Reshaping British Education – 2016

A Summarising Narrative

There have been massive improvements in British education in the last 70 years – with national expenditure, as a percentage of GDP doubling between 1955 and 2010, and now at almost £90billion p.a. In 1950 only 3.4% of children went to university, now over 45% do; in 1972/3 only 45% of 16 year-olds were in full-time education and now over 85% are; school buildings and classrooms have improved enormously, and white-boards and computers have replaced blackboards and chalk.

Furthermore, for most children the overall quality of life has never been better – in health, life-expectancy and wealth – and, in so many ways the children leaving school today are better than those of past generations – more lively, confident, mature, streetwise and socially aware. Three quarters of our schools are said to be ‘good’ or ‘outstanding’ – GCSE and ‘A’ Level results are good, and the numbers going to university continue to rise.

However, despite all this, it is sad and shaming to record that the education system in the UK, the fifth largest economy in the world, has been failing our children for the last fifty years – and today is unable to provide the skilled staff that our businesses require or to match the PISA performance standards of our international competitors. The frightening facts are given in the ‘Introduction’ to the main document.

The root causes of this damaging failure, with proposed solutions, are summarised below:

NATIONAL GOVERNMENT – The responsibility for this situation of course lies with all national governments since the war, but it must be accepted that the development and implementation of suitable long-term policies for this huge and complex sector is extremely difficult, especially when Education Secretaries change on average every two years, and when they have been often faced with severe and paralysing opposition from the Education Establishment. The situation will only be resolved by the creation of a ‘British Education Council’ of leading professionals – the ‘BEC’ – to guide policy-making for all sectors of education. (Ref Chapter 1, p3)

THE SHAPE OF STATE EDUCATION – The present education network is in disarray – the primary sector is stable but generally under-performing, but the secondary schools network is complex (with 13 different types) and is divided between academies and Local Authority controlled schools, with confused admissions policies and blatant selection in many faith schools, grammar schools and academies. The ‘Post-16’ sector (Schools, Further Education Colleges, Sixth Form Colleges, Studio Schools, Career Colleges and UTCs) is also confused and subject to overlap, severe competition and a shortage of funds. (See Chapter 7, p27)

The current government’s policy of converting all schools into academies, relying on ‘chains’ or Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs) for support, with regional commissioners in control, is unwise, impractical and irrelevant for solving today’s problems:

• There is no hard evidence that academies in general provide a better education than other state schools, although it is not surprising that some academies with new buildings, new better-paid staff, and operating selection, are doing quite well – at the expense of other schools. Academy status will not be appropriate for the vast majority of primary schools, which will find it difficult to survive without some form of local support.
• Again, there is no evidence that Multi-Academy Trusts are successful in their governing role over many schools – a full inspection system has yet to be developed, but in February this year Ofsted had reported on nine chains, eight of which were critical, but some of the biggest, such as Ark, Harris and Reach2, had not been inspected. Cases of mismanagement have already appeared.
• The concept of MATs, with differing models, systems and structures, is illogical, impracticable and dangerous – creating another fragmented and inconsistent level of bureaucracy, replicating the worst elements of the LEA network. A large MAT can cover schools in wide areas from Birmingham to London, Portsmouth and Brighton, and therefore the Directors of MATs, some now earning up to £400,000 a year, are often remote from the day-to-day operations of their schools – schools in which many headteachers will have lost their independence, autonomy and detailed control.
• It is logical, and indeed vital, that education is this country should be managed and planned in local cohesive areas, involving not just schools, but all inter-relating sectors (Early Years, Post-16 colleges, UTCs, Adult, etc.), and led by professionals in that area. MATs would be totally inappropriate in this role.

• Education today has responsibilities and needs which, being so much wider than years ago, the Local Authorities can no longer meet, and a much broader ‘Middle’ is required to provide local services and support to all sectors – a system way beyond the scope of MATs.

We have to recognise that after a hundred years the current basic structure, using Local Authorities, no longer works, and now in 2016, to rely on academies, MATs and Regional Coordinators for a solution to all our problems is, I believe, a recipe for continuing failure. A substantial change in structure is now crucial.

The money has to be found, from a new educational tax or by other means, to build a new ‘Middle’ which is appropriate for today’s education. I believe the answer lies in a two-part structure as follows:

• A network of ‘Area Education Councils’ (about 750), responsible for the supervision, planning and control of a cluster of schools, colleges and other establishments in a local area – councils would consist of all local headteachers and leaders of all other establishments, involving businesses and main service providers.

• A new national organisation, the British Education Support Trust (BEST), with 152 district offices to provide all services and support for all sectors of education. (See Chapter 2, p70 – with an illustration of the proposed structure at the end of this Narrative, Attachment ‘A’)

This new ‘Middle’ would mean that all state schools could be called academies – perhaps ‘Neighbourhood Academies’ – all operating (without the need for Chains or MATs) within the same framework of policies and with the same level of autonomy, but without losing individuality – leading to a system that most parents want: ‘just a good school at the bottom of the road’. (See Chapter 7, p27)

It would also allow us to tackle the three main problem areas, ‘vocational education’, ‘teachers and teaching quality’ and ‘building a new institution in society’, as summarised below – and to review three other sectors of education that require special treatment: ‘Early Years’ (See Chapter 12, p43), ‘Young Leisure’ (See Chapter 13, p45) and ‘Adult Continuous Learning’ (See Chapter 14, p49). Following these reviews, the new ‘Middle’ would produce proposed solutions, area by area, for approval by the BEC – and would then provide appropriate services and support for the new recommended structures countrywide.

A full review of University education is also urgently required – (See Chapter 15, p50)

**VOCATIONAL EDUCATION** – The ‘equality-driven’, ‘one-size-fits-all’ Comprehensive movement launched in 1965 introduced an ‘academically-based’ system, which has been allowed to continue to this day, with the interests of the vocationally-inclined half of the pupil population being neglected. Submerged in a world of GCSEs and ‘A’ Levels, many children struggle in their school years through lessons in which they have little interest, and in subjects from which they have become dis-engaged. The majority of these children are likely to be from deprived areas and from disadvantaged sectors and families.

So, for over fifty years, we have ignored the evidence from overseas and have not offered an appropriate course of learning for the vocationally-minded, thus creating and perpetuating a severe and widening educational gap within schools, and deepening the damaging divide in society between the usually-wealthy cognitive elite and those at the ‘bottom of the pile’ – serving as a permanent barrier to social mobility and directly causing the ‘skills gap’, which is damaging our business sector so severely.

The time has surely come to recognise that we are not all equal, and that we must therefore match the varying needs of our children by offering, as our competitors do, alternative ‘Pathways’ through schooling from the age of 14 – three are suggested, ‘Academic’, ‘Professional’ and ‘Technical’ – each having its own specific curriculum, examinations and qualifications. This will improve life’s chances for 50% of our pupils, allowing many to achieve real social mobility and escape from the cycle of deprivation. It will also improve skills and productivity nationally. (See Chapter 4, p16, & Chapter 6, p21 – and Attachment ‘B’ at the end of this Narrative.)
To ensure the cost-effective provision of these Pathways from 14 onwards, we will have to review the role of schools, FE colleges, Studios, Career Colleges and UTCs to avoid competition and overlap, and the whole national education network will need to be reshaped, area by area in the years ahead, as appropriate. (See Chapter 7, p27, Chapter 8, p31)

Finally, the whole question of apprenticeships has to be resolved, not by complicated levies, but by creating a framework in which businesses and Chambers of Commerce can become involved in education, working to develop the right systems for each locality, as is done in competing countries. Business would be represented on the ‘British Education Council’ in London, on each of the 750 Area Education Councils, and would work with the proposed Business Coordinators in each of the 152 Districts. Business would also need to assist in the creation of suitable qualifications, courses and examinations for the new Pathways. The Government’s Apprenticeship Levy could then be converted into a more useful education tax for general educational purposes. (See Chapter 4, p16)

TEACHERS & TEACHING QUALITY – Teachers have always been under-valued and under-paid, and now they are also under-trained and under pressure with greater responsibilities – so that after many years of over-prescription, high-pressure Ofsted inspections, constant policy changes from centralised Governments and worsening classroom discipline, morale is low. Teaching outcomes have therefore not matched the standards of our own independent schools or of our international competitors. (Chapter 10, p36)

It is crucial that:

- All teaching questions – status, employment terms, qualifications, titles, etc. – are made the responsibility of the British Education Council of professionals, with a priority to control the content and practice of teacher training, both initial and CPD.
- More time must be found for an expanding curriculum – by employing ‘Support Teachers’ on a District basis to cover all PSHE and special subjects such as Sex and Careers, and by lengthening the school day.
- ‘Education Support Managers’ should be appointed in every school, to give teachers more time to teach and to act as a ‘Second Shift’ of management, so that schools can remain open until 10.00pm if required, to provide ‘Extended School’ activities everywhere, and to create Community Hubs where appropriate.
- The question of ‘Progressive’ or trendy teaching, with soft attitudes to discipline, has to be resolved by the ‘British Education Council’. For many years, politicians have proclaimed that ‘it is not the Government’s job to tell teachers how to teach’, but in view of its importance, education professionals should carry out research and a national enquiry to establish an accepted view on the merits of ‘progressive’ and ‘knowledge based’ philosophies. In a state system, we cannot allow individual teachers, schools or universities the luxury of following teaching philosophies that are proven to be less effective than others. (See Chapter 9, p33)
- The question of replacing the Ofsted ‘high pressure’ inspection regime with a system of ‘self-inspection’ should be examined as soon as possible. (See Chapter 11, p 41)

A NEW INSTITUTION IN SOCIETY – Professor Sir Michael Marmot, in his book ‘The Health Gap’, states that to match the educational performance of other competing nations:

‘We have to take active steps to reduce the social gradient in educational performance’, and ‘To achieve good educational results, we also need action to reduce poverty and socio-economic inequality and to improve the family and community context in which children’s education takes place.’

Effectively using the process of education and the education network of over 20,000 schools, colleges and other educational establishments as proposed, will help to improve the ‘family and community context’ by, for example: reshaping and supporting Early Years provision; introducing Pathways through schooling; lengthening the school day; expanding Extended School activities; filling the leisure hours of all ages – through youth clubs in deprived areas and Community Hubs where appropriate; and supporting adult education for self-improvement and progression to a better lifestyle and for productivity. (See Chapters 16, p51, and 17, p56.)
FINAL SUMMARY & CONCLUSIONS

Our education system is not working well, and needs to be reshaped on the lines suggested in this document. I believe that implementing the proposals would remove the root causes of our problems, and would usher in a new ‘professional era’ of relative peace, harmony and cooperation – replacing the current environment of market forces, competition, selection and continuing friction. This new era would be created and preserved for the future by:

• The permanent ‘British Education Council’ of leading professionals, with permanent operating ‘Boards’ – bringing long-term strategies and policies, cost-effectively applied – without ‘Establishment’ opposition.
• Area Education Councils – bringing together the leaders of schools, all education establishments and providers in small clusters – seeking improvement through sharing, cooperation and peer supervision.
• The new BEST organisation, providing wide and nationally consistent support and service to all educational units, using new ‘Support Teachers’ and a ‘Second Shift’ of management staff in every school – allowing the school day to be lengthened, the Extended Schools programme to be expanded countrywide and Community Hubs to be developed wherever practical.
• The network of all state schools operating as ‘Neighbourhood Academies’, all operating in the same legal framework of rules for funding, admissions, curriculum, etc., and all with the same level of autonomy – avoiding selection, the manic and divisive hunt for good schools and the widening of the social gap.
• The new regime for vocational education with alternative Pathways through schooling from age 14, and involving Chambers of Commerce and business in the provision of high quality apprenticeships, etc.
• Teachers being given their due status, rewards, training and time to do what is one of the most important and most difficult jobs in life – free from Ofsted inspections and national League Tables.

It is also hoped that within ten years, we would see this country at the top of the PISA rankings, that businesses had all the skilled staff they require, that problems of mental health, obesity, drugs, Internet abuse, etc. had reduced, that lifestyles had improved and the social/educational gap had narrowed – and with the UK still united, we would be leading the world in a campaign against poverty and deprivation, by exporting education in all its aspects to Africa and elsewhere, to counter the dangers of conflict and mass immigration.

Funding is of course the vital matter *(see p66)*, but the Government should seriously consider:

• The statement by the CBI in 2012 that: ‘Raising educational attainment to the best levels in Europe could boost GDP by more than £8Trillion over the lifetime of a child born today, the equivalent of one percentage point a year on growth. Few other changes could make such a powerful difference to the long-term health of our economy’.
• The replacement of the apprenticeship levy by an entirely new wider educational tax on business, applied nationally and perhaps also locally, to meet the ‘broad-brush’ estimated extra cost of £5billion a year to implement these proposals in full – against the average return of £100billion per annum as suggested by the CBI.

There are of course many other unanswered questions – but this document only attempts to propose a direction of travel, with many ideas for debate. Hopefully it will not be considered as a complete package for acceptance or rejection, so that for example, two of the most vital matters – the introduction of ‘Pathways’ and the creation of the ‘British Education Council’ – could be accepted quickly for detailed study by experts, while the other proposals remained to be debated.

Only one thing is absolutely certain – the status quo is not an option if we are to ensure a decent education for our children in the decades ahead.

John Mirams – March 2016

*An illustration of the proposed reshaped education system is shown as Attachment ‘C’.*
THE NEW ‘MIDDLE’
Authority from Local Councils — Services from BEST

DISTRICT EDUCATION COUNCIL

AREA EDUCATION COUNCILS

Nursery & Pre-Schools  Primary Schools  Secondary & Special Schools  F E Colleges  6th Form CoEls Studios UTCs, etc  Early Years  Adult Continuous Learning  Young Leisure

SOCIETY

BUSINESS
Business Coordinators with Links to Employers and Chambers of Commerce, etc.

TEACHING SUPPORT
Supply Staff Specialists/SEN LCC Teachers* ESMs in all schools Extended Schools

OTHER SERVICES
Teacher Training Self-Assessment Teaching Materials The Media/PR, etc. Parents & Parenting Governors Support

FINANCE & LEGAL
Funding Admin Accounting Support Admin Systems Legal Support Staff Insurance Fund Raising

OPERATIONS
Transport Purchasing Facilities Maintenance IT Supply & Support

MAJOR PROJECTS
Review & Development of Community Hubs Early Years ACL Young Leisure

EDUCATION COUNCIL SUPPORT
Administration Research Data/Statistics District Planning

BEST DISTRICT OFFICE (Summary of Services)

BEST HEAD OFFICE

BRITISH BUSINESS

Attachment A
EDUCATION ‘PATHWAYS’

THE PROPOSED CONCEPT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YR</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>QUALIFICATIONS — CURRICULUM — EXAMINATIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>5-6</td>
<td>Start of National Primary Curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>13-14</td>
<td>Assessment for making Pathway choice - including SATs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>14-15</td>
<td>START OF PATHWAY CURRICULUM</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ACADEMIC</th>
<th>PROFESSIONAL</th>
<th>TECHNICAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Core Subjects</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>Core Subjects - 60%</td>
<td>Core Subjects - 50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Subjects</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>Special Subjects - 30%</td>
<td>Special Subjects - 40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LCC Subjects</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>LCC Subjects - 10%</td>
<td>LCC Subjects - 10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Including introduction to:
- Business Functions
- Business Sectors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>11</th>
<th>15-16</th>
<th>Pre-BECC (A) Exam</th>
<th>Pre-BECC (P) Exam</th>
<th>Pre-BECC (T) Exam</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Chosen Special Subjects and ‘Extended Essay’</td>
<td>Chosen Special Subjects &amp; ‘Extended Essay’ plus Work Experience as appropriate</td>
<td>OPTIONS Leave for full Apprenticeship or 6th Form College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>LCC Subjects - as appropriate</td>
<td>LCC Subjects - as appropriate</td>
<td>LCC Subjects - as appropriate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>13</th>
<th>17-18</th>
<th>BECC (A) Exam</th>
<th>BECC (P) Exam</th>
<th>BECC (T) Exam</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

NOTES

1. This page has been designed only to illustrate a concept — leaving the experts to define the exact definition of the Pathways, the subjects and all other details.

2. ‘LCC’ is an abbreviation for ‘Life’s Chances and Challenges’, a suggested title to cover all those subjects that are needed at school (including PSHE matters), but which are not curricular or justifying a permanent teacher, and could be provided by ‘Support Teachers’ — employed by the proposed new BEST organisation and working full-time, part-time or on-call from the BEST District Office. (Please see Chapter 10, page 38 for details.)
A NEW SHAPE for BRITISH EDUCATION
in the 'Professional Era'

BRITISH EDUCATION COUNCIL
National Body of Leading Professionals

DEPT for EDUCATION

BRITISH UNIVERSITY OF TOTAL EDUCATION

PARLIAMENT

OPERATING BOARDS eg:
- Funding
- Examinations
- Teacher Training
- Universities

DISTRICT EDUCATION COUNCILS

AREA EDUCATION COUNCILS (750)
Leaders of all Educational Establishments

EARLY YEARS
Children's Centres
Nurseries
Pre-School
Childcare Settings

FE Colleges
6th Form Colleges
Studio Schools
UTCs
Career Colleges

STATE SCHOOLS
Primary
Secondary
Special
25,000 UK

ADULT EDUCATION
CONTINUOUS LEARNING

YOUNG LEISURE
11,000 Youth Clubs, etc

UNIVERSITIES
Teacher Training Bodies

BEST DISTRICT OFFICES
(152)
Providing Support & Services
(See Chapter 2 - page ?? for details)

BEST Regional Offices (9)

BUSINESS
Employers & Chambers of Commerce, etc.

The BRITISH EDUCATION SUPPORT TRUST (BEST)
CEO, Board and all normal HO functions

Teacher Support | Special Functions | Finance & Legal | Operations | Community Hubs | Council Support