

Education reforms

Education



Look at the main Education reforms throughout the 20th Century in terms of their differing aims and perspectives on the control of education in England and Wales.

In this essay I will look at the main education changes and reform acts throughout the 20th century. I will look at several different acts separately and discuss what was achieved in each act and the reasons for why these acts were necessary. I will also look at what happened between the acts and then draw a conclusion comparing the main differences between the Education Acts and reforms throughout the 20th century.

In the 1920's education had come a cause for concern amongst the politicians of the time. Due to the rising level of public debate during this era, the government of the day created a series of commissions of enquiry which was headed by Hadow. The Hadow committee published three very important reports in 1926, 1931, and 1933. These reports led to major changes in the structure of primary education which in effect influenced the 1944 Education Act (One of the most important acts of the century). There were distinct changes in education for children ages between 5-7 and 7-11.

In the words of the Hadow Report of 1926, for the education of children aged broadly 5 - 11 years, 1 " The curriculum of the primary school is to be thought of in terms of activity and experience, rather than of knowledge to be acquired and facts to be stored." This meant that the educationalists wanted to put the emphasis on teachers helping the children to learn rather than just dictate the material to the children. One of the most important implications introduced by the Hadow committee was that class sizes should

be reduced wherever possible to 30 or children or less. This meant that with fewer children in a class children would get more personal attention and help from the teacher.

Another influence on the education system throughout the century was the Norwood report (1943). This had a profound effect on the organisation and curriculum of the countries post war primary schools. The Norwood report referred to three types of children: -

- * The academic

- * The technically minded

- * The 'rest'.

The Norwood Report also said that these children were: -

- * Interested in learning for their own sake

- * An uncanny insight into intricacies of mechanism

- * Deal more easily with concrete things rather than ideas

There was also a lack of resources and school buildings. The Norwood report issued that instead of common secondary schools there would instead be selective grammar schools for the elite band of children and modern secondary schools for the rest.

The Education Act of 1944 was sanctioned by Rab Butler. This act is probably the most important act sanctioned during the century. Butler was the Minister of Education in the coalition government formed by Winston
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Churchill in 1940. Butlers' 1944 Act was claimed to attempt to create the structure for the post-war British Education system. Butler stated that it was, " my opportunity to harness to the educational system the war-time urge for social reform and greater equality." (R. A Butler) He indicates in this statement that he liked the task set before him.

So why was this act necessary? The country was still at war during 1944; however the government was still determined to plan for a better future. The changes in social attitude throughout the war made people more determined to plan for this better future. The government believed that they needed to plan for a post war society which would be less class ridden than that of the pre-war era. Access to all education before 1944 had been limited. For example in 1938 only 1/5 of children age fourteen or above actually received any kind of formal education.

I will now look at the main points of the 1944 Education Act. The Board of Education was abolished in 1944. The Board of Education was replaced with the Ministry of Education. Before 1944 there had been no government department that was dedicated to education. The Minister of education had the duty of providing a varied and comprehensive education service in every area.

The main aim of the Act was to create a system of free, compulsory schooling from the ages of five to fifteen. The Act was seen as an opportunity to give children of different backgrounds equal opportunities in education. There were options available to the parents for where the children went to school. Pupils could either be taught in schools maintained by the LEA,

schools maintained by other organisations and there was also an organisation set up which was known as 'Education Otherwise'. This organisation was set up for parents who wanted home education for their child.

All secondary schools were required to have governing bodies. These governing bodies were established to aid and help the schools run internally. Section 17 required all primary schools to have boards of education however, section 20 allowed

LEA's to group schools under single governing bodies. In some cases this meant that an LEA would maintain several schools. Despite this problem the 1944 Act raised thoughts about school government and created expectations for the future.

The main feature of the Act was how it divided the responsibility between the Central Government, the LEA's and the head teachers of schools. It was the Central Government which allocated the resources, the LEA's who allocated these resources to schools, and the head teacher had control of the school and its curriculum and allocated the resources within the schools.

The Act also made Religious Education compulsory. Students would carry out an act of worship on a daily basis.

There were also major issues on successive education. Three phases in Education were set up: -

* Primary (Age 5-11)

* Secondary (Age 11-15)

* Further

The 'Tripartite System' was introduced and secondary schools were divided into three categories depending on their performance in Education.

Grammar schools for the most able of pupils, Modern schools for the majority of pupils and Technical schools, however not many technical schools were built.

R. A. Butler's Education Act of 1944 made sure that every effort was made to ensure that every child that attends a secondary school would not have to pay fees.

Butler's Education Act also raised the school leaving age to 15 (however, this did not come into effect until 1947) and 16 later on.

In 1965 the government of the time issued Education Circular 10/65. This was set up to allow the LEA to move towards a more comprehensive form of schooling and then in 1967 the Plowden Committee, who were appointed by the government, recommended that changes needed to be made in primary education. 2 " The fact that there was a Report on primary education gave great encouragement to those who worked in primary schools".

They recommended that children should not be grouped to their abilities, more flexible teaching techniques, and a greater regard for creative subjects in primary schools.

The most important act since 1944 was the 1988 Education 'reform' Act. This Act was also known as 'The Baker Act'. Named after the Secretary of the State Kenneth Baker. The Act was seen as the most important piece of Education legislation since 1944. The Act was believed to be "the most radical educational measure of the Thatcher period"

The 1988 Education Act was presented as an Act to enable schools to maintain a larger power. However, the act took away power from the LEA's and gave all powers to the Secretary of the State Kenneth Baker. Kenneth Baker wanted to create an Education market where all the schools would compete with each other to get pupils. Places at the better schools would be in higher demand eventually leaving the worse schools to close because of the lack of pupils and leave only the best schools in each area. There were 3 main aims of the Act. These were to

- * Improve the quality of Education in schools, colleges and universities
- * Raise standards in education,
- * To extend the freedom of choice.

I will now talk about some of the major provisions of the Act in 1988.

Open enrolment was a major provision brought back in the 1988 Act. As talked about earlier this enabled parents to make a choice of where their child went to school.

Grant Maintained schools were also introduced in the Act. Grant maintained schools were schools which opted out of local control (LEA Control). These

schools were granted money by the Central Government. This was a controversial part of the act as there was an increase in funding for the schools and the Grant Maintained schools were allowed to select and set their own admission criteria based on ability. These schools were later abolished in 1998.

The National Curriculum was introduced during the act. The Act required that all pupils were taught a certain amount of set material in order to a wide and balanced education relevant to their needs for later life. The curriculum was divided into subjects. The main aim of enforcing the national curriculum into everyday schooling life was that it should aim to provide opportunities for all pupils to learn and to achieve. To tie in with the National Curriculum, National Curriculum tests were introduced. Pupils were assessed in all the National Curriculum subjects. League tables of school results were also introduced to show statistics from each school based on their academic achievements, parents also got to see which schools were doing well and this put them in a better position of where to choose for their children to go to school. This system however did not succeed in the way it wanted due to the fact that schools became unwilling to take on pupils who had a difficulty with learning in case they had an effect on the schools league position and test results.

The Religious Education system was also looked at during the 1988 Education 'reform' Act. Christianity was to be the dominant religion however, other faiths were to be also acknowledged. The 1988 Act implied that those who were in attendance at a school should take part in a daily act of collective worship (the same as in 1944). There were many people who opposed this.

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Mainly the head teachers of the schools who believed that in some cases it was nearly physically impossible due to the resources to gather all the children in a certain place. Another reason why this was opposed was there was the issue of why Christian acts of worship should be held in schools which were the majority were not of the Christian religion.

School governing bodies were also introduced. Parent governors were added and these governors had responsibilities in relation to the duties enforced in the National Curriculum and they also had a say in the school budget and how it was spent.

The 1944 Act introduced one of the biggest changes where it made 'Secondary Education for all'. This was a major factor as it meant that all children had an equal opportunity in education. The 1988 Act however changed this when it introduced the 'Education market'. This is where all the schools would compete with each other to get pupils. This was a major development and was a total comparison to the equality that came about from the 1944 Education Act. Schools were competing against each other for pupils and with that bad schools would lose pupils and close, leaving only the good schools open.

There were also changes in the Act in how the Education system was run. In 1944 the Minister worked with the LEA. This was known as Dual Control. The system however changed in 1988 when power was taken away from the LEA's and all powers were given to the Secretary of the State Kenneth Baker. This was known as Single Control.

A major step took place in 1944 where Education set up a continuous process. This meant that there was successive education for the first time. The phases for this successive education were:

Primary Education--> Secondary Education--> Further Education

Christopher Winch States the 1988 Education Act was "the single most important piece of Education legislation since the 1944 Act and will shape the nature of our Education system for the Future." The 1988 Act introduced some major additions from the 1944 Education Act.

The National Curriculum was established as well as Grant Maintained Schools. The National Curriculum offered a wider choice of subjects, however there were debates about this due to the fact that choices became limited in what the teachers were allowed to teach. Grant Maintained schools were also a major introduction however these were abolished in 1988 due to the fact that there was an increase in funding for the schools and when the money dried up to fund these schools so did the applications of schools who had earlier seen the change initially as a good idea.

There has been much improvement over the years and many changes to go with them. The leaving age at school has been raised. Raised to 15 in the 1944 Act (however change did not come into effect until 1947) and then later in 1973 to 16.

There has also been a dramatic increase in the amount of voluntary participation at schools throughout the century as the Education system has gradually improved. Undoubtedly, the education service has improved over

the years. Young people are now far better educated, they enjoy greater opportunities than ever before and their aspects are also a lot higher. The 1944 and 1988 Acts paved the ways for this improvement throughout the years but there were also other factors which triumphed throughout the century.

The Hadow report was vastly popular with the teachers. The results of the Hadow report meant that more children were found in primary schools, and class sizes were reduced. This allowed for a more child centred approach in teaching methods. The Plowden reports were also significant due to the fact that it reflected back to the Hadow report and its child centred approach to primary schooling.

5" The general election of May 1997 brought to a sudden end 18 years in which successive right wing conservative governments had made radical and far reaching changes to the education system".

There were a few reversals to the conservative system in education such as the ending of the assisted places scheme and grant maintained schools were abolished; however, most other aspects of the conservative measured remained untouched.