should not be dependent on the ability to pay was upheld, along with its corollary that intake be demand led.

How then did new Labour respond to this set of consensus positions? In fact the party's *Lifelong Learning* policy document of 1996 already accepted much of this agenda, which it linked with the need to expand:

> A broad consensus has developed in favour of seeking a contribution to the costs of higher education from those who benefit from it. The Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals, the National Union of Students and the Association of University Teachers have

[751] QSC/CVCP (1997) p.15.
[752] ibid, pp.14-15.
[753] ibid, p.15. This position gained support from many organisations and individuals who saw top-up fees or full privatisation as the only ways that elite higher education could compete internationally, see for example Barr,N & Crawford,I *Universities in the first division*, The Guardian, 16/9/97, and for another perspective which maintained elite universities within the state, Corfield,I *The Gold-plated spires*, The Guardian, 12/11/97.

> all recognised that the fairest and most efficient way of increasing the number of university places is to share the burden of expansion between public and personal resources[754].

The document went on to note that governments around the world had faced up to the same pressure for expansion by "building new funding partnerships"[755], citing the World Bank's report which found that all of the fifteen leading industrialised countries it surveyed operated contributory schemes. Particularly singled out by new Labour was the Australian Higher Education Contribution Scheme introduced in 1989, through which students pay for part of their own tuition[756]. However, the document did not make clear that the Australian example is one of student financed fees as well as maintenance, it was merely presented as an alternative funding regime for higher education[757]. The document had in effect bundled the separate issues of maintenance and tuition into 'costs' as a catch-all category for the uninitiated. This was in line with the expectations of the CVCP's Chair Gareth Roberts, in December 1996, that [new Labour] "will definitely not rule out tuition fees in the manifesto"[758]. In fact, the election manifesto confined itself to maintenance and noted that "[t]he improvement and expansion needed cannot be funded out of general taxation"[759]. However, the seed, the recognition of the utility of the HECS and the principle of student-paid fees, had been planted in *Lifelong Learning*.

Therefore, new Labour's policymaking efforts prior to the 1997 General Election seem designed to obscure or fudge the tuition funding issue in the minds of the electorate, who were essentially told a set of truisms: that student loans were inevitable but could be administered more fairly; that more money would have to go into HE; that it was right and fair that the recipients of education should contribute to its costs; and that some countries operated schemes which allowed this to occur without damaging the equity of student intake (although this was a contested point).

The next section sets out the events surrounding new Labour's legislative impact and aims to trace the lobbying process by which the party's leadership was drawn into this series of policy positions. The background context provided by this examination of the position of policy actors is

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[754] Labour Party (1996) *Lifelong Learning*, The Labour Party, London, p.21
[755] ibid, p.21.
[756] ibid, p.21.
[757] In *Lifelong Learning* the argument is not explored. However, there is controversy about the equity of the HECS, in that some contest the figures of working class and mature students deterred by charges, while others have noted that flat fees were best suited to non-mass systems of higher education, not for systems where positional good demands differentials in funding, as with the elite universities and the Oxbridge colleges in the United Kingdom system, see Maslen,G (1998) *Unregulated market plan triggers union fury*, THES, 16/1/98 and Barr,N (1997) *Australian mantra to ward off (at least) some evils*, THES Opinion, 3/10/97.
[758] interview with author, Sheffield 10/12/96.
[759] Labour Party (1997) *New Labour: because Britain deserves better*, The Labour Party, London, April 1997, p.9.

worth reiterating. Primarily, liberal and meritocratic education prerogatives dominated the agenda, as concerns about academic autonomy in terms of individual academic freedoms and the ability of institutions to police their own quality won out over more radical proposals to subject HE to some kind of open market testing. This would imply demand-led provision and is thus linked to attitudes towards opening access to wider groups of students, beyond the traditional age and social groups. No group was impolitic enough to deny the arguments for wider access or challenge the logic of lifelong learning, but the weight of argument, as distilled in contributions to Dearing and in new Labour's interpretation, worked against any widening agenda which threatened institutional autonomy on any of the key issues of funding and quality control, and by extension, on opening up a credit-based access scheme. Equally, no group, apart from NATFHE, stood against the idea of student contributions making up the shortfall created by previous expansion.

The Dearing Report: the policymaking end-game

The imminent arrival of the Dearing Report in July 1997 represented new Labour's first opportunity to show how it was going to tackle to problems of student finance. By late 1996 and early 1997, it had become clear that Dearing's NCIHE would recommend some form of student-financed tuition. The Conservative's Secretary of State Gillian Shephard had established the NCIHE precisely (and with bipartisan support) to delay a decision on the future funding of the sector until after the 1997 election. In the days prior to the publication of the report, *Higher Education in the Learning Society* (the Dearing Report, 23rd July 1997), it became clear that the retention of maintenance grants was the preferred option of the Committee, but with the introduction of flat-rate tuition fees paid by all[760].

The new Government's alternative solution differed from the Dearing Report's in that it wanted to abolish maintenance grants altogether, but introduce a flat-rate contribution of 25% of the cost of tuition (£1,000) with means-tested exemptions for students from the poorest backgrounds. This was seen by universities as a 'fudged' policy, attempting to keep the NUS and parliamentary backbenchers onside[761]. The NUS let it be known that they had colluded with the Government to prevent students from the poorest homes being charged tuition fees, having recognised that this was Dearing's favoured option; Douglas Trainer, NUS President said his organisation was "very pleased about the decision on means testing fees but we believe the

[760] It was reported three weeks before publication that retention of maintenance grants for the poorest was the majority position on the committee, which would cause problems for Labour's manifesto promise and force them to confront the issue of means testing the middle-class benefit for the first time, Hodges,L (1997) *From free for all to fee for all?*, TES, 4/7/97.

[761] Bright,M (1997) *Sacrifice of an ideal*, The Observer, 20/7/97, three days before the Government unveiled the Dearing Report, reported early fears of several universities who could not survive without the funding injection that Dearing proposed with the introduction of fees.

principle of fees is wrong and we will campaign against this"[762]. New Labour MPs could expect to be reminded by their constituents that losing almost £2,000 in grant entitlement and gaining £1,000 in free tuition still left poorer students £1,000 per year worse off, as well as accruing greater debts than other students[763]. As for families, the Government declared that: "there will be no parental contribution from lower income families; and their will be no increase in parental contributions from middle and higher income families"[764].

As many pointed out, this was in fact disingenuous if the whole family, parents and students, were to be taken as the calculation unit, because the shortfall in parental input would in future be more than made up for by student borrowing, otherwise there would have been no extra money accruing to HE. That week's THES Editorial disapproved of the reverse-spin which accompanied the decision (designed as it was to show that no middle class parents would pay more), but recognised that new Labour had actually, and radically, cut back on the ultimate middle class benefit, free higher education[765]. Moreover, new Labour had adapted Dearing with a more equitable repayment system, beginning when incomes reached £10,000 rather than the report's recommended £5,000[766]. David Blunkett presented this in the light of party principles:

> Our preferred solution secures equity, access, quality and accountability. Our proposals retain the principle that repayments should be made on the basis of future income, not present circumstances[767].

The resulting funding arrangements would mean that students with parents earning below £35,000 would not pay the full £1,000 (25% of tuition costs) per year, and those whose parents earned less than £16,000 would pay nothing at all. Parents who earned between £16,000 and £34,000 would pay a larger share of tuition and their offspring qualify for a smaller supplementary loan for maintenance the closer their income came to the upper limit[768]. However, this hybrid of the Dearing Report and new Labour's manifesto pledge on maintenance would produce less money for HE than the universities' identified funding gap between 1997 and the end of the century, only realising £1 billion as opposed to £3 billion. With exemptions for poor students, this would reduce the extra

[762] Tysome,T (1997) *Students stitch up Ron*, THES, 25/7/97
[763] as pointed out in the THES Editorial, *Swallowing whole after dizzying spin*, 25/7/97.
[764] DfEE (1997) *Higher Education for the 21st Century: Change in Higher Education*, Crown Copyright, London, p.8.
[765] THES Editorial, *Swallowing whole after dizzying spin*, 25/7/97
[766] although the extant Student Loans system had an introductory level of 85% of average earnings, approximately £13,500 per annum on 1996/7 figures, but this carried a much shorter repayment period of between five and ten years as opposed to Labour's up to twenty years.
[767] DfEE *Government responds to Dearing Committee Report on Higher Education*, press release non. 226/97, 23/7/97,
[768] Carvel,J (1997) *Dearing inquiry 'bewildered' by Labour changes*, The Guardian, 21/7/97.

income for HE to £600 million. However, David Blunkett held out some hope for a new funding arrangement which would remove student borrowing from the Public Sector Borrowing Requirement (PSBR), although that would not be possible for the following financial year[769]. The politics behind this decision will be discussed in due course.

Access was one of the biggest areas of concern. Even if mature and working class students continued to apply in the same numbers, the colleges and ex-polytechnics they traditionally attended would suffer disproportionately from the lack of incoming fees, assuming a poorer client-base. This would negate the effects of new Labour's backing for more sub-degree level work in much of their lifelong learning rhetoric[770].

Therefore, for a combination of reasons, new Labour's funding policy caused controversy. There were objections from within higher education about what proportion of the tuition fees would actually accrue to HE because the Treasury would see loan repayments long before any funds trickled down to the institutions. In the post-Dearing public debate, during the Autumn-Winter 1997-1998, there were proposals for a more rational funding system[771], calculations were made which predicted that working class students would leave university with debts of £12,000 or more[772], and that working class student couples could facing combined repayments of £25,000 which could prevent them from buying a home[773]. There was also a period of confusion before the fears of students who had already decided to take a gap-year before advancing to university were assuaged, and exemptions were clarified[774]. An anomaly had also been pointed out whereby Scottish and European Union students could not be charged for the traditional fourth year of the Scottish degree programme, whilst English, Welsh and Northern Irish domiciled students would have to find an extra £1,000 if they chose to study north of the border[775]. Moreover, by November

[769] as reported by Carvel,J & MacLeod,D (1997) *Blunkett battles with Treasury for student cash*, The Guardian, 16/10/97. This move to 'resource accounting', which realises that most student debt will be repaid, could raise £1 billion extra, Blunkett claimed in an appeal to Vice Chancellors to help him lobby the Treasury.

[770] see for Blunkett's speech to the *Future of Higher Education: Challenges for the Dearing Committee* conference at the Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre, Westminster, 18/6/96. Post-election examples: MacLeod,D & Major,LE *Superpoly threat,* The Guardian 21/10/97, which examined Labour's attitudes to the extra 500,000 places Blair had promised at Conference- 400,000 of which were eventually announced to be in FE. The THES Editorial, *Long on vision, short on cash*, 14/11/97 also highlighted some potential problems if more did not come HE's way.

[771] Barr,N & Crawford,I *Opportunity lost*, The Guardian, 2/9/97, Barr,N & Crawford,I *Universities in the first division*, The Guardian, 16/9/97. They and Bill Robinson of London Economics are authors of the 'resource accounting' argument which accepts that at least half of loans will be recovered. Many of these ideas were presented as evidence to the Select Committee on Education and Employment, Third Report, November 1997, Parliamentary Copyright.

[772] *Learn now, pay later*, The Observer, 20/7/97.

[773] Carvel,J & MacAskill,E (1997) *Tuition fees: a learning curve too steep*, The Guardian, 30/9/97.

[774] Carvel,J (1997) *Blunkett tries to end panic over tuition fees*, 29/7/97.

[775] This was to cause Labour continuing problems with the resultant Teaching and Higher Education Bill in the House of Lords where all the parties were reported to have agreed that an amendment would

1997, application returns to UCAS were being scrutinised by critics who pointed out evidence of a falling-off of mature and working class students[776].

The culmination of three to four years of policy development seemed to be the primacy of presentational and back-bench management considerations in determining policy. The Government had failed to build up popular support for the principled stand on means testing tuition fees, or on sticking to the manifesto commitment on grants [777]. It had also become associated with the conservatism of the Dearing Report on course modularisation and the denial of the long-expected right of part-time students to apply for loans. Meanwhile, in contrast to the Government, Dearing himself was portrayed as the defender of student maintenance grants[778].

The lobbying process: new Labour and other policy actors

Adapting to the consensus view on student self-financing obliged new Labour to take a potentially unpopular stance in its primary arena, that of public opinion. As we have seen, new Labour minimised the political effect of this decision through a degree of obscurantism about its real intentions during the pre-election period. In this section, the intention is to explore the actual lobbying relationships during the period when policy was being determined and later implemented in Government. The context for the interaction between actors was clearly set out by Bryan Davies, who was charged with developing policy on further and higher education issues as shadow spokesman. One key element of this context was the lack of an internal pressure group with an interest in HE. While the higher education policy community is open, in internal party politics there was no significant interests and therefore little political cost beyond the specific issue of tuition fees and maintenance grants. Davies believed Walworth Road was supportive of what his working group were doing. In reality this meant that:

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have to be allowed. It was one of the issues which slowed the progress of the Bill through Parliament, see Huw Richards, *Lords to renew fight against teaching bill*, THES 12/6/98.

[776] Carvel,J (1997) *Ministers admit fees problem for students*, 25/11/97. Although the Government were able to announce in March 1998 that applications were up on the previous year, DfEE *Blunkett welcomes university applications figures*, press release 150/98, 24/3/98, it fell to others to highlight that mature student numbers are the only category showing a shortfall against expectations. A UCAS survey which found that a higher proportion of working class college students were now not considering going on to HE was also reported by MacLeod,D (1998) *Poor students put off by tuition fees*, The Guardian, 24/3/98. A subsequent downturn in the final application figures was presented as following a demographic trend, with most mature students who desired higher education having now attained it, see Harriet Swain, *Mature keep away in droves*, THES 12/6/98.

Mature keep away in droves

[777] even though a MORI poll found that 69% of adults agreed that students should contribute part of the bill for HE, compared to 38% in 1991. DfEE (1997) *Tuition Fees; poor will not have to pay*, press release 322/97, 15/10/97.

[778] for example in the TES Editorial *Poor will pay most*, 25/7/97, Swain,H (1997) *Fees: there's no limit*, TES, 1/8/97, and Carvel,J & MacAskill,E (1997) *Tuition fees: a learning curve too steep*, The Guardian, 30/9/97.

> How it would run with the NUS was probably more important than how it would run with Labour Youth, lets say, simply because Labour Youth would be largely on board if the NUS was on board... our job was to address ourselves to the national issue and secondly to the party...[779]

As we might expect given the assumptions of Chapter Two of this thesis, Davies chose to contrast this with the experiences of the party during the 1970s and up to 1983, when

> the problem for policymakers really was, what does the party want, and secondly how do we square that with the nation. Now it is, what is the nation willing to support, and then, will the party support this too....[780]

Davies selected his policymaking working group[781] from Labour-friendly academics such as Roderick Floud, Andrew Graham, Lesley Wagner, Cliff MacLauren, some of the Labour supporting Vice Chancellor's and "sub-groups of the interest groups with a particular Labour orientation"[782]. This group began to meet in spring 1995, while Davies and his researcher Nick Pearce would relate the findings of this group into the 1996 policy statement *Lifelong Learning*. None of the institutional staff associations or quangos were invited to become members of the working group. However, such groups were able to gain access to new Labour's front-bench as and when necessary, partly on the basis of the salience and seriousness of various issues, and partly by institutional size. Tom Wilson, assistant general secretary of the AUT (the largest staff association within HE), believed that:

> ....size does matter more to Labour, they will listen to us to the extent that they think that a) we have something to say, and b) if they don't like what we say they think we could cause them problems... ...so they do listen to us because they think we have interesting things to say, but they are not that bothered if at the end of the day they come out with something that we disagree with[783].

Anne Cotteril of NATFHE recognised that new Labour were not able or obliged to consult with every practitioner or interest groups before publishing papers, rather it was up to them to respond to party documents. In the pre-election period NATFHE had: "....quite friendly relations with Bryan

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[779] Bryan Davies, interview with author, Westminster, 3/9/97
[780] ibid
[781] conceptualised as a 'mini-commission' in other chapters of this thesis, it shared the characteristic of being essentially chosen by the front-bencher himself from his own contacts in FE and HE.
[782] Interview with author, Westminster, 3/9/97.
[783] Tom Wilson, assistant general secretary, interview with author, Notting Hill Gate, 3/9/97

Davies.... ... there was generally no problem in setting up a meeting by issue [with the new Labour front bench]."[784]

It is difficult to evaluate the real returns on lobbying because several groups shared the same concerns. Overall, however, representatives of the elite institutions such as the CVCP and the AUT can be seen to have had more influence on new Labour than the NUS and NATFHE. There are several opportunities to lobby political parties, for example, through evidence to the education select committee of the House of Commons, direct responses to party/departmental documents, submissions to the NCIHE or via media events. The difficulty is described by NATFHE's Ann Cotteril in relation to their opposition to the introduction of top-up fees, "if we see top-up fees not being introduced we won't know if that it's because of our campaign"[785]. Actors also have a perhaps distorted view of the efficacy of other groups' ability to affect policy, particularly NATFHE who feared they were being out-lobbied by representatives of the elite universities:

> I think if you tried to do anything to change Oxford and Cambridge's funding you would expect a lot of lobbying. Certainly when Labour were in opposition there were people from the old universities going to see them..[786]

This turned out to be prescient, as CVCP and representatives of the elite institutions began an assault on new Labour's plans to set uniform tuition fees during the Autumn of 1997[787]. The AUT were similarly concerned about new Labour's affection for lifelong learning and its potential to damage the interests of "HE as a distinctive activity", concerned not with employability or competitiveness but with the search for "the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth"[788].

One thing that both the major staff associations were agreed upon was new Labour's seriousness about developing realistic policy in the expectation of gaining power. Here we can see new Labour consciously moving from a fringe position to one at the centre of the policy community. For example, Tom Wilson believed that:

> Labour have become more interested in nitty-gritty policy issues... ..as the prospect of power has become closer. So looking back to say six or seven years ago, a lot of our

[784] Anne Cotteril, NATFHE, interview with author, Leeds, 10/9/97
[785] ibid
[786] Anne Cotteril, NATFHE
[787] see for example of the furore over the possible introduction of top-up fees Thompson,A *No extra cash as Treasury grabs fees*, THES, 22/8/97, Barr,N & Crawford,I *Universities in the first division*, The Guardian, 16/9/97 and Crequer,N *Universities dig in over fees*, TES, 12/9/97 for a flavour of the debate.
[788] Tom Wilson, AUT, interview with author 3/9/97

> relationship with the Labour Party was really about campaigning issues, they weren't that interested in details of policy, it was just, well lets bash the Tories[789].

This was a view endorsed by NATFHE and Socialist Education Association representatives, and the sense of expectation was summed up the decision of the CVCP and other organisations to employ some of their representatives on the basis of their party affiliation. The developing belief that new Labour would win in 1997 led Gareth Roberts, Chair of the CVCP in the two years before July 1997, to choose his executive specifically with a change of government in mind; he selected Tessa (now Baroness) Blackstone and Michael Sherwood for their Labour Party affiliation, and identified twenty-seven VC's who were party members[790]. The AUT also employed David Melhuish, a Labour Party researcher in the Lords between 1992 and 1997, after the election.

Policy groups also share some of the same concerns and seek to build alliances with Opposition parties which seem to have a chance of attaining power. Despite the different, and basically unchanging value systems of interest groups, most would work together on complementary issues, even if competition for members or interest clashes precluded lobbying together on all issues. NATFHE worked in conjunction with several partners on general funding and expansion issues, targeting their lobbying efforts

> ...at a number of different bodies, not just government. We work with other organisations, for funding we had a major campaign last year with the AUT, CVCP plus the unions and employers as well, NUS, AUCL (now absorbed into AUT) and UNISON...[791].

The other major staff association, AUT, recognise the value of joint campaigns on some issues, but were aware that the two staff associations represented different interests and values. Tom Wilson believed that

> ... we in the AUT are trying to prove that we are a professional association first and foremost.... [and] because we are a professional association it is more appropriate that we develop the sort of links with Parliament and influence events that way rather than by walking out on strike..

[789] ibid
[790] Gareth Roberts, interview with author, Sheffield, 11/9/96. Blackstone became Minister for Education and Employment in the House of Lords after the election. The employment of Labour-friendly academics and researchers by policy community actors before the 1997 election was repeated across the sectors.
[791] Anne Cotteril, NATFHE

> ... I think NATFHE has somewhat more informal but stronger links with the Labour Party's left-wingers, maybe because a lot of the MPs have come through that employment route, maybe because NATFHE has been very active in race politics..[792]

On specific issues like the introduction of tuition fees, AUT, in conjunction with others, had campaigned for a change in attitude from the Opposition Labour Party since 1992, to the extent that a Labour spokesman Jeff Rooker had been sacked from his post in 1994 for considering fees out loud:

> ...there has been so much kind of background work before that shift could take place over the last few years, way before Jeff Rooker even, we had been trying to play our part in hoping to create a climate where it was possible for that shift to take place, as the NUS has, but in return if you like, for us making it crystal clear what the conditions are, and what we say is, if Labour judge that the climate is such that you can't ever really maintain grants or increase taxation to a level where fees won't be necessary.... then, well these are the minimum criteria that we would want for any new system; that it should be progressive taxation not regressive, that it will actually deliver more money, that it should be stable and secure, that it should be paid for by those who actually benefit from the service, employers as well as students..[793].

At NATFHE, where the association was against the introduction of student fees and the abolition of grants, the institutional response to Labour's decision was to change tack to take account of the new context, for example:

> ....certainly we are aware of some opposition among MPs to the issue of fees. As soon as David Blunkett announced fees, a letter was sent by our acting General Secretary to David Blunkett, and we particularly focused on top-up fees because although we are opposed to fees, we concentrated on an area where we thought we might be able to have some influence, we chose top-up fees because that was an area where we were aware that there is some lobbying in the other direction.[794]

Here NATFHE reacted to the new context (where two of their former allies joined the lobby for top-up fees to be introduced) by reverting to their core activities in other forms of lobbying behaviour:

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[792] Tom Wilson, AUT
[793] ibid.
[794] Anne Cotteril, 10/9/97

> ....and that does mean relating what we say to our general philosophical stance which is very much in support of access, widening participation, particularly in the direction of ethnic minorities and people who are less well represented, as well as what is in the interests of the new universities, so we are less concerned with the elite universities.[795]

This illustrates the fluid nature of interest group lobbying, even while the interest groups themselves are relatively stable in terms of values. It is the changing political context which alters the actors' relationship with one another. While NATFHE and the NUS were happy to campaign alongside the AUT and CVCP on increased funding, once new Labour had decided upon student-financed tuition, the groups reassembled on opposite sides of the top-up fees debate, with AUT claiming credit for having prepared the ground with Labour since around 1990, as we have seen, while NATFHE stood on the principles of free education because of their core position of widening access.

Similar cleavages between the organisations were recorded on issues of shape and structure, partly because NATFHE represent staff in both FE and HE, and even in HE they are predominantly represented in the new (post 1992) universities:

> ....another part of our philosophical position in NATFHE is that education is a continuum, we don't see a sharp divide between FE and HE, we are very much aware that a lot of HE is delivered in FE, and vice-versa, so we are very much aware of the common issues.[796]

This duality leads to the association having to take somewhat ambiguous stance about structural funding distributions, of course "we don't think HE is so well off that money should be redistributed to FE"[797].

The position of NATFHE shows how relatively weak the association had become in relation to most of the groups inside the policy community on some issues, suggesting a less sympathetic environment for employment-related issues of concern to a lecturer's trade union. In contrast, the AUT, which finds itself more often on the side of the main Principal's organisations, CVCP, could use the talisman of retaining quality and standards of provision as part of their argument for the *status quo*, in relation to autonomy and funding distribution. The AUT perceive the university system as one which has been systematically underfunded by successive governments, and link fears about standards and money slipping away into FE to their line on funding:

[795] ibid
[796] ibid
[797] ibid

> Part of the roots of the problem are in the success of HE, ... and that is part of the problem that AUT along with CVCP have had in trying to fight against the big cuts in HE that we have seen over the years. They [government] have turned round and said, but you are still highly regarded worldwide with standards and quality, and it seems to be the case that they have lost out because of that[798].

The result of this is that funding across all tertiary education sectors can increasingly be portrayed as a zero-sum game:

> I can see this happening, because when there is a generally accepted problem as there is in FE, then it tends to get locked onto at the cost of other sectors, for example look at how at this time they are talking about raising money from HE students, without any absolute, explicit guarantee that it will be just for HE.[799]

From this perspective, then, any changes to the shape and structure of HE and FE could have threatened the autonomy and funding base of the university sector. Clearly the AUT form part of a higher education lobby within the policy community which, is set against any diminution of institutional or sectoral autonomy. Therefore, a political party with an agenda towards lifelong learning, widening access, and which puts so much faith in the abilities of the education system to improve national competitiveness, would have to confront this lobby if it wanted to move policy beyond the *status quo ante*.

We might expect new Labour to be less responsive to elite institutions because the party does have an internal bias towards further and vocational education issues because of the employment background of its MPs, while in contrast, there is no parallel group with a sectoral interest in higher education within the party. Therefore an ideological approach to party policymaking should lead us to expect some movement towards FE concerns. However, David Blunkett, a Labour Secretary of State with experience of working within FE as a lecturer, did not see the lack of a HE lobby in the party as making any difference "because the forces of HE through the media and through their personal contacts are enormous and they counterweight any influence the party may have..."[800].

Even in the future, when receipts from the reductions in the social security budget begin to accrue to education, Blunkett expects further education to remain the marginalised group in relation to HE:

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[798] David Melhuish, research assistant, AUT, interview with author, Notting Hill Gate, 3/9/97
[799] ibid
[800] David Blunkett, interview with author, Leeds Civic Hall, 13/9/97

"given the clout of HE, the bulk of it will go to higher education"[801]. Blunkett believed that this was due to some of his fellow members "who are instinctively conservative about HE, they tend to be defensive of what is there now rather than radical about what could happen"[802].

Evidence in support of this argument is provided by Bryan Davies[803] who saw the party's developing views on the funding of HE thus:

> ....if we are to expand the system we cannot do that from taxpayers funding HE, and the party is, I think, coming late to that view... ...the interesting thing about that is when we were developing the obvious points, we couldn't look at the expansion of HE on the basis of offering particular privileges to the 18-21 year old's maintenance support, now the 1992 manifesto supported going back to 1979 levels of student maintenance. It wasn't sustainable, but in a sense there has been a realisation of change without the party fully understanding the arguments.[804]

Clearly, the new Labour front bench was not responding to pressures from within the party, which, as we have seen, offers no coherent argument based on principle, except that expressed by those who wished to see the continuation of free tuition and maintenance. This raises two questions about the Labour Party's electoral strategy. Was the 1992 manifesto, which promised a return to 1979 levels of student support, written with the serious expectation of attaining power?; and did the 1994-1997 leadership react purely to the Conservative's expansion of places during the 1988-1992 period? Bryan Davies believed that:

> ....throughout the eighties we were always severely critical of the fairly elitist model in terms of access, we wanted to lever open the doors of HE.... the Tory government...under manpower pressure..[were influenced by two things]... you keep the unemployment figures down, but on the positive side there was a build up of pressure from the employment side. Although that was not articulated at the level of Conservative philosophy, there was a response to pressure that they had to succumb to quite readily, namely what the bosses were saying to them.[805]

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[801] ibid.
[802] ibid.
[803] who having failed to find a seat after the boundary changes removed his Oldham constituency, became Lord Davies of Oldham and was appointed chair of the FEFC on 3/12/97, DfEE *David Blunkett announces new chairman of the Further Education Funding Council for* England, 411/97, 3/12/97.
[804] Bryan Davies, interview with author, Westminster, 3/9/97.
[805] ibid.

Would Labour have had to react to the same pressures (the changing basis of demand for labour) if it had been in office during the 1980s? Certainly by 1992, the effects of the expansion were clear, hence the introduction of the Student Loans scheme in 1991, while representatives of the HE lobby were calling for a new funding regime to account for the new conditions of expansion. Only the authors of the Labour Party manifesto seemed unaware of the changed context. Davies clearly felt that any 1980s Labour governmental expansion would have been incremental, rather than unfunded growth. However, he neatly encapsulated Labour's philosophical dualism in discussing the possibilities of manpower planning:

> ....to be fair to us on the left, there is bound to be some reservation about education purely as the instrument of efficiency. In a very real sense, I would sooner people have had higher education experience ..... even if they have to be unemployed..[806]

This is an expression of the philosophical trade-off between meritocratic liberal and egalitarian values within the party discussed earlier. Without going beyond the boundaries of Labour supporters in HE, the party were able to cover all the range of opinions and positions within the wider policy community.

New Labour, on approaching the prospect of government and in Government, chose to build on this and position itself in relation to a consensus-driven policy community, rather than to fit into any radical traditional position, a decision made easier by the lack of such a tradition on the left. To what extent did the lobbying by a section of the policy community and the presence of key party personnel affect policy in the run-up to the 1997 election?

The seriousness of new Labour's efforts to advance policy on student support after the 1992 defeat was reflected in the party's relationships with key policy actors. Although the debates were confined within the Labour 'movement' or broad church, the major motivational factor behind policy change was externally derived, largely consisting the lobbying of the AUT and CVCP. During 1994 two memoranda had been prepared for John Smith which demonstrated that Labour realised student contributions would have to form a plank of any serious party policy on HE funding[807]. This was closely related to the rationing of HE, so the solution also had ramifications for shape and structure issues like widening access to less represented groups. There would also be a knock-on effect on the issue of quality and standards, especially if money had to be drawn away from the spending priorities of higher education's elite. Against this policy background, Labour

[806] ibid.
[807] see Chapter Five, pp.33-34.

would have to aggravate the electorally vital middle-income families to attain such a funding shift by threatening free higher education for their offspring.

Policy change on student support after 1992 can then be seen to have developed in response to changes in context, as interpreted by the party. Change was not attempted before 1992 presumably because the new context was not assumed to be permanent, and that a Labour Government would have gone back to 15% APR, generously funded, or key party actors could not be persuaded to face up to the new context. There was no reference to higher education in the 1994 policy statement *Opening Doors to a Learning Society* which reflects the fact that shadow spokeswoman Ann Taylor either did not want to highlight an issue which had recently cost a junior spokesman his post. After the accession of Tony Blair to the leadership and the appointment of David Blunkett as shadow Secretary of State, new Labour found it easier to make the intellectual case for change. However, changing policy at the level of Conference still required some delicate interactions between party affiliates and key external (but Labour-oriented) policy actors.

Despite the lobbying of the party and the developing consensus among interest groups, the prospects for the adoption of student fees did not look good on the eve of the 1995 Labour Party Annual Conference, when Bryan Davies said: "Some people within the party have canvassed the idea of repayment of fees, but I do not see any real interest in it among those with an interest in education."[808]. In fact, some of the groundwork had already begun at the 1995 conference of the NUS, when the executive floated several Labour-friendly policy options, ruling out only the status quo and top-up fees. Proposals for more flexible student loans with repayments based on income (known as a Maintenance Income Contingent Loan) were considered, within the framework of five principles: alleviating hardship; improving access to education; bridging inequalities between further and higher education; funding equitably full and part-time study; and enhancing education quality, all of which favoured schemes which fitted in with new Labour's broad philosophy[809]. In this way, new Labour were able to float, and gain acceptance for several ideas which would affect students more than any other group, even as Davies was officially sceptical.

At the 1995 Labour Party Conference the NEC were confronted with a motion which would have offered student support more generous than the levels envisaged in the 1992 manifesto, which was supported by thirty constituency groups. The NEC opposed the motion, claiming the backing of Catherine Taylor, youth representative on the NEC, and eventually won the vote by a margin of 77% to 23%[810]. This was critical for policy change in two ways. Firstly, it allowed David Blunkett

[808] Tysome,T, *Blair banks on loans*, THES, 29/9/95
[809] Tysome,T & Charter,D *Follow my Labour*, THES, 5/5/95.
[810] Tysome,T *Labour ducks £10bn bill*, THES, 6/10/95.

to criticise the costs of the motion, £10 billion, and the way that Conference pressurised leadership autonomy; it was "a classic resolution of impossible demands that places us rather than the Tories on the rack"[811]. Secondly, by allowing Bryan Davies to discuss how the freed-up resources would allow new Labour to consider plans to widen access. In a classic reshaping of the agenda, Davies told reporters after the vote that:

> There are still sections of the party which regard grants as part of the welfare state, and the argument is based on the premise that inadequate resources are the chief reason why people do not go into higher education. But this is not so. The real reason is that access is severely restricted[812].

By trading off the issues of funding and access, Davies stayed within the confines of party ideology, making use of the egalitarian desire for wider access and playing on working class disillusionment with the unfairness of the 'middle-class benefit'. Institutionally, the 1995 Conference vote not to reject student loans for maintenance and the 1996 vote which decided not to reject income contingent loans were heavily reliant on the support of a few key groups, in effect actors in the trade-off process. Catherine Taylor noted that spending £2.5 billion on restoring student grants was not supported by either Labour Students (an affiliate body) or the NUS (who had, as we have seen, supported the leadership line in April 1996), instead "what we want is a loan system that works, and a higher education system that gives more people the opportunity to learn"[813]. Graham Lane of the SEA saw the 1995 vote as giving Blunkett "a green light to develop something about student finance". However the political sensitivity of the issue was illustrated by the report that new Labour "still thought it was a vote-loser" until the NUS conference vote in April 1996[814]. Acknowledging that the 1996 Labour Party conference would present difficulties for the leadership, Lane believed the fact was that:

> Labour Students at their Conference supported it [the new line], and so did the SEA at its Conference, so you need powerful allies to defeat those who don't want to go back to student grants, and then [the Labour Party] Conference will have made a decision, and it legitimises the shadow policy.[815]

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[811] Blunkett,D (1995) speech to the Labour Party conference, October 1995, the Labour Party, London
[812] ibid
[813] Richards,H *But Labour rules out top-up fees*, THES, 4/10/96
[814] ibid, on how Labour could not settle on income contingent loan repayments until CVCP and the NUS combined to support it, a case of waiting for consensus to emerge before backing the winner.
[815] Graham Lane, interview with author, Sheffield, 11/9/96

Therefore, new Labour was able not only to change the nature of policy towards student support, but also managed to present it in the light of party democracy.

Even as new Labour developed policy within the essentially democratic framework of the party constitution, this thesis demonstrates that the actual ideas that shape policy change can come from external sources. The background to the introduction of changes to student finance was created by the Conservative's underfunded expansion between 1988 and 1992 (which in turn was a response to employment demand) and the Government's introduction of the Student Loans Scheme for maintenance in 1991. New Labour only then had to accept the inevitability of student-financed tuition, while offering concessions (such as Blair's promise to widen access and provide for some expansion at the 1997 Conference) which satisfied elements of party ideology. It is far from clear that any of the party's larger affiliates, such as the trade unions, would have blocked the introduction of student financed HE on a matter of principle, at a time when Labour were less overtly courting 'middle-England'.

Because new Labour left student finance deliberately vague in policy statements during the 1994-97 policymaking period, progress was not as smooth as seemed likely after the 1996 Conference. As we have noted, new Labour was unwilling to openly admit that it would introduce tuition fees before the 1997 election. Sir Ron Dearing had written to all the parties during 1996 asking them not to pre-empt his report by making any statements on HE funding. Labour in fact broke this rule during its 1996 Conference, by overtly ruling out top-up fees. New Labour clearly wanted to sound tough on top-up fees at a time when the delegates were accepting the *Lifelong Learning* document and rejecting a motion to overturn the income contingent loan element by 61 to 39% (which effectively gave the green light for tuition fees)[816]. Indeed, the CVCP had taken new Labour's acquiescence on tuition fees as an opportunity to lobby openly for top-up fees, and the heightened political awareness surrounding the Conference provided the ideal opportunity for the leadership to be seen as tough-minded (as the difference between fees and top-up fees might not have been clear to many potential Labour voters). However, this was widely seen as having backfired, as CVCP were using the top-up fees issue as a political lever to raise more funds from the DfEE in the next financial year[817]. Therefore, the political expedient of wanting to sound tough on (top-up) fees at the time of the Conference dominated Labour strategy during the winter of 1996/1997, perhaps to the extent of reducing total DfEE spending on higher education.

This was underlined closer to the appearance of the Dearing Report, when new Labour began to pre-emptively leak its own plans, first on selling off the student loan book (which Dearing

[816] ibid.
[817] Editorial, *V-c's unilaterally disarmed*, THES, 25/10/96

thought a poor deal[818]), and later on introducing flat-rate fees for all as well as abolishing the maintenance grant and introducing income contingent loans. As we have noted, this attracted much criticism from students, parents and Labour Party members, who had not taken much heed of the manifesto commitment on maintenance, but there is no doubt that new Labour's stance was ambiguous as the real position on fees had played no part in the election campaign or manifesto[819].

Why then did new Labour feel the need to choose this particular option? Bryan Davies felt that the party had gone into the election with a clear policy on maintenance, but on fees, there were no clear signals emanating from the Dearing process prior to May 1st. From the point of view of ministers

> they decided they couldn't allow Dearing to come out on the issue of fees and no signal to come out from government. They didn't think Dearing had solved the problem and the pressures on funding for next year, they felt they had to condition the debate.... The executive decision was that they decided to put out their stance alongside Dearing, and I have to say I would have reached the same judgement if I had been part of the process.[820]

David Blunkett expressed the same argument in different terms, mainly to explain why new Labour had come out with a response to Dearing on the same day as the report itself, 23rd July 1997, in the final week of the Parliamentary session:

> ....if we hadn't taken the principle decision, every single option would have been rubbished over the summer and autumn. Different MPs and sections of the party would have taken up different stances, by the time we would have come to make a decision, we would hardly have had any troops on our side, so the idea of saying, this is what we intend to do, is at least pull the bulk of the Parliamentary party, reluctantly in some cases, behind us, rather than them expressing a perfectly genuine view that they were then expected to renounce once we had made the decision.[821]

Clearly, from a party management point of view, it made sense for the leadership to control the timing of the report's emergence. Although Blunkett claimed that backbenchers and supporters had "missed the point that we had changed policy" at the time of *Lifelong Learning*, new Labour still had opportunities to avoid the fees debacle. One potential solution was presented by the proposed change to 'resource accounting', a mechanism which allows government to take student borrowing

[818] according to Tysome,T *Students stitch up Ron*, THES, 25/7/97
[819] BBC's Newsnight produced a clip of Robin Cook during the election campaign, predicting that the Conservative's would introduce tuition fees if re-elected. BBC, 1/10/97
[820] Bryan Davies, interview with author, Westminster, 3/9/97
[821] David Blunkett, interview with author, Leeds, 13/9/97

out of the public sector borrowing requirement (PSBR) on the reasonable assumption that the majority of it would be repaid. Bryan Davies highlighted the ongoing political problem this had raised:

> I thought that the general stance of the ONS (Office of National Statistics) and the Treasury on what counts as the PSBR was largely a reflection of the political will of the last government, and I thought, and still believe they were very value-laden and they were going to change under a Labour administration[822].

This was crucial as a method for immediately getting more money into further and higher education. Resource accounting would certainly have had some effect on the decision on tuition fees. However, in January 1997 the ONS pre-empted new Labour by casting doubt on the methodology. Davies and Blunkett's response was to remind the ONS that their position was a "Conservative stance to public expenditure and that stance will change under a Labour government...". The education front-bench team expected this to be finalised after the election, despite the fact that they had not published anything about the plan. However, Davies avers that "in a very real sense before the election we set out our stall in such a away that we expected to win that battle"[823]. However, Davies failed to secure a seat in time for the 1997 election and did not become a minister after May 1st. Another change in personnel that Davies did not anticipate was the replacement of Andrew Smith from the shadow treasury team with Alistair Darling as Gordon Brown's number two in Government; in this sense, then, the deal apparently agreed between Davies and Smith became irrelevant, as Darling reaffirmed the ONS line after the election. Bryan Davies believed that the education policymaking team had come up with a solution to the short-term funding crisis in the universities, and that this plan was brought down by the Treasury reasserting conservative values over new and inexperienced Ministers.

Davies believed that the deal was not included in documents because of the pressures of time. Presumably, however, had it appeared in *Lifelong Learning* or in the manifesto, it would have been sacrosanct. This was the argument used by the new Government to justify abolishing maintenance grants, rather that taking the Dearing Report line, which many believe would have been more equitable. The political problem arose because no-one had taken the opportunity after the doubling of the APR between 1988 and 1992 to persuade voters that such unfunded growth

[822] Bryan Davies, interview with author, Westminster, 3/9/97
[823] ibid

could not go on[824]. Therefore, by taking the line of least political resistance, by hiding the issue of student financed tuition behind vague concepts and ill-explained international schemes such as HECS, and neglecting to make resource accounting part of their open funding package, new Labour created the problem for itself through its own financial caution. Either the ONS scheme would have averted the need for tuition fees, or it would have at least lessened their political impact. Whichever interpretation we prefer, if new Labour had campaigned honestly and openly about tuition fees and resource accounting, it would have made it more difficult for the Treasury to deny the new Government, and would have avoided the post-Dearing impression that it was not in control of events.

Conclusion

This chapter has been concerned to determine how new Labour came to make policy decisions in higher education. It has examined the relative impact of internal and external pressures on the party. Several conclusions can be drawn for the purposes of this thesis. Firstly, in higher education matters the leadership of the party did not set the political agenda, but reacted to the existing consensus among pressure groups when choosing which options to support. It follows from this that party institutions themselves had little impact on the agenda, although constitutionally the leadership relied on internal groups to produce and support Conference resolutions which the leadership could back..

Secondly new Labour used symbolic rhetoric as a cover for detailed policy, so that many in the membership or among its potential electorate would not have realised the full implications of policy. This was the method employed in controversial matters (such as contributing to the costs of higher education) as well as in areas where new Labour were settled on positions designed to straddle the divide between groups. Thirdly, other political factors (external to party political factors), such as the parliamentary timetable and the need to present backbenchers with something to 'fill the vacuum' do play a key role in policy selection.

It is clear that the dominant concerns in HE policy are those relating to human capital and specifically the changing basis of demand for labour, and social demand for credentials. While this agenda suggested a more radical departure towards true lifelong learning, new Labour were content to exhort policy actors to a cultural transformation in higher education, without signalling the arrival of the necessary policy framework for such a transformation. In the concerns covered by

[824] Barr,N & Crawford,I *Opportunity lost*, The Guardian, 2/9/97 for example.

this chapter, new Labour showed themselves in the least radical light. The only 'brave' decision was to redistribute post-compulsory spending through the introduction of tuition fees and the abolition of grants, and as we have seen, this not only kept new Labour well within the confines of consensus, but in the way the policy change was announced, showed new Labour to be financially cautious, politically naive and reactive to events. In the absence of an internal policy lobby on higher education, it is more difficult to trace evidence of Michelsian capture; however, given the lack of interest in higher education traditionally shown by the party (as evidenced by David Blunkett) this is an area of policy where the leadership already had a high degree of autonomy of party policymaking. This made it comparatively easy for further and higher education spokesperson Bryan Davies to alter the focus of policy to one concerned with widening access, from one concerned with maintaining a middle class benefit. Once again, new Labour policy has changed without threatening the boundaries of party ideology, on this occasion highlighting an apparent shift towards egalitarian outcomes at the expense of meritocracy. At the same time, the most successful lobbying organisations, the CVCP and the AUT, were able to ensure that to elite university interests were maintained along with the overall meritocratic direction of policy.

Conclusion

> The great weakness of British Labour... is its lack of a creed. the Labour Party is hesitant in action because it is divided in mind. It does not achieve what it could because it does not know what it wants. It frets out of office and fumbles in it... If the Labour Party is to tackle its job with some hope of success, it must mobilise behind it a body of conviction as a resolute and informed as the opposition in front of it... To kick over an idol you must first get off your knees. (RH Tawney[825])

This thesis has demonstrated that parts of Tawney's analysis are as valid today as in the 1930s. On education issues, Labour is divided because of the presence of two separate strands of thought within the broad ideology of the party: egalitarianism; and meritocracy. In this sense, the party has not traditionally known what it wants from the education service. The lack of a unified vision for education and training allowed the Labour Party leadership to exercise a degree of policymaking autonomy, which often produced outcomes at odds with notions of democratic socialism. By contrast, new Labour has a clear view of what it wants from education, and has mobilised behind the resolute conviction that educational structures are less important than the standard of outcomes the system delivers. Four conditions had combined to produces this new settlement. Firstly, the decline of the trade unions in the economy and within the party. Secondly, the emergence of an aspirational middle class cohort of parents, which corresponds with new Labour's target voters. Thirdly, the changing nature of labour skills demanded by the economy which has acted as a spur to educational reform, especially with regard to training and post-compulsory education. Fourthly, the globalisation of the economy, which has produced a consensus among policymakers that human capital should be maximised through lifelong retraining by the workforce.

The tendency towards oligarchy, as Michels noted, is the technical result of proper and normal party behaviour. New Labour exhibits an hierarchical leadership structure which knows what it wants to do, and the methodology has been a synthesis of the divisions that Tawney highlighted. However, this thesis argues that, given Labour's broad ideology, Panebianco's concept of the dominant coalition is useful in describing how new Labour combined egalitarianism and meritocracy in policy changes without provoking serious exit.

[825] Tawney,RH (1932) *The Choice Before the Labour Party*, Political Quarterly, 1932

In developing compulsory education policy, new Labour, in both Opposition and Government, has clearly been influenced by changes introduced by the Conservatives in government. The Labour Party clearly moved to the right, with an emphasis on individualism and an acceptance of the power of markets and the need for low and accountable public spending. In celebrating choice and diversity to suit individual requirements, new Labour entered office pledged to manage a system which offered a hierarchy of schools: independent fee-paying schools; grammar schools; City Technology Colleges; Foundation (formerly Grant Maintained) schools; specialist state schools (including Beacon Schools); Aided (usually church) schools; comprehensive schools; and secondary modern schools in areas where grammar schools persist. Of these eight categories, seven are state funded, while all but comprehensives and secondary moderns can select a proportion of their intake by ability, aptitude or religious persuasion. As well as this emphasis on selection by schools and choice for parents, which has created a sophisticated market pricing system for schools, new Labour has also introduced measures to centralise the education service, taking powers from both the professionals in the schools and the democratically elected local education authorities.

New Labour was careful to include elements of traditional Labour Party policy on class sizes and on subsidies for private schools which allow them to touch traditional Labour Party bases. The clearest signal that new Labour proposed in compulsory education was of zero tolerance of poor standards, which again appealed to Labour's traditional working class supporters. However, standards were most effectively invoked rhetorically in an effort to attract middle class support to the 'modernised comprehensive principle'. More assiduously, the question of educational standards was used to override concerns about the demise of local democratic influence, professional autonomy, the comprehensive principle itself and the creeping privatisation of some aspects of state education. While there was much internal debate about these changes, particularly on selection and the role of the LEA, there were few internal Labour Party groups which could have prevented a strong new Labour leadership from introducing such changes. In compulsory education, at least, policy development seems to have proceeded from new intellectual and moral foundations rather than from the bypassing of a party caucus. The three elements of the synthesis discussed in Chapter Two, changes to the institutional structure, intellectual individualisation and moral authoritarianism, allow new Labour to take populist positions on many educational issues. In compulsory education new Labour can be seen to have shifted the consensus by ratcheting up the 'standards' debate, and indeed in this area have fused the aspirational requirements of its new-found supporters and satisfied the meritocratic element of party ideology by attacking the producer interests in ways that may even benefit some of Britain's most deprived communities.

In post-compulsory and training issues, institutional factors were more important, especially with regard to training policy where the trade unions were marginalised both intellectually (the tide of individualistic ideas and the needs of a flexible workforce) as well as constitutionally, with trade union concerns listened to but rejected. These changes go back beyond the advent of new Labour in 1994, to the Policy Review period at least. Marginalised constitutionally and in the end willing to exchange pre-election quietude for a minimum wage and Britain's signing of the Social Charter, the party's affiliated trade unions effectively reinforced Lewis Minkin's theory by uniting with the PLP leadership in the name of electoral necessity. On other issues in post-compulsory education, new Labour was content to join the consensus about the qualifications structure, without legislating to level that structure; therefore the 'gold standard' of A levels would be retained. New Labour preferred to exhort long term cultural change in the name of lifelong learning, which may yet bear fruit as some, like Bob Fryer and Ken Spours, would hope. With less issue salience in most post-compulsory issues, new Labour is content to use its new found policymaking autonomy to resist taking on the vested interests in further and higher education, therefore sacrificing egalitarianism for meritocracy and radicalism for caution.

In matters of higher education policy, the leadership of new Labour also failed to set the political agenda, preferring to react to the existing consensus position and declining to harm the elite interests of the liberal university sector. Once again, the party itself failed to develop a radical lobby in favour of a more egalitarian HE. The single brave decision, on tuition fees, was made possible by Labour's huge majority in a new House of Commons and the backing of virtually the whole policy community, but as we have seen, the implementation of the replacement of grants with student financed fees was politically inept. Firstly, new Labour had failed to prepare the ground before the election by being deliberately vague about the difference between fees and maintenance. Secondly, by failing to consolidate changes to the status of HE funding through resource accounting by including a pledge in party documents, new Labour failed to prevent the Treasury re-imposing conservative philosophy after the election with regard to the role of the Office of National Statistics. Thirdly, new Labour failed to anticipate the problems which the announcement caused, and despite the egalitarian slant put on the removal of the free provision of HE to the middle class, new Labour were too politically cautious to gain credit from its modest redistributive effects.

The changes discussed in this thesis, and the synthesis which has become new Labour, have clearly produced a more reactive party than was possible under the dual hierarchy of the 1918 constitution. However, given the low political salience of many of the policy issues discussed in this thesis, the full extent of the constitutional policymaking practices may only emerge in the

future. Indeed, the reactiveness of new Labour does not preclude a left-ward drift by a future, equally oligarchic, dominant coalition if more egalitarian policies are favoured by the electorate. If the consensus moves, rational parties are obliged to follow, especially if they have the ideological leeway of the Labour Party and the Michelsian policymaking structure of new Labour.

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Appendix I

Inter-Party consensus tables

Class Sizes and Teacher Supply

Year	Labour	Conservatives
1964	Labour will cut down our overcrowded classes in both primary and secondary schools: the aim is to reduce all classes to 30 at the earliest possible moment.	The training colleges will be producing by 1970 three times as many new teachers as in 1958, and the larger numbers going on to higher education will mean more teachers later on.
1966	Our first priority is to reduce the size of classes. We shall intensify our efforts to increase the recruitment of teachers, and improve their status in society	Get more teachers especially for the primary schools by expanding the Colleges of Education, enabling part-time teachers to qualify for pension, and giving more encouragement to married women who want to return to teaching.
1970	We intend to make further progress, now that the supply of teachers has been increased, towards our aim of reducing to 30 the size of all classes in our schools	
1974a		
1974b		
1979	Labour will continue to give high priority to reducing class sizes further.	
1983	We will restore funds to local education authorities to reduce class sizes	This country is now spending more per child in school than ever before, even after allowing for price rises. As a result, the average number of children per teacher is the lowest ever
1987	We will make provision for smaller classes and ensure that children have up-to-date books, equipment and buildings without having to depend on fund-raising for those essentials.	Schools will be required to enrol children up to the school's physical capacity instead of artificially restricting pupil numbers, as can happen today
1992	Within 12 months, we will end the scandal of primary school classes of over 40 children. We will then establish and steadily reduce maximum limits on class sizes, until no primary school child is taught in a class of more than 30.	

1997	We will reduce class sizes for five, six and seven year-olds to 30 or under, by phasing out the assisted places scheme, the cost of which is set to rise to 180 million pounds per year.	We will.. encourage more teachers to enter the profession.

Nursery Provision for 3 and 4 year olds and Prioritise early years

Year	Labour	Conservatives
1964		
1966		Give improvements to primary school accommodation priority over projects for building new comprehensive schools
1970	In the next five years, we shall put more resources, both teachers and building, into the primary schools and expand nursery schools provision both in, and outside, the educational priority areas.	We also recognise the need for expansion of nursery education. This is especially important in areas of social handicap, such as the poorer parts of our large cities, where it is so vital to give children a better start.
1974a	Expand the education service by the introduction of a national scheme of Nursery Schools, including day care facilities	We shall gradually extend free nursery schooling throughout the country so that within ten years it should be available for all three- and four-year-old children whose parents wish them to have it.
1974b	Continue to give priority to nursery school and day care provision	
1979	Our aim is to provide nursery education for 90 per cent of our 4-year-olds and half of our 3-year-olds by the early 1980s.	
1983	For the under fives, our goal is to achieve comprehensive provision, with priorities for children in the most deprived areas. We will unify education and care services for the under-fives, both nationally and	

	locally. Our aim will be to introduce a statutory duty on local authorities to provide nursery education, as soon as possible, for all pre-school children whose parents wish it	
1987	We will make nursery education available for all three- and four-year-olds whose parents want this opportunity	Eighty per cent of all three- and four-year-olds in this country attend nursery classes, reception classes or playgroups. Formal nursery education is not necessarily the most appropriate experience for children. Diversity of provision is desirable. LEA's should look to support the voluntary sector alongside their own provision
1992	We will offer nursery education to three and four year olds	We will continue to encourage the creation of nursery places
1997	Nursery vouchers have been proven not to work. They are costly and do not generate more quality nursery places. We will use the money saved by scrapping nursery vouchers to guarantee places for four year-olds. We will invite selected local authorities to pilot early excellence centres combining education and care for the under-fives. We will set targets for universal provision for three year-olds whose parents want it.	[O]nly we are committed to giving the parent of every four year old child a voucher so they can choose the pre-school education they want for their child.

Direct Grant Schools, Assisted Places Scheme, Private Schools

Year	Labour	Conservative
1964	Labour will set up an educational trust to advise on the best way of integrating the public schools into the state system of education	
1966	We have appointed the Public Schools Commission, to recommend the best ways of integrating the Public Schools into the State sector	Give independent schools of high standing the opportunity to become direct grant schools, thus narrowing the gap between State schools and fee-paying schools
1970	We have legislated to end fee paying in Scotland, and we intend	We will encourage the direct grant schools. Many of these schools have

	to legislate further to ensure that no local authority in Scotland can maintain an area of privilege which destroys the full benefits of comprehensive reorganisation for its children	an excellent record and provide opportunities... regardless of their parent's income
1974a	All forms of tax-relief and charitable status for public schools will be withdrawn	We will defend the fundamental right of parents to spend their money on their children's education should they wish to do so
1974b	Stop the present system of Direct Grant Schools and withdraw tax relief and charitable status from Public Schools, as a first step towards our long-term aim of phasing out fee paying in schools	We will expect local authorities to make their schemes of reorganisation sufficiently flexible to include grammar and direct grants of proven worth. This will help meet the needs of bright and able children, especially those from disadvantaged areas.
1979	Independent schools still represent a major obstacle to equality of opportunity. Labour's aim is to end, as soon as possible, fee-paying in such schools, while safeguarding schools for the handicapped. Labour will end as soon as possible the remaining public subsidies and public support to independent schools	The Direct Grant schools, abolished by Labour, gave wider opportunities for bright children from modest backgrounds. The Direct Grant principle will therefore be restored with an Assisted Places Scheme. Less well-off parents will be able to claim part or all of the fees at certain schools from a special government fund
1983	We will abolish the Assisted Places Scheme and local authority place buying;.. We shall also withdraw charitable status from private schools and all their other public subsidies and tax privileges. We will also charge VAT on the fees paid to such schools; phase out fee charging; and integrate private schools within the local authority sector where necessary.	[The] Government offered Assisted Places to enable less well-off parents to send their bright children to some of the best independent schools. We shall defend Church schools and independent schools alike against our opponents' attacks. And we shall defend the right of parents to spend their own money on educating their children
1987	[we shall] ... stop the diverting of precious resources that occurs through the Assisted Places Scheme and the public subsidies to private schools	We will expand the Assisted Places Scheme to 35,000. This highly successful scheme has enabled 25,000 talented children from less-well-off backgrounds to gain places at the 230 independent schools currently in the scheme. We will continue to defend the right to independent education as part of a free society. It is under threat from all the other parties

1992	We will phase out the Assisted Places scheme (without affecting pupils currently on a place, or offered one from September 1992) and redirect the savings to meet wider educational needs	We have always fought to maintain diversity in education, protecting the right of local people to preserve their grammar schools, and defending independent schools against mindless Labour attacks
1997	We will reduce class sizes for five, six and seven year-olds to 30 or under, by phasing out the assisted places scheme, the cost of which is set to rise to 180 million pounds per year.	We will give more talented children, from less well off backgrounds, the opportunity to go to fee-paying schools by extending the Assisted Places Scheme to cover all ages of compulsory education

Comprehensive reorganisation, parental choice, opting out

Year	Labour	Conservative
1964	Labour will get rid of the segregation of children into separate schools caused by 11-plus Selection: secondary education will be reorganised on comprehensive lines. Within the new system, grammar school education will be extended: in future no child will he denied the opportunity of benefiting from it through arbitrary selection at the age of 11	Of the many different forms of secondary school organisation which now exist, none has established itself as exclusively right. The Socialist plan to impose the comprehensive principle, regardless of the wishes of parents, teachers and authorities, is therefore foolishly doctrinaire. Their leader may protest that grammar schools will be abolished ' over his dead body", but abolition would be the inevitable and disastrous consequence of the policy to which they are committed
1966	[W]e shall press ahead with our plans to abolish the 11-plus - that barrier to educational opportunity - and re-organise secondary education on comprehensive lines. We have appointed the Public Schools Commission, to recommend the best ways of integrating the Public Schools into the State sector	Give parents as much choice as possible by having diversity in the pattern of education. Give independent schools of high standing the opportunity to become direct grant schools, thus narrowing the gap between State schools and fee paying schools.
1970	Comprehensive reorganisation has been vigorously pursued. In the past six years 129 of the 163 English and Welsh local education authorities have agreed plans for reorganising their secondary schools.	In secondary education, a number of different patterns have developed over the years, including many types of comprehensive school. We will maintain the existing rights of local education authorities to decide what is best for their area.

	This progress must not be checked; it must go forward. We shall legislate to require the minority of Tory education authorities who have so far resisted change to abandon eleven plus selection.	Many of the most imaginative new schemes abolishing the eleven-plus have been introduced by Conservative councils. We therefore believe that Labour's attempt to insist on compulsory reorganisation on rigid lines is contrary to local democracy and contrary to the best interests of the children.
1974a	..finally ending the 11+...	We believe it to be educationally unwise to impose a universal system of comprehensive education on the entire country. Local education authorities should allow genuine scope for parental choice, and we shall continue to use our powers to give as much choice as possible
1974b	As in all our plans, economic restraints are bound to influence timing. But the next Labour Government will: End the II plus and other forms of selection for secondary education.	We are in no way against comprehensive schools: what we oppose is the ruthless imposition of these schools, regardless of local needs and in defiance of parents' wishes. Typical of this approach is Labour's circular, which hits the building programmes of local authorities which have not gone comprehensive. The next Conservative government will withdraw this
1979	The Labour Party believes in equality of opportunity. Universal comprehensive education, which is central to our policy, must be completed in the 1980s.	The Labour Party is still obsessed with the structure of the schools system, paying too little regard to the quality of education. Extending parents' rights and responsibilities, including their right of choice, will also help raise standards by giving them greater influence over education. Our Parents' Charter will place a clear duty on government and local authorities to take account of parents' wishes when allocating children to schools, with a local appeals system for those dissatisfied. Schools will be required to publish prospectuses giving details of their examination and other results.
1983	We will: Repeal the Education Act 1979 and	For a long time now, parents have been worried about standards and

	prohibit all forms of academic selection, such as the eleven plus, as a condition of admission to secondary schools. Require local education authorities to maintain a broad, balanced and comprehensive curriculum, providing genuinely equal opportunities for boys and girls, and for the ethnic minorities to meet the needs of our multi-cultural society.	discipline in many of our schools. This Conservative Government has responded to that worry with the Parents' Charter and the 1980 Education Act. For the first time: local authorities were obliged to take account of parents' choice of school for their children; schools were obliged to publish prospectuses, giving details of their examination results; parents were given the right to be represented on school governing bodies.
1987	Labour will invest in education so that the abilities of all children and adults from all home back grounds and in every part of our country are discovered and nourished. At the same time as we improve the quality of publicly provided education, we shall end the 11 plus everywhere.	These steps will compel schools to respond to the views of parents. But there must also be variety of educational provision so that parents can better compare one school with another. We will therefore support the co-existence of a variety of schools – comprehensive, grammar, secondary modern, voluntary controlled and aided. If, in a particular school, parents and governing bodies wish to become independent of the LEA, they will be given the choice to do so. Those schools which opt out of LEA control will receive a full grant direct from the Department of Education and Science
1992	Opted-out schools will be freed from central government control and brought together with City Technology Colleges into the mainstream of the local school system	We believe all parents have the right to choice in education – not only those who can afford school fees. Young people differ in their interests and aptitudes, and we need a range of schools to offer them the best opportunities
1997	We must modernise comprehensive schools. Children are not all of the same ability, nor do they learn at the same speed. That means 'setting' children in classes to maximise progress, for the benefit of high-fliers and slower learners alike. The focus must be on levelling up, not levelling down. We reject the Tories' obsession with school structures: all parents	Since 1979 we have created a rich diversity of schools, to serve the varied tastes of children and give parents choice within that diversity, because we believe that parents know what is best for their children. [A] grammar school in every town where parents want that choice. Schools are stronger and more effective where head-teachers and governors can shape their own

	should be offered real choice through good quality schools, each with its own strengths and individual ethos. There should be no return to the 11-plus.	agenda. Sometimes that means developing a specialism in some subjects. Sometimes it means selecting children by their aptitudes... special abilities should be recognised and encouraged.

Grant Maintained and Local Management of Schools

Year	Labour	Conservatives
1987		Within five years governing bodies and head teachers of all secondary schools and many primary schools will be given control over their own budgets. They know best the needs of their school. With this independence they will manage their resources and decide their priorities, covering the cost of books, equipment, maintenance and staff; we will allow state schools to opt-out of LEA control
1992	We will reform the Conservatives' scheme for the local management of schools All schools will be free to manage their day-to-day budgets, with local education authorities given a new strategic role	We have further increased diversity by: Giving schools control over their own budgets and encouraging new types of school. Allowing schools to become independent of local councils, by applying for Grant-Maintained status if the parents involved so wish. By mid-1992, over 200 GM schools will be up and running. Creating a number of highly popular City Technology Colleges Existing schools which opt for GM status will be able to emulate City Technology Colleges and attract private technology sponsorship.
1997	Schools that are now grant maintained will prosper with Labour's proposals, as will every school. Tory claims that Labour will close these schools are false. The system of funding will not discriminate unfairly either between schools or	We will encourage more schools to become grant-maintained... we will give all grant-maintained schools greater freedom to expand and to select their pupils. Local authority schools are benefiting from our policy of local management of schools.

	between pupils. LEAs will be represented on governing bodies, but will not control them. We support guidelines for open and fair admissions, along the lines of those introduced in 1993; but we will also provide a right of appeal to an independent panel in disputed cases.	We will extend the benefits of greater self-governance to all LEA schools.

Raising standards, teacher quality

Year	Labour	Conservatives
1964		
1966	Our educational aims.. are the highest possible standard of education for all children	Judge proposals for reorganisation on their educational merits.
1970		Concern about teacher training is widespread. We wish the teaching profession to have a career structure which will attract recruits of high quality into the profession, and retain them.
1974a		Because of our concern over reading standards we have set up an enquiry... to report on all aspects of the teaching of English. Higher standards of education can only be achieved through more and better trained teachers. We wish to move the debate away from the kind of school which children attend and concentrate on the kind of education they receive
1974b		Many parents are deeply worried about the quality of education which **their** children receive- in particular about standards of learning, conduct and discipline. We must take speedy action to raise the standards of teaching and education. This will involve considerable strengthening of the system of school inspection. National

		standards of reading, writing and arithmetic will be set
1979		We shall promote higher standards of achievement in basic skills. In teacher training there must be more emphasis on practical skills and on maintaining discipline
1983	We shall encourage a higher standard of achievement among all pupils in the variety of academic and other activities which are essential parts of fully comprehensive education	Until now, HM Inspector's reports have remained secret. Now we are publishing them.. We are not satisfied with the selection or the training of our teachers. WE shall encourage schools to keep proper records of their pupils progress... and carry out externally graded tests
1987	[W]e shall work with local education authorities to secure a... School Standards Council, and a new profile of achievement recording individual progress through school for all pupils.	[M]oney alone is not enough. Increased resources have not produced uniformly higher standards. Parents and employers are rightly concerned that enough children can master the basic skills
1992	By investing in better teaching, smaller classes and modern books and equipment we will raise education standards. To make sure children are reading by the age of seven, we will create a National Reading Standards programme, with a national Reading Recovery Programme to help those in difficulty. [W]ithin five years, we want four out of five 16 to 18 year olds to be able to achieve at least five GCSEs at grades A, B, or C, or their equivalent.	Regular and straightforward tests will be in place for all 7,11 and 14 year olds by 1994. As the first step in the reform of teacher training, postgraduate students will spend much more time in the classroom, learning their skills under the practised eye of senior teachers
1997	Standards, more than structures, are the key to success. Labour will never put dogma before children's education. Every school has the capacity to succeed. All Local Education Authorities (LEAs) must demonstrate that every school is improving. For those failing schools unable to improve, ministers will order a 'fresh start' to close the school and start afresh on the same site. Every school needs baseline	Our decision to test children and publish the results has allowed standards to be measured and exposed. [W]e will require every school to plan how to improve its performance and to set targets. Parent power is a vital force for higher standards. Sometimes schools are failing because the LEA which runs them is failing... [these LEAs] will be required to set out plans to raise standards.

	assessment of pupils when they enter the school, and a year-on-year target for improvement. Schools are critically dependent on the quality of all staff. The majority of teachers are skilful and dedicated, but some fall short. We will improve teacher training, and ensure that all teachers have an induction year when they first qualify, to ensure their suitability for teaching.	We will establish a more rigorous and effective system of appraising teachers.

National Curriculum

Year	Labour	Conservatives
1987	[W]e shall work with local education authorities to secure a flexible but clear core curriculum agreed at national level...	[W]e will establish a National Core Curriculum... between the ages of 5 to 16 to study a basic range of subjects- including maths, English and science. We will consult widely among those concerned in establishing the curriculum
1992	Labour will modernise the national curriculum and apply it in all schools. From the age of fourteen, pupils will study five essential subjects: English, mathematics, science, a modern language and technology.	For the first time in our history, we will soon have a National Curriculum which will require the main school subjects to be covered thoroughly
1997	We must recognise the three 'r's for what they are the building blocks of all learning that must be taught better. ..creating new opportunities for children, after the age of 14, to enhance their studies by acquiring knowledge and experience within industry and commerce.	We are revising and simplifying the National Curriculum in primary schools to emphasise high standards in the basic skills. We will.. introduce a new test for 14 year old children that covers the whole National Curriculum..

Post-Compulsory issues:

A levels and Further Education provision

Year	Labour	Conservatives

1964		More and more who have the ability to benefit will stay on to 17 and 18 and go forward to higher education
1966		
1970	We have never believed that education and educational opportunity should stop at the school leaving age; nor that further education should be confined to full time students in colleges and universities.	
1974a	[A] big expansion of educational facilities for 16-18 year olds..	The expansion of further.... education will be less rapid than planned because of the reduced demand for places and the prevailing economic circumstances, but numbers will continue to increase
1974b		
1979	Further education places have increased by 25,000 under Labour.	
1983	Our aim is to replace the rigid 'A' level system with a broader programme of study... thus preventing over-specialisation and promoting flexibility and breadth in learning.	
1987	We will spread the provision of a comprehensive tertiary system of post-school education. There will be maintenance allowances for 16- to 18- year olds whose family circumstances would otherwise impeded their further education.	
1992	[W]e will establish a five-subject A level and bring it together with technical qualifications into our new Advanced Certificate.	We will defend the well-respected A-levels examination, which Labour would destroy. We are giving further education colleges and sixth form colleges in England and Wales autonomy, free from council control. We also value our school sixth forms and will ensure they retain their place in the new system
1997	In schools and colleges, we support broader A-levels and upgraded vocational qualifications, underpinned by rigorous standards and key skills.	We will continue to uphold the gold standards of A-levels and ensure that the great classics of our literature are studied at A-level

Training, provision and funding

Year	Labour	Conservatives
1964	Most young people, and particularly girls, are still denied either adequate training at work or release for further education and technical colleges. [We will implement] The right to first-rate industrial training with day and block release for the young worker; The right to retraining for adult workers.	Steps will be taken to increase the number of industrial workers under 18 who are released during the day to attend technical and other courses
1966	Industrial Training Boards will increase the range of training opportunities for school leavers. It will become normal, rather than exceptional, for young workers to have part-time education up to the age of at least 18.	
1970	Over 1,400,000 people are now being Trained, including 500,000 apprentices. The main responsibility lies with the Industrial Training Boards. The Central Training Council is also being given a more important role in co-ordinating industrial training over the whole field. [The] C.T.C.s have a vital role to play helping to meet urgent shortages of skilled labour and to retrain redundant workers for new jobs, particularly in the development areas.	We will stimulate a massive retraining programme for men and women in industry. We will closely monitor the work of the Industrial Training Boards and the operation of the levy/grant system
1974a	...redundant workers must have an automatic right to retraining; redundancy should then lead not to unemployment, but to retraining and job changing	For the nation as a whole we have introduced the Training Opportunities Scheme... We have nearly trebled the numbers being trained and retrained under government auspices. Our Employment and Training Act has provided industry with help in increasing its own training, related to actual labour needs, through the newly established Manpower Services Commission.
1974b	Redundant workers must have a automatic right to retraining, with	One possibility, which we will want to examine closely, is to allow

	redundancy leading not to unemployment, but to retraining and job changing.	children of fifteen the opportunity of taking up an apprenticeship or training as a first step towards taking a job
1979	We will introduce a new statutory framework, linking adult training with initial training. This will place a statutory duty on employers to carry out training and establish work-place training committees. Adequate funds will be provided jointly by industry and government	We are aware of the special problems associated with the need to increase the number of high-quality entrants to the engineering professions. We shall review the relationship between school, further education and training to see how better use can be made of existing resources
1983	We will give to young employees who are at work the right to be released to college or school, on full pay. Employers will be given a statutory duty to provide opportunities for their young employees to receive systematic education and training	This year, some 1,100,000 people are being training or helped by the most comprehensive programme of its kind in Europe. Training for work must start with better, more relevant education at school. [Our aim is] reform of the industrial training and apprenticeship system.
1987	British industry now carries out less than half the training of our competitors. Labour will therefore establish a national training programme to bring about a major advance in the spread and standard of skills.	
1992	Learning must become a lifetime opportunity, with new chances to update skills at work. Sixteen year olds not in full time education will be entitled to a new traineeship lasting for up to two years, with an option of another two years. Every young person in employment will be guaranteed the right to Learn While You Earn	We will... continue to develop new high-quality National Vocational Qualifications, and introduce a new post-16 diploma which recognises achievement in both vocational and academic courses. Now we are offering young people aged 16 and 17 vouchers they can use to buy approved courses of education or training, and which will put the power of choice in their hands
1997	Employers have the primary responsibility for training their workforces in job-related skills. But individuals should be given the power to invest in training. We will invest public money for training in Individual Learning Accounts which individuals... can then use to gain the skills they want. We will give 250,000 under-25s opportunities for work, education and training. Four options will be	We will give students between 14 and 21 a learning credit which will enable them to choose suitable education or training leading to recognised qualifications up to A-levels or their equivalents. We will also introduce National Traineeships and encourage employers to offer more Modern Apprenticeships.. We will continue to support the network of Training and Enterprise

	on offer, each involving day-release education or training leading to a qualification: private-sector job: employers will be offered a 60 pound-a-week rebate for six months work with a non-profit voluntary sector employer, paying a weekly wage, equivalent to benefit plus a fixed sum for six months full-time study for young people without qualifications on an approved course: a job with the environment taskforce, linked to Labour's citizens' service programme. Rights and responsibilities must go hand in hand, without a fifth option of life on full benefit.	Councils.

Human capital, value-for-money

Year	Labour	Conservatives
1964	Labour believes the national plan will require a faster rate of change in industry. To meet the human needs that will arise it is essential to combine with our education reforms a revolution in training	Education is the most rapidly developing feature of our social outlay. This reflects our view of education as at once a right of the child, a need of society, and a condition of economic efficiency.
1966	The universities are being assisted to make a growing contribution in science, technology and social studies	
1970	This increased [educational] expenditure reflects our belief.. that it will make a contribution the welfare, quality and happiness of our society. We are in transition to a new era where higher education could become available to wider section of the community. This expansion will require very careful planning.	Modern industry imposes new and heavy burdens on all levels of management. Good management is essential not only for efficiency and the proper use of capital resources, but also for the creation of good industrial relations
1974a		
1974b		
1979		
1983	Give the Manpower Services	If we are to make the most of the

	Commission the authority and resources it needs to do the job.. develop regional and local structures, advise companies on their plans for manpower..	employment opportunities that present themselves in an age of rapid change and more varied patterns of work and occupation, up-to-date training is essential
1987	For modern, wealth-creating industry we need a well trained workforce. Education for life through a well funded adult education service will help to provide the means by which rapid economic and social change can be embraced	[W]e must meet the nation's demand for highly qualified manpower to compete in international markets
1992	Good education is the best investment in Britain's future. We want every child to get qualifications that count	Last year we launched the new Employment Action programme, which will help more than 61,000 people in a full year
1997	Education... is not just good for the individual. It is an economic necessity for the nation. We will compete successfully on the basis of quality or not at all. And quality comes from developing the potential of all our people. It is the people who are our greatest natural asset. We will ensure they can fulfil their potential.	Britain's prosperity depends on the quality of [children's] education. Competitive markets demand high skills. If Britain is to win, we need to encourage learning and give people the opportunity to go where their interests and inquiring minds take them.

Further and Higher Education expansion

Year	Labour	Conservative
1964	Labour will carry out a programme of massive expansion in higher, further and university education.	More and more who have the ability to benefit will stay on to 17 and 18 and go forward to higher education. This will be made possible by our plans for the universities, colleges of advanced technology, higher technical institutions and teacher training colleges
1966	We shall expand higher education provision in the universities, the colleges of education, and the leading technology colleges. We shall establish the University of the Air... this open University will enormously extend the best teaching facilities and give everyone the opportunity to study	Restore the university and further education buildings programme cut by the Labour Government

	for a full degree	
1970	We shall still further expand higher education. We are in a transition to a new era where higher education, traditionally the preserve of a small educational elite, could become available to a wider section of the community.	The demand for higher and further education in universities, polytechnics and other colleges will increase in the 1970s. We will expend the number of places available.
1974a		The expansion of further and higher education will be less rapid than planned because of the reduced demand for places and the prevailing economic circumstances.
1974b	We will support the further development of the Open University.	
1979	Further education places have increased by 25,000 under Labour. Labour will substantially increase the opportunities for people from working-class backgrounds.. to enter higher education.	We are aware of the special problems associated with the need to increase the number of high-quality entrants to the engineering professions.
1983	Our policy for education after 18 is expansion with change. We will reverse the Tory cuts and restore the right of all qualified young people seeking higher education to secure places. We will also substantially expand opportunities for adults in both further and higher education.	More of our young people are now entering full-time degree courses than under the last Labour government .
1987	We will ensure that our universities and polytechnics get the resources they need to restore and expand the opportunity for all qualified young people seeking higher education to secure places. We will ensure that more adults have access to higher education.	[W]e want to expand higher education opportunities still further.
1992	[W]ithin four years we will double the number of students in higher education, with at least one in three young adults participating by 2000.	By the year 2000, one in three young people will follow full-time higher education courses. Meanwhile, the number of mature entrants to higher education has risen by 65 per cent since 1979.
1997	The improvement and expansion needed cannot be funded out of general taxation.	We have world class research in British universities which we will continue to support.

Higher Education funding, student loans

Year	Labour	Conservative
1964	To stop the 'brain drain' Labour will grant to the universities and colleges of technology the funds necessary.	
1966		
1970		
1974a		The review of student's grants is proceeding and we shall continue to improve the parental income scale so that parents on a given income will pay less toward the grant
1974b		We.. want to ease the financial problems faced by our universities and see that teachers in polytechnics, with the same qualifications as those at the universities, receive the same salaries. In addition our aim will be to finance the polytechnics and colleges of education in a similar way to the universities.
1979		Much of our higher education in Britain has a world-wide reputation for its quality. We shall seek to ensure that this excellence is maintained.
1983		The very large sums of public money now going to higher education must be spent in the most effective way.
1987	We will also invest in research in higher education, in order to provide the facilities and opportunities necessary to sustain standards of excellence.	As part of aim to widen access to higher education we have begun a review of student support... No final conclusions have been reached, but we believe that top-up loans to supplement grants are one way, among others, of bringing in new finance to help students and relieve pressure on their parents.
1992	The student loan scheme deters many bright youngsters from poor families. We will replace it with a fairer system of student grants and targeted help for housing and vacation hardship.	We will continue to provide generous support for students and to expand our student loans commitment. The new system will steadily reduce the proportion of student's living costs that their parents are expected to meet.
1997	The costs of student maintenance	

	should be repaid by graduates on an income-related basis, from the career success to which higher education has contributed. The current system is badly administered and payback periods are too short. We will provide efficient administration, with fairness ensured by longer payback periods where required.	

Appendix II

Persons interviewed for this thesis:

a) Representatives of teacher unions

Richard Margrave, Association of Teachers and Lecturers, (ATL), Northumberland Road, London 25/9/96

Eamon O'Kane, Deputy General Secretary, National Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers, (NASUWT), Covent Garden, London 24/9/96.

Neil Robinson, National Union of Teachers, (NUT), Bloomsbury, London 20/8/96.

Rowie Shaw, National Association of Head Teachers, (NAHT), Westminster, London 21/8/96.

John Sutton, General Secretary, Secondary Heads Association, (SHA), Leicester, 23/9/96.

David Melhuish and Tom Wilson, Association of University Teachers (AUT), Notting Hill Gate, London, 3/9/97.

Ann Cotterrell, National Association of Teachers and Lecturers in Further and Higher Education, (NATFHE), Leeds, 10/9/97.

Representatives of Labour Party affiliated trade unions

Phil Wyatt, General, Municipal and Boilermakers, (GMB), Wimbledon, 29/10/96.

John Mitchell, Graphical, Paper and Media Union, (GPMU), Bedford, 14/8/96.

Jenny Pardington, Political Officer, Transport and General Workers Union, (TGWU), Victoria, London, 25/9/96.

Charlotte Atkins, UNISON, Woolwich 24/9/96.

Representatives of pressure groups and statutory bodies

Margaret Tulloch, Executive Secretary, & Melian Mansfield, NEC Member, Campaign for the Advancement of State Education, (CASE), Bloomsbury, London, 30/10/96.

Professor Gareth Roberts, Committe of Vice-Chancellors and Principals, (CVCP) University of Sheffield, 11/9/96 and 10/12/96.

Geoff Hall, Further Education Funding Council, (FEFC) 10/9/96, Leeds.

Professor James Tooley, Institute of Economic Affairs, (IEA), Hayfield, Derbyshire, 7/3/97.

John Hillier, National Council for Vocational Qualifications, (NCVQ), Euston Road, London, 15th August 1996.

Stephen Pollard, Social Market Foundation, (SMF), Queen Ann's Gate, London, 3/3/97.

Ian Kane, University Council of Teacher Training, (UCETT), Manchester Metropolitan University, 17/3/97.

Representatives of the Labour Party

Liz Allen, Education Policy Officer, Millbank Tower, London, 29/10/96.

David Blunkett, MP, Sheffield, 22/8/96, Leeds, 13/9/97.

Bryan Davies (Lord Davies of Oldham), Westminster, London, 3/9/97.

Margaret Hodge, MP, interviewed by questionnaire, November 1996.

Graham Lane, Socialist Education Association, (SEA), Sheffield, 11/9/96.

Individuals

Professor Robin Alexander, University of Warwick, 4/3/97.

Professor Maurice Kogan, Islington, London, 29/10/96.

Professor Lewis Minkin, Leeds, 1/8/96.

Nick Pearce, interviewed by telephone, 8/10/97.

Professor David Reynolds, University of Newcastle, 17/3/98.

Professor David Robertson, Liverpool John Moore's University, 14/4/97.

Professor Peter Scott, University of Leeds, 22/4/97

Ken Spours, Institute of Education Post-16 Centre, University of London, 20/5/97.

Sally Tomlinson, Goldsmiths College, London,18/3/97.

Peter Wilby, New Statesman offices, Victoria, 19/3/97.

Professor Alison Wolf, Institute of Education, University of London, 10/3/97.