

THE VALUES IN GREAT BRITAIN'S EDUCATION
REFORM ACT: MEASURING CONGRUENCY
BETWEEN NATIONAL POLICY AND
THE LOCAL SCHOOLS

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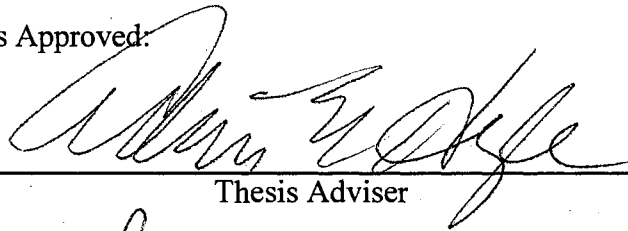
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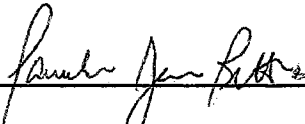
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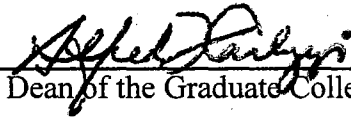


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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

... the English education system today is driven more by the government's economic and technical concerns than by a philosophy of education and lacks what might be termed a "vision" for where it wants to go. Somewhere along the line the debate changed from one of "what do we want our children to learn" to "how do we control what our children learn," the assumption being implicit that all agreed on what constituted the content of the curriculum. (Barnham, 1996, p. 31)

Despite a long history of political and cultural alliance between the democratic societies of the United States and Great Britain, distinct differences exist between American and British school systems. Although educational policies in both countries have tended to reflect the competing ideologies of conservative and liberal politics, the idea of public schools for the common people, so valued from the beginnings of the United States, had no such early support in England.

Historical Perspectives on American Education

It is important to note the essential place of a public school system in America's successful development as a strong and free nation. America's founding fathers themselves, among them James Madison, Alexander Hamilton, John Jay, Thomas Paine, and Thomas Jefferson, affirmed their own support of a public school system for America, acknowledging education as one of the essential functions of a free and democratic

government. The Declaration of Independence in 1776 gave the American people the rights of equality, freedom, and justice and an educational system that perpetuated those values seemed a logical and essential part of the contract the new nation had with its citizens (Clausen, 1979; deMarrais & LeCompte, 1999; Tyack & Cuban, 1995).

The signers of the U.S. Constitution, though ideologically supportive of a nationwide public school system, also believed that schools should be locally created and controlled, avoiding a distant, central bureaucracy, and endorsed the idea in the 10th amendment in 1791. The Bill of Rights established the complete freedom of religion in America and laid the foundation upon which common, tax-supported, non-sectarian schools could be established. James Madison, fourth president of the United States, understood the importance of diffusing knowledge in a free, democratic country. He wrote to John Adams that, “The best service that can be rendered to a country, next to that of giving it liberty, is in diffusing the mental improvement equally essential to the preservation and enjoyment of that blessing” (Clausen, 1979, p. 25). Thomas Jefferson agreed. “Above all things, I hope the education of the common people will be attended to; convinced that on this good sense we may rely with the most security for the preservation of a due degree of liberty” (Clausen, 1979, p. 25).

The new nation of America declared on its national seal the goal of becoming “The New Order of the Ages” and from the Revolutionary times onward, schooling was used as a way to develop citizens of that order. A Protestant-republican ideology that saw the United States literally as God’s country, inspired the early public school movement. Indeed, education for new order citizens became all the more important in America than

elsewhere because of the role continuous immigration has played in the formation of public policy. The ensuing political debate over various values and how to define and create model citizens, has played a significant part in shaping public education in the nation (Tyack & Cuban, 1995).

Since those early beginnings of the public school movement, Americans have also somehow maintained faith in education as an important force for advancing the common good. Sarason reminds us that schools have two functions: “to nurture the cognitive-academic development of pupils; and to provide them with experiences in classrooms informed by the values of a democratic ethos” (Sarason, 1996, pp. 269-270). But that same faith in the power of education to bring about all manner of social reform is probably also responsible for the chronic disillusionment with the schools throughout much of their history. Many of the criticisms of today’s schools are the same as those made fifty years ago (Tyack & Cuban, 1995). Schools have been increasingly burdened with problems of society well beyond their control. The idea of accomplishing social reform through schooling has drawn attention and resources from other more difficult and politically sensitive reforms within society itself.

Schools have also been made the lightning rod to absorb the detrimental effects of failed economic policies, most recently in the 1980s, and to deflect scrutiny and criticism from corporate misjudgments (Berliner & Biddle, 1995). America, among other democratic societies, finds itself, at the end of the twentieth century, in a crisis of confidence over education. While educators know better, even they are beginning to believe the negative rhetoric that is bombarding them from every quarter. In what may be

the most difficult period for teachers in American history, the social value of their work may no longer be enough to sustain them amidst the sense of public and political attack (Barth, 1990; Berliner & Biddle, 1995; Boutwell, 1997; Tyack & Cuban, 1995).

Educational issues are so embedded in this democratic society that policy initiatives would seem to be the result of the convergence of a number of factors (political, economic, international) including the cultural values that are supported in the intent and language of policy. Kouzes and Posner (1993) believe shared values are crucial in a democracy. They provide us with a common language with which to collaborate and generate commitment, enthusiasm, and drive. They give people a reason for caring about their family, their work organization, and their country. The basic values we share as Americans are those embodied in the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights, the ideals of freedom, equality, and justice (Clausen, 1979). When values are shared and in sync, energy is created that enables individuals and organizations to be more effective in the tasks they undertake and nowhere is this idea more important than in a democratic nation's commitment and investment in its public schools. Some educators are questioning whether these democratic ideals are being acknowledged in the current reform movements when, in fact, to do so, could provide the basis for strengthening the relationship between schooling and the healthiness of the society (Giroux & McLaren, 1986).

Educational Reforms in the United States

In the United States, the second part of this century has been distinguished by two major periods during which there have been strong public calls for educational reform.

The first was precipitated by the preemptive launch of the Russian spacecraft Sputnik in 1957 which sparked accusations that America's schools were inadequate in preparing students for the "space age" and startled educational policymakers into a period of increased emphasis on science curriculums in schools. The second event was the 1983 publication of A Nation at Risk by the National Commission on Excellence in Education chaired by then University of California president David Gardner. The latter report hit the public's consciousness with the effect of a storm, claiming the whole structure of education as its victim. Describing the state of America's education as a "rising tide of mediocrity," (p. 5), the report caused a crescendo of criticism and began a period of fault-finding with schools that has continued to the present. Proof of the accusations seemed to be confirmed by such measures as American students' a poor showing on international achievement tests, a 25-year decline in SAT scores, and the claims of American corporations that the high school graduates they were employing needed remedial skills training. Coincidentally, this scarcity of skilled workers came at a time when the business world was reeling from the increasing dominance of Japanese products on the world market. American corporations were apparently successful in convincing the public that the so-called decline in American public education meant that America was not going to be able to compete globally (Berliner & Biddle, 1995; Koppich & Guthrie, 1993).

As a result, A Nation at Risk triggered two consecutive waves of reform in education in the 1980s and 90s. The First Wave, from 1983-1986, was an incremental and centralized approach in which most state legislatures placed an emphasis on core academics, more rigorous coursework, and a tightening of teacher certification

requirements as well as long overdue raises in salaries (Koppich & Guthrie, 1993). In the Second Wave, in a move reminiscent of the factory model schools designed by Frederick Taylor in the early part of the century, reformers began to look to American business organizational structure for ideas. Even the language of education began to be colored by terminology from the corporate world (Berliner & Biddle, 1995; Clinchy, 1998).

Various reports, among them *The Carnegie Foundation's A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century* in 1986 and the *National Governor's Association Time for Results* in 1991, focused the attention for change on the actual job of teaching and the organization of schools. Districts were asked to re-evaluate the balance of authority among educators, teachers, and parents and in some states, this led to the establishment of a "decentralized," site-based management of schools (Koppich & Guthrie, 1993).

There was also, in the decade of the 80s, a convergence of political factors that brought such prominent attention to the state of American education. Until the beginnings of the 1980s, the liberal view of education had been dominant. The basic belief was that if schools provided equal educational opportunities for all students, even the poor and minority ones, these young people would eventually obtain better jobs, advance themselves socially, and contribute to the growth of the economy. But the successive elections to the Presidency of Republicans Ronald Reagan and George Bush, provided a platform for conservative interests to speak out against public education and for the more vocal among them to blame poor schools for the downturn in the economy. These critical voices included those of the Far Right, who generally blamed everything on the federal government and the Religious Right, who criticized the denial of prayer in schools as

well as trends in curriculum and textbooks that favored secular humanism over religious values. A third group, the Neo-Conservatives, has been responsible for much of the current criticism of public schools, arguing that the public schools have suffered from the demands of too many social experiments and excessive federal intervention on behalf of educational equity. All of these groups have had a strong influence on recent educational policy (Berliner & Biddle, 1995; Bottery, 1999; Boutwell, 1997; McClure, 1998).

Centralized and Decentralized Control of Public Schools

With the debate over educational reform that ensued after A Nation at Risk, it appears that two competing national movements have been advocating for their own version of school reform at the end of the twentieth century. The first perspective, accepting the claim of A Nation at Risk that the mediocre state of America's public education posed a severe threat to the future economic health of the nation, responded to the 1983 report with a number of demands. Proponents called for a powerful national education agenda to include higher academic standards for all students, stricter discipline measures, and stronger certification requirements including competency testing for teachers. The buzzwords became accountability and efficiency (Berliner & Biddle, 1995; Clinchy, 1998).

This powerful "standards-based" agenda proposes to spell out in considerable detail "what every student in this country should know or be able to do at each grade level" and therefore what all schools and all teachers should teach at each grade level . . . This agenda for our lower schools is currently being adopted in one form or another by every state legislature, every state board of education, and every state department of education across the country. It is supported not just by state funds but by funds from the federal Goals 2000 program and from private foundations.

Most of those state authorities are adapting to their own purposes the “voluntary” national standards and national tests. And in almost every case, they are mandating them for local school districts, teachers, and students through compulsory state curricular and testing directives. (Clinchy, 1998, p. 273)

A contradictory, bottom-up movement has also been gaining strength alongside the standards agenda. It is a revolt against the top-down, authoritarian structure of our traditional education system. In direct opposition to the move toward a national education curriculum, this decentralized movement believes that America’s students are too diverse in race, ethnicity, and social class to be served well by a single and highly academic program. And, the question is who would determine those common standards? Proponents also worry that a standards movement with a national assessment program may well lead to test-driven instruction and the neglect of critical thinking in students (Reigeluth, 1997). Proponents of the decentralization movement also believe schools will improve if forced to compete for students. It was a logical step, then, toward the notion of more parent involvement in their children’s schools, including magnet schools and parental choice schemes such as voucher plans. All of these promise to provide parents with the opportunity to have a voice in curriculum, instruction, and the philosophy of education for their children (Alves & Willie, 1990; Metcalf & Tait, 1999).

Historical Perspectives on British Education

While their colonial counterparts were establishing the common schools idea in keeping with a budding democracy, the British had developed a very different system of public schooling for their children. Traditionally, educational opportunity in Britain

depended mainly on membership in a socioeconomic class. Social and educational privileges fell to the males of upper class families, while the schooling of the working classes and the poor was ignored. The industrialization of 19th century England and the fact that children were put to work in the factories, prevented any expansion of the elementary schools. In fact, the development of elementary schools did not occur in England until passage of child labor legislation in 1833. Even then, English tradition, unlike in the United States, emphasized parental, rather than state responsibility for children's schooling, certainly a laissez-faire approach to educational policy (Guttek, 1993; McAdams, 1993; Thomas, 1993).

In the nineteenth century, industrialization and a sense of nationalism influenced the formation of school systems. In the period between 1840 and 1860, the common schools movement in the United States revived the idea of locally supported and controlled schools within each state. In Britain, by 1862, although no tax-supported national school system had been established, a Revised Code of Regulations initiated a more centralized school grant system known as "payment by results." The code set achievement standards, which were assessed annually, and schools were subject to regular inspections. The Education Department of the national government assumed a supervisory role for the first time, as well as an influence on curriculum content. A three-tiered system developed: primary schools for the working class children, generously endowed grammar schools for the middle class, and select secondary schools for upper class males (Guttek, 1993; Kelly, 1999; McAdams, 1993).

The Education Act of 1870, known as the Forster Act, established local school districts, under the jurisdiction of a locally elected board, and authorized them to maintain a primary school system. The boards could levy taxes to establish these “public” schools as alternatives to the previously existing church-affiliated schools. This early version of a decentralized system, that allowed parental choice between the public and religious schools, was a compromise with church school leaders who opposed a national educational policy because it would weaken their own control over primary education. Under the Act, funding depended on local taxes and individual tuition payments and school attendance was still voluntary (Guttek, 1993; McAdams, 1993).

So, until the early twentieth century in Great Britain, primary schools provided basic literacy to working class children but secondary education was the province of the elite classes, was open only to males, and served as preparation for admission to universities and for the grooming of future statesmen. These largely private schools had no connection to the public primary schools and church schools that taught basic literacy skills to the working classes. Indeed, unlike the sequential public school system in the United States, there was no comparable educational link between the elementary and secondary schools in England and certainly no national organizational plan (Guttek, 1993; McAdams, 1993; McClure, 1998).

Educational Reforms in England and Wales

In the late 1960s, the most progressive idea to have been proposed in the history of British educational policy developed out of concern for the value of equality in

education for all students. The focus of educational policy was on creating a social mix within the schools. A national network of schools, called “comprehensives,” was established to provide a free secondary education for students of all backgrounds, without favor of class or ability. The idea was a reaction to the elitist system of schooling that had hitherto prevailed in Great Britain, where children of poorer citizens were segregated at age 11 to attend second-class schools while the children of the middle and upper classes went on to well-resourced schools with access to higher education opportunities. But despite the nobility of intentions, the comprehensives were not without their critics, accused of fostering a culture of non-achievement by lowering the standards at the expense of brighter children (Davies, 1999; McClure, 1998). By the mid-1970s, it became widely accepted that even comprehensive schools could not compensate for society’s inequalities (Bottery, 1999; DFEE, 1997; Tomlinson, 1997).

Traditionally the British have always been suspicious of a centralized educational system and so public education, in its various manifestations, has been a shared enterprise between the national government and local education authorities. By the time that Margaret Thatcher’s Conservative party took charge of the government in the 1980s, the educational system in England and Wales was a complicated patchwork quilt of both centralized and decentralized agencies, offering a disparate range of educational opportunities, depending largely on location and socioeconomic class (Deem, 1994; Gutek, 1993; Searle, 1998).

Just as *A Nation at Risk* (1983) served as a catalyst for educational reform in the United States, economic conditions and conservative political views launched the impetus

for the reform of education in England and Wales during the same decade of the 1980s. The Japanese dominance of world markets was alarming to industrialized nations in Europe and North America and there was in England, at the time, a growing conviction that the poor state of the economy was related to the state of the public schools. With funding in short supply, attention focused on obtaining more value for tax money (“efficiency”) which, in turn, led to calls for higher standards for student achievement and ways to measure progress toward that goal (“accountability”) (Davies, 1999; McClure, 1998; Thomas, 1999).

A look at broader government reforms in England in the late 1970s and 1980s shows some other trends that played a role in the educational reforms that were soon to come. Bowing to public pressure to prove favorable results, both Tory (conservative) and Labour (liberal) parties began to look to market-oriented solutions for providing goods and services in the public sector and that included public education. Fundamental to this exercise of free enterprise is that the consumer comes first. Having “privatized” the national railroads and utility companies, the Tories moved ever closer to a market system of education as a way to be seen as a more efficient government. Parents were to be viewed as consumers of educational services for their children (Koppich & Guthrie, 1993; McClure, 1998).

In any period of tight spending, efficiency as a public value tends to heavily influence policy and so a crucial first step in the British reforms was to bring about a change in how schools were financed. In the eyes of Thatcher’s new Secretary of State for Education, Kenneth Baker, local education authorities and local educators had formed a

self-protective clique, what Michaelsen calls “mutual accommodation,” (Michaelsen, 1994, p. 31) and had become much too powerful. And like Michaelsen, the Tories saw this reciprocal arrangement as a major determinant in causing resource allocation and management to become inefficient. Facing an important election in 1987, the Thatcher government seized upon the education issue as a way to arouse the public sentiment and developed some radical proposals for a restructured school system, introducing a series of monumental changes to the whole system of education in Britain. The result was the Education Reform Act (ERA) of 1988. Its objective was to raise standards, increase parent choice, and increase efficiency in the delivery of educational services. (Davies, 1999; Gutek, 1993; Koppich & Guthrie, 1993; McClure, 1998).

There was no apparent research evidence to support the changes the Tories were proposing, no conviction that the reorganization of the school structure and the market approach would be best for student learning. It was a political maneuver and there were moral questions that remained unanswered, questions like should the education of the at-risk child be promoted at the expense of the bright? Or will a parental choice policy bring back the multi-tier educational system? And, is education being delivered for its own sake or for the sake of the economy (Bottery, 1999; Davies, 1999)?

The idea of school choice (the value of *liberty* for parents) is intended to improve the standards of education in state (public) schools and the competencies of teachers by creating the conditions of the marketplace. Responsibility for attracting and keeping pupils falls on the school and its staff as the government assumes that educators and governors have sole control over the conditions of student learning. Schools are required

to compete for “customers,” largely by the publication of achievement test results in “league tables” that rank schools against each other in academic achievement. The announcement of results has become a key event of the school year and amounts to a huge public relations effort by the government. A school’s position on the league tables is crucial to its perceived ability to attract pupils (consumers), and so the assessment process has become an extremely high stakes event, and the ultimate in accountability as a measure of the efficiency of the system (DFEE, 1997; McClure, 1998).

Accountability under the ERA is also accommodated by the oversight of school performances by the Office of Standards in Education (OFSTED). The mainly lay committee members of OFSTED inspect the schools through on-site visits and the monitoring of assessment results. Responsibility for a school’s success or failure falls clearly on the leadership and the staff of each school and “failing” schools, subject to the demands of the “market,” must either improve or eventually close. If standards, as measured by test results, are not met, the present Labour government offers to “retrain” the teachers, thus laying responsibility for poor results on “poor teaching.” A growing body of research, however, has questioned the reliability and even the credentials of the OFSTED inspectors. Unlike their predecessors in Her Majesty’s Inspectorate (HMI) who were respected educators and teacher advisors, the current inspectors are predominantly lay persons who have limited first hand knowledge of schools. Some studies have shown they tend to receive minimal preparation considering their important role in the educational reform (Hustler, Goodwin, & Roden, 1999; Millett & Johnson, 1999; OFSTED, 1999; Thrupp, 1998).

The ERA represented a contradictory approach to school reform. A main feature of the Tory plan was the introduction of a national curriculum, a decidedly “centralized” move in opposition to the decentralized market approach of the earlier reforms and a far cry from the independence of locally managed schools. This philosophical contradiction appears to have been deliberate. By centralizing government control over curriculums, the legislation was designed to “deregulate” both the demand and supply sides of state education and make the schools more responsive to consumer demand. It placed the wishes of the consumers (parents, or the demand side) over that of the producers (educators or supply side) of the educational services. While exercising their so-called local management powers, local governing bodies, heads of schools, and teachers must be ever mindful of their duty to meet the requirements of the national curriculum, overseen with careful scrutiny by the politician serving as Secretary of State for Education. In reality, local power, then, was effectively reduced. The new policy was seen as a compromise that permitted both social and individual interests to be recognized. The public accountability of the government is to the private citizen as *consumer* not *citizen* (Davies, 1999; DFEE, 1997; McAdams, 1993; McClure, 1998; Swanson, 1993; Thomas, 1993).

It can be argued that educational reforms in England are consistent with the thinking of public-choice theorists. Their philosophy is that given the wide array of professional and public opinion about how to best educate students, there should be a similarly diverse choice of options *within* the public school system. Parents would then be able to choose the school that best reflects their own values and that meets the needs of

their children. Examples of public choice models in the United States are site-based management, open enrollment within and between school districts, magnet schools, and private contractors hired by a district (Chubb & Moe, 1990; Levin, 1990). These public school options differ from pure market choice, which is aggressively consumer-driven, and provides alternatives, like vouchers, outside the public system. The controversy over the merits or dangers of educational “choice” schemes has continued to ebb and flow for years, mainly since economist Milton Friedman proposed the idea in the mid-50s and reached a crescendo in the 90s (Lowe, 1999). Although the two contradictory movements, for centralized standards and decentralized autonomy in schools, both wish to contribute to the improvement of our public school system, they represent widely different political philosophies and moral values. Politically, the right and the left have found themselves strange bedfellows when it comes to school reforms (Chubb & Moe, 1990; Clinchy, 1998; Goodring, 1995).

Statement of the Problem

In England, education reform is presently focused on two initiatives that have resulted in both a centralized national standards movement *and* a mandated decentralized market choice system. The British experience, then, provides a good opportunity for examining how a similar combination of philosophies might play out in American education. Higher standards through a mandated national curriculum and parental choice are touted equally as important educational goals. However, these reforms have been strongly led by government policy makers, and the agendas appear to have been set more

by political and economic principles than by sound educational research (Berliner and Biddle, 1995; Guthrie & Koppich, 1993).

While politicians have made the rules, the responsibility to manage successful students and schools has been placed squarely on the shoulders of the local school leadership (administrators and school governors) and on the teachers (Gibson & Asthana, 1998). As a result, the voices of those most effected at the local level appear to have been left out of the educational policy decision-making process. Education had become a political football, and while politicians seem to announce an educational initiative of the week, professional educators are significantly mute in the media (Davies, 1999). Indeed, references to the swift development of the ERA refer repeatedly to the lack of research support for the education reforms and the decidedly political impetus to its formation (Deem, 1994; Patterson, 1996; Searle, 1998; Thomas, 1993).

The anomaly of federal governmental control while requiring local implementation is not new (Sarason, 1993). In fact, it appears to be the norm. However, success of reforms of this magnitude and complexity, implemented in this way, is infrequent (Tyack & Cuban, 1995). Guthrie and Koppich would explain the development of current British education policy in terms of a lack of balance among the social values of liberty, efficiency, and equality, the very values which form the foundation of a democratic society. Without attention to all of these values, and to the educational professionals who deserve to be consulted, policy is “just politics” and will probably lead inevitably and eventually to yet another series of reform in pursuit of the elusive standard of high achievement.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the educational reforms in England and Wales, using Koppich and Guthrie's (1993) A.I.M. theory of social values and policy reform as the evaluative lens. Specifically, the purpose of this study has been to evaluate the extent to which the cultural and democratic values of liberty, efficiency, and equality identified in Guthrie and Koppich's (1993) A.I.M. theory, have influenced notable changes in Britain's national education policy with the 1988 Education Reform Act. I have looked at both the national political context in which the reform policy was developed and at the "actors" who have been responsible for mobilizing the resources necessary to implement the reforms. I have also focused particularly on the values and belief systems implied by the policy language of the ERA, comparing those findings with the values expressed by local educators who have experienced the effects of the reforms for over a decade now. The policy has resulted in both a centralized national curriculum and a decentralized market choice system with strict accountability as a key component. It could be argued that the British reforms are a result of different but the equally powerful (A.I.M.) components of alignment of values, an initiating event, and mobilization of resources. A comparable study on cultural values and education policy by Marshall, Mitchell and Wirt (1989) provided an enriched perspective for my research on how collective social values of both politicians and constituents can strongly shape the direction and the language of policy legislation.

In the U.S. we have extensive research which describes the ways in which our reform initiatives have and have not met the goals of the reformers (Berliner & Biddle,

1995; Sizer, 1992; Tyack & Cuban, 1995). We know that as a culture we value productivity and place achievement high on the scale of our goals for education and that local community support and control is important (Berliner & Biddle, 1995; Sarason, 1996; Tyack, 1990). We know that parents particularly want schools to be smaller and safe places, and they expect educators to maintain discipline. Despite mixed reviews about the state of the nation's public schools, the majority of the public strongly supports their local schools (Rose, 1997).

But in England and Wales, the voices of the politicians have drowned out those of the professional educators. These very actors who must implement national educational policy should be allowed to express their views about whether the social and civic values of a democratic school system are being met by current educational policy. Thomas (1993) agrees that we have yet to discover if the final outcome of current British educational policy will match the intention of reformers. He notes that although professional educators have not been a part of the policymaking, they are, of course, vital to implementation of that policy. How professional educators interpret their roles and responsibilities, he says, is crucial to the level of competition between schools, the relationship of local education authorities (similar to school districts) to their schools, and the nature of local policy making by school governing bodies.

Research Questions

To ascertain the effect of two seemingly contradictory mandates in educational policy in England on school level educators and to interpret the common values that underlie their responses, the following research questions guide the study:

Given the mandate of the 1988 Education Reform Act in Great Britain:

1. What have been the experiences of educators in implementing the national education reform policy enacted in 1988?
2. How do educators at the local level view the purpose and goals of public schooling?
3. What does this tell us about the values held by those educators?
4. In what ways do the values underlying the intent of the policymakers align or conflict with those of local educators who must implement the directives of the Education Reform Act?
5. In what ways are local educators able to remain true to their own values?

Theoretical Framework

Guthrie and Koppich (1993) claim that the imperative to develop human capital or workers capable of keeping up with global competition is driving the educational reform movements in many of the industrialized nations, including the United States and England, even though the specific strategies to accomplish this may differ. They believe that unless certain conditions coincide, lasting reform is unlikely.

In their policy reform paradigm, which they call the A.I.M. model, Guthrie and Koppich (1993) theorize that educational reform must be closely *aligned* (A.) to a value held in high regard at the time by the public, or that a society must be in a period of uncertain values, or of significant cultural transition, making policy vulnerable to the values held by policy reformers themselves. The most common values in a democratic society, they say, are “liberty,” “efficiency,” and “equality.” Most reforms, whether by organizations or governments, are gradual and may be largely imperceptible to the general public. Sometimes what might become a major reform is dulled and diluted so much by compromise as to become only minor change. But periodically policy reforms may so dramatically bring about a change that they catapult an issue into public awareness.

Though in the abstract, citizens may hold certain values in common, in practice the favoring of one or two of a society’s values necessitates the minimizing of another. Pursuit of equality, for instance, will restrict or ignore the values of either liberty or efficiency or vice versa. Various factors in a society may cause different values to be temporarily considered more important than other values. Education, however, is one of the few areas through which a society attempts to honor all three values, and so it is important that public policy coincide with dominant public values (Guthrie & Koppich, 1993).

While alignment of conditions is crucial, according to Guthrie & Koppich (1993), successful reform also depends on an initiating event (I.), and usually occurs during a period of social disequilibrium. Examples of this kind of event might be a shift in

demographics, a transformation in the means of doing work, or the sort of dramatic developments in technology that we have been experiencing at the end of the twentieth century. Reform, say Guthrie and Koppich, also depends on the availability of alternative policies. Some cynics believe that there are always numerous policy specialists with ideas, theories, and solutions just waiting for an appropriate problem to come along so they can solve it.

Finally, Guthrie and Koppich also point to the importance of leaders who, by their strategic positions or status, are crucial to the mobilizing (M) of the resources to allow reforms to occur. These leaders are termed “policy entrepreneurs,” and they are expert in being able to seize a window of opportunity and to maintain the momentum of a reform movement. England’s former Secretary of State for Education, Kenneth Baker, seemed to fulfill such a role in the radical reforms of the 1980s (Davies, 1999; Guthrie & Koppich, 1993).

Guthrie and Koppich also think another critical factor in reform is that a society’s problem becomes important politically, made possible when certain favorable predisposing conditions come together in the political arena, among them election results, mood shifts in public opinions, and public surveys. That is certainly the case in the United States and England at the present time where there have been changes in government leadership and in fiscal policies. More recently, the growth of conservative movements have placed individual rights and business interests over the collective good (Berliner & Biddle, 1995). Kingdon (1984) suggests that in the second half of the twentieth century, educational problems, public preferences, and appropriate alternative

policies appear to have become aligned as never before and have created a window of opportunity for educational reform.

According to Berliner and Biddle (1995), in both the United States and England, the main sources of educator distress seem to be the dominance of business (efficiency) values over others, and an adjustment from an industrialized to a technological economy as much as a shift in political attitudes. But as Guthrie and Koppich (1993) have suggested, the state of the economy alone probably isn't grounds for a major reform movement. After all, economic problems are cyclical and chronic, and school reform does not always follow. But the increasing imbalance in the distribution of wealth during the recent period of great prosperity could have the same effect in creating a conflict between the rich and the poor as a poor economy might have. Society's values seem to have shifted and the push for equal educational opportunities of the 1960s and 1970s have been overtaken by the values of efficiency and liberty advocated in the 1980s and the 1990s (Berliner & Biddle, 1995).

Significance of the Study

This study has been undertaken with the intent that the results will contribute to the a further understanding of the A.I.M. theory, expand the research in the area of centralized/decentralized educational systems in a democratic society, and inform policy and practice, both in England and in the United States.

Theory

The theoretical framework through which the recent and drastic changes to the educational system of England and Wales has been viewed, is the A.I.M. model proposed by Guthrie and Koppich (1993). They speculate that in order for policy changes, including educational reform, to occur in the national political system, a number of politically related phenomena must not only exist, but also be significantly aligned. This theory provided a method of examining the effects of the radical educational reforms of the late 1980s on the local state or public school in England from a political, policy-making perspective. The theory attempts to address some basic questions about educational reform and societal values (Guthrie & Koppich, 1993):

1. What forces and conditions create a climate for launching and sustaining a reform movement?
2. How does an education issue escalate into “high politics” (p. 13)?
3. Why are some of the same reforms merging in different countries at this time?

Research

This study was intended to add to the limited knowledge base about the impact of the significant educational reforms in the 1990s on the local British state (public) school and particularly its educators.

Implications for Practice

By listening to the voices of educators and interpreting the values that they feel are being served by the contradictory movements in the current educational policy in England, a new dimension may be added to the continuing debate about school choice and national standards. The experience of educators in England could be helpful in informing policymaking on those same issues as they are currently being debated in the United States.

Summary

Education in the United States has historically been considered a vital element in perpetuating the democratic principles and values that have made America a unique and prosperous nation. Because public education has been so fundamental to the rights of the citizenry, the school system has been buffeted over this century and the last by many waves of reform that often have placed the responsibility for economic and social ills on the schools. More recently, as the twentieth century has come to a close, two strong but opposing movements have gained prominence. One calls for a more centralized (and decidedly politicized) approach to curriculum and assessment while the other demands local control over schools through parental (market) choice. The debate has certainly become “high politics” in America and much research and rhetoric from all quarters (politicians, parents, the public, and educators) has been publicized about the merits and pitfalls of each.

Politically, economically, and culturally, the U.S. has owed much to its English heritage throughout much of its development as a country, but America's fundamental goal of free universal education for its citizens was undertaken out of the strong convictions of its founding fathers and early statesmen. Indeed, in England, a strong class consciousness meant that it was one of the last industrialized nations to consider a free public secondary education to all its youth (McAdams, 1983). However, in 1988, a radical policy of educational reform was enacted in England (Davies, 1999; McClure, 1998; Thomas, 1983). It attempts to combine a mandated national curriculum standards and assessment system with local management of schools that is subject to market forces in the form of parental choice of their child's schools.

This study has allowed me to take advantage of my position as an American educator and researcher living in England at a time when this country is at an educational crossroads, for the following reason. This strict education policy now in place in England, with components that are also at the center of political debate in the United States, has provided an excellent opportunity for assessing the lessons to be learned in terms of long-term reform, before Americans plunge headlong down the same difficult road.

Reporting

Chapter II provides a more complete explanation about the democratic values satisfied by a free public education system and the circumstances that cause educational reform and politics to coincide. This review of the literature examines the following:

Democratic principles and education from a historical perspective in both the United States and Great Britain, the historical background to British education reforms, a theoretical model of education-reform politics and social values, policy sharing between the U.S. and Great Britain, issues of centralized and decentralized governance, effective schools research, the British Educational Reform Act of 1988 and the influence of current educational politics.

Subsequent sections of the research report include the design of the study and the methodology, addressed in Chapter III. Chapter IV presents empirical materials in the form of a case study developed from observations, artifacts, and staff interviews at an average public school in England. Chapter V offers an analysis of the case study findings and attempts to interpret whether the values served by the current national educational policy in England can be reconciled by those educators at the school level who must make the policy work. A summary of the research study in Chapter VI includes a discussion of the study's findings and conclusions, as well as implications for practice in other advanced democratic nations and in particular, the U.S.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

. . . the English education system today is driven more by the government's economic and technical concerns than by a philosophy of education and lacks what might be termed a "vision" for where it wants to go. Somewhere along the line the debate changed from one of "what do we want our children to learn" to "how do we control what our children learn," the assumption being implicit that all agreed on what constituted the content of the curriculum. (Barnham, 1996, p. 31)

Introduction

Despite a long history of political and cultural alliance between the democratic societies of the United States and Great Britain, distinct differences exist between American and British school systems. Although educational policies in both countries have tended to reflect the competing ideologies of conservative and liberal politics, the idea of public schools for the common people, so valued from the beginnings of the United States, had no such early support in England.

The review of literature that served as a basis for pursuing this study is drawn first from current writing on the state of education in England, both from the perspective of journalists and other, more scholarly, observers of educational policymaking at the close of the twentieth century. I then discuss the purposes and structures of public education in a democracy, beginning with a historical overview of the common school movement in

the United States and the contrasting philosophy of public school development in Great Britain. I next describe the major educational reform movements of the past several decades, looking particularly at the societal values that each reform seeks to support and giving consideration to the notion of policy sharing between the United States and Great Britain. A review of some of the research on what makes schools effective will provide educators' perspectives to school reforms as a balance to the largely political agendas that have marked many of the recent reform initiatives.

A description of Koppich and Guthrie's A.I.M. theory of reform (1993) is used as a framework by which I look at the values, the political events, and the "actors" involved in the radical reforms that occurred in England in the late 1980s. Using this model for reform, I review various works that examine the philosophy and the politics behind the national government's passage of the Education Reform Act (ERA) of 1988 which has had a revolutionary impact on contemporary education in England and Wales and is the cornerstone of my own study. I will draw on works that describe the political and social influences that led to this milestone legislation and others that offer an update on the Labour Party's educational policies. Included in this review are perspectives on the intended roles to be played by the primary agents of the ERA at the national and local levels. Finally, I refer to studies and commentaries that examine whether or not the ERA has been successful in meeting its stated goals for reform.

Current State of Education in England

If news reports are any example, the education reforms of the past decade have not resulted in a smooth transition to a more efficient and standardized system of schooling for Great Britain. In any given week there are announcements of new government initiatives on education, new policies tumbling out of London at such a rate as to bury the local education authorities (LEAs) and the schools under a barrage of paper. A recent edition of the Times Educational Supplement (TES, April 7, 2000, p. 6), featured an article, "Government Interference in Schools, The Big Picture of Bureaucracy," which draws attention to how overwhelming government intervention can be. The LEA's estimate that in just less than a year, an average of 437 pieces of "guidance," 387 sets of regulations, 315 consultation papers, 143 requests for data, and nine ministerial letters have arrived on their doorstep from the office of the Labour Secretary of State for Education David Blunkett..

Such figures support the accusation from opposition politicians and teachers unions that the Labour government is interfering too heavily in the daily work of schools. According to a recent poll of 3,200 headteachers (TES, April 7, 2000), the greatest irritants of their job, contributing to the heavier workloads, are school inspections by the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) followed by the number of documents arriving from government agencies. The heads feel strangled with red tape and see an urgent need to reduce the amount of centrally directed tasks that have little direct value for pupils.

The issue of mandatory OFSTED inspections as another source of stress and controversy appears regularly in the media. The same Times Educational Supplement article (April 7, 2000) reports that while headteachers see some value in inspections, they feel the benefits did not warrant the substantial increase in workload and pressure that descends upon a school in the weeks before an OFSTED visit.

The government seeks to address the most pressing concerns of educators but centralized control of the school system requires that the politicians do so by forming a task force to study the problems and make recommendations for new policy. According to the TES (April 7, 2000, p. 18), Labour's latest attempt has been to "free heads to concentrate on raising standards" in their schools is to form a task force, ironically named the "Better Regulation Task Force," headed by Lord Haskins, a friend of Prime Minister Tony Blair. While the BRTF seems to have identified some key factors causing unnecessary red-tape, educators are not waiting hopefully for workload relief from the government since previous attempts to reduce bureaucracy in education have hardly succeeded. A prime example is an offer from Education Secretary Blunkett to school governors of a "bureaucracy-cutting toolkit" that is 53 pages long!

The present Labour government has placed educational improvement at the top of its political agenda and seems determined to make sure that all initiatives revolve around school improvement, but they do so from a non-educator's perception about how schools work and by imposing scheme after scheme. The collective voices of teachers, speaking through their unions, have more recently been raised in angry protest against the government's attempt to improve the pay status of teachers (TES, March 31, 2000). This

has been largely driven by the concern for recruiting new teachers as well as an attempt to stem the hemorrhaging of experienced teachers from the profession.

The Labour Government Schools Minister Estelle Morris expresses surprise at the adverse reactions to proposals that the government sees as a long over-due recognition of the vital work teachers do in the classroom. One of the most controversial aspects of the government recommendations is a new two-tiered pay system. With this proposal, teachers will be able to apply to cross a “performance threshold,” giving them an immediate salary increase of £2,000 and opportunity to earn further increases for “substantial and sustained” performance. The government seems to view this Green Paper proposal as a logical move to raise the standards of the teaching profession by providing financial incentives for excellence (<http://www.dfes.gov.uk/teachingreform>). However, many school-level educators see such a plan as divisive and detrimental to collegiality since the plan calls for different pay levels among teachers in the same school depending on the subject taught and the subjective judgment of the headteacher (Kent, 2000). Further more, one factor in determining “good teaching” is the teacher’s responsibility for student achievement as measured most efficiently by student exam results, another controversial issue (Kelly, 1999).

This “pay for performance” idea has been tried before in England. In 1862, achievement in reading, writing, and arithmetic were assessed by examination at the end of each year under the Revised Code of Regulations. Financial grants were then awarded to schools, based on the number of children who passed the exam and the total number of days in attendance for each child. This accountability by exams was accompanied by

regular inspections of schools by His or Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) from the Education Department of the national government. Since preparation for such important exams came to dominate instruction, the primary school curriculum was soon indirectly shaped by what the government believed was important (Guttek, 1993; Nelson, 1987).

Irish headteacher Anthony Kelly (1999), currently conducting research in evaluation techniques at Cambridge University, argues that the government's pay for performance proposals are unworkable. He suggests that the government's plans lack basis in theory and possess a number of shortcomings that will probably result in another failed system for improving the educational system. Among the flaws in the proposals are the lack of training in teacher appraisal for headteachers, no guidelines for describing how a teacher might meet the primary objectives of the job, and no disincentive for declining performance to ward off complacency. He also states that evaluation of teaching should be judged on the quality of a continuous performance and not merely on examination results and the pay reward should reflect the importance of the role in the school rather than the individual. Doing the job, Kelly says, should presuppose that the job is competently accomplished.

A Key Question Is How Did British Educational Policy Become So Politicized?

A democratic society requires a democratic education but the challenge is in determining what constitutes a democratic education (Sizer, 1992). There seems always to be the tension between the two primary priorities for public education: that is the

making of workers and the making of citizens. The former calls for a process of transmitting skills and competencies and the latter, transmitting ideas and values (Kaye, 1996).

In the same way that the combination of successful innovations and failed ideas in the United States over the course of the twentieth century were attempts to debate the fundamental purposes of school and to solve society's social and economic problems through public education and (Tyack & Cuban, 1995), the British educational system, particularly during the latter part of the twentieth century, has also been shaped in response to social pressures.

Education and Democratic Values

Ideally, democracy values diversity over conformity, the common good over self-interest, opportunity over limitation, justice over legality, inclusion over segregation, interest over occupation, community over domination, and dialogue over dictate. The test of a system of public education is how well it remains true to its societal covenant. (Friere, 1990, p. 82)

It is important to place any educational structure within the context of the society it supports. The United States, as a democratic nation, is of interest in any examination of late twentieth century school reform as its common schools evolved out of eighteenth century European and British practice (Clausen, 1979; McAdams, 1993). Despite historical differences in each country's approach to public education of late, Great Britain has been struggling through many of the same shifts in philosophy and fundamental values as the United States.

Public schools reflect the values of the culture they serve and any reform movement necessarily stirs up confrontations about how school should function among those of opposing personal and political values (Weiss, 1990). If we were to observe students attending classes in many schools today, and then were magically transported to a classroom in the early 1900s, it is likely that, except for radical changes in dress and teaching tools, the routine and the structure would be quite familiar. People, for the most part, take school organization and curriculum for granted, and although waves of reform movements have frequently attempted to restructure schools to reflect a variety of educational philosophies, there has been little fundamental change to the culture of school (Nathan & Myatt, 1998; Tyack & Cuban, 1995).

Education is essentially political, in that ideas and issues are usually derived from other social and political arenas (Cohen, 1990). In defining the nature of political control, Weiss (1990) notes that public schools are necessarily political institutions because as a nation, children are our collective future. The quality of education is linked in the public's mind to the quality of both the workforce and of the society in general. In a democracy, educational institutions are expected to be responsive to the preferences of the citizenry and the tapping of local taxes to fund school district budgets give schools high local profiles. Government regulations establish educational policy and even the courts become involved in educational decisions.

Much of the debate about education in the industrialized world is really about the purposes of education in a democratic society. In the U.S., our founding fathers understood that it is through schooling that a nation's people seek to prepare children to

become informed citizens for the future as well as providing a way for public values to be expressed (Kaye, 1996). In fact, in the United States, education has been considered by many statesmen and educators to be essential to the perpetuation of American-style democracy (Clausen, 1979; Curtis, 1996).

The American Perspective

Although in recent years, the state of public education has been blamed for economic decline, Americans have traditionally seen education as a comprehensive social and political good, more deeply important than any economic status. Levin (1990) agrees that the common (free, public) school crusaders believed that the main function of schooling was to produce literate and moral citizens and philosophers like John Dewey promoted the fundamental link between democracy and education.

TheodoreSizer (1992), in the first of his Horace trilogy on American education, includes among the “chestnuts” of American educational thought, literacy, numeracy, and civic understanding. This means an understanding of the basics for consensual democratic government, a respect for the process, and acceptance of the responsibilities of citizenship as described in the Bill of Rights. It is almost certain that a democratic nation could not last without this understanding by its citizens.

Gerald Gutek (1997) also addresses the public school ideology of the United States. An ideology, he believes consists of a body of ideas, values, and preferences that a cultural group holds in common. Shared culture is transmitted through a common language and carries values that explain the group’s history. The young, born without

ideologies, must be taught and conditioned to the values of the dominant group and historically, in the United States, this uni-dimensional transmission was accomplished through what became known as common, or free public schools. Ironically, the influence was two ways, as over the decades, the American culture and character has, in turn, been reshaped by the many cultures and nationalities arriving on its shores and increasingly populating its schools.

Historically, England and the United States have differed in their own approaches to the uses of power when it came to public institutions such as schools. Where the period of Enlightenment in England in 1688 saw reason and liberty as the organizing principles of society (Slater, 1983), the public school system reflected those same values in its distribution of power to local communities.

In contrast, the American common schools movement was founded upon nationally held values and beliefs that a free (at least elementary) education was the right of all the nation's children. Liberty and reason were certainly valued but during the formative years for the new country the notion of equality was most significantly in keeping with the fledgling liberal democratic society that was America in the 18th century. Centrally made policy decisions seemed then, to naturally reflect the common goals and hopes of the new nation's citizens (Slater, 1983).

However, in the subsequent centuries between the founding of the public schools in England and America, there have been numerous reform movements. Tyack and Cuban, in Tinkering Toward Utopia (1995) are particularly adept at describing the almost relentless search in the U.S. for the ideal public school system since its inception. As a

nation we seem never to be satisfied and the state of the schools seem to be a litmus test of how our society views itself. By the turn of the twentieth century, there seem to be really no new ideas, only tinkering with the same old traditional system trying to improve what, in essence, has always been done (Nathan & Myatt, 1998).

The British Perspective

To understand the revolutionary reforms that took place near the close of the twentieth century in Great Britain, it is enlightening to follow the changes in philosophy behind earlier education movements. Those first immigrants to America, mainly from England, Scotland, and Holland, brought with them the attitudes of 17th century English society toward education where there was no system of public schools, no laws which mandated the education of the masses (Guttek, 1993; McAdams, 1993). Gerald Guttek (1993) suggests that British educational policies often reflected the competing political and economical ideologies of liberalism and conservatism in their struggles for power in the nineteenth century. In England, education was considered the province of the middle and upper classes and illiteracy was widespread among the working poor. In fact, there was the belief among some of the social and industrial elite that it would be socially undesirable to educate the masses. Privileges and opportunities were based on birth, in those times, and not on merit.

While the principle of separation of church and state has been scrupulously protected in the American education system, English schools have historically been dependent on church involvement. Limited basic education was provided to the working

classes by charity or church-related schools, supported not only by the Church of England, but also by various philanthropic and voluntary organizations. But despite some attempts to improve the lot of disadvantaged children by early reformers, these schools remained under-financed, poorly organized, and staffed by untrained teachers (Cornall, 1997; Simon, 1997).

An efficient method of instruction called “monitorialism” appeared in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century as a way of finally providing education for the masses (Guttek, 1993). It involved not only the teaching of basic skills to all children, but the instilling of “proper values” in pupils considered inferior. The name derived from the system of instruction that resembled a carefully monitored chain letter, with a master teacher instructing “monitors” who in turn would pass on their newly acquired knowledge to the army of lower class students. The basic skills of reading, writing, and arithmetic were broken down into small manageable parts. This new method of instruction had as much to do with social control of the lower classes as it had to do with educating. The method was even promoted in the United States but was abandoned in both countries when it no longer served the needs of industrializing nations. Later reform efforts to improve the living and working conditions of the industrial poor in the 1830s resulted in enactment of child labor legislation and so set the stage for the extension of formal schooling for poor children.

Historically and economically, England’s preeminence on the nineteenth century world stage has significantly influenced world history. But in the field of education, according to Richard McAdams (1993), England was never able to match its other

accomplishments. Hampered by the class-consciousness of its society, England was one of the last industrialized nations to establish a free and universal public school system.

After the Industrial Revolution, English schooling maintained a tradition of educational elitism in which elementary and secondary education were separate systems (Guttek, 1993). Charity and church-related schools provided elementary schooling to the children of the working classes while endowed private schools prepared the sons of the middle and upper class. The most prestigious of the private schools were confusingly called “public” schools and were famous for educating the future leaders of the nation. These schools, reflecting the influence of the Renaissance and the Reformation, emphasized classical and humanistic studies as preparation for admission to the great universities of Oxford and Cambridge. Such schools resisted change, seeing their role as performing a national service in educating future statesmen. The traditional values of these institutions “stressed religion, patriotic service to king and country, and “manliness” (p.103).

For the lower classes, education held a much less prominent place in their lives. The prevalence of child labor in the factories only served to increase illiteracy rates. By the 1830s, efforts of reformers resulted in legislation to improve conditions for the poor and to regulate child labor and this led directly to the development of more extensive formal schooling in England. For the masses, English culture viewed education as a parental responsibility and, as a result, national funding for schools open to the lower classes was limited (Guttek, 1993).

The wealth created by the Industrial Revolution pushed the nouveau riche into the ranks of the upper classes and created more of a demand for state-run schools. In 1864, Parliament appointed the Clarendon Commission to examine this idea and in response to upper middle-class demands, recommended a broadening of the curriculum to include natural sciences, mathematics, history, geography, music, art, and foreign languages. They also called for the raising of standards and more rigorous examinations while also commending the institutions for the moral education they provided (Guttek, 1993).

Further changes to secondary schooling in the nineteenth century were slow to develop. A Technical Instruction Act, in 1869 and 1889, directed local boards to provide technical training. It was not until the Education Act of 1870 that school boards were created, with authority to levy taxes to establish and support local public primary schools as alternatives to voluntary church schools. Additional funding was granted by the national government to both board and church schools, but was dependent on favorable reports from inspectors from the central government. The Act also specified that religion could not be taught in board schools. The country was divided into local school districts to convince the church school leaders that there was not a nationally dictated education policy. It was not until 1902 that church schools began to receive public funding and in that same year, Local Education Authorities (LEA's) were created and authorized to provide secondary education (McAdams, 1993).

Policy Sharing: The United States and Great Britain

Abstract gross-national policy borrowing rarely has much to do with the success, however defined, of the institutional realisation of particular

policies in their countries of origin; rather, it has much more to do with legitimating other related policies. On the other hand, active policy borrowing involving the appropriation of identifiable aspects of another country's policy solutions, including ways of implementing and administering them, is more likely when there is some synchrony between the characteristics of the different education systems involved and the dominant political ideologies promoting reform within them. (Halpin & Troyna, 1995, p. 1)

In the last decades of the twentieth century, similar reform movements have gained prominence and have garnered support in a number of the industrialized nations. It cannot escape notice that much of what is occurring in the politics of education in the United States has direct parallels in the alliances, conflicts, and reforms in Great Britain (Chubb & Moe, 1992; Bottery, 1999). When education systems are similar and dominated by partisan ideologies, reforms are often likely to become synchronized.

The trend of looking to other societies for ideas is termed "policy sharing" or "policy borrowing" (Halpin & Troyna, 1995). Attention to the shared characteristics of the U.S. and British economies can explain the policy convergence of the two nations in recent education reform (Halpin & Troyna, 1995; Whitty & Edwards, 1998). In both cases, school reforms originally sought to provide solutions to perceived economic weaknesses and declining competitiveness in global markets coupled with denigration of teacher competence and dissatisfaction with bureaucratic school organization.

But, despite the obvious similarities in reform movements in the U.S., Britain and other English-speaking countries, there are some differences. Halpin and Troyna (1995) point out that the Liberal Left in the U.S. has campaigned for school choice by couching their arguments in terms of equality, by playing up the historic failure of the common school in America to meet the needs of the disadvantaged. In England, on the other hand,

school choice seems to have evolved as a Political Right reaction by Margaret Thatcher's Conservative government to the liberal-spawned comprehensive system and to progressive practices of teachers and Local Education Authorities (Ball, 1997; Davies, 1999; Dunford & Chitty, 1999; Halpin & Troyna, 1995; Imison, 1999).

Another divergence in the progression of school reform in England and the United States occurs because of the fundamental differences in accomplishing legislation (Halpin & Troyna, 1995). In England, Conservative (and later Labour) administrations have used their greater concentration of power in central government and their parliamentary majority to deregulate Local Education Authorities and to mandate a national curriculum without the need of local approval. In the United States, where much of educational policy-making is influenced by both national politics and the agenda of individual governors, but lies with the state legislatures, education reform has required the active involvement of federal, state, and local government.

Whitty and Edwards (1998) question to what extent policy borrowing occurs in the actual details of policy reform. The push for a national standards and assessment system, based on the same premise to improve student achievement and educational efficiency as Britain's national curriculum reform, garnered short-lived interest in the U.S. (Gratz, 2000; Ramiriz, 1999; Sirotnik & Kimball, 1999; Weiss, 1990). Even in Britain, the plan was denounced by the Neo-Liberal right wing groups and some Conservatives as being at odds with the competitive market idea, which is based on supply and demand. This philosophy, say Whitty and Edwards (1998), should have encouraged curriculum diversity in England and Wales, rather than the prescriptive policy

that was adopted in the end. The reluctance to do the same in the U.S. at the national level has not meant dismissal of the idea, however. At the turn of the twentieth century, there has been growing support for allowing state governments to assume jurisdiction over curriculum and assessment from almost every state governor and legislature in the nation (Clinchy, 1998; Orlich, 2000; Ramirez, 1999).

Reforms in education have occurred in cycles, most often in response to periodic perceptions that something is lacking in the current system. Cuban and Tyack (1995) note that faith in the power of education has historically had both negative and positive consequences. On the one hand, it has allowed citizens and their leaders to establish and support a system of public schooling as a means to provide a common experience and to prepare future citizens for life in a democratic society. On the other hand, placing so much value on the educational process has also resulted in disillusionment with schools and has led to blaming schools for problems whose solutions lay more with society than with education.

Centralization: The Standards Movement

There are numerous studies and commentaries (Adler, 1997; Lawton, 1996; Pierson, 1998; Slater, 1983; Whitty & Edwards, 1998), reviewed in the next section, that examine the national conditions that launched the idea of a standards-based curriculum and assessment system in the United States and its philosophical equivalent in the Great Britain.

The decades of the 1960s and 1970s, for the most part, had marked a public mood of expansiveness and a commitment to issues of racial and educational equality, culminating in the landmark Civil Rights legislation in the United States and symbolized by the establishment of comprehensive schools in Great Britain. In contrast, the decade of the 1980s ushered in a period of economic decline that had repercussions for the countries engaged in global trade. Suddenly, concern about value for money and efficiency became valued over equal rights for all (Berliner & Biddle, 1995).

The spotlight, and the blame in America, eventually fell on the educational system. The nation's schools, it was thought, had an obligation to turn out students who were better prepared for the international job market of the future. Berliner and Biddle (1995) refer to the ensuing controversy over the state of American education as a "manufactured crisis." The effect was to initiate a period of public education bashing that has continued unabated to the present. It is no coincidence that many of the nations in the industrialized world faced with similar economic worries began to turn their attention to educational reform at the same time. Great Britain was no exception (Bottery, 1999).

In the U.S., reform efforts have been exerting pressures on educational institutions in two fundamentally conflicting directions (Clinchy, 1998; Sirotnik & Kimball, 1999). On the one hand, there is research support for smaller and more autonomous schools (Beare, 1993; Nathan & Myatt, 1998; Nelson, 1998). On the other hand, Berliner and Biddle (1995) claim that the publication of A Nation at Risk triggered two consecutive waves of centralized reform initiatives in the 1980s and 1990s.

Berliner and Biddle (1995) argue that in the United States, the second part of the twentieth century has been distinguished by two major periods during which there have been strong public calls for educational reform. The first was precipitated by the preemptive launch of the Russian spacecraft Sputnik in 1957. There was a panicked concern that America was not producing the top-notch scientists that the country needed to compete in the exploration of space and there were calls for stronger emphasis on science and math in the public school curriculum. The inevitable deceleration of the booming post-WWII economy also brought about concern that American companies were losing their competitive edge and analysts referred to the “deindustrialization” of America (Berliner & Biddle, 1995; Koppich & Guthrie, 1993). New technologies threatened to gradually make manual labor obsolete and it seemed logical that there would soon be a need for more highly skilled workers to meet the demands of a more sophisticated workplace.

The National Commission on Excellence in Education, chaired by the President of the University of California David Gardner, was tasked by the Reagan Administration to study the status of U.S. education. The resulting report was A Nation at Risk, published in 1983. Berliner and Biddle (1995) seem to have little doubt that this report became a catalyst for the almost two decades of frenzied reform efforts that followed its publication. Describing the state of America’s education as a “rising tide of mediocrity” (1983, p. 5), it unleashed a tidal wave of criticism and began a period of fault finding toward schools that has continued to the present (Koppich & Guthrie, 1993).

As part of overall education reform efforts, successive governments in both the U.S. and Britain have been pursuing an unparalleled experiment in school governance initiatives that combine deregulation and centralized control. This trend has resulted in a shift of decision-making authority to the local level while at the same time mandating strong centralizing controls over curriculum standards and assessment (Halpin & Troyna, 1995; Lawton, 1996; Pierson, 1998; Whitty & Edwards, 1998). Neo-Liberal and Neo-Conservative influences that have led to the embrace of market choice mechanisms have mobilized the direction of education policy in both nations. In England, the current Labour government's rhetoric encouraging schools to market their own distinctive identity and to attract families under the Local Management of Schools strand of the Education Reform Act, resembles the site-based management experiments in the U.S (Adler, 1997; Malen & Ogawa, 1988; Whitty & Edwards, 1998). Similarly, the British grant-maintained schools have their parallel in American charter schools, an extension of the move toward school autonomy (Nathan & Myatt, 1998; Sizer, 1992).

Education reform efforts in many of the industrialized nations may be viewed as arguments over balance of control vs. autonomy. Slater (1993) points out that the now familiar terms "centralization and decentralization" belong to the vocabulary of organizational theory and business and have to do with the distribution of power in various organizational structures. He argues that the way power is distributed determines how human behavior is controlled. This is the essence of a bureaucracy where centralized power is formalized and used to limit individual behavior to only those tasks that will achieve the prescribed goal(s).

The “restructuring” of schools in the last two decades has meant a change in the structure of organizational governance and a shift of focus from the individual in the 1980s to the organization in the 1990s (Koppich & Guthrie, 1993; Lawton, 1993; Louden & Browne, 1993; Macpherson, 1993). This change represented a business-like approach to education, a “dehumanizing” of the process of schooling as structures exist with or without humans, though they shape and mold human behavior according to the specific intent of those in power. As a rule of thumb, researchers claim, the more restrictive the behavior within the structure, the more efficient the organization.

However, Slater (1993) points out, if power is to be effective, those who implement the orders of those in charge must see the power structure as legitimate. In education, this means that school level administrators and teachers are most effective in accomplishing their educational mission when they have a voice in policymaking and curriculum development. But, in areas such as teacher hiring, curriculum, or selection of instructional materials, the centralization of any one of these functions may automatically limit decisions in the other areas.

Political control of schools has its strengths, in that, as public institutions, they remain responsive to the preferences of the citizenry and allow public accounting for expenditures of public funds. But the disadvantages are that those who make the policy and exert control are far removed from work with school children and there are weak links between the demands of the government agency in charge and compliance by the teachers who must make the policy work (Weiss, 1990).

Nelson (1998) finds it remarkable that at the end of the twentieth century business interests dominate social policy debate and that accountability and efficiency are the political buzzwords, much as they were at the turn of the previous century. The progress of technology is much like the progress of industry 100 years ago. The language of the standards and assessment movement reveals its business origins by using terms such as “manage,” and “effectively,” to describe the process and referring to teachers and schools as the “education industry.”

Nelson (1998) warns that how public education is governed is vitally important because the principles of democracy are at stake. He worries that those who would promote conformity and standardization threaten not only academic freedom but the opportunity for critical thought. In the spirit of John Dewey, Nelson believes the purpose of schools is to transmit the culture of the society to the next generation and therefore the schools should represent democracy rather than only the interests of the economy.

Much has been written about the development and the subsequent effects of a standards-based curriculum and assessment system on instruction and learning throughout the United States and other democracies (Koppich & Guthrie, 1993; Lawton, 1993; Louden & Browne, 1993; McAdams (1993); Macpherson, 1993; Orlich (2000); Thomas, 1993). Examination of the factors leading to a standardization movement in many of these countries reveals a common evolutionary process, heavily influenced by economic and political developments. These caused a shift in societal values and thus propelled a change in direction for policymaking. Many of the studies profile trends in

American education but the findings can be applied to education systems in other democratic societies.

Few would argue that there is no room for improvement in American education, especially in the areas of racial discrimination and teacher preparation and continuing education (Clinchy, 1998; Cohen, 1990; French, 1998). However, Sirotnik and Kimball (1999) comment that the standards movement has proven to be far more durable than most observers had expected. Not only has the idea taken on the status of “high politics” (Koppich & Guthrie, 1993), but, the stricter assessment and accountability measures that accompany the movement are certainly having a noticeable impact on schools and educators everywhere. This has occurred despite reform efforts being usurped by non-educators and propelled more from political enthusiasms rather than empirically sound studies (Sirotnik & Kimball, 1999).

Indeed, there have always been educational “standards” in the United States (Marshall, 2000; Sarason, 1983; Sizer, 1992). In 1892, the Committee of Ten (Tyack & Cuban, 1995) laid out concise expectations in nine subject areas and these were the basis for curriculum for decades or until “progressive” reforms brought the problems of American society into the schools.

Now, in the early days of the twenty-first century, a national educational agenda is literally sweeping the nation. Based on a social-Darwinism philosophy, and inspired by A Nation at Risk (1983), the national reform agenda was set by President George H.W. Bush and the nation’s governors in 1989 (Orlich, 2000) with America 2000: An Education Strategy. In 1994, the original six goals were expanded into eight by Congress

and became the Goals 2000: Educate America Act. While these two federal acts are the most prominent, as early as 1988, there were apparently more than 275 educational task forces in the U.S., generating reports on how to “fix” schools and set national standards. Even a change in administration in Washington in 1992 did not significantly shift the general thrust of the reforms and the Goals 2000 were reinforced in President Clinton’s State of the Union speeches of 1997 and 1998. In considerable detail, the plan spells out what every student should know and be able to do at each grade level and includes targets for raising average scores on college entrance exams like the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) (Clinchy, 1998).

So pervasive is the standards momentum that the idea is being adopted in virtually every state with no small help from federal and state Goals 2000 funds, and by contributions from *private* [my italics] foundations. Clinchy (1998) sees this reform trend as a return to the factory model school system of the early twentieth century where children were seen as “raw products” to be shaped into products to meet the demands of customers, or in this case, the needs of society.

Donald Orlich (2000) has identified some general characteristics of the current reforms. He believes they are largely politically inspired and represent an increased involvement by state governments and a shift away from local control. The reform agendas are broad in scope, encompassing nearly all of the 50 states. The stress is on higher student achievement and standardization of curriculum content, and proposals are generally without theoretical foundation.

Orlich's (2000) primary criticism of the standards reforms, however, lies with the basic assumption that as a consequence of high standards and high-stakes testing, there should be a dramatic increase in student achievement. Orlich (2000) makes the argument that instead there are probably developmental limits to student achievement. He contends that by using our knowledge of developmental psychology, such as Piaget's model of the four stages of human development and Bloom's Taxonomy, we can reasonably predict the level of achievement school children should be able to reach. "It will do little good to make 9-and 10-year-olds work harder if their cognitive development has not reached the level that allows them to engage in formal thinking" (p. 472).

High-Stakes Assessment

This section reviews several studies that examine the issue of testing and learning. High-stakes assessments are usually associated with the demand for higher standards, often as political justification for the increasing amounts of public resources that standards of excellence require (Broadfoot, 1997). Evidence from assessment research seems to show that testing programs may promise more than they can deliver and, in fact, may actually be distorting the educational system in the United States.

Ramirez (1999) notes that a huge national reform effort, like the current enthusiasm first for national, and now for state-level standards and assessment systems, is nothing new. He specifically refers to the history of assessment-driven reform movements that are documented in much more detail by Tyack and Cuban (1995), tracing the urge to "tinker" with the American school system back to the origins of public

education. Even then, the use of assessments for accountability was an element of proposed changes. As early as 1845, Horace Mann recognized that individual school test results would allow political leverage over “recalcitrant” head masters. The introduction of a standardized test for college admissions (Ramirez, 1999), the norm-referenced standardized testing in the 1950s and 60s, the “back to basics” movement in the 1970s, and national and international assessment programs in the 1980s and 90s (Stiggins, 1999), were other examples of previous attempts to add rigor to the curriculum.

Our culture, says Ramirez (1999), has come to place great value on educational tests, making policy initiatives on assessment popular with the public. Despite all efforts, each generation finds discontent with the public schools and another policy shift occurs. In the latest change initiative, early recommendations were for rich teacher assessments, like portfolios and exhibits tied to authentic teaching. When this quickly proved to be too cumbersome and costly to extrapolate to large-scale assessment programs, this innovative idea evolved into the familiar less time-consuming and more economic reliance on individual students’ single test scores to enable all sorts of judgments about whole schools and teachers.

Ramirez (1999) believes that faith in the power of technology in the U.S. has blinded people to the limitations and weaknesses of such a high-stakes assessment system. He poses some critical questions that should be addressed by educational leaders and policymakers. Where is the value added by testing? What more do we get that we don’t already have? What new information do we gain and what more do we know about our students and our education system?

Sirotnik and Kimball (1999) seek to clarify the complex issues surrounding the notions of testing and assessment and the differences between the two. They recommend that assessment systems be multi-leveled and that the results of each be carefully interpreted. They argue that a single test score can hardly represent all that is going on in a school. Other important data that should be used to place assessment figures into perspective would include statistics on student race and ethnicity, economic status, attendance rates, mobility, suspension and expulsion rates, tracking, special education placements, and scores on other performance measures.

Sirotnik and Kimball (1999) also stress the importance of context (meaning the different conditions and circumstances within which students learn) when officials and the public attempt to make generalizations about test results. While the authors caution people about the limitations of assessment-driven reforms, and their misuse as a means to distribute rewards and punishments to people and institutions, they also believe that with awareness of the limitations, the information gained can be useful in improving teaching and learning. The reality, they say, is that the public has a right to know how the public schools are doing (Weiss, 1990) and they recognize that accountability is the name of the game.

Several researchers (Sirotnik & Kimball, 1999; Donald Gratz 2000) can see some merit in the ideas underlying the standards and assessment movement but are dismayed by the some of the misinterpretations and poor implementation practices that are happening while polarized debate over such initiatives rages on. Sirotnik and Kimball recommend that the developers of the standards and assessment systems set standards for

themselves to which they too would be held accountable. They propose 11 content standards for policymakers that might influence future policy toward actually improving public education. Both Gratz and Sirotnik and Kimball believe that an accountability system must not be based on a single indicator and that the context of each school should be taken into consideration before making comparisons with other schools.

James Popham (1999), former education professor and founder of a test-development and evaluation agency, agrees. He argues that the overriding purpose of the norm-referenced standardized achievement tests, the kind used in much of high-stakes testing, is to permit comparisons among individual students. A test that reveals a single student's strengths and weaknesses, he says, is not necessarily suitable for evaluating the quality of schools. According to Popham, since many items on these tests are thinly veiled IQ items, those students with higher academic aptitude are more likely to answer those items correctly, putting other less able students at a disadvantage.

Gratz (2000) adds that the National Research Council (NRC) strongly recommends that decisions about children under the age of eight or grade three should not be made on the basis of a single test. Sirotnik and Kimball (1999) also suggest that a fair accountability system would include monitoring and support for equal learning opportunities regardless of a child's racial or ethnic background, and should be flexible enough to allow for individual differences in pace and style of learning.

Numerous educational researchers and writers including Marshall (2000), Nelson (1998), Sirotnik and Kimball (1999), Stiggins (1999) call for continual professional development for teachers and a respect for the professional judgment required for teacher-

developed classroom assessments. They warn against the creative restrictions and limits to educational opportunities that result from overly prescriptive and narrow curriculum standards.

In acknowledging the need for schools to demonstrate student progress in reasonable ways, the authors (Sirotnik and Kimball, 1999) argue against an accountability system that punishes either individuals or schools. They maintain that better compensation for educators should be included in the accountability system, for given the importance of their work. Finally, for any accountability system to work, it must have the support of the public and policymakers. This includes providing the funding required to pay for what is needed and protecting the educational functions of the public schools lest they be over-burdened with the health and welfare needs of their students (Sirotnik & Kimball, 1999).

Nelson (1998) is also an advocate of opportunities for professional self-development for teachers and the testing of ideas through classroom research. The best way to improve education in Minnesota, Nelson says, has been to “re-skill” teachers (p. 684) to pursue their own inquiry into curriculum and methodology and to give them respect. “Where is there any evidence,” he asks, “that control by the state will improve education more effectively than the professional development of teachers?” (p. 683)

Writing as an education policy analyst for the Family Research Council, Jennifer Marshall (2000) takes a decidedly conservative view of what President Clinton, in his 1997 State of the Union address, called a “national crusade for education standards” in reference to Goals 2000. She proposes several critical questions about the trend in United

States educational policy in the past several years. Her argument is based on a concern for the ideals and values of American society, in particular the idea of liberty in the sense of intellectual freedom. She suggests that important questions are too often left unasked; such as, if the government is to require by law that children attend school and is to set standards for educational performance, who sets the standards, who makes the tests, and who controls the curriculum? Like Sirotnik and Kimball (1999), she is concerned about the responsible use of power that rests with policymakers and is disturbed by the attitude of many standards proponents who imply those with opposing views are almost “un-American.”

Marshall (2000) also points out that the term “standards” is defined differently by pro-standards advocates who often mean accountability systems, and by the general public who interpret standards as a return to traditional basics education, an end to social promotions, with stricter discipline and clear standards for promotion and graduation. The fact that polls show that the public is almost evenly divided between wanting federal involvement in national testing in reading and math and those who do not, indicates some degree of confusion among the electorate. The fact is that the American public has never had to consider the consequences of a national curriculum or test.

Marshall (2000) warns that a national standards movement can be a trap. The idea, made almost impossible to resist because of the considerable federal funding that accompanies the establishment of such a system, is to create a one-size-fits-all school system. She claims this will not only encourage mediocrity but will become a powerful weapon for eventual control of ideas through prescribed curriculum and assessments.

Quick-fix curriculum reforms at the expense of long-term investment in teacher education and instructional reforms at the local levels interfere with people's values, in particular that most fundamental belief in liberty.

Gratz (2000) concludes that the current standards movement represents a convergence of several trends that include tracking, the struggle for educational equality, the impact of teacher expectations on learning, and the need for skilled workers for the U.S. economy. As such, support for standards has garnered advocates from among such disparate groups as educators, politicians, and business leaders. He suggests the two primary purposes for a standards movement. The first is economic and the need for an efficient work force in order to compete in international business. The second is to address the issue of equality in education, with proponents arguing that raising standards for all students will improve education for poor and minority children by expecting them to live up to higher expectations. Our schools have failed these children, they say, because they are put at a disadvantage by a vast sorting system based on social class and racial/ethnic background. Standards have emerged as a way to provide incentives to unmotivated American students to compete for higher performance in school and later for the best jobs. There is a definite sense of establishing national standards in competition with other first world nations.

French (1998) looked at school reform and bureaucracy issues in a case study of reform initiatives in Massachusetts in the mid-1990s. Until 1994, Massachusetts had essentially no statewide curriculum mandates. There was concern that Massachusetts, like most modern societies, was stratified along racial and economic lines due to the

inequitable state funding which awarded considerably less money to rural and urban districts. This resulted in differences in class sizes, support services, quality of teachers and extra curricular activities and there was widespread support to correct such disparities.

The result was the Massachusetts Education Reform Act which, for the first time, called for a framework for a state curriculum school improvement plans, teacher forums and high stakes testing tied to high school graduation. Participation by teachers, students and the public was encouraged through focus groups while the whole process was being developed in a monumental and dynamic attempt to engage anyone concerned with public education in the state. An innovative funding idea created teacher study groups to allow discussion and feedback about the new curriculum frameworks among those who would be implementing it. Schools were encouraged to form affiliations with similar schools with an eye toward collaborating on the implementation of the new reforms (French, 1998).

However, in 1996, a change in the chairmanship of the state board of education produced a new board majority with politically conservative philosophy and the entire direction of the Massachusetts reforms shifted. Study groups were dropped and assessments grew to include multiple assessments to improve teaching and learning. The result, in French's opinion (1998), was a system with the same problems encountered in any bureaucratic mandate. Such a return to the factory model thinking, that values efficiency at the cost of innovation, mistakenly excluded the teachers who must implement the policies.

Minnesota has been embarking on a similar plan for “revolutionary reform,” with state officials advocating a three year implementation plan for a new state graduation rule and its related curriculum known as “Profile of Learning.” Wade Nelson (1998), a professor of educational leadership at Winona State University considers these reforms to be “retreads of previously unsuccessful conservative concepts” (p. 1). He describes the plan as a very controlling system, essentially “teacher-proof” in that teachers are asked to accept that politicians and bureaucrats know better than they do about how students should be taught and how their performance should be measured.

Donald Gratz (2000) believes that educational accountability is in its infancy. He is cynical about educational reform efforts, believing that they are being distorted by faulty implementation and are subject to political opportunism. Politicians tend to have a need, he says, to seek villains to fight rather than take the time to find solutions to complex problems. Like the patterns of previous reforms, the current movements will eventually be replaced by a new fad. If standards and accountability systems are to be successful and fair, they must be placed in the hands of educators.

Academic standards, while necessary to eliminating disparities in access to quality education, tend to become too prescriptive and narrow, preventing in-depth study of topics. High stakes testing at so many levels also drives schools toward more uniformity and less diversity while at the same time putting low income and minority students at a distinct disadvantage. And even with all of these measures, it is unproven, says French (1998), that a mandated curriculum and assessment system will raise student achievement.

In a five year national study of test usage, Dorr, Bremme, and Herman (1986) concluded that mandated external tests were considered only of peripheral value to school level personnel and were used occasionally for planning. Teachers tended to give more weight to their own observations and judgments because they believed that immediate feedback to students was of most importance to learning. George Madaus (1988), director of the Center for the Study of Testing Evaluation and Educational at Boston College, has found that the more there is at stake in a testing program, the more likely teachers are to concentrate on teaching test-taking strategies and to reduce the curriculum to drills of these strategies.

While many school districts give lip service to discouraging such practice, there is general acceptance that curriculum should be aligned with the tests. However, Linda Darling Hammond and Arthur Wise (1985) found that teachers were reporting having less time for academic subjects that were not included on the test. Linda McNeil's study (1986) revealed that when teachers feel instruction and assessment are taken out of their hands, there is little of intrinsic interest in classroom lessons for either teacher or students. Morale suffers under these conditions and teachers tend to succumb to "teaching to the test" or become disenchanted enough to leave the profession (Stiggins, 1999).

On the other hand, where teachers were entrusted to conduct their own evaluations of student performances, there have been some encouraging results. Black and Wiliam (1998) in Great Britain analyzed and synthesized more than 40 controlled studies on the impact of improved classroom assessment on subsequent student success and found

sizable gains in standardized test scores, especially among lower achieving students. The benefits of multiple assessments might be explained by the fact that with classroom assessment, students are more apt to clearly understand the purpose of the work, they are actively involved in the assessment process, and may be more personally motivated to do well. They conclude:

The main plank of our argument is that standards are raised only by changes which are put into direct effect by teachers and pupils in classrooms. There is a body of firm evidence that formative assessment is an essential feature of classroom work and that development of it can raise standards. We know of no other way of raising standards for which such a strong *pria facie* case can be made on the basis of such large learning gains. (Black & Wiliam, 1998, p. 148)

An extensive study of 470 diverse elementary schools by Jones, Jones, Hardin, Chapman, Yarbrough, and Davis (1999) focused on teachers' perceptions of North Carolina's new high-stakes accountability program known as "The New ABC's of Public Education." The researchers were interested in how the teachers viewed the new accountability program and that the effect was on teacher morale. As in a number of other studies on assessment and effective teaching (Gutloff, 1999; Thrupp, 1998; Stiggins, 1999), the Jones group (1999) found that teachers now spend the majority of their classroom day preparing students in the basics of reading, writing, and math as defined by the ABC mandate. Such findings provide further evidence of a narrowing of the curriculum typical of standardized testing programs. Subjects such as science and social studies are usually found to receive short shrift.

Corbett and Wilson (1988), who investigated the effects of minimum-competency tests on classroom learning in Maryland and Pennsylvania in the late 80s, also found that

where the stakes were high, school districts began to embark on a single-minded course to find ways to raise test scores. Seventy-seven percent of teachers in the study reported lower morale and felt their jobs had become more stressful even when students performed well because they felt they had too little control over student performance while at the same time, pressured to raise scores any way they can. It comes as no surprise that almost the same number of teachers said they would not support a “pay for performance” scheme. In fact, the researchers’ review of statewide data indicated that 20% of the variance in a school’s ABC test scores can be explained by the percentage of students receiving free or reduced-price lunches.

While teachers in the study (Corbett & Wilson, 1998) appeared to be trying to adapt their instruction to the demands of the new program, most believed that this type of accountability system would not improve the quality of education. Many teachers simply go through the motions of complying even though they fail to accept the validity of high stakes tests to improve learning.

This perception corresponds to the findings of Richard Stiggins (1999), president of Assessment Training Institute, Inc. of Portland, Oregon, who believes that to rely on standardized tests to enhance school effectiveness shows a naiveté about the relationship between assessment and teacher motivation. To make important educational decisions on the basis of a once-a-year test is to minimize the many smaller but critical assessments and decisions about student performances that teachers make every day in their classrooms. In fact, Stiggins (1999) maintains that high stakes testing can have the opposite effect on student learning if students are feeling increasing pressure to score

high on tests and at the same time, teachers have less time to provide real opportunities for learning. The result can be a loss of confidence, even a feeling of hopelessness, especially for normally low-achieving students

Forty-three percent of teachers in the Jones study (1999) could find some positive effects of the testing on their students, such as better preparation for learning and increased confidence, yet 61 percent felt their students were more anxious. Almost half indicated that North Carolina's high-stakes ABC program was having a negative effect on students' love of learning.

Jones et al (1999) are concerned that with the ABC system, control of teaching learning has been taken away from educators and been placed in the hands of politicians, threatening to make teachers akin to "unskilled workers." Weiss (1990), in examining five kinds of control in regard to educational policy, also warns that policy mandates often interfere with teachers' professional judgment and this can lead to passive resistance by teachers or even failure to implement the policy.

In an interview for the Harvard Education Letter (1988), Howard Gardner, known for his theory on multiple intelligences, was critical of America's testing society. He took issue with the assumption by policymakers pushing test reform that teachers are considered obstacles to be circumvented. The thinking seems to be, Gardner says, "if we could simply dictate what tests they will have to give we could force them into drumming stuff into kids' heads" (p. 5). Calling formal testing artificial and narrow, Gardner would like to see teachers have the opportunity to become assessment experts. He advocates a model where the teacher is a master of an apprenticeship type of learning environment

and student performances can be creatively chosen and geared to the intelligence strengths of each child.

In another study, Darling-Hammond (1991) documented negative consequences to using test single scores to make decisions about rewards and sanctions for schools and teachers. She found that large numbers of low-scoring students were being placed into special education so that their scores “won’t count” in aggregate school test reports. In other cases, students were retained in grade level so that their relative standing would appear more advantageous for the schools’ grade-equivalent scores. Darling-Hammond (1991) questions whether high test scores even reflect real gains in achievement and argues that students are better motivated when test scores are connected to grades or to future school or job prospects. She asks if high stakes tests really serve to focus instruction and highlight student goals?

Unfortunately, Gratz (2000) notes that most current accountability systems seem to focus on punishing poor-performing schools, expect all students to succeed according to a prescribed time schedule, and use high stakes test scores as the sole determinant for important decisions about children’s educational programs. Ironically, these practices appear to have the unintended consequence of actually widening the gap between the educational haves and have-nots rather than increasing equity among children. Many such mistakes are being made in the name of standards. Gratz (2000) maintains that policies governing such areas as homework, recess, retention and testing are most often ignoring the research on effective schools (Gewirtz, 1998; Louden & Browne, 1983;

Purkey & Smith, 1983; Thrupp, 1998) and student learning in favor of conventional wisdom.

Schools in many states are upgrading and realigning curricula, training parent to help their children, creating faculty task forces to draw up plans for improvement, and providing extra help to struggling students . . . At the same time, many schools and teachers are resorting to such strategies as piling on homework, abolishing help their children, creating faculty recess for young children, cheating on tests, transferring pressure to students, flunking more students, teaching to the test, and seeking ways to rid themselves of low performers. (Gratz, 2000, pp. 684-685)

Time to develop skills and meet goals according to their own developmental map, says Gratz, is what is really needed for educational success. It is politics that requires short-term and decisive action, not student learning.

Many of these studies expose standards and accountability systems as satisfying the demands of politicians for quick results because such schemes can be presented in a form that is easy for the public to understand. Accountability is in favor, as well, because of the culture's admiration for a competitive education environment and its valuing of efficiency. The public appears unwilling to understand the complexities of real teaching and learning issues. But the question is, do standards and assessment systems actually accomplish what their advocates claim? Is there an improvement in student achievement and are teachers inspired to provide higher quality instruction and to raise the standing of their school in the eyes of its patrons?

In summary, the standards movement appears to have taken hold in a number of countries, spurred by concerns for preparing future workers with the skills and knowledge to contribute to the national economies in a globally competitive world. Proponents have been able to sell the idea that higher academic standards and increased accountability

over public services like education, will solve both social and economic problems. The recent period that has seen politicians in several countries embracing the standards movement as an expedient and popular solution would indicate the rise of “efficiency” as the dominant societal value.

Decentralization: Site-Based Management of Schools

In a really progressive, democratic, and no-authoritative way, one does not change the “face” of schools through the central office. One cannot decree that, from today on, the schools will be competent, serious, and joyful. One cannot democratize schools authoritarily. (Friere, 1990, pp. 19-20)

While politicians, in particular, have latched on to the standards movement and its accompanying system for high stakes assessments because of its appeal to the efficient accounting of public expenditures for education to the electorate, many educational researchers (Beare, 1993; Malen & Ogawa, 1988; Nathan & Myatt, 1998; Sizer, 1992) have been advocating a decidedly different approach. Modeled on John Dewey’s progressive education ideas at the turn of the century (Clausen, 1979; Tyack & Cuban, 1995), the movement for more decentralization of control in American schools was popular in the 1920s and 30s as well as during the decade or so following World War II, when there was a general reaction against authoritarian structures (Clinchy, 1998). However, advocates of a decentralized school system represent differing philosophies about why schools should be locally controlled.

Educators like Nathan and Myatt (1998) have been personally committed to an innovative site-based management pilot program, begun in 1983, at Fenway Middle College High School in Boston. Their dual mission, spurred by an interest in community

collaboration and authentic learning, has been to establish a dynamic community of learners and to challenge traditional school structures and policies found in central office bureaucracies. Their ultimate goal, like that of all reformers, was to increase student engagement and achievement by structuring a curriculum and standards dictated by the intellectual powers of the students and shaped by the school staff and not by some remote authority. In 1989, Fenway became affiliated with Coalition of Essential Schools (Sizer, 1992) and by the early 1990s had created an essential curriculum focusing on integrated humanities, math, and science.

Such innovation does not easily gain acceptance and Fenway's founders experienced considerable frustration with the constant power struggles with the central office. They remain true to their original premise that corporate ideas and management techniques, so widely applied in these days of centralized control over school policy, do not translate to public education. "Dynamic school communities," they claim, "are barraged by traditional expectations and policies" (Nathan & Myatt, 1998, p. 285). They suggest, in line with Britain's former Education Secretary Kenneth Baker's thinking, that maybe there is really no need for a central office and that all schools should be autonomous. While concerned that perhaps such bureaucracies do help with assuring an equitable education for all students, Nathan and Myatt wondered if providing only "operational assistance" might be the proper role for the central office.

Bearé (1993) objects to the use of the words "devolution" and "decentralization" as applied to the organization of school systems. In his view, these terms imply that power is being transferred from a "superior" central office to the "inferior" school level.

Often meant to refer to school-based-management models, such terms remain open to various interpretations by school governing bodies.

Beare (1993) proposes four models for decentralized school governance. The first is governance by a “company of learners,” where management is by a lay body and teachers are employed by the people who wish to be taught. An example of this model would be a private school. With a “company of teachers,” teachers control the governing board and hire a business manager for day-to-day management. A third model is governance by a board of trustees within a centralized bureaucracy and their function would be to provide a public service. Management of schools by a local governing body in Great Britain is theoretically an example of this type of devolved control (Beare, 1993).

Finally, there is governance by a parliamentary body of representative and elected members. Its power derives from a constitution or a mandated state law. A school belongs, in essence, to a local community made up of different electorates of parents, teachers, community, and government. This last model probably most closely resembles typical public school based management experiments where the school is identified as the primary unit to be improved and decision-making authority is dispersed among all the principals with a stake in the school (Beare, 1993).

Malen and Ogawa (1988) have studied the effectiveness of school-based management. While they found little evidence that such local control substantially alters policymaking or results in measurably more effective schools, they do acknowledge that

this type of governance should foster greater accountability since responsiveness to the school's patrons should necessarily be strengthened.

A recent article analyzes a report from the National Commission on Governing America's Schools (Starr, 1999) which examines how school governance affects student learning. In this context, governance is defined as who makes what decisions and in what manner. Funded by an admittedly conservative think tank, the Education Commission of the States, the project was the first phase of an initiative intended to help educators, policymakers, and the public make informed decisions about school governance.

After a year-long process of gathering data and allowing experts to develop a body of knowledge about educational governance issues, the commission finally recommended two specific governance plans in 1999 that clearly define the roles that states, districts, and schools should play. The consensus suggested a decentralization of control through school-site management with the central offices providing services to locally controlled neighborhood schools (Starr, 1999).

The first governance plan would improve the existing system, with the goal of improving "quality" and "efficiency." Publicly authorized, funded, and operated, the state and districts would establish academic standards, high expectations for curriculum and assessment, and monitor student performance, while each school would manage its own budget, including staff salaries and basic services, and fine-tune plans for student learning (Starr, 1999).

An alternative plan, according to Starr (1999), advocated a system of independently operated schools, but publicly authorized and funded. States and districts

would still be held accountable for student achievement and for setting curriculum standards and instruction. Claiming to be more “evolutionary” than “revolutionary,” the commission is entering into market choice territory with its emphasis on parental choice of the schools their children attend, allowing public money to follow the student, and providing parents and the community with “good information” (test scores?) about student, teacher, and school performance.

As an advocate of decentralization, Cohen (1990) believes it invigorates static school systems and focus schools on improved teaching and learning. But, says Cohen, decentralization alone is not the answer, and it is likely to also create new power arrangements at the local level instead of at the state or national level. Existing political organizations would find it easy, Cohen suggests, to fill the vacuum created by devolving power to the local community and a patronage system can easily develop as local politicians struggle to maintain the status quo and protect their own jobs.

Cohen (1990) maintains that socio-economic status affects how educational values are expressed and from the beginning of public education in democratic countries, educational ideas usually reflect other social and political ideas, whether it be anti-immigrant feelings, industrialization, global business competition, or the disappearing influence of the family or the church. In the U.S., during the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, civil rights and poverty were primary issues in the nation and this attention was mirrored in the concern for equality of access to public education. At the same time, different issues influence local educational policy, including increases in property taxes, an aging population, censorship, and racial and economic demographics.

Essentially, the American system of government was carefully designed to disperse power and authority and so decentralization of schools is a natural condition for a democratic society.

In summary, the push for a more decentralized governance of schools is supported by many educational researchers who find the local control of schools to be more responsive to the needs of students, parents, and the community. These advocates point out the importance of teacher autonomy in the classroom and urge respect for the judgments of professional educators who know the “face” of their school. Beare (1993) identified four models for local governance and Nathan and Myatt (1998) described their own experience with a pilot charter school while confessing their frustration with continued central office control. Though not all researchers find evidence that decentralized control is more effective, they agree that accountability seems to be more meaningful at the local level.

Effective Schools Research

It is apparent that the stated goal of almost all major school reforms is to improve student achievement and yet debate over the issue continues to be polarized and politicized. It is therefore interesting to look at some of the studies on effective schools, particularly those conducted in Great Britain and commonwealth nations (Gewirtz, 1998; Purkey & Smith, 1983; Thrupp, 1998).

Martin Thrupp (1998) has studied school accountability policies in New Zealand and England and their effect on achievement and has found remarkable similarities. In

both countries, the emphasis is on the “external” inspections that have dominated centralized educational reform policy during the last decade in many of the English-speaking countries, including the United States. Thrupp contends that both New Zealand’s Education Review Office (ERO) and England’s Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) represent what is referred to as the populist “politics of blame” rhetoric of recent governments (p. 196). Their targets are so-called “failing” schools and “incompetent teachers” (p. 196).

Thrupp (1998) found that educators, particularly in England, see the present approach to school inspection contentious, often misguided, and unfair. At the center of this adversarial relationship between the schools and external accountability agents is what Thrupp sees as a punitive approach, in which the inspectors attempt to place the responsibility for pupil failures on the schools alone. Uncompromisingly, the quality of student achievement is seen as a direct result of each school’s policies and staff practices. Contextual claims, made by many sociologists (Gewirtz, 1998; Ogbu, 1987) that school failure so often reflects the broader socio-economic factors outside the school, are dismissed by the inspection bodies as simply educators making excuses for poor performance.

In England, at least, the Office for Education and Standards (OFSTED) has attempted to legitimize their approach to inspections by acknowledging contextual factors through a “value-added” system and by considering the social context of a school in its reports (Thrupp, 1998). By so doing, OFSTED established credibility with academics who seem to have taken their inspection methods seriously. At the same time, the value-

added aspect of the school reports managed to cleverly remove SES as a school's excuse for poor performance. This approach was reiterated by then Secretary of Education Chris Woodhead in 1996 when he cautioned schools about using SES as justification for low expectations of pupil performance.

The removal of social context from the debate about individual school performances, says Thrupp (1998), strengthens the government's argument for market choice, which played an important part in the development of England's 1988 Education Reform Act. The thinking goes, that if schools are considered wholly responsible for their own success or failure, then the federal government can be absolved from redistributing resources more equitably.

Thrupp (1998) finds a close relationship between school effectiveness researchers and school inspectors in England due to their assumption that schools can make a difference in student achievement despite socio-economic factors. Thrupp theorizes that this bias may derive from what he sees as the relatively uncritical practitioner-oriented research during the Thatcher administration which stemmed from a decidedly anti-teacher view (Davies, 1999; Koppich & Guthrie, 1993). Thrupp's own research (1998) substantiates that the social mix of a school's student population strongly influences the organization and management of a school and that schools with different socio-economic factors, even with similar levels of resourcing, will not be able to carry out similarly effective school policies.

In more recent developments, the Labour government has joined OFSTED in creating new initiatives to address school failure, a mixture of politics with so-called

independent school inspections, that makes a number of school-effectiveness researchers uncomfortable (Thrupp, 1998; Tomlinson, 1997). Thrupp (1998) makes the point that the inspections continue to find “ineffective” schools in low socio-economic areas.

Oversimplification often characterizes the use of data on effective schooling. A common assumption seems to underlie the thinking about education in the United States and Britain that “failing” schools are the product of poor leadership and incompetent teaching. A contrasting view credits good leadership and teaching with having only a minimal effect on school performance and places the blame on socio-economic factors.

In a comparative case study of two inner-London secondary schools, Sharon Gewirtz (1998) attempted to isolate the determinants that allow one school to be labeled a success and the other a failure. She highlighted several key issues derived from the study. Rather than accept the premise that the quality of leadership and teaching has created the “good” or “bad” perception of these two schools, Gewirtz (1998) suggested that reputation, and the accompanying public attention that it brings to a school might be the true determiner of staff behavior and attitude.

In an interesting twist on conventional wisdom on the subject and using Thrupp’s (1998) conclusions from his research in New Zealand, Gewirtz (1998) theorizes that schools deemed as “successful” exhibit a number of positive characteristics: motivated and undemanding pupils, adequate resources, pleasant facilities and dedicated teachers. Heads of such schools spend little of their time on discipline problems and can devote themselves to budget matters and strategic plans for putting the vision of the staff into practice. Teachers have time to plan imaginative lessons and morale is relatively high.

In so-called “failing” schools, worries about resources are constant, lessons tend to be hijacked by behavioral problems and the physical demands of difficult children means teachers are left with little energy for developing positive relationships with colleagues or for being creative about instruction. Gewirtz (1998) is not suggesting that good management and teaching do not make a difference, only that the various factors that are normally thought to contribute to school effectiveness are bound together in very complex ways and must be considered in the context of the socio-economic environment.

Historic Background to British Education Reforms

It is possible to trace the development of educational reform in Great Britain by examining the philosophical foundation of conservative and liberal thought over the last half of the twentieth century and following the significance of the interactions, even skirmishes, between the two. Contemporary education policy in Britain was established with the passage of the 1944 Education Act, or Butler Act, by a conservative government. It legislated, for the first time, secondary education for all children and formed the legal and philosophical basis for post-World War II education in England (Guttek, 1993). Among its objectives were that education should contribute to the “spiritual, moral, mental, and physical development of the community” and that children should receive an education “suitable to their age, ability, and aptitudes” (p. 105). With this landmark ruling, Britain became the last of the industrialized nations to commit to a free, universal public elementary and secondary education for its children.

The first hint of support for the “multilateral” or “multibias” school that would serve all children together came from a recommendation of Labour’s Education Advisory Committee as early as 1938, but the Labour governments of 1945-51 were unsympathetic to the idea (Simon, 1997). In 1947, the age of compulsory schooling was raised to 15 and, in 1973, to 16. The Board of Education was transformed into a Ministry of Education, later to become the Department of Education and Science (DES), headed by the secretary of state for education, a cabinet level position (Guttek, 1993).

The educational system that developed at the end of World War II was tripartite in organization. Highly academic schools, called “grammar” schools, would prepare the strongest students for university, while “technical” schools would provide training for skilled craftsmen and technical workers. Students not interested in or qualified for those two educational options, could attend a “secondary modern” school. The latter eventually gained a reputation for poor quality as more and more students struggled for admittance to the grammar schools, leaving those who had “failed” the selection exam to the secondary modern (Chitty & Dunford, 1999; McAdams, 1993). Cornall (1997) describes the educational system that Britain embraced in the mid-fifties as “segregation-by-testing” in the state schools, paralleling the “segregation-by-class” in the private or independent schools. Sorting, selection and exclusiveness was common to both.

The Comprehensive Ideal

The comprehensive system was based on the principles that *all* children are to be educated in a “common school” and should enjoy the same social and educational

advantages, whatever their ability, race, ethnic, or class background. Classes were organized in mixed-ability groups and those children with special needs were integrated into the mainstream classes where it was believed they had a better chance of achieving than in separate educational facilities. Comprehensive schools appear to have been particularly beneficial to working class or disadvantaged children (Cornall, 1997; Simon, 1997). The school “context” or the composition of the school student body cut across social class and so lower class pupils, able to attend the same schools as middle and upper middle class students, have had access to more favorable educational environments.

While the comprehensive ideal remains a subject of debate in England, it is accepted practice in many other post-industrialized nations (Gruber, 1998). In the Scandinavian countries and in Italy, comprehensive schools have been firmly established for over 30 years with support from politicians, educators, and the public. In the U.S., the very term “common schools” (Guttek, 1993; Tyack & Cuban, 1995) denotes a comprehensive movement that prides itself in providing free, public education to children of all its citizens.

During the period between 1950 and 1975, the idea of providing an equitable system of education for all students gained favor and influence in Great Britain (Chitty & Dunford, 1999; McAdams, 1993). It reflected a positive emphasis on human potential (Cornall, 1997). The impetus for a shift in values from social elitism to a comprehensive ideal came partly from a resistance to the early selective tracking that submitted 11 year olds to the anxieties of life-shaping exams and then drew off the ablest among them to an

academic grammar school track. This system meant that countless other youngsters were to be written off as “failures” at a very early age.

It also became apparent that intakes to the three types of secondary schooling were reflecting a social class bias, with grammar schools becoming dominated by middle class children (Walford & Pring, 1997). The fairness of the IQ tests used to select children for admission to grammar schools was also called into question as opponents argued that they discriminated against children from culturally and economically diverse backgrounds. Even when working class children were able to enter the grammar schools, they were often overwhelmed by cultural expectations that conflicted with their own experiences.

Other pressures came from the middle classes who wanted access to challenging secondary schooling and university opportunities for their own children. In the post war years, demographics created by the baby boom generation meant that there were many fewer grammar school places than there were students (and their parents) seeking them (Walford & Pring, 1997). Even the impossibility of establishing alternative schools in sparsely populated rural communities made the tripartite system impractical.

The perception that Britain was essentially a homogeneous society was also shattered several decades ago when local education associations began to struggle with the unique educational needs and challenges of children newly arrived from various and disparate nations of the British Commonwealth. They brought with them not only different languages, but cultural and religious traditions far removed from those of the

British establishment. For the first time, the central government was faced with the need to offer equality of education to all its children (Chitty & Dunford, 1999).

The 1960s represented a period of optimism and concern that education would be an entitlement to everyone in British society. Policy makers saw a direct relationship between a comprehensive school system and an educated and skilled workforce, and called for a school system that would facilitate economic growth and educational expansion (Chitty, 1999).

But as with any public institution involving public funds, comprehensive secondary education was a political issue. It was in 1965 that the Labour government first voiced its opposition to the 11+ grammar school selection process and requested that local education authorities reorganize their secondary schools to fit the comprehensive model (Chitty & Dunford, 1999; Gutek, 1993).

But the vagaries of political power subjected the comprehensive school idea to a roller coaster ride in the next decade. The policy supporting comprehensives was withdrawn in 1970 when the Conservative or Tory Party returned to power, only to be reinstated in 1974 with the re-election of another Labour government (Walford & Pring, 1997). The 1970s had ushered in a period of economic crisis in Great Britain, as indeed in the United States, precipitated in part by a steep increase in oil prices. This created the conditions for the resumption of right wing ideas, tying education to economics, and the return to power of the Conservative Party in 1979. The government's aim was to restore a competitive, free enterprise approach to education.

The basic objectives of the Tory Party represented a shift in values from a concern for equality of opportunity for all, to a regard for efficiency by raising academic standards, a modern version of the classic “market liberalism” of the nineteenth century (Chitty, 1999; Thomas, 1993). Their reform of education turned attention to the quality of teacher preparation, and began to put into place a market system for education that would permit parental choice of school for their children (Guttek, 1993). But not everyone agreed with those Conservative goals. Out in the counties of England, support for the comprehensive schools was not divided along political party lines (Chitty, 1999). Despite a push for a return to the grammar school system by national Conservative politicians, some Tory LEAs often were among those resisting the move away from comprehensive schools as many middle class parents were quite satisfied with their local comprehensive school. Meanwhile, some Labour LEAs were reluctant to vote to abolish the selective system for grammar schools because they saw it as an opportunity for a minority of able lower class children to succeed in an admittedly classed society.

By now, so strong was the belief in *efficiency*, or the need for value for money in state education, even Labour politicians could not be counted on to defend the comprehensive system during the 70s. In his now famous speech, delivered at Ruskin College, Oxford, in 1976, Labour Prime Minister James Callaghan bowed to contemporary media pressure by failing to celebrate the achievements of the comprehensive public education in Great Britain (Chitty, 1999). So-called “progressive (and liberal) teachers” had attracted the attention and the criticisms of the media during this period, for their emphasis on developing socially well-adjusted individuals

presumably at the expense of academics. Callaghan appeared to wade into the fray, by implying that these comprehensive teachers were not up to the job of turning out skilled workers.

Despite Conservative attempts to destroy the comprehensive system, by the 1980s such schools had become the preferred organizational structure for English secondary education as a result of a grass-roots movement, largely led by parents (Ball, 1997). It eventually won converts from across the political spectrum. There were those who advocated a comprehensive system because they believed all local children should have the opportunity to attend a single school, with equal physical facilities and equal access to the same high quality of teachers as found in a grammar school. This view represents the thinking that, in a society with class and race differences, the local school should reflect all the same differences among its children and provide the opportunity to learn in the conditions matching the social realities of the world of work.

The 1980 Education Act followed the lead of the Scottish school system in legislating parental choice legislation. Adler (1997) revisited a research study on parental choice and educational policy that he was involved in between 1983 and 1986 and reviewed policy developments in Scotland and England since that time. He confirmed that the legislation for England and Wales was a political rather than an educational initiative and that it was enacted despite the opposition of several interest groups. The Conservative's commitment to parental choice, Adler contends, was weakened by their determination to reduce public spending. The 1980 Education Act was a compromise between the two.

Support for a National Curriculum

James Callaghan's Ruskin College speech marked the first stirrings of an idea for a national core curriculum. There had been no consensus on curriculum in Britain (Broadfoot, 1997; Lawton, 1996; McAdams, 1993) since the passage of the 1944 Education Act (Gutek, 1993) and, by the mid-1970s, the momentum for some sort of national curriculum guidelines began to gather support across political party lines. Even educators were calling for some sort of standardized guidelines. Schools had been left largely to their own devices in terms of curriculum, and while the quality of teaching was subject to monitoring by Her Majesty's Inspectors (Bolton, 1998; Dunford, 1998), there was never a strong sense of interference from outside the educational establishment.

The Education Secretary at the time, Shirley Williams, discussed the issue in a 1977 "green paper" and Her Majesty's Inspectorate (HMI) was at work on an "entitlement" curriculum in keeping with the comprehensive schools idea (Dunford, 1998; Lawton, 1996). And so it appears likely that pressures from politicians and professional educators would have brought about some kind of national curriculum even if the Labour party had been re-elected in 1979 (Lawton, 1996). While Labour politicians had been poised to push ahead with a national curriculum plan, their defeat at the polls in 1979 meant that the idea ended up being appropriated by the victorious Conservative Party.

As it turned out, it was a new conservative government under Margaret Thatcher that made British education history. The Tories, like the concurrent Reagan administration in the U.S., saw themselves as agents of an economic system that had

come to dominate national policy. In terms of political strategy, they accepted that “global economic determinism” (Bottery, 1999) would guide policy in all areas of society, including public health care and the state school system. However, it was to emerge later, that the Thatcher government’s real aim was to encourage the idea of parental choice of schools and to open up education to market forces (Lawton, 1996).

At the same time that the reform was moving to devolve control from the LEAs to the school level in order to create an educational market and to restore traditional educational values), there was a simultaneous plan to centralize the education system. The cornerstone of the 1988 Education Reform Act was the introduction of a national curriculum. It was remarkable in that it flew in the face of traditional British regard for independence in their schools and yet immediately attracted consensus from a broad political spectrum (Pierson, 1998).

A very prescriptive and extensive version of the curriculum was originally proposed with the intent to ease the curriculum into the schools over a number of years. But there were immediate problems and significant changes were occurring even as the reforms were being implemented (Thomas, 1993). By 1991, the last Thatcher Education Secretary, Kenneth Clarke, was discontent with implementing the innovations of his predecessor and showed his irritation in general with Her Majesty’s Inspectors whom he accused of undermining government policies (Bolton, 1998). Clarke’s term bridged the transfer of government power from Thatcher to John Major in 1992 and he pursued a domestic policy that was somewhat of a departure from the Thatcher policies. Priorities were accountability, inspection, diversity, parent charters, and choice.

The 1988 Education Reform Act

The Education Reform Act was certainly omnibus legislation. Kenneth Baker had a seemingly inexhaustible appetite for reform, with his evangelising even stretching to a commitment to improve the quality of school meals! The Act had an impact all the way from nursery schools to the management of postgraduate study in the universities. It sought to deal simultaneously with questions of curriculum, assessment, funding, management, recruitment, accountability and institutional structure. The legislation was hastily prepared, with a minimum of consultation and was imposed upon a largely unsympathetic teaching profession (Pierson, 1998, p. 138).

The same fundamental conditions that spawned the call for centralized educational standards in the United States were also present in Great Britain during the decades of the 70s and 80s. Surveying behind the scenes of Margaret Thatcher's Conservative government in the 1980s it appears that the stage was set for a major political reform movement. While the United States still debates the relative merits of centralized and decentralized control of schools, the 1988 Education Reform Act in Great Britain has already put into practice a system where national curriculum and standards are administered by the central government and issues of budget and personnel are devolved to the local school level (Lawton, 1996; Thomas, 1993; Whitty & Edwards, 1998).

When Margaret Thatcher became Prime Minister in 1979, her first Education Secretary Mark Carlisle, seemed content to accept the existing locally administered national education service. But when he was rather abruptly replaced in 1981, the agenda of his successor, Sir Keith Joseph, was to "reduce public expenditure on education and to minimize the influence of bureaucrats and professionals" (Bolton, 1998, p. 47). Joseph

was also interested in raising student achievement and in bringing the school system more in line with business interests and the marketplace.

Pierson (1997) notes that in the early 1980s, the neo-liberal right, in a bid for decentralization of the school system, floated the idea of educational vouchers, in which funding would follow each student to the school of his/her choice. Instead, in the first moves toward reform, legislation established the Local Management of Schools concept, transferring the administration of the schools, including staffing, premises, and services, from the Local Education Authorities (LEAs) to governing bodies. In 1987 the Tories set the stage for the major reforms of 1988 in promising the strengthening of parental rights to choose their children's school and a reduction in the powers of the local education authorities. A policy of open enrollment gave parents greater freedom to choose their children's schools and, in turn, schools were obligated to accept enrollment up to their capacity. Budgets were determined by a funding formula based largely on the number of pupils and any budget deficit could mean dismissal of teaching staff, thus the incentive for a school to become competitive enough to attract students (Thomas, 1993). There have been no further adjustments to the parental choice legislation since the 1988 Education Reform Act (Adler, 1997), but the introduction of Local Management of Schools (LMS) was an attempt to increase the competitiveness among schools and thus enhance choice. The government describes LMS as "unique systems of virtually complete self-management. This ensures that important decision making is carried out close to the level of delivery" (The British Council, 1999, p. 1).

Adler (1997) reports that additional components of the ERA also established a pilot network of City Technology Colleges in England and Wales, to provide a high-tech curriculum to 11-18 year olds in the inner cities. The scheme was to be funded and run by private educational interests. School communities were given the option of also choosing to have their local school “opt out” of the control of the local education authority and become “grant-maintained” by direct funding from the central government, coupled with the CTCs, further enhanced parents’ choice of schools.

Social justice arguments were used by the New Right elements, represented by think tanks such as the Hillgate Group, to assure critics that consumer demand in the market would lead to quality education for all students (Whitty & Edwards, 1998). This approach mirrors similar rhetoric from proponents of voucher schemes in the U.S. who couch efficiency and accountability goals in terms of equality and liberty (parent choice) values (Thomas, 1993). In fact, Wiliam (1998) suggests the term “entitlement” was used as a justifying rationale in 1987 amid proposals for a National Curriculum. The claim was that a national curriculum would ensure that “all” pupils would have access (be entitled) to broadly the “same good and relevant” programs of study which would equip them for the knowledge and skills they would need for adult life and employment.

Another component of the ERA related to decentralization of control was the introduction of grant-maintained schools (Whitty & Edwards, 1998; Thomas, 1993). This option allowed the governors of all secondary schools and elementary with over 300 pupils to apply to the Secretary of State for maintenance by grant from the central government and cease being controlled by the LEA. Designed to provide families with a

greater range and diversity of schools from which to choose, in effect, the LEAs now had to consider both parents and schools as clients and to compete for their “business” (Thomas, 1993). Whitty and Edwards (1998) observed that all of these measures challenged teacher autonomy and the bureaucratic interference of the LEAs, producer factions the Right viewed as self-perpetuating and self-interested and ignoring the interests of consumers.

Accountability / High-Stakes Assessment. In conjunction with the centralized curriculum an assessment system was created. It was felt to be necessary by the Thatcher government because there was suspicion that the previous comprehensive system had made schools “soft on standards,” but also because the market system needed to provide information about schools to parents so that they could make choices regarding their children’s education. Results of testing, and other key indicators of a school’s success (such as attendance and truancy rates) would be placed in the public domain (Pierson, 1998). But there was opposition to the assessment scheme from the beginning. The Labour party was hostile and teachers unions were extremely resistant over the implications of an increased workload. Daugherty (1995) writes about the micro and macro-political struggles that surrounded the ERA. He says that even fellow Tories voiced their objections to the innovations Kenneth Baker was advocating. The traditionalists wanted testing of strictly content rather than his more skills-oriented assessments, and the neo-liberals pressed for more commitment to a free-market approach.

A Task Group on Assessment and Test (TGAT), largely comprised of academics, was formed to design an appropriate national assessment. The framework was to have four purposes: diagnosing students' strengths and weaknesses, provide feedback for planning instruction, aggregate information on pupils' achievement at key stages of learning, and yield evaluative data about the quality of teachers, the school, and the whole educational system. Daugherty (1995) questioned whether these goals were too broad and idealistic or whether the assessment program was implemented too quickly and without benefit of a pilot program. He even speculated that it may be that political advantage could have been gained simply by talk of an assessment plan.

The TGAT had recommended that "authentic" assessments be used. The spirit of this idea was welcomed by teachers, although they were concerned about the workload requirements as teachers were expected to correct all of their students' exams (Daugherty, 1995). TGAT understood these concerns and recommended a mix of external testing and classroom assessments geared to explicit curriculum targets. Recognizing that any scheme will only work if teachers make it their own, the TGAT also planned for on-going professional development for teachers. In regard to attainment targets and testing in the primary schools, TGAT Chairman Paul Black (1998) himself reports that the task force foresaw "terrible difficulties." They also stressed that the new assessment plan should be phased in over a period of at least five years.

The first main report by TGAT was released in 1988, to some immediate complaints by Thatcher (Black, 1998). Kenneth Baker appeared to endorse almost all of the proposals. However, there were to be some early casualties to the TGAT plan. Early

trials found the proposed Standard Assessment Tasks (SATs) cumbersome. The new Secretary of State, Kenneth Clarke pronounced them “elaborate nonsense” (Black, 1998) and wanted the new emphasis to be on manageability and producing summative information. This change was followed by the elimination of the teacher assessment portion of the assessment plan.

Professor Black (1998) believed these moves were calculated from the start and that initial acceptance of the elements of the TGAT report was pretense to disguise the intentional implementation of another policy. As he remarks, “. . . two driving forces—distrust of teachers and the belief that external measures and the rigours of the competitive market are the best way to raise standards—were too powerful” (p. 60).

By 1993, when the whole revolutionary curriculum and assessment plan was proving to be too complex and in disarray, the government called in Sir Ron Dearing to conduct a review and to “slim down” the whole National Curriculum and simplify testing (Tomlinson, 1997). As Chitty and Dunford (1999) comment, the fact that planning for the ERA showed no evidence of either an educational purpose or a set of clearly defined principles to form the foundation for the reforms, was now exposing the flaws of the undertaking. The Dearing committee listened to teacher concerns, much of the detailed curriculum content was “pruned,” and schools were given some slight flexibility to implement the curriculum, though Lawton (1997) suggests it was “not enough.”

Accountability-School Inspection. In keeping with the Tory government’s enthusiasm for accountability and centralized management, they also undertook wholesale reform of the process for inspecting schools. A book by John Dunford (1998)

traces the changes in the functions of the inspectorate. He reports that for 30 years, the purpose of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) was to provide the government in power with information and inspection-based advice about carrying out its policies for education.

HMI were not teachers but were graduates of the best universities and had "class." Their method of judgment depended largely on a body of corporate knowledge about how schools were supposed to work. They never produced a manual or handbook and Dunford describes their style of inspection as approaching their job as "connoisseurs," who "approached schools and teaching as an art form to be appraised" (p. 529).

The database for all those years of inspections was not in statistical tables but in the corporate memory of the inspectors. HMI reports were available to and understood only by schools and LEAs and head teachers were able to do with the results as they chose. Dunford (1998) viewed the inspectorate as "within" the profession of teaching, a distinction generally appreciated by teachers but which ultimately caused the demise of HMI.

Although the inspectorate was under constant appraisal itself, its contributions were given little attention and during the years between 1956 and 1968 members were content to keep a low profile (Dunford, 1998). When Sir Keith Joseph became the second Thatcher Secretary for Education and Science in 1981, he publicly acknowledged that HMI had the potential to be an important change agent in education (Bolton, 1998). Bolton (1998) comments that the priorities of HMI's work were determined by what the government needed to know about education and in the Thatcher years of 1979 and 1992, as education became a central political issue, the government required a lot of

information. HMI's organization and practice evolved to suit these demands while continuing to support local administration of schools.

A 1983 Policy Statement reaffirmed HMI's traditional role. Keith Joseph's White Paper *Better Schools* in 1985, made extensive use of HMI findings and advice (Bolton, 1998). But HMI's involvement in developing policy and the now common practice of publishing inspection reports, eventually resulted in a fatal shift in HMI's status and caused tension between the inspectorate and both the government and the local educational establishment. They also came under official "scrutiny," with some in the government intent on reducing their role, and the inspectors began to be drawn into the government's concern with the power of local education authorities (Bolton, 1998).

Questions about the role of HMI began to emerge. Was the purpose of an inspectorate to support the government's quest for efficiency, or to act on behalf of parents as consumers? The Thatcher, and later the Major, administrations wished to serve the interests of parents. Pierson (1998) reports that the Thatcher administration suspected that Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) were allied with the liberal educational community which the government held responsible for overseeing the long-term decline in academic standards in the nation's schools. In the end, the Tories' desire to be rid of all reminders of the old educational establishment, with which HMI was associated, signaled the end of the inspectorate and the advent of a whole new agency (Dunford, 1998).

With the Education (Schools) Act of 1992, responsibility for the inspection of schools was transferred to a new Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) on 1

September of that year. Its duty was to “inspect, report on and improve” standards of achievement and the quality of education. Independent inspection teams, to include a lay member, would be awarded contracts on a competitive basis (www.ofsted.gov.uk/about/index.htm).

Standardized rules and regulations were established to ensure the utmost accountability on the part of the schools and their heads. OFSTED reports subsequently become very public knowledge, to be used by parents in selecting a school and also instigate “action plans” by the school in which the head teacher and the governors indicate how they will address the recommendations of the inspectors (Pierson, 1998).

Bolton (1998) expressed several concerns about the present structure of OFSTED. First, in order to ensure the comparability and reliability of inspectors, OFSTED has had to develop a highly prescriptive checklist for inspection that does not account for the characteristics of individual schools. Contract inspectors are also too disconnected from OFSTED itself and have no involvement in translating advice into practice. Additionally, Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector (HMCI) appears to be accountable to no one and when the current HCMI, Chris Woodhead speaks out, as he often does, it is not clear if these are his own opinions or a collective judgment based on inspection reports. Finally, Bolton (1998) also believes that OFSTED’s inspection reports are not focused and well-founded enough to provide reliable advice for policy formulation.

In a study which examined the effectiveness of the inspection system in England and Wales on school reform, Norton Grubbs (2000) compared English school inspection procedures prior to and since 1993. He was particularly interested in how the lessons

from England might help in developing similar methods of observation in the United States. Norton observes that when inspections work well, they can be valuable in initiating dialogue about teaching but it is also possible that, like any assessment process, inspections can be used for regulation and control.

In England and Wales much controversy has developed over whether OFSTED inspections are of significant enough benefit to the improvement of the quality of education to warrant the time-consuming paperwork and stress to school personnel that seem to accompany the process. Norton's conclusion is that as an attempt to improve educational quality, OFSTED has been a failure since only a small fraction of ineffective schools have been closed. Moreover, while OFSTED inspectors consider their purpose to be to identify institutional and administrative weaknesses, their focus on classroom observations and ratings of individual teachers clearly send a mixed message to those educators they profess to support. The old HMI, in contrast, was generally respected for its advisory role. Norton's findings reveal a distrust of both the system and its head, Chris Woodhead, by teachers who are alarmed by what appears to be his campaign to identify and dismiss incompetent teachers rather than to fault the system.

The Politics of Education Reform

What prompts and drives education reform movements? What are the policy dynamics behind national education reform? Why are so many international educational reforms emerging now, in the last decades of the twentieth century? Guthrie and Koppich (1993) propose a model of education reform and what they term "high politics"

that attempts to explain school-reform movements can be tested in a variety of national settings.

The Education Reform Act of 1988, grew out of the context of cultural and economic disturbances in British society of the time. In this section of the review of literature I will place the template of Guthrie and Koppich's A.I.M. model (1993) over the social and economic fabric of Great Britain during the 1980s in an attempt to test its theoretical view of reform as "high politics."

The A.I.M. Model for Reform

Most changes, either by individuals, organizations, or even governments, are incremental, requiring only minor adjustments according to circumstances and necessity. However, occasionally a policy reflects a substantial alteration in thinking or of values and this, say Guthrie and Koppich (1993) may be defined as a "reform." The question is what really qualifies a change as a reform and what makes some particularly noteworthy?

Guthrie and Koppich (1993) theorize that national educational reform policy movements, like those that have marked political rhetoric in recent decades in Great Britain as well as in the U.S., New Zealand, Australia, and Canada (Anderson, 1993; Koppich & Guthrie, 1993; Lawton, 1993; Loudon & Browne, 1993; McAdams, 1993; Macpherson, 1993) are the result of what they call "high politics." This phenomenon happens, they say, when an issue "explodes" out of the traditional world of everyday policymaking and a host of additional policy players, often high-ranking officials,

become involved. Debate becomes increasingly public, usually elevating the issue to the status of partisan politics and attracting the attention of the mainstream media and thus the general public.

Since “politics” is central to Guthrie and Koppich’s A.I.M. paradigm (1993), the two define the term as “the set of processes by which a social group allocates valued resources” (p. 17). The problem then becomes what is it that is “valued” by a society and what “processes” are to be included.

The dynamics in politics then, claim Guthrie and Koppich (1993) is in the determination of who gets what, when, and in what circumstances. Issues that become political begin with hopes and wants, some of which eventually make demands on the political system, providing incentive for the system to act. While in a democracy at least, political systems are open but “institutional gatekeepers” determine which demands are “heard” by the system.

As to the timing of current reforms, Guthrie and Koppich (1993) agree with numerous political observers (Adler, 1997; Bolton, 1998; Haigh, 1996; Lawton, 1996; Pierson; Portin, 1999; Whitty & Edwards, 1998) that economics is the best explanation. Modern organizational structures, instant communication, and the rapid growth of information technology have transformed international business and trade. Countries are now globally competitive and increasingly interdependent, and such economic conditions require highly developed human intelligence. A strong education system, then, is deemed essential for producing the valued commodity of human capital and nations can no longer ignore the potential of any future workers.

Guthrie and Koppich (1993) propose three conditions that they believe must coincide in order for a major policy reform to take hold. These conditions form the *A-alignment of values*, the *I-initiating event(s)*, and the *M-mobilization*, of their paradigm.

(A) Alignment. The A.I.M. model suggests that most cultures hold “equality,” “efficiency,” and “liberty” as the strong values and that the constant interplay between advocates of one value or another strongly influences public policy. Liberty connotes freedom of choice, equality means parity of opportunity, outcome, or treatment, and efficiency refers to the tools and techniques capable of producing greater results.

Guthrie and Koppich (1993) contend that for a reform to be part of “high politics,” the issue must first “enter the political arena.” Then the idea must either be *aligned* with a value that is currently dominant in the society or it must appear during a period of value disequilibrium or value ambiguity, forming the “A” portion of their reform model.

“Shifts in political or economic tides” can cause a particular value to achieve more importance for a time, making timing crucial. In the 1960s, for example, the value of equality was uppermost as the issue of civil rights took center stage. During the same period, concerns about equality became the foundation of the comprehensive schools movement in Great Britain (Chitty, 1999; Pring & Walford, 1997). By the end of the 1970s and into the 1980s, efficiency had become valued as necessary for dealing with economic crisis and this value also influenced the growing trend to incorporate market principles into education reform (Ball, 1997).

A shift of values, at least among the politicians in power, certainly seems to have had considerable influence on developing education policy in England. Secretary of Education Kenneth Baker was critical of the liberal “educational establishment,” teacher unions, university departments of education, educational researchers, officials of the Department of Education and Science, Her Majesty’s Inspectors, and local education authorities. He raged against the “1960s ethos” that created the comprehensive school system and blamed the egalitarianism that prevailed during that period for being “anti-excellence, anti-selection, and (importantly in this context) anti-market” (Pierson, 1998, p.132). The complete rejection by the Thatcher government of equality as a value in favor of efficiency seems obvious (Davies, 1999, Sept.). It also appears to fulfill the (A) alignment criteria for setting the conditions for Guthrie and Koppich’s reform model (1993).

While legislation to improve the quality of curriculum and instruction and the stress on standards and assessment indicate a desire for efficiency (Whitty & Edwards, 1998), a case can also be made for ascendancy of liberty as a value in the concern for parental choice, and school autonomy. When Kenneth Baker could not persuade his own party to adopt a voucher system as a way of reintroducing selection of pupils by ability and aptitude, he devised a new funding formula that accomplished the same effect. It was based on funding according to the number of pupils in a school and combined with parental choice, meant that poorer schools, which did not attract students, would have a shortage of funds with which to operate.

(I) Initiating Events. As a second condition of reform, Guthrie and Koppich suggest that political alignments and value ambiguities are themselves “initiated” by “an unsettling series of conditions” perceived generally as threatening by the populace. This provokes dissatisfaction with the status quo and opens a “window of opportunity” for change to succeed (Guthrie & Koppich, 1993). This so-called window of opportunity for value-supported reform also requires a catalytic event or a series of events that initiate in the public an unsettling atmosphere or dissatisfaction with the status quo, a sort of “political problem.” (Guthrie and Koppich 1993). The economic concerns of the 1980s in many of the developed nations created such conditions (Koppich & Guthrie, 1993; Slater, 1993; Thomas, 1993) as changing demographics (age, race, ethnicity) have as well. The net result is a destabilization of value preferences and a climate ripe for policy shifts.

There is no question that with the transfer of control from Labour to the Conservatives in the 1970s, politics became the consuming motivation for the significant changes that were to come (Davies, 1999; Daugherty, 1995; Pierson, 1998). Kenneth Baker admits that his education policies had no basis in theory or research. He did not seek answers to critical questions about how children learn or developmental capability for sitting exams (Davies, 1999; Orlich, 2000; Thomas, 1993). Nor did he concern himself with such philosophical dilemmas as should public education be provided for its own sake or for the sake of the economy.

A third condition for the alignment of societal values, is the presence of “alternative solutions,” advocated by numerous specialists or scholars, ready to be

adopted at the right time (Guthrie & Koppich, 1993). Cynics might even say that there are always many policy solutions just waiting for a problem. At the same time, a final politically related alignment necessary for the success of reform are favorable political conditions such as mood shifts in public opinion, election results, or partisan changes in national leadership.

The conservative Tory government was prepared in this regard. Margaret Thatcher had been known to have disdain for what she considered the weakness of the comprehensive system and her administration quickly set about to introduce a number of anti-comprehensive ideas, sometimes disguised as rather neutral proposals. Among these was a complex application system for entry into certain schools (those with higher socio-economic status) that set the barriers to entry high enough that self-selection ensured that “deserving” families were selected. Schools were also allowed to “specialize,” meaning they could select pupils on the basis of aptitude or ability, thus by-passing the comprehensive principle of equal access to educational opportunities (Pring & Walford, 1997).

Finally, for all of the previous conditions to become aligned, there must be a politically favorable climate in which reform may occur (Guthrie & Koppich, 1993). Examples of this in 1980s Britain include the re-election of the Tory party and perhaps a readiness to bring the many diverse institutions of education together under a single curriculum. The state education system was becoming the target for dissatisfaction with the general state of the society from all quarters and could be easily held responsible for

not properly supplying a highly skilled workforce prepared for a global economy (Bottery, 1999).

In England, the perception of falling educational standards in state schools precipitated conservative criticism against the so-called liberal educational establishment who they believed had allowed the comprehensive school system to become complacent. They decried the tendency of educators to cater to “soft skills,” like concern for pupil self-esteem, rather than to concentrate on academic skills (Davies, 1999; Pierson, 1998; Thomas, 1993). And so the Tory government experienced a convergence of several major concerns during this period of time: falling standards of student achievement, the belief that the poor performance of schools was affecting the country’s economic well-being, and a need to control public expenditures following the oil crisis of the 1970s and the subsequent downturn in the economy (Ball, 1997; Thomas, 1993).

(M) Mobilization. While Guthrie and Koppich (1993) feel alignment is critical to policy reform, they contend that it is also essential that there must be brokers of change ready to act when conditions are optimum. They term these people “policy entrepreneurs” and their role is to combine a recognized problem with an available solution and then to make sure that momentum for change is sustained throughout the process political process. Characteristics necessary for these agents include a high interest in the topic at hand and the political skills to exploit what might be a brief opportunity for action. For this Thatcher had Kenneth Baker, her Secretary of State for Education.

Conservatives believed that in the mid-1980s, education in Britain “was an awful mess” (Davies, 1999, p. 1). Teachers had been on strike off and on for eighteen months and as Labor Secretary at the time, Kenneth Baker, had found it impossible to deal with the teacher unions and appeared to harbor a personal grudge against local education authorities (Davies, 1999; Imison, 1999). Thus, when Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher ordered Baker to do something about the schools, his first move as Education Minister was to remove all negotiating rights from the unions by statute and by setting up an advisory committee to set the rates of teacher pay.

The next attack was politically shrewd and subtle. Baker turned his attention to crippling the Local Education Authorities (LEA's), beginning with the Inner London LEA which had closed a select grammar school in Baker's old constituency. He explains, “I wanted them to wither on the vine” (Davies, 1999, p. 1). He felt that the LEA's were forcing pupils to attend second rate schools merely to protect the jobs of teachers and that made him angry.

There was a common theme to the virtual dismantling of the existing state school system and the subsequent reforms that the Tories were creating in the 1980s. It is likely that the Thatcher administration was strongly influenced by public choice theory popularized in America (Levin, 1990; Michelsen, 1981). The view was that without a market system, decision-making always tends to favor producer interests over that of consumers. Without competition and choice to bring the discipline of the market to public services, professionals in the public sector, are the true beneficiaries of these bureaucratic systems (Pierson, 1998). Therefore, to accommodate a shift in government

and business values, “efficiency” was established through a centrally-controlled national curriculum and assessment system and “liberty” was served by a parental choice component (Thomas, 1993).

It was a move strictly in keeping with the market philosophy. In a calculated effort to eliminate what he termed the “huge producer-led cartel” controlled by the Local Education Authorities (Davies, 1999, p. 4), Lord Baker pushed the legislation of Local Management of Schools (LMS). As he explained to Davies (1999, Sept. 16), the concept would force teachers to negotiate conditions of work with their individual school heads and as such would fragment the teacher unions. The idea was to remove power and control from the “producers” of the educational services and transfer them to the consumers. To accomplish this, the head and the board of governors of each school would need to make their institution attractive to potential “customers,” families who would theoretically be what selecting their child’s school (Davies, 1999, Thomas, 1993). This was a task that required greater “efficiency” and would subject all schools and their senior management staff to increased “accountability,” another hallmark of market thinking, according to Pierson (1997). By instituting parental choice, the Tories were robbing the LEAs of their traditional function of allocating pupils with their district.

There are others who might be called “entrepreneurs” in the sense that they are necessary for making the reform happen. Thomas (1993) suggests that in Britain, these “mobilizers” would have to be the professional educators who, given the mandates of the ERA, must interpret their own roles and responsibilities in the implementation of policy. In the British school structure, these professionals include head teachers, school

governors, and of course the teachers. Their cooperation and leadership is crucial in shaping an effective academic program for their own schools while also finding a balance between offering an attractive “product” to potential “consumers” in the new ERA market system and working collaboratively with other schools.

Whitty and Edwards (1998) even suggest that there can be “unofficial” and “informal” entrepreneurs. These might be researchers, politicians, educators, and policy advisors, who exchange visits between the United States and Britain, or who make contact at international conferences, and who are able to share ideas and possibly shape opinion about educational trends and ideologies.

In summary, Guthrie and Koppich (1993) suggest a number of research propositions that would test their theory within the context of a particular national setting. The A.I.M. model provides a perspective for examining whether the economic, social, and political conditions in England over the past several decades were indeed responsible for the significant education reforms enacted in the late 1980s.

Cultural Values in Education Policy

An examination of another perspective on values and education will be reviewed next to expand on the important role that value shifts play in education reform initiatives.

Marshall, Mitchell and Wirt (1989) have studied the relationship between culture and values. They describe the process by which people construct their culture by decision-making; that is, by reinforcing, modifying, or rejecting established preferences.

Social and political arenas are seen as interwoven, continually shaping the *value*

preferences of the society. In turn, these value preferences guide social behavior and cultural choices. A society fashions laws and policies that reflect the dominance of particular values at any given time.

The research conducted by Marshall, Mitchell and Wirt (1989) examined educational policy language in several American states and compared the value priorities within the cultural context of each of these states. To carry out their study, the researchers defined four cultural values in observable terms, with which they structured the analysis of their findings. Three of the values that Marshall, Mitchell and Wirt measured were equivalent to those identified by Guthrie and Koppich in their A.I.M. model of reform (1983). *Choice*, defined by Marshall, Mitchell and Wirt as a “range of options for action” and “the ability to select a preferred option” (p. 135) dovetails with Guthrie and Koppich’s concept of *liberty* as “freedom of choice” (1993, p. 20). Importantly, Marshall, Mitchell, and Wirt recognize that the political value of *democracy* serves as a value substructure to support *choice* as an observable cultural value, allowing for the “constitutional authority of citizens over public officials in their policy actions” (p. 136).

The American study by Marshall, Mitchell and Wirt (1989) views the concept of *efficiency* as a complex value, “popularly seen as a goal” (p. 136) and “less ends oriented than means oriented” (p. 136), similar to the “tools and techniques capable of producing greater output” (p. 20) definition of efficiency suggested by Guthrie and Koppich (1983). The researchers make the distinction between two forms of the efficiency. One is *economic*, as in “the effort to minimize costs while maximizing gains” (p. 136); the other

is in the form of *accountability*, whereby superiors have the authority to “control their subordinate’s exercise of power and responsibility” (p. 136). Efficiency is an instrumental value in that it greases the mechanisms that enable democracy to work.

The third cultural value that both groups of researchers find fundamental to policy actions is *equity* (Marshall, Mitchell & Wirt, 1989) or *equality* (Guthrie & Koppich, 1983). Equity is defined as “the use of public resources to redistribute public resources for the purpose of satisfying disparities in human needs” (p. 136) and involves two stages. The first is to identify a disadvantage or gap in public services between the norms of society and the needs of some citizens. Then, compensatory programs are designed to close the gap between norm and need by applying public resources. As in other democratic values, value substructures are implied, and in this case, it is the worth of every individual in society and that the democratic ideal has a responsibility to recognize that worth. Guthrie and Koppich (1983) sums up this notion simply as “parity of opportunity, outcome, or treatment” (p. 20).

The study on policy language and values by Marshall, Mitchell and Wirt (1989) includes a fourth value of *quality*. It means simply, “the best.” The three researchers describe a two-stage application of this value. First, policy language must mandate a standard for excellence or proficiency, though reaching popular consensus on what constitutes quality performance usually proves more difficult than might be expected. A second stage requires that public resources be applied across districts in order to achieve professed standards. According to the authors, quality is also an instrumental value for the more basic democratic values that hold that education is of crucial importance for

improving opportunities in life for future citizens. While the researchers believe that all four values are pursued in a democratic society, the focus of this American study was on how education policy reveals the value priorities of the state policy-makers.

Labour and the ERA

Learning can unlock the treasure that lies within us all. In the 21st century, knowledge and skills will be the key to success. Our goal is a society in which everyone is well educated and able to learn throughout life. Britain's economic prosperity and social cohesion both depend on achieving that goal. (Blunkett, www.dfes.gov.uk/wpaper/mindex.htm)

The radical reforms to education in Britain during the decade of the 1990s, were engineered almost entirely by the conservative Tory Party under Margaret Thatcher and developed further by later Tory Prime Minister John Major. When the Labour Party finally captured the post of Prime Minister for Tony Blair in 1997, they had the opportunity to move forward with their own educational agenda. The following section reviews research and the government's own publications to give an idea of Labour's contribution to education reform.

The Labour Party has had to re-position itself in regard to education after a generation of sitting on the sidelines while the Tories dismantled the system of comprehensive education. In the early days of the reforms, Labourites fiercely defended the role of the LEAs and the autonomy of the teachers, as well as questioning the wisdom of applying market principles to schools (Pierson, 1998). However, they were supportive of a national curriculum and were willing to "modernize" the existing comprehensive system.

By the time of the 1997 election, prospective Prime Minister Tony Blair was touting education as the number one priority of the Labour government. Having accepted, by this time, many of the Tory reforms, nevertheless, Labour had its own ideas and promised some policy changes (Pierson, 1998). But, as a recent publication from Education Secretary David Blunkett (<http://dfee.gov.uk/teachingreform>) will attest, Labour's commitment to education, much like the Tories, continues to put higher standards at the center of the government's agenda.

The standards focus includes identifying good practice to raise standards, building effective partnerships, and *increasing opportunities for all* [my italics] (www.dfee.gov.uk/teachingreform). A pledge to address the educational inequities of the Conservative era seems to mark the Labour platform. Pierson (1998) notes that Labour has actually outdone the Conservatives in "raising standards, by offering a more effective system of assessment, a new mandatory qualification for headteachers, new home/school contracts and so on" (p. 14).

Bottery (1999) would agree, pointing out that there is at least as much stress on external measures of accountability as there is with the Conservative government. And while there is no longer the conviction that the use of the "market" is the key to making the nation globally competitive, the idea of competitiveness for increased efficiency is still accepted. The strategy for those Bottery (1999) refers to as the "New Modernizers," is for the government to find either public or private money to invest in education in order to produce the high tech skills future British workers will need in a global economy.

David Blunkett wrote confidently that he and his ministerial colleagues are tapping the pulse of the electorate for feedback on the many government proposals for education over the last several years (www.dfes.gov.uk/teachingreform). He hoped to inspire “lively and constructive debate” (p. 1) over his Excellence in Schools White Paper (1997) and pointed with pride to the more than 8,000 responses his department has received on Labour’s education agenda.

In 1997 (2000), DfEE publications (www.dfes.gov.uk) repeatedly referred to the need to raise standards. Plans called for the establishment of “Education Action Zones,” which would allow “local partnerships,” a reduction in infant (primary) class sizes, “Education Development Plans,” a joint effort of the schools and their LEAs, and “Home-School Agreements” to “improve understanding between parents and schools” (p. 2).

Referring to public demands, Blunkett (www.dfes.gov.uk/teachingreform) promises to allow LEAs to intervene where schools are found to be “failing” and to seek higher status, morale, and professionalism for teachers through legislation. New qualifications will be introduced for headteachers as well. The new schools framework, he is convinced, will meet Labour’s objectives while not “distracting” from the standards movement. And despite this flood of new initiatives, Blunkett is satisfied that “schools should properly run themselves” (p. 2) while forming partnerships among schools, local authorities, churches, and the government.

Pierson (1998) asserts that Labour is already launched into its own “center-left” version of public sector reform, hardly distinctive from the Tory version even though as

Pierson believes, experience seems to have taught us that the market philosophy is limited as an instrument of governance for schools. As he remarks, the “consumers” of education have not been able to become sufficiently informed to make a proper “buying” decision about school selection. These communications from the Secretary of State for Education and Employment confirm Pierson’s contention (1998) that governments have repeatedly intervened to “rig” the educational markets because they have such a stake in educational outcomes.

Research and Commentary Post-ERA

... just because it is difficult does not excuse us from the obligation of attempting to build into the education system practices that support different types of learning as well as all learners in ways that demonstrate to them that they have equal value. For it is their opinion that matters. When we do attempt this, it means that the least we can do is start with an education system that does not have attainment selection that decides ahead of time who will be successful; a system that does insist on the greatest possible degree of democracy in making the decisions about equal value, and about the way resources are distributed, learning conducted, and that balance struck between what everyone ought to be learning at any stage for the greater community good, and the freedom of teachers and learners to choose their own areas of interest. (Benn, 1997, pp. 124-125)

The Education Reform Act has been in place for just over a decade in Great Britain and represents a radical departure from the traditional educational structure of the past. There have been a plethora of studies and commentaries (Lawton, 1996; McClure, 1998; Simon, 1997; Walford & Pring, 1997) on the impact of the ERA on all aspects of British education. However, in keeping with the purpose of this research study, the focus of this section of the review will concentrate on examining sources that relate specifically

to the principles of Guthrie and Koppich's A.I.M. model (1993), as it relates to the ERA and the implications for values in British culture.

Higher Standards and Accountability (*Quality and Efficiency*)

Paul Dean (1999), a Portsmouth, England English teacher, believes that education in England has been "politicized to the point of extinction" (p. 1). He contends that Advanced Level Examinations, the university entrance qualifications known as "A-levels," are an example of falling standards in recent years. The A-level was established in 1951 and was designed to provide two years of intensive study of only a few subjects beyond the O-level certification (for "ordinary" secondary schooling and now called GCSE's) for those students planning to go on to a university. The Tory intention of increasing the number of students seeking high education, has certainly succeeded but now critics like Dean (1999) maintain that A-level course and exam standards have fallen. Where course content has been intellectually challenging, he claims, students have proved reluctant to enroll, choosing to enroll in easier courses instead. Syllabi that attract too few students are then dropped because "they have ceased to be cost-effective" (p. 2).

Dean (1999) is concerned as well, with a proposal from yet another government-appointed body, the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA), to broaden the A-level curriculum but, in Dean's opinion, will probably encourage superficiality. In

addition, the freedom of teachers to teach as they see fit will be curtailed and titles for student reading must be approved by the QCA and must fall within a prescribed set of topics. *Liberty* as a value, while expanded for parents is, in Dean's view, not advocated for teachers. As to the "dumbing down" (p. 2) of the A-level exams, versions rewritten by QCA have come to resemble the less challenging GCSE exams. Dean accuses the British education secretary of being a person not interested in education but in advancing a political career, and sees a shift in value from a purely academic concept of education to a utilitarian one that develops tomorrow's workers.

Elizabeth Barnham (1996) examined the impact of the centralizing reforms of the last decade on teacher control over the processes of curriculum change. She points out that the great debate over the British education system that began in the 1970s seems to have arrived at a modernist consensus about the importance of education for all in an industrial society. But, she adds, there is no requirement that a national curriculum must be centrally developed, administered, and monitored. In fact, she maintains, the direction of British educational policy has progressed more on political party ideology and is significant in the singular lack of intellectual debate or reference to educational theory to support the many initiatives.

As a repository of collective concerns about global competition, the British government has placed a strong focus on "accountability" in the form monitoring and assessment of school programs. A very prescriptive curriculum, with closely defined content and targets for attainment, is intended to be "teacher-proof" (Barham, 1996). Using terminology from business management principles, teachers are expected to

measure themselves against “performance indicators,” and headteachers must develop “mission statements” for their “workforce.”

Clearly, too, the language of business has insinuated itself into the culture of school, implying that *efficiency* is valued. Barham (1996) found that teachers were initially bewildered by the new language that the Education Reform Act introduced, as well as puzzled by the different value system that it implies. She found that teachers have been removed from the processes of curriculum change and while professional educators have participated more in the 1994 review, any recommendations are still subject to being overruled by government ministers. The introduction of exams at the end of Key Stages of the curriculum has been controversial and not consulting the professional has at times resulted in monumental errors. The sheer volume of initiatives in too short a time span, coupled with the pressures of accountability have also contributed to overload with teachers and there is hardly opportunity for them to place themselves within the context of the rapid changes.

Bottery (1999) worries, along with other educators, that we live in a time when economic agendas dominate all other social priorities, including the management, curriculum, and the objectives of the educational system. The idea of education for its own sake or for the individual’s personal development is considered a luxury that the government should not have to subsidize. The “New Modernists,” he claims, see education as a means to fulfill management’s aims and this increasing centralization could lead to an increasingly “illiberal” society, where individual needs, if necessary, are sacrificed to national policy.

Barham (1996) contends that, despite these flaws in the reforms, teachers maintain some observable power over implementation, in adapting imposed texts and materials for their own classrooms and learning to make meaning out of foreign pieces of the National Curriculum. Each school, she says, develops its own culture within the main social culture. Education as an interactive process must depend on the professionalism of individual teachers and cannot, she believes, be brought about by remote control. Teachers may yet regain some control over their work with a policy of “adapt and survive.”

In a three-part series in *The Guardian* newspaper entitled “Crisis in our Schools,” journalist Nick Davies delivers an articulate, well-researched but scathing description of the current state of British education (Davies, 1999). In the first part of the series (Sept. 14), the journalist concludes that there is a “fatal flaw” at the heart of the British education system. He notes that the vast majority of government interventions over the past fifteen years have been made on the assumption that schools and educators can be blamed for the failure of their students.

In the second of three articles on Britain’s schools, Davies (1999, Sept. 15) provides a detailed account of the rise and fall of two different schools in the city of Sheffield. He demonstrates how the fortunes of so-called “successful” and “failing” schools could have been completely reversed through the interference of government policies from the 1960s to the 1990s. He also demonstrates how the designation of a school as a selective grammar school or a comprehensive determines the eventual

demographics of the student population and that socio-economic status, race, and ethnicity can have a significant impact on a school's reputation.

Local Management of Schools –Liberty. As an attempt to introduce market forces into education, the Local Management of Schools component of the ERA devolves day-to-day administration to the school level resulting in responsibility being shared between governing bodies and headteachers (Davies, 2000; Evans, 1998).

Davies and Ellison (2000) have defined the “decentralization” component of the Education reform Act of 1988 as placing responsibility and accountability for implementing centralized decisions at the school level. One of the arguments for self management of schools, they explain, is that it promotes *efficiency*, but to date, they say, there is little reliable evidence that this is true. There are only “perceptions” that self management makes schools more “effective.”

Davies and Ellison (2000) take issue with the claim by the government that British schools enjoy the liberty of managing themselves. They identify five types of decisions that autonomous organizations commonly make and contrast the realities of local management in Britain with the optimum patterns of control. It is their contention that all five dimensions must be operating together to achieve the benefits of autonomy.

The first decision includes determining the “type of business to be in” and having the freedom to decide how to operate or to provide services. The “business” of British schools is, legislated by national policy and they are dependent organizations without control over the nature of their business.

A second dimension of autonomy (Davies & Ellison, 2000) is the ability to make decisions concerning the employment and compensation of staff. Central government interference in the distribution of some resources (limiting class size for example) results in only partial autonomy for school level administrators (heads and governors) in this area of decision-making.

The remaining categories from Davies and Ellison (2000) are concerned with deciding which “customers” to serve and the types of revenues to pursue. Parental the “choice” implies distinctions between schools but the reality of central control of curriculum means that schools have little leeway to differentiate themselves from others. The revenue category, though, may be the one area where schools can be most nearly autonomous, if they pursue multiple sources of revenue, but it is more likely that intricate government funding formulas centralize, and thus greatly limit, school funding decisions after all.

Based on these definitions of autonomy, Davies and Ellison (2000) determined that Local Management of Schools in Britain has not so much as failed (as they might have suspected), but “has never been tried” (p. 7). They warn that it is inappropriate for the present Labour government to press ahead with more radical ways of improving schools before giving true site-based management a fair chance. Such interplay of decision-making elements is also necessary to create a real “educational market.” Davies and Ellison (2000) contend that, “a regulated market is an oxymoron” (p. 9)!

Mobilizers of Reform (*Liberty*)

Guthrie and Koppich (1983) maintain that the presence of individuals or groups of individuals who are able to mobilize existing resources to take advantage of a window of opportunity is crucial to any reform effort. According to their A.I.M. model, these individuals must possess two qualities. First, they must seek change and second, they must be politically astute enough to recognize the expedient moment to act. Such “policy entrepreneurs” (p. 24) may be responsible for the inception of reform, as in the case of political policy makers, or “attempt to maintain reform momentum” (p. 27) as local school managers may do.

Politicians as Policy Mobilizers. There is evidence that the demise of the comprehensive concept by Tory policies was deliberately but subtly engineered (Davies, 1999; Lawton, 1997; Thomas, 1993; Walford & Pring, 1997). In a revealing personal interview with former Tory Secretary of Education Lord Kenneth Baker, Nick Davies (1999, September 16) elicits an admission of the political motives that drove the educational reforms of the late 1980s. The radical proposals for changing the whole British educational system had more to do with “guesswork, personal whim, and bare knuckles politics” (p. 1).

Tory Education Secretary Baker’s motivation to reform the education system was not, on his own admission, for the welfare of children, nor based on a strong foundation of research and intellectual thinking (Davies, 1999; Thomas, 1993). There were questions that were never addressed by the government such as how do children learn,

and what are the best ages for children to begin school or sit exams? Even more importantly, there appeared to be no thought given to whether the new policies represented the values of British society. Fundamental questions that should be answered in a democratic society include whether education should be provided for the poor at the expense of the bright? Or should education be for its own sake or for the sake of the economy? And is it acceptable for the rich to buy better public schools for their own children?

Teachers as Policy Mobilizers. Several researchers have sought teachers' views of recent reforms in Britain. Tomlinson (1997) reports on a small pilot project commissioned by the National Union of Teachers (NUT) to explore a revised curriculum and assessment plan for 14-19 year olds and to seek teachers' perceptions of the divisive academic/vocational system that remained as a legacy from the Dearing recommendations of 1995. Tomlinson (1997) notes that in the project, 98% of teachers indicated support for a system of schools based on the comprehensive model, where they felt all abilities would be cared for, there would be equal opportunity for all students to succeed, and social integration can be facilitated. The teachers favored a range of subjects and experiences for students, the development of critical abilities, and no distinction between academic and vocational courses. Reflecting a commitment to the notion of equality in educational opportunity, the teachers were opposed to selection by aptitude to different schools at ages 11 and 14, but supported student choices of different courses at age 14, including those for special talents or skills.

Surprisingly restrained in their comments about the National Curriculum (Tomlinson, 1997), teachers nevertheless called for a partnership among central and local governments, parents, students, teachers, employers, governors, and local communities could have a positive influence on education, particularly for the 14-19 age group. Tomlinson holds out little hope, however, for any real support of the “comprehensive ideal” by anyone with political clout as the forces of efficiency continue to prevail.

Clarke (1997) and Lawton (1997) suggests that in planning curriculum one should begin with the nature of society and the needs of young people rather than a detailed list of subject contents. Clarke points out that learning seems to take place best when teachers have established good relationships with their students and there is mutual respect. The same can be said for the relationship between government policymakers and the teachers who must implement their directives. Allowing teachers to have a stake in the policy framework that rules their working environment would create a much less alienated teaching force than the one spawned by the ERA.

There are indications that psychological factors can take their toll on teachers. A national conference on teachers and stress grew out of research findings that revealed widespread feelings of bitterness, frustration, disillusionment, and low morale among teachers (Cole & Walker, 1987). Several speakers addressed the most probable sources of teacher stress, including low status and self-esteem, the contrast between the “idealism” and the “reality” of teaching, and dealing with an “external locus of control or externally imposed change” (p. 3). Group presentations suggested that a policy on teacher stress should be the concern of everyone in education and proposed a dual policy

to prevent stress. All concluded that the national government and local authorities should review the pace and manner in which educational change is implemented with regard to its effects on teachers.

Ironically, these observations were reported by Cole and Walker in 1987 during the turbulent times preceding the passage of the Educational Reform Act and *before* teachers had experienced the impact of those reforms. Awareness by the policymakers of the sources of teacher stress might have prevented some of the adverse reactions to the government's reforms. One cause of stress can be attributed to the lack of respect that teachers feel. A more recent study commissioned by the Daily Telegraph (Clare & King, 1999) seems to confirm the importance of self-esteem in teaching. It found that at least 70% of adults in Britain (and 77% among the white-collar middle class) believe teachers today have a "lower status" than when they were in school. About the same number believe there has been no improvement in schools since Labour has come to power, including Labour voters.

Members of America's ASCD Executive Council visited and London schools in November of 1995 (Patterson, 1996). Their purpose was to become better informed about education in other nations and that included a look at the changes in school governance introduced in 1988. They found a range of opinions about the National Curriculum among teachers, with some educators welcoming the structure it offered. But others were critical of the rigidity that the curriculum imposed and blamed the centralized reforms for their "enormous workload." There was obvious resentment by teachers toward the assessments that until 1993-94 were, unrealistic and poorly designed. The

student-centered teaching for which British schools were famous in the 1970s have given way under the more traditional practices of the National Curriculum and because of political opposition to what the government associated with liberal methods.

Teachers are reacting to the controlling nature of government bureaucracy. Even more recently, *The Times Educational Supplement* (Dean, 2000) reported that a teacher's strike was eminent in June, during the critical exam periods (GCSEs and A-Levels) with the purpose to curb teachers' workloads. Claiming to be following the government's own advice in their "bureaucracy-cutting tool kit," the teachers are seeking limits on meetings, less target setting, streamlining of lesson planning, and a reduction in the documents produced by the government.

In a four-year study in England to determine the extent to which teachers influence their students' performance on national exams, Paul Kelley and colleagues (1999) concluded that despite the appearance of good teaching, teachers made little difference in test results. In fact, they found evidence that several other factors were much more influential, including BBC Bitesize revision (test review) materials, the use of technology-based projects, and intensive week-long review courses. According to Kelley, the significance of the findings is that "how" students are taught has more impact than "who" teaches them, thus calling into question the whole controversial notion of "pay for performance." The government may need to reconsider the policy on teacher appraisal, pay, and promotion if there is, indeed, no evidence that teachers alone are able to affect student test results.

Richard Haigh (1996) writes passionately about school leadership under the ERA, in calling the whole centralized education reform a “nightmare” and a “debacle.” He describes an atmosphere in which teachers were publicly discredited and advice on policy was sought instead from others outside of education, like industrialists and politicians. As a head teacher, Haigh watched as teachers struggled to cope with the unworkable early versions of the national curriculum and assessment scheme. He sees the function of teachers and heads reduced to merely working out the details of delivering other people’s mandates-no deep thinking required at all. He admits a certain nostalgia for the days before the ERA when a school staff could deliberate over their own curriculum. Though teachers are working as hard as ever, they have been buffeted by constant changes from the government, affecting the ability of teachers to invest themselves in what might be a short-term idea or to consider differences in students’ abilities.

Headteachers as Policy Mobilizers. In a six-year qualitative case study, Portin (1999) examined the complex conceptions of leadership and the changing roles of four primary headteachers following the passage of the 1988 Education reform Act in Great Britain. In categorizing the various ways headteachers use their power, he describes an initial shift from the role of instructional leadership traditionally provided by headteachers, to one with broad managerial responsibilities.

Hall and Southworth (1997) also studied the effect of the 1988 Education Reform Act on the changing role of the headteacher in British schools. Noting a scarcity of research-based analyses of headship, they seek to trace the transformation of the head’s position as a “chief executive” in the 1970s, to a very different role in the 1990s.

Portin (1999) found that headteachers were largely overwhelmed by a flood of market-driven initiatives, tighter government controls over curriculum and pedagogy, and high stakes accountability, which all served to draw their energy and attention away from the support of teachers and their classrooms. A central function of the headteachers' role also became the implementation of the national education policy requiring interpretation of the National Curriculum and a focus on school finances. The increased responsibilities of their jobs weighed heavily on these leaders.

The Hall and Southworth research (1997) identifies as crucial, the decision by the heads to be "entrepreneurs" of the central government education policy as the work load and the character of their work has changed significantly. There is great pressure to become entrepreneurial in light of the "educational market" that creates competition for pupils between schools and this means the headteacher must both promote the school and insure that it receives adequate resources to remain competitive.

According to Hall and Southworth (1997), a centrally administered national curriculum and assessment scheme, with its strong accountability component, also recasts the head's function as the school's chief inspectors and increases his or her investment in "outcomes." In addition, they concluded that headteachers must now set an example of stability in the midst of continual changes in policy development delivered from the centralized authority of the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE).

But Portin (1999) later observed a return to more traditional functions of headship over the six years of the case study as heads adjusted to the demands of the ERA and in the case of the research sample, as they gained confidence in their newly developed

managerial skills. Heads have learned to call on the expertise of others to assist in keeping their schools functioning well.

Hall and Southworth (1998) suggest headship is now less about managing an stable organization and more about being able to anticipate and respond to a barrage of challenges and opportunities.

. . . the constancy of change in schools and society and the acceleration of educational developments means that headteachers need to be: future-oriented; capable and sophisticated managers of multiple changes; able to live with change in proactive and productive ways; aware of the professionals learning needs of themselves and the school's staff; active in orchestrating development activities which support staff and which advance the school's capacity to improve. (p. 167)

Governors as Policy Mobilizers. The 1988 Education Reform Act removed most of the administrative powers from the Local Education Authorities and vested the overall responsibilities for governance with each schools' board of governors (Lawton, 1996; Pierson, 1998; Tipple, 1998). This increased involvement of the governors makes them good candidates to assume the role that Guthrie and Koppich (1993) term "entrepreneur" or "mobilizer" of reform efforts.

The management perspectives of headteachers and chairs of school governing boards are the subject of a study by Tricia Evans (1998). She explains that Government directives for schools fail to make a distinction between governors of small primary schools and large secondary schools. Since governors are responsible for deciding the aims and policies of the school, oversee the implementation of the National Curriculum, maintaining the school budget and dealing with staff matters, the centralized nature of

school governance in Britain means that education policies can be highly intrusive in small schools, and “goes against the ethos” (p. 8) of many primaries.

In the Evans study (1998), governors interviewed emphasized the key roles of the governors in policymaking and monitoring the work of the school. Heads agreed, however, that governors had neither the time nor the expertise to manage the school because this is seen as the province of the headteachers. Some governors pointed out the potential for wide power to run the school while acknowledging that this power was rarely, if ever, exerted.

Heads in this study showed a healthy respect for the governors’ status as decision makers and monitors though they did not seem stressed by this reality. In fact, heads seem to appreciate their governors as “helping” and “supporting” their own work. A predominance of parents as governors usually meant that they had an ownership of their school and an investment in its success. As such, heads were able to view governors as their “eyes and ears” to the community and keeping them on their toes. In fact, says, Evans (1998), in many ways the relationship between a headteacher and their governing bodies is a “relationship of equals.”

Not all school staffs appreciate the increased power of school governors (Redwood, 1999). There have been suspicions that some governors lack the knowledge of education-related subjects required to satisfactorily fulfill the functions of their job and much time wasted by helping them learn the basics. Governors, themselves, were often surprised by the expertise needed in their jobs and frequently felt uneasy about participating in discussions with educators.

But Fred Redwood (1999) reports that a unique pilot course has been developed that fully prepares governors for their important duties. Jointly funded by private business and the Local Education Authority, the training provides the governors in an area of the West Midlands of England with critical management skills tailor made to fit the requirements of their role. The effectiveness of the course was measured by an evaluation of the governors' subsequent job performance by their headteacher. The results were very positive and lent the governors credibility in the eyes of others.

None of the heads or chairpersons in the Evans study (1998) considered their governing bodies in any way political. Most often heads believe that their governors most value "caring" and a sense of community for their schools, where children and staff come first. So strong is this fundamental value among governors that heads and chairs maintain that governors would be prepared to resist or reject government directives if they ran counter to the best interests of the pupils. As Evans reports, "They don't want to lose sight of the education of the whole child in the interests of status and league tables" (p. 10). Such views are particularly strong in small schools.

LEAs as Policy Mobilizers. Certainly the Local Education Authorities have been dealt an almost fatal blow since the legislation of the Conservative education reforms of a decade ago. The 1988 ERA not only ignored the many years of achievement by the LEAs, but essentially held them responsible for most of the "failings" of the British school system (Davies, 1999; Lawton, 1996; Pierson, 1998; Thomas, 1993). And the disenfranchisement of the LEAs seems to have put aside the essential need for checks and balances in a democratic system of government, according to Christopher Tipple (1998).

The demise of the LEAs has been evolutionary, a process that has been frustrating and demoralizing to local chief education officers and their staffs. Tipple (1998) believes, though, that LEAs are gradually adjusting to a new and different role in the education structure. Among their new responsibilities are articulating a vision for their own school community, championing the value of education while winning over the trust and respect of the schools. LEAs must also plan for future facility needs and manage funding fairly in a function that has now become more public. They may also give support to schools before and after OFSTED visits that may include in-service training for teachers. Tipple (1998) believes that the LEAs make up a dimension between the central government and the schools that remains important for a healthy democratic society.

Parental Choice (*Liberty*)

Even the much touted parental choice aspect of the ERA is flawed, according to Haigh (1996). With a centrally imposed curriculum, parents in reality choose not between different “products,” but between different versions of the same product. In rural areas, where there may only be one school, there is essentially no choice at all. Too often, he claims, the choice is between neighborhoods, not schools, the public rankings of schools reflecting the socio-economic status of its populace more than its competence.

There are hidden agendas in educational choice schemes. Paul Peterson (1979) hypothesized that universal rules for allocation of school resources acts to protect school administrations or the central government (as in England) from pressures from diverse

interest groups seeking special treatment. Such rules may enable authorities to claim that every child is treated equally but because of the reality of school “selection by mortgage,” treatment is actually quite diverse. In Britain, this plays out in the fact that published league tables draw parents to higher performing schools, and those increased enrollments and thus funding in these schools, necessarily draws money away from poorly performing (and poorer) schools.

Michelsen (1981) explains further. When the public employees’ interests (in this case teachers) do not correspond to the public’s interest, calling for “choice” allows budgets, policies, and rules to favor other interests (private or political self-interest in England?) over the “de jure” interests of the LEAs and teachers.

The Devaluing of Equality

Clarke (1997) worries that in an education system that relies on OFSTED’s “number-crunching, bean-counting culture” (p. 150) to verify effective education, there is a danger for losing sight of the values, particularly “equality,” that were honored in a comprehensive school system and which many teachers, as members of the helping profession, sense are “right” and “just.” Relying heavily on anecdotal accounts, Clarke attempts to describe why he feels an education system that truly provides equal and common educational opportunities, like the comprehensives the ERA replaced, is the best way to promote understanding and tolerance so necessary in a just and open society. He sees the whole National Curriculum movement as a distraction from fundamentals of what pupils should learn and how they should learn it.

Lawton (1996) laments that despite the general acceptance of Ron Dearing's work in salvaging the cumbersome national curriculum and assessment plan in the early days of the Tory reform initiatives, he ended up abandoning the idea of entitlement to a broadly based curriculum for "all" students from ages 5-16, one of the few saving graces of the Baker plan, in favor of an "extended core" of subjects for ages 14-16. This means that history, geography, art and music became optional to make space for vocational and occupational options for students and creating dual academic and vocational tracks that begins to sort students.

Inequality is also an issue for Bottery (1999), who observes that current education policy assumes that if students are given the right skills, they will be employed and earn income, and then all inequalities will disappear. Because markets are never even playing fields, says Bottery (1999), and those who begin with advantages often exploit them to garner even more advantages, and the gap between rich and poor widens further. He also poses the old dilemma about who would have the final say over what values a society holds in the event of a disagreement? Would values have to be so abstract in order to be palatable to everyone that in practice they are useless? Guthrie and Koppich (1993) would call this "value disequilibrium."

Nick Davies (1999, September 14) in his Guardian series, describes the disheartening atmosphere of many urban schools, in neighborhoods mired with poverty and increasingly occupied by a stream of non-English-speaking immigrants. While the current Labour Secretary of State for Education, David Blunkett, speaks of his government's willingness to offer teachers better rewards in return for their meeting

higher standards and improving their pupils' performance (TES, April 7, 2000) and sends "consultants" to take over "failing" schools, Davies looks beyond the political rhetoric to life in real schools what educators probably already know.

If a school takes in a substantial proportion of children who come from a disadvantaged background-if their parents do not read, if they have no books at home, if they are awake half the night and then half asleep all day, if they have been emotionally damaged by problems in their family or in their community, if they have suffered from an environment which is likely to expose them to drug abuse and violence and alcohol abuse and the collapse of social boundaries, then the school is more likely to fail academically. A school which is based in a disadvantaged community will struggle with its children, while one that is based in a more affluent area will prosper. (Davies, 1999, p. 4)

CHAPTER III

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

Colloquially, a research design is *an action plan for getting from here to there*, where *here* may be defined as the initial set of questions to be answered, and there are some set of conclusions (answers) about these questions. Between “here” and “there” may be found a number of major steps, including the collection and analysis of relevant data (Yinn, 1994, p. 19).

This chapter presents the rationale for the case study design of this study and the methodology used to conduct the research. This section will include a review of the purpose of the study, the theoretical framework that guided the study, a presentation of the researcher’s background, an explanation of the case study procedures, and a description of the process used for analysis of the collected data.

Theoretical Framework

Using Guthrie and Koppich’s A.I.M. model (1993) as a theoretical framework, the purpose of this study was to place the educational reforms of the last decade in England and Wales in a political context, and to determine the extent of shared values between the national and local “actors” in this reform drama. Data collection focused on those “mobilizers” of national education policy, including a head teacher, school governor, classroom teachers, and a member of the Local Educational Authority. A single

secondary school was selected as the site of an explanatory case study, both because its school and community demographics made it representative of a typical British state or public school and because the head teacher and chair of governors were interested and supportive of the research process. The purposes of the data collection, presentation, and analysis were to reveal the social values that guide educators at the local level, those who Guthrie and Koppich might call the “mobilizers” of policy, and to measure those views against the perceived values that guided education policy reform at the national level. Since, as Thomas (1993) believes, the way professional educators, interpret their roles and responsibilities, and the belief they have in the fundamental “rightness” of the system, are vital to the successful implementation of national policy. Analysis of the data is also intended to reveal if local implementation of the National Curriculum and Assessment, mandated in 1988, is in any sense, matching the intentions of the architects of the education reform more than a decade after passage of the Education Reform Act.

My purpose in this case study was to *expand* or *generalize* the A.I.M. theory by first, examining whether the intent of the policy becomes modified according to which actors become the subsequent “mobilizers” of the reform. I then analyzed what happens when the “mobilizers” or implementers of the reform possess *different values* than the policy makers.

A research study by Marshall, Mitchell and Wirth (1989) also provided a framework for examining the values embedded in educational policy. They describe culture as being made up of two phenomena; that is, social relationships and common values. People construct their culture, these researchers believe, in the process of

continuous decision-making and laws ultimately reflect the domination of particular cultural values within a given political system. Marshall, Mitchell, and Wirth therefore see the social and political realms of culture as interwoven. Their work defined cultural values by the behavior required in law, examining through detailed content analysis of statutes in numerous American states to identify the values embedded in the language of the law. They agree with Guthrie and Koppich's premise (1983) that three values that are basic to democratic societies are efficiency, equity, and choice or liberty, and they define these in observable terms in order to conduct their research. They also identify a fourth value "quality," which they define as "the best." This value is often represented by statements referring to "standards of excellence."

My research study considers if the values represented in the policy decisions of politicians in power at the time may or may not reflect the values of those actors who have implemented the radical reforms of 1988. As such, I have sought to draw out the values underlying the experiences local educators have had in implementing these reforms. The fundamental principles that guided this research were formulated to search for evidence of value preferences at the local level and the data presented here may be considered the collective response to two primary research questions.

The first question examines what local educators perceive to be the purpose of public schooling. Responses in this case tend to be revealed through statements of personal philosophy about education in general and more specifically in reference to children and their stages of development. The second question probes local educators' experiences with implementing those aspects of the 1988 reforms that affect secondary

education in Britain. These personal experiences can be categorized as falling into the four educational policy domains of governance/control, curriculum, performance evaluation/assessment, and instructional practices.

All those interviewed expressed opinions and frustrations about issues involving governance and control. Teachers by and large tended to view a national policy, one that places limitations on the freedom they now have to plan and present their lessons, as evidence of centralized control. Those interviewed that touched repeatedly on such concerns as the appropriateness of the National Curriculum and the pressured pace of assessment-driven lessons. School level respondents worry about the pressures of high-stakes testing at Key Stages of the curriculum (SATS), the very public accountability measures the stress accompanying school inspections by OFSTED and the successive waves of education initiatives and the increasing amount of inevitable paperwork. Finally, school level respondents, in general, talked about the effect of national education policy on instructional practices, in many cases, comparing classroom experiences prior to and subsequent to the legislation of the ERA.

Their own experiences enable local educators to paint a somewhat different picture of both the Tory and Labour governments' announced intention to decentralize the control of education policy through the Local Management of Schools idea. Teachers and educational administrators naturally bring different perspectives to the discussion and the data analysis to be described later seeks to assign meaning to both the convergence and divergence of views expressed.

Researcher Bias

My career as an educator began in an alternative school setting within a suburban school district in northern California. I was, at the time, completing coursework toward a Masters degree in Counseling Psychology and since the class sizes were small (usually under ten students) and individualized, my time was spent as much in counseling as in academic instruction. After counseling internships, served in both a military Family Support Center in California, and in a middle school on an American airbase in the Philippines, I began my career as a seventh grade English and Geography teacher in an overseas school system where I have been employed for 16 years. Subsequent positions were as an elementary and middle school counselor in various schools in the Philippines and in Norway. In most cases, this position required my involvement in special education assessment and placement decisions, including four years of conducting diagnostic testing and psychological report writing as part of the referral process for special education evaluation. I have been involved in presenting programs for parents on study skills and on standardized achievement testing as well as conducting teacher workshops on special education issues and an experimental gifted/learning impaired program. For the past five years I have taught sixth and seventh grade English at an American airbase in England and have only recently moved into a middle school counseling position.

I believe I undertook this research study with a certain bias. I have become disturbed by several trends I have seen developing in the United States and England. One has been the momentum toward increased single-measure accountability that has been building at a fever pace. Non-educators, politicians in particular, have seized on

achievement test scores as an easy measure of student and school “success” and in state by state, legislation has been passed that can have a crucial impact on the viability of so-called “failing” schools and on decisions made about the careers of teachers. My experience and training in assessment tells me that judging the effectiveness of an entire school and the performance of its teachers on achievement test scores of individual students, is neither valid nor reliable (Popham, 1998). I see both the national standards (curriculum) and the market choice movements as chasing the elusive goal of higher achievement with almost a meanness of spirit while their advocates make a superficially attractive argument that accountability and market forces will create new opportunities for disadvantaged students. Like Clyde Chitty (1997), I do not believe a market system, in practice, will be either democratic or egalitarian. Chitty supports schooling as a public service and is concerned about the widening gap between “successful” and “failing” schools that the marketing of education is likely to cause.

The other trend of concern to me is one related to what seems to me the real agenda behind the Market Choice advocates of the educational market. In the past decade I have noticed a growing empowerment of certain parents in dealing with the public schools, including our own school system. The parent as consumer is a natural development in our increasingly commercialized nation, but every institutional response that caters to the demands of individual parents necessarily neglects the collective interests in that school. Kohn (1997) is concerned with the moral effects of catering to individual demands on a democratic society. He reports that one Oklahoma educator, speaking of affluent parents of successful students commented, “They are not concerned

that *all* children learn; they are concerned that *their* children learn” (p. 570). I see this aspect, among other things, as an important argument against publicly funded voucher schemes.

Given my bias against the extremes of both a national standards and testing movement and a market choice system, I would expect to find similar feelings among educators in England who must cope with both approaches.

Rationale for the Case Study Method

This study uses the Explanatory Case Study approach (Yinn, 1994). A case study is defined by Merriam (1998) as “an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single instance, (the “case”) phenomenon, or social unit” (p. 27). I have pursued the answers to “what” and “how” questions; what are the experiences of local educators since the reform policies of 1988, and how does national policy effect educators’ own values in implementation of the policy? Yinn (1994) refers to these as questions that “deal with operational links needing to be traced over time, rather than mere frequencies or incidence” (p. 6) and suggests an explanatory case study is the appropriate research strategy. Merriam (1998) finds a case study “a particularly suitable design if you are interested in *process*” (p. 33) as a causal explanation.

Yin (1994) also defines a case study as appropriate for investigating “a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (p. 13). In this case study, the 1988 Education reform Act for England and Wales may be viewed as the “contemporary

phenomenon” and the local school and its education authority viewed as the “real-life context” in which the mandates of the ERA must necessarily be enacted. Documentation, observations, and interviews at the local level have been undertaken as a way to distinguish the extent of congruence between the goals of a national policy for education and the realities of teaching, learning, and administering an effective school.

The case study approach is in keeping with my focus which was intended to be on typical educators and the effect that the process of implementing a rather radical reform policy has had on their own values and belief about public education. Since the restrictions of England’s mandated National Curriculum should theoretically have created some common experience with implementation among British educators despite the differences in schools that the parental choice system must create, an in-depth study of a single school meets my objectives. The explanatory approach has been used to develop conceptual categories to support or challenge Guthrie and Koppich’s theory of policymaking based on the alignment of fundamental values of liberty, efficiency, and equality in a democratic society.

Case Study Procedures

Case study procedures (Yin, 1994) included direct observation of school routines and faculty meetings, some participant-observation involving interaction of researcher and students in several classroom lessons and interviews with a school administrator, a school governor, and teachers. Triangulation was achieved through documentary information in the form of a survey instrument to track teachers’ perceptions of change,

archival records, including the school Prospectus, the School Development Plan, a report of the most recent OFSTED visit to the school. An interview was also conducted with a long-term employee of the Local Education Authority to gain a different but equally important perspective on local efforts to implement a fundamentally restructured public education system in Great Britain.

Case Study Site

My study site was a middle/secondary school located in the eastern region of England, about 100 miles northeast of London. The student population is slightly over 500, and there is one head teacher (principal) and one deputy head (assistant principal) overseeing a staff of about 50 educators. I chose such a location because British secondary schools are the places where the maximum impact of both the National Curriculum and local management of schools can be felt because the grade levels span two key stages of the curriculum (Key Stage Two and Three). While all schools follow the national curriculum, the full impact of both the demands of the curriculum and the high stakes exams required under the 1988 Educational Reform Act seems to begin in earnest with Key Stage Two of the national curriculum. This situation can create some pressure for a middle school faculty.

The community, of which the school is an integral part, draws its student population from a predominantly rural area but there is a fairly affluent and culturally sophisticated large town close by. The school serves an average population of mainly

white pupils from a mixed social economic background. Students at the middle school range in age from about 10 in Year Five to 13 in Year Eight.

Respondents

Obviously I wanted to work with a school whose personnel were interested in informing research and therefore would be willing to be interviewed. Initial contact with three local schools within a 25-mile radius of my home and work was made by means of a general letter (Appendix C) in which I introduced myself, briefly described the purpose and the direction of the research study and solicited the participation of school staffs. Within a week or so of my solicitation of case study sites, I received a letter from the head teacher of Eastham Middle School, expressing interest in my research project. I followed up this first contact by telephone, arranging a meeting between the head teacher and myself to decide if a qualitative research study at the school would be feasible. In presenting my research intentions to her faculty, the head teacher had received no objection from anyone about the idea of my study and subsequently she also sought and received approval to commence the research from the chairperson of the school governors.

The head teacher agreed to be interviewed herself and was also instrumental in arranging an interview with the chairperson of the board of governors. In probing for information about local political implications of the ERA, this governor recommended speaking to several officials of the "council" (which includes the Local Education Authority). I had a subsequent conversation with a colleague at the University of

Cambridge about the idea of pursuing interest in educational reform policy beyond the school and into the context of the broader community authorities, which provided me with two more names of possible contacts in the county LEA. Both LEA advisors were contacted by both e-mail and by telephone and the most senior of the two willingly agreed to be interviewed.

Faculty participation in interviews was initially solicited after I was formally introduced to the staff at a staff meeting. There were only a few early responses to the interview requests requiring me to try a more assertive approach. I surmised that the reluctance to approach me demonstrated a certain reserve in approaching a stranger and an American and a hesitance in submitting to an interview. I committed myself to spending about a week interacting informally with the staff, observing classes, and generally establishing myself as a familiar figure around the school. After observing several informal and formal faculty discussions, I decided to approach certain teachers choosing them to represent a cross-section of ages and teaching experience to obtain as balanced a collection of data as possible. This method proved successful and resulted in willingness on the part of all but one teacher to take part in a taped interview.

All respondents were given a copy of the original letter containing a summary of the research proposal (Appendix C) with an assurance that identities of respondents would be kept anonymous and that all data would be properly secured and confidential. Respondents were asked to read and sign a statement (Appendix D) confirming their understanding of the interview process and the safe handling of the collected data. Personnel agreeing to be interviewed were asked to complete a Demographic Information

Sheet (Appendix E) to provide background for the collection of data. Pseudonyms were assigned to each participant, with the first letter of the last name based on the respondent's professional position (teacher, school administrator, governor, LEA official). Appendix A contains the Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board Approval necessary for research involving human subjects.

Collection of Empirical Materials

Empirical materials included observations of the setting, interviews, and artifacts and documents specific to the school. I also kept personal field notes during the research process. The selection of the setting, the events to observe, and specific "actors" to be interviewed was done "purposefully" with the goal of obtaining the most appropriate and reflective answers to the research questions (Creswell, 1994).

Observations

Janesick (1998) refers to the observation as a cornerstone for the qualitative research to come. Although observations composed only a small portion of the data gathering process, they served to set the scene for examining local implementation of national policy and helped to establish a rapport with students and adults at the school. They also provided a means of establishing a connection between the impressions about the school environment and the views of the people so much a part of it.

My position as an American researcher working in a British school required more of an effort on my part to gain some credibility as a fellow educator and to assure an

element of trust given the controversial nature of the research topic. Therefore, becoming a familiar presence at the school and engaging in informal conversation with school staff were as important to the success of the research as the written observations that became the source of descriptive detail in my data reporting.

On my first visit to the school I was welcomed by the deputy head teacher, who had arranged a very informative tour of the school conducted by a Year Eight student. Early on in the research process, I was able to observe the school reception area as a way of determining how the school is presented to parents, students, and the public. I then attended several of the weekly faculty meetings to observe the interactions between teachers and between administrators and where I was able to gain insight into the topics considered important to the staff. I was also able to attend two events to which members of the community were invited into the school. One was a very well attended parent evening which provided an orientation to the school for upcoming Year Five students. The other was the celebration of the opening of new science classrooms, a part of a long-term school plan to upgrade school facilities.

I also observed several of the daily school assemblies during which ethical and moral issues are presented through storytelling, music, and role-playing. This integral part of the school program offered valuable information about the relationship between the head teachers and the student body. Additionally, by visiting classrooms and observing numerous lessons, I was able to gain a sense of the atmosphere for learning in the school. My intent, in these various observations, was to derive a sense of the climate and culture of this particular school since research on schools that work (Barth, 1990;

Gibson & Asthana, 1998; Wood, 1998) so often considers school climate to be an important factor in improving student achievement.

Participant Observation

I was a participant in only the mildest sense in that I was asked to observe several classes including an exploratory-type science lab experiment with 10 and 11 year olds and English lessons with 13 and 14 year olds. These gave me the opportunity to interact with the teacher and the students and to share American classroom experiences with the British children. Whereas the British educational system differs significantly in structure from the American, with participant observation I was able to compare the realities of classroom lessons in the two countries through my own experience.

Field Journal

I have recorded personal observations and reflections about the research process. This has helped guide the direction of further research by suggesting specific leads as well as assisting in my analysis of the findings (Merriam, 1998).

Interviews

The interviews have been the most important component of the research study. However, they were only possible after my research project had been summarized to the faculty and after a period of becoming used to my presence in the school, after which some of the local educators appeared willing to be approached.

This study employed what Merriam (1998) terms the semi-structured interview. “In this type of interview either all of the questions are more flexibly worded, or the interview is a mix of more or less structured questions” (Merriam, 1998, p. 74). This format allows the researcher to “respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the respondent, and to new ideas on the topic” (Merriam, 1998, p. 74).

A total of eight local educators was interviewed for this study. The head teacher, governor, and LEA official were each contacted by phone to arrange an interview at a time and place of their choice. Since the meeting occurred during the school day and because of the demands of administrative duties, the head teacher chose to be interviewed in the office, which was also the location for the interview with the governor who was then able to meet with the head teacher on school business. The Local Education Authority official chose a borrowed office located midway between council headquarters and the town closest to the school at the end of the regular workday.

Each interview began with a more informal establishment of the topic at hand, followed by a more formal discussion of the Education Reform Act and its impact on each participant’s job and about how the reform policy had affected their feelings about education in general and their own experience in particular. Previously prepared interview questions (Appendix F) focused on what local educators believe is the purpose of school and on their own experiences in implementing the 1988 reforms, in particular, the National Curriculum and related assessments. Initial interviews ranged anywhere between forty-five minutes and an hour and a half.

Member checks with all but one respondent (who had retired) were used to gain feedback about data gathered in the initial interviews. Respondents were asked to review the interview transcripts and to revise or supplement any of their original responses. Further informal conversations with school personnel throughout the process of data collection and analysis also served to ensure that the research findings were a true reflection of the research context.

Two formal follow-up interviews were conducted with the headteacher and chair of governors respectively, in which these respondents contributed additional information and, in a few instances, provided clarification of the original interview data. At this point I was looking for more specific responses to questions probing for underlying *values*. This revisiting of interview data also assured that interview data and other documentation thoroughly addressed the purpose of the case study. Concerns expressed by Yin (1994) on construct validity and case study reliability, emerging insights leading to the refinement of questions, as Merriam (1998) suggests, as well as a refocus on the fundamental elements of Guthrie and Koppich's A.I.M. model for reform (1993), guided the direction of the follow-up interviews. Like the initial interviews, these second interviews were conducted in person, recorded, and transcribed. With the exception of one teacher, who has since retired, each respondent was given a copy of his/her interview transcript and asked to review it for content accuracy. Opportunity was also given for respondents themselves to clarify, add, or change any part of the interview.

The follow-up interviews and member checks resulted in no substantial changes being suggested by the teachers. However the Chair of Governors had obviously

examined the interview transcript carefully and provided detailed clarification regarding sections of the interview that were unclear. I shared a graph summarizing my conclusions about the values inherent in both Tory education policies and those of the school and Local Education Authority with the respondents and the head teacher willingly discussed her reaction to my findings in another short interview. No additional information had any significant effect on the previous findings but provided validation for my own conclusions.

A follow-up conversation with the head teacher also helped me to consider how value issues might evolve in the school over the next year. These ideas are discussed in Chapter VI of this dissertation.

Analysis of the data occurred simultaneously with data collection as I noted impressions in my field journal and identified possible themes and patterns as they emerged from interview material. I continued to employ this process until there appeared to be no new data.

Survey Instruments

The head teacher agreed to present a survey instrument on “Government-Initiated Change” (Appendix G) to the professional staff at Eastham Middle School during a faculty meeting, with the understanding that participation would be voluntary. The intent of the survey was to determine if, in fact, teachers in this school actually perceived of any real changes to educational policy at the school level. Teachers were able to choose from five paragraphs stating possible reactions to policy change and the analysis of the

collective response measures both teachers' commitment to government-initiated change and their sense of control over that change. It seemed important that I not *assume* the extent on impact on teachers and administrators of the 1988 Education Reform Act.

Surveying the staff members who were not interviewed also broadened the impression of how local educators were reacting to government reforms. Survey responses also provided me with additional information for describing the "intervention," in this case, the Education Reform Act of 1988, and the real-life "context," or the school and teachers, that Yin (1994) refers to in defining case study research. The surveys were accomplished in a short time during a regular faculty meeting, providing not only a whole school response on the issue of change but also insuring a timely and high return on the survey instrument.

Demographic information requested from those interviewed included teaching qualifications, current position, and the amount and type of teaching experience. This data allowed me to account for differences in age and/or teaching experience as the rationale for differing categories of response to the current educational reforms.

Documentation

Triangulation of sources was accomplished by collecting additional documentation to provide checks for the accuracy of observation and interview data, to lend validity to the interpretation of other data, and to corroborate evidence of social values that might be present at the school level of policy implementation.

PHASES I: A guided tour of the school was arranged for the research by the headteacher. Interviews were then conducted with the headteacher and chairperson of the governors using an interview protocol. Three classes, two English lessons and a Science lesson, were observed to provide a sense of the rapport between students and teachers, as well as to understand the variety of teaching methods used in interpreting the requirements of the National Curriculum.

PHASE II: In depth interviews were carried out with four teachers, of different ages and gender and covering a range of subject areas and grade levels. A questions guide or protocol was employed.

PHASE III: The researcher was referred to an official of the Local Education Authority through a British colleague leading to a formal interview with a senior advisor for the county LEA. Once again, an interview protocol guided the discussion.

PHASE IV: School documents, including the School Prospectus (2000/2001), the School Development Plan (2000/2001), and the most recent OFSTED inspection report (2000) were examined for cultural values embedded in the language. There was opportunity for observing several school assemblies and an open evening for parents. An interview was conducted with the deputy headteacher.

PHASE V: Initial analysis of the data gathered through observation, artifacts, and interviews provoked further research. A brief survey on "Government-Initiated Change" was administered voluntarily to the remainder of the faculty. Member checks with all respondents were used to verify early findings and follow-up interviews were also used to confirm impressions and to clarify information. Analysis of the data was on-going.

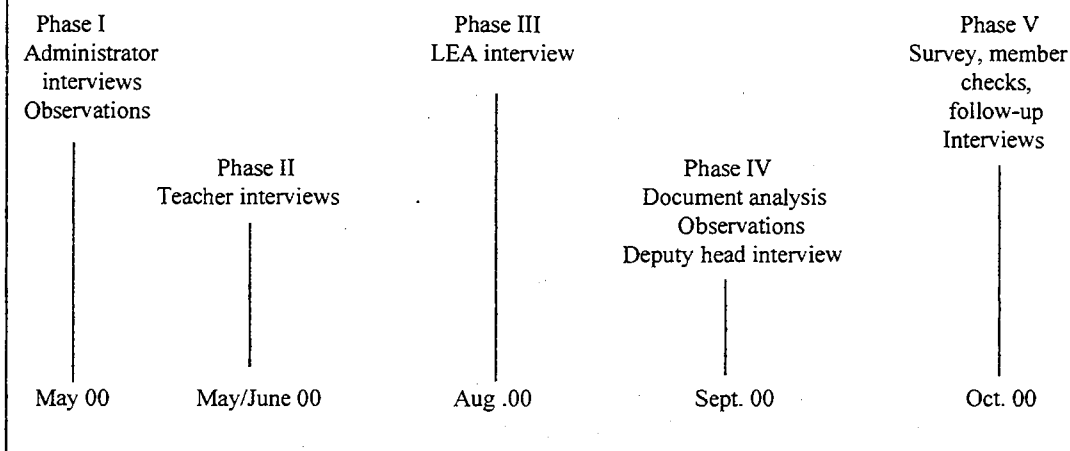


Figure 1. Data Collection Time Line for Eastham Middle School Case Study.

Documents

As part of the response to the demands of the market, the School Prospectus (2000/2001) provided helpful information about how the school presents itself to the

public, and revealed the characteristics of the school program that the school staff has deemed important to advertise. These documents have, in part, provided insight into the values of the educators involved in this community school.

The School Development Plan (2000) was also valuable in disclosing the educational priorities of the school staff and governors. It conveyed a tone that went beyond the rhetoric of public relations and provided extensive material to examine for value statements. Figures for pupil withdrawals as well as applications for the allotted places in the school (referred to respectively as “exit” and “voice” in market terminology) provided quantitative data on the comparative appeal of the school in the educational marketplace. Of course, scores on the national tests and the position of the school in the published league tables (a national ranking of a school’s performance listed by aggregate test scores) provided comparative information about the school in relation to other schools.

Finally, an unexpected OFSTED inspection occurred during the research period, in June 2000, and the subsequent inspection report, and a summary of that report, provided an external assessment of the school’s strengths and weaknesses and further material to analyze for value priorities.

Analysis of Empirical Materials

I have analyzed and interpreted the data simultaneously with data collection. Merriam (1998) explains that after the initial observations, interviews, and reading of documents, “Emerging insights, hunches, and tentative hypotheses direct the next phase

of data collection, which in turn, leads to the refinement or reformulation of questions, and so on” (p. 151).

As I am a visual learner, I found it helpful to create a color-coded visual display, during the process of data analysis, showing emerging themes or patterns in a chart as suggested by Tesch in Creswell (1994). First, using topics similar to those suggested by Marshall, Mitchell and Wirt’s study of cultural values and policy (1989), I categorized all interview responses into four domains – curriculum, instruction, performance standards, governance and control. Such organization of the data provided a focus on topics that emerged as important to local educators. Then, interview transcripts were further examined for personal value systems. Again, Marshall, Mitchell and Wirt’s research (1989) provided the technique, based on behavioral definitions, for distinguishing implicit value language through content analysis (pp. 133-137). This system of analysis allowed me to code interview language according to the four basic cultural values of liberty, efficiency, equality, and quality, identified by both Marshall, Mitchell and Wirt (1989) and Guthrie and Koppich (1993). Later, I conducted the same content analysis on the language of school documents, including the School Prospectus (2000/2001), The School Development Plan (2000/2001), and the OFSTED Report (2000).

In order to produce a comparative compilation of the values underlying Tory education policy, I duplicated the procedure for analyzing values embedded in language by examining Tory policy statements. Due to limitations of accessibility, I was able to use only secondary sources to surmise Tory Party values. However, the Davies interview in the Guardian (1999, September 14) with former Tory Education Secretary Kenneth

Baker, proved to be an important resource for behind the scenes strategy, as did other references to Tory policy statements in the literature (Bolton, 1998; Bottery, 1999; Broadfoot, Osborn, Planel, & Pollard, 1996; Chitty, 1997; Daugherty, 1995; Deem, 1994; Dunford, 1999; Lawton, 1996). Ultimately, value themes were compared to the theoretical predictions of Guthrie and Koppich (1993).

Finally, content analysis was conducted on publicized Labour policy statements, in particular, the Excellence in Schools White Paper (www.dfes.gov.uk/wpaper/mindex.htm) and the current Department of Education and Employment (Dfee) website (<http://dfes.gov.uk>). A visual comparison of those values implied by both the language of national policy makers and the words of local educators are displayed in the Conclusion section of Chapter VI in this study.

It must be said, that had I been able to interview Tory politicians who were instrumental in forming education policy in the late 1980s, a diversity of personal opinions might have been revealed. Instead, the content analysis of the Baker interview, combined with numerous accounts of Tory statements and actions during the decade of the 1980s, appears to present a monolithic view of Tory values. The same is true regarding Labour policy analysis. While education rhetoric may not reflect the range of opinions held by Tory or Labour constituencies, throughout the review of relevant literature, and in discussions with British colleagues, there seemed to be no indication that any opposing views were publicly legitimized. The nature of British politics is such that political party leaders hold some considerable control over their members who are

expected to support the party's agreed upon platform and may help explain the rather singular interpretation given to policy value systems.

Trustworthiness of Empirical Materials

Certain research criteria must be met in order to protect the internal validity of the study and assure the trustworthiness of the qualitative research. These criteria are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Janesick, 1998).

Credibility

One of the most fundamental methods for establishing credibility is the triangulation of empirical materials, that is, using multiple investigations, multiple sources of data, or multiple sources to confirm the findings that emerge from the field research (Janesick, 1998; Merriam, 1998). To establish such credibility in my research I have described my biases in regard to this particular topic and have attempted to approach the subjects of the study in as objective manner as possible.

Using a participatory or collaborative mode of research, educators at the study site were involved in all phases of the study, including their previewing of the conceptual framework, being appraised of emerging empirical findings, and being informed of the tentative results of the analytical process. The plausibility of the research findings was then confirmed with study participants by using member checks throughout the study, giving research participants the opportunity to rectify any factual errors or to discuss or challenge the interpretation of the findings. Such consultation yielded supplemental data,

which was used to modify the process of analysis and allowed me to re-address several research questions.

Peer examination was also used to achieve credibility. Dr. Adrienne Hyle, my dissertation advisor, provided continual analysis of the study and experienced professional guidance about the direction and focus of the study. Additionally, several fellow doctoral students, who are conducting related research studies in Great Britain, acted as sounding boards to my findings. Of particular value to the process of interpreting the findings has been the critical support provided by a colleague who is a British educator and professionally immersed in many of the issues central to my study. She has reviewed my interpretation of the empirical materials for accuracy within the context of British education (Merriam, 1998).

Transferability

Transferability refers to the ability of the researcher to describe the case study setting so it may be used as a source of comparison by others (Janesick, 1998). I hoped to assure that the study will be considered valuable in examining various political initiatives for American education in light of the British experience. For that purpose, I have reported the findings in narrative form, in rich, thick description, thus providing a holistic and interpretive picture of the effect on local level educators of a centrally imposed educational policy juxtaposed with a decentralized system of parental choice.

Dependability or Reliability

It is important that the results of the research study truly represent the values, beliefs, and the norms of the participants (Janesick, 1998) and that they can be applicable to other situations. If this particular research were to be conducted in a similar but different school setting within the British education system, the results should be much the same. In research with human subjects, where perceptions about the environment may be considered to be constantly changeable, reliability concerns must acknowledge that social reality depends on the variety of meaning that people give to their world. The researcher, then, must try to describe and explain the research setting as it is experienced by the research participants, accepting that this is their reality (Merriam, 1998). Sharing emerging interpretations with these participants and allowing them to review the written record of the findings has been extremely important in limiting my own bias as a researcher (Janesick, 1998).

Confirmability

The conclusions drawn in this study must be seen to be based on the empirical materials gathered during the research process and not upon researcher bias. I have made every effort to ensure that conclusions, interpretations, and suggestions for the transfer of new knowledge to other contexts, are supported by the evidence collected. To that end, I have maintained an audit trail of interview tapes and transcripts, field notes, evidence of the analytical thought processes, and other supporting documents.

Summary

Chapter III has presented the rationale for the design of this study and described the methodology used to conduct the research. The theoretical foundation for the study was reviewed, touching on the A.I.M. model of education reform and high politics of Guthrie and Koppich (1993) as well as making reference to the study on education policy and values by Marshall, Mitchell and Wirt (1989).

Certain research criteria addressed the trustworthiness of the qualitative research design, including credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. As acknowledgment that the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection, researcher bias was described.

CHAPTER IV

DATA PRESENTATION

The teaching profession draws people who are hard workers, who are committed to service, and who place a high value on stability. It is likely that people of this nature will initially oppose suggestions of change. At the very least, change agents need to recognize that they will find different levels of commitment as they work with schools. Some educators will be inclined to seek new and approaches to education. The majority will have arrived at a level of security and achievement that they will strive to maintain. This tendency reinforces customary modes of practice and serves to block out ideas that are different. (Trubowitz, 2000, p. 167)

Previous chapters have described the purpose of this study and provided the background material necessary to place the research intentions in context. This has included an examination of public schooling in both the United States and Great Britain in order to establish a basis for comparison of educational policy in two different democratic societies. A discussion of the theoretical framework for the research, the rationale for a case study design, and a description of the methodology used have set the stage for the presentation of the data collected by the researcher that will be addressed in this chapter.

The case for this study is a secondary school, which for the sake of confidentiality I have called Eastham Middle School.

The Community

Eastham Middle School is situated at the edge of a rural English village and not far from a Royal Air Force airbase from which some of the student body is drawn and which can have an effect on the fluctuation in school population. While the village itself dates back to the 15th century, this end of town features a modern residential section of well-kept single-family homes with late-model automobiles parked in the driveways.

The village itself is situated about six miles from a much larger market town which serves as the cultural and commercial center for the county. Its main street is only a few blocks long, with sidewalks on both sides hugging the foundations of a series of ancient, attached buildings. Some, from the 19th century, are made of flint and chalk, common building materials of the time, while many have been painted in ice cream colors of peach, vanilla, and lime green, raising the suspicion that being bold with color is a concerted effort on the part of the villagers. There are signs of 15th century architecture in an occasionally curving plaster walls, open beam construction, and thatched roofs. One ancient building leans over the street, its wooden skeleton gray with age, and fading into the white plaster of its walls. A small brick church, with more Victorian origins, is nestled amid the small shops, pubs, and simple homes that line the road, documenting in sticks and mortar, the long and varied history of small English hamlets such as this one. While there are certainly signs of affluence in and around this village, it is only a partly gentrified area, with shops which still cater mostly to the housewife and the old age pensioners rather than to tourists seeking boutiques, galleries, and tea shops. A curving brick wall leads the motorist out of the village in just a few minutes. Beyond, the road

leads one way to a more modern section of brick duplexes and in the other direction, it gives way to broad expanses of patchwork quilts fields, divided by the thorny hedgerow barriers so characteristic of rural Britain.

Eastham Middle School

Eastham Middle School is known as a mixed comprehensive, co-educational day school. It presently occupies a site that was purpose built as a secondary modern school in 1957, being reorganized as a middle school in 1973. The most recent school prospectus (2000-2001) proudly describes its extensive playing fields, hard tennis courts, swimming pool, all weather cricket pitch, a fully equipped gym with a large stage, library, science labs, and a conservation area. There are also facilities for community adult education as well. At present, there are just over 500 pupils, with an even gender balance. The school receives students from six primary schools in an area considered above-average in terms of socio-economic factors, although there are pockets of rural poverty within the “catchment” area. There are very few pupils from an ethnic minority background and only five currently with special education needs (OFSTED, 2000). The school would be considered successful in the education marketplace as it is fully subscribed by parents in the local area and even attracts some further students from outside the catchment area.

The school is approached either by through the narrow, quaint main street of the closest village from which the school takes its name or from a four-lane highway skirting between the newer section of the village and open farm land. The school itself is tucked behind a wooded area at the edge of a cluster of attractive single-family homes. A right

turn into the entrance drive of the school reveals a large structure of red brick and glass sprawling horizontally further than the eye can see and with roof-top hints of other further buildings behind the façade. The building resembles a factory building more than a school for 9 to 13-year old students, with large expanses of metal-framed windows, unsoftened by any window drapes. The school is three stories at the center, with a tower block at the front of a single wing on the right, jutting toward the front drive. To the left, is an L-shaped wing with large, 12 paned windows providing visual access to music and art rooms. Seen from above the school must appear to be a building project gone awry, with sections heading in every direction. The rhythmic sounds of jazz from a piano, drum, and guitar drifts outside, providing a musical accompaniment to a visitor's arrival at the school entrance.

A circular cement drive curves past the unobtrusive front entrance with its small black and white sign directing visitors to the office inside. A mass of trees in a central circle obscures the red doors of the student entrances, one for boys, another for girls, from the neighborhood street. Clumps of lavender thrust fragrant purple tips into the air and form a border to the circle. A few pots of red geraniums placed on the front steps add a cheery note to the unimpressive wide brown front entrance doors.

To the right, past mostly compact cars and a tangle of bikes haphazardly pushed into stands, is the massive, irregular shaped building housing the cafeteria, the kitchen, the stage, and the gymnasium. Beyond is the painted asphalt that usually serves as a basketball and handball court. There are a few portable classroom buildings behind the school but there is still an expanse of playing fields and surprisingly, an outdoor swimming pool.

Inside the front door, the visitor is greeted with a wide, utilitarian hall, with a set of glass doors leading forward and to a back hall and stairs, and a staircase rising midway from the hall to the right. Immediately ahead, across the hall from the entrance, a closed door bears the mysterious warning, "Please do not knock between 10:30 and 11:30." An occasional adult appears in the hall, most walking purposefully and glancing with only mild curiosity at a stranger in their environment. A few disappear into the mystery room while others stop to conduct brief business at the office.

Only a visitors' sign-in book identifies the small main office. It is a very small room, crammed with wall shelves of manuals, piles of paper, file cabinets, and a desk. There are notices tacked at eye level all around the room and a school calendar hangs prominently directly across from the door. Straight ahead, another door stands ajar, and I glimpse more shelves, books, and paper. It leads, I later discover, to the office of the head teacher.

A cordial secretary offers a visitor's pass, to be hung around the neck while on the premises, and asks me to wait. I am expected but it is a busy morning. The loud metal thump of doors against walls and a wave of childish chatter announces the end of morning assembly and the approach of the students. They move in steady, animated lines, their appearances belying the notion that school uniforms make everyone look the same. There are navy or black slacks or skirts, an occasional navy sweater and white shirts that vary from tucked in neatness to spilling from waistbands. These students generally make a good first impression as they pass in surprisingly orderly fashion to their classes. In their midst the deputy head teacher arrives, breathless with responsibility and in a hurry to get to his own classroom to fulfill the teacher part of his duties. This

one foot in the classroom and the other in the office aspect of school administration in Great Britain gives credibility to the title “head teacher” and describes the original intention of the top position in a school being one of leading by example. The deputy apologizes for his being otherwise occupied but he has arranged a tour of the school for me. Within five minutes they have gone and the hall is quiet again.

In short time I am approached by a lanky boy of about 14, who extends his hand and introduces himself as a “Year 8” student and my guide. I am escorted through double doors through which most of the student body has recently passed and find myself in an open room, lined with lockers and coat hooks and filled with benches. Seeing a jumble of jackets and book bags in plain sight, I ask about security, thinking of my own school’s concerns about student pickpockets and occasional vandals. My guide, however, seems unaware of the possibility of theft from within the school and explains the daytime security arrangements that theoretically keep all outside doors locked and requires all visitors to the school to enter through the main door by the office.

My guide leads me from music to art rooms on the ground floor and then upstairs to a series of connected classrooms where he taps politely to excuse our interruption of the lesson, and we walk quickly and quietly around curious children and patient teachers. Many of the classrooms seem half empty, with perhaps 15-20 students present, and I catch fragments of math, English, and French lessons being taught in a familiar, traditional style.

With his running commentary about the school and affectionate anecdotes about the teachers, it is obvious that this young man is both proud and possessive of his school. It is also evident from the extent of his vocabulary and his astute observations about

teachers and students, that he is not a typical adolescent either. When we enter his own classroom, where the students are listening raptly to the teacher read a story, my guide is eager to explain the context of the lesson to me and seems reluctant to leave. I am impressed with this young man and that I have been so welcomed into the heart of the school.

By late morning, my tour has ended and the head teacher has appeared to greet me, also apologetic about her busy schedule, and she invites me to observe her own Year 8 English class. She has been amazingly accommodating to me and I admire both her openness and her willingness to let me experience the work of the school for myself. When I enter her classroom, The Head introduces me as and the class of 13 and 14 year olds greets to my arrival with enthusiasm, a reception I would not normally expect from a group of adolescents. It seems that my main attraction is being an American educator and several bunches of students vie charmingly for my attention and are eager to share their work. The assignment is to revise some previous personal writing using peer support. I had been warned that this is an exuberant class, unafraid to give their opinions and my time with them confirmed this impression. A few are shy but I quickly learn the names of some of the class "characters." I find these British young people to be much like their American counterparts in seventh grade. It is apparent that they have a good rapport with their teacher, being surprisingly un-intimidated by her position as head of the school. For her part, she seems amused by their energy and humor and the whole atmosphere is relaxed and unhurried.

The head teacher invites me to join her for lunch in the school cafeteria. On my tour I had seen the room, a large empty space with a wooden floor buffed with the patina

of decades of student feet scuffing its surface. At the long end of the room is a stage, framed by heavy velvet curtains, and across the room from the hall entrance a series of shutters have now been opened to reveal a kitchen. The room has been transformed by rows of rectangular tables occupied by animated young people and lines of older students wind in front of the stage, edging toward the steaming food tables.

On several of my visits I have settled into the staff lounge, the room behind the mystery door, with the intent of observing the interactions of the educators. It is a sunny place, with two large windows providing views to the fields behind the school. There are sectional couches arranged around a socializing area, with a worktable behind the center seats. In the center, two coffee tables are spilling over with teacher publications and union newsletters. Immediately to the left of the door is a bulletin board with teacher course information, job vacancies, and some charitable appeals. Further along this wall are file cabinets topped by an assortment of books and binders and wooden lockers assigned to each teacher in which they could keep personal objects and snack foods. On the opposite wall is a sink, with shelves of coffee mugs and a counter for making tea. As in most school staff rooms, bulletin boards are covered by overlapping layers of paper, containing notices, calendars, instructions, and charts. A large board features union news as well as information on special needs students. Counters run the length of the wall against the corridor and the work surfaces are cluttered with paper cutters, hole punches, paper supplies, and baskets of more educational materials. Above the counter, there are cubbyholes half filled with videotapes, booklets, and piles of copied worksheets, and to the right, by the door, are the teachers' mailboxes.

Almost always empty early in the day, this room obviously offers a brief respite in mid-morning when a break from classes is scheduled. About half the teaching staff arrives eventually and they bustle around the tea and coffee pots or settle onto couches. The talk seems prosaic, focusing on student concerns or exchanging news about other staff members. I am interested to see a mixture of gender and ages join the group and the atmosphere is relaxed and congenial.

When the break time is over, and the room empties quickly, I am interested to overhear a conversation between a young teacher and an older woman who appeared to be offering guidance on curriculum matters. The younger woman seemed somewhat insecure about some future lessons and was seeking reassurance about what was expected of her. After a while it became apparent that the older woman was an advisor from the Local Education Authority and the source of the younger woman's anxiety was the impending OFSTED visit. There was obviously a frustration that classroom lessons were expected to meet a certain standard by the inspection team and yet materials for the latest curriculum guidelines had not arrived in the school. I caught a muttered comment that maybe it would be better to just hire robots to teach and be done with it.

I am able to return to the school near the beginning of a new term in the autumn. My intention is to view the school in a new way, that is, as an entity of pupils, teachers, and senior management and the "ethos" they have striven to create. Each day at Eastham begins with a morning assembly. The whole school meets together on a Monday, with year or grade level assemblies held separately the remainder of the week. I wanted to attend one of the Monday assemblies in order to absorb both the content and the ambience of this regular gathering.

Eastham students manage to enter the cafeteria/auditorium with surprisingly little noise and disruption. Even as early in the school year as it is, the pupils know the routine and file into the large open space of the room quickly, the youngest year group to the front and the oldest at the back. They settle cross-legged on the floor and begin to look forward with some cautious anticipation as the deputy head teacher greets them with a “good morning” from the front. Mr. Davis is an unassuming presence, bespectacled, not too tall and with a self-effacing, bookish air about him. The audience of students quiets further as Mr. Davis pushes a button to flood the room with rhythmic music, a cross between popular sound and a catchy beat sounding vaguely from another culture. At first the audience is still and some seem delightfully surprised at the music, but gradually heads begin to nod and knees can’t help but bounce to the addictive rhythms. Some children engage in polite whispers as the music reaches a crescendo. “Ah, I feel better for that,” Mr. Davis comments as he switches off the sound. Despite an initial impression of timidity, it is soon apparent that Mr. Davis is able to hold the rapt attention of the pupils. The musical introduction is effective and he is then able to make a connection between the song about the “Israelites” and the story he has chosen to provide background to the Middle East conflict once again grabbing headlines around the world. As he launches into the biblical story of Abraham and Sarah and the warring sons of Abraham, Mr. Davis draws the students in by holding out costumes one by one and asking for volunteers to become the story’s characters. Each request is met with an enthusiastic waving of arms from ten or twelve students. After choosing Abraham, a tall Year 8 boy, Mr. Davis points to a chair on the stage in back of him and directs Abraham to “sit there and look impressive.” As Mr. Davis turns back to continue his story, “Abraham” can’t resist a

little twenty-first century showing off but it is a fleeting moment and both the audience and Mr. Davis are amused. At the point in the story where Abraham's two sons, Isaac and Ishmael, are not getting along, Mr. Davis urges the actors to demonstrate fighting and again, the audience of pupils is delighted. When all the characters have been costumed and have played their part, Mr. Davis states that Abraham is key to today's problems in the Middle East. In a conclusion that in the United States would be more likely found in a church school than a public school, Mr. Davis asks the students to bow their heads, and all heads are lowered obediently. He asks, "Is there someone in your life you find it hard to get along with? This week, have a really good go at not winding them up and understanding them" (Mr. Davis, October, 2000).

Local Educators

This section will begin with demographic information for each respondent. From the beginning of the relationship between the researcher and the school selected for the case study, the head teacher, and later the Chairperson of the Governors, have been interested and supportive of this research project. Consequently, they were both quite willing to participate in interviews and to recommend other community sources who might also contribute to the research.

Teacher respondents were selected somewhat randomly when the researcher approached a number of teachers who represented a cross-section of experience, age, and gender. A description of the purpose of the research study along with an assurance of confidentiality was given to the selected teachers to read over. In the end, all but one of the teachers approached readily agreed to participate in the study. The teacher who

declined to be interviewed did so for reasons of time rather than because of a reluctance to discuss the topic to be researched. Although initially many expressed a certain reticence to speak out, nevertheless, they proceeded to converse quite readily about teaching, children, and education policy, past and present.

The Local Education Authority advisor was one of two recommended by a British university colleague and was selected because of his more than ten years association with the LEA, spanning the periods before and after the passage of the 1988 Education Reform Act. He went out of his way to make himself available for the interview and was quite candid in his comments.

To protect the identity of the participants and to maintain the confidentiality in the reporting of the data, respondents have been assigned pseudonyms in keeping with their gender. For ease in understanding the perspective of the respondent, pseudonyms begin with the same letter as the person's position; i.e., teachers' names begin with "T," the head teacher's with "H," the Governor with "G," and the LEA advisor with "L." Where necessary to maintain confidentiality, subject areas of teachers and specific job titles have also been slightly altered as well, but the essence of the data has been preserved. The following local educators were interviewed.

Head Teacher

Mrs. Harris was named head teacher of Eastham Middle School after the 1999-2000 school year had begun. In the preceding year she had been acting head of a middle school in another part of England, a school in considerable contrast to Eastham. Her first administrative experience had not been easy, as she had overseen a large and unruly study

body in an urban setting where issues of discipline and the need to accommodate many special needs children formed the bulk of her responsibilities. Although Eastham's facilities were built in the 1960s and show the wear and tear of the intervening years, Mrs. Harris appreciates the generally good condition of its buildings and the relative serenity of its setting in contrast to the urban neglect at her former school.

Before becoming a school administrator, Mrs. Harris taught art and technology at a middle school. It is still common in British schools that, except in the larger secondary schools, most head teachers continue to be classroom teachers as well. Mrs. Harris, therefore, is responsible for a Year 8 English class and is thus able to understand issues that are important to teachers.

The head teacher's office is located immediately behind the school secretary's small office. Another door to a back hall leads to the deputy head's office on the right and to the front hall of the school to the left. On the outside wall a bank of windows faces onto the circular drive at the front of the school and beyond to a parking lot and another wing of the school. It became apparent during the interview that while the head could observe all the comings and goings at the school's front door, the wide expanse of office window also exposed her and the contents of her office to visitors and students. There is a large desk with a swivel chair, bookshelves on the end wall, and several file cabinets, piled heavily with manuals and papers. Several armless chairs stand against the wall to the secretary's office and against the window a small table holds a lamp. Boxes of brochures and various other evidences of a busy school mistress add to the general clutter of the office. To be fair, this head teacher has been in the position for only a few months, replacing the former head teacher who had recently left after many years at the school.

Governor

Mrs. Grover is chairperson of Eastham School's board of governors and has held that position for 13 years. She has lived in the village community surrounding the school for 36 years and her middle daughter was a pupil there in 1973, the year the school reverted from a secondary modern to a comprehensive. Although her children are now grown, she has maintained an interest and affection for this local public school and is able to trace the recent history of the school through her own experience.

The interview with the governor, Mrs. Grover, took place in the head teacher's office during her absence. The location was a convenience to both of us as I was already in the school that day and Mrs. Grover had a later appointment to discuss school business with the head teacher, Ms. Harris. We both sat close to the closed door to the secretary's office, in armless chairs. Mrs. Grover had been briefed by the head on my topic and the use of the data prior to the interview. I was asked, however, to briefly reiterate the purpose of my research and to explain the final form in which the data would appear. This clarification of the purpose of the interview seemed to be requested in the spirit of curiosity and a genuine interest in the whole topic.

Teachers

Mr. Taylor is a quiet gentleman looking more like a country vicar than a teacher. He has been teaching for 38 years at Eastham, having his start in the school when it was still a secondary modern. He earned a diploma in education and his first teaching position was as head of the physical education department. At age 35, Mr. Taylor

became a head of year, which he held for about 12 years. In 1988, just before the National Curriculum came in to the schools, Mr. Taylor opted to give up his leadership positions and decided to be “an ordinary teacher.”

Mr. Taylor was interviewed in his classroom, a bright and airy second floor space. There is nothing unique about the room. The walls are decorated with the usual kinds of school posters, some in French as Mr. Taylor is responsible for teaching French to a low ability Year 5 group as well as other core curriculum subjects. There is a timeless quality about the environment, with well-worn desks and wooden floorboards bleached pale by years of scrubbing. Mr. Taylor answered the interview questions from behind his desk, willing to give his views but with a certain reserve in his manner.

Mr. Tandon is a younger teacher. He began his teaching career in 1995 after earning a Bachelor of Arts degree with honors in Geography and Economics. He subsequently completed a Post-Graduate Certificate of Education (PGCE) which enabled him to teach. Eastham has been his only school. Mr. Tandon has some interest in advancement to a higher post in education. Part of his career plan involves learning more about how a school is run and so he has served, for almost four years, as a teacher-governor. He has found the experience to be very interesting but “particularly hard” and time-consuming. Currently, Mr. Tandon teaches Geography to the Year 7 students.

This interview took place in a small nondescript office, along the corridor from Mr. Tandon’s classroom. He had agreed to being interviewed during a free period in his busy teaching day and while another teacher was using his classroom. A glimpse into the room reveals an impression of color and evidence of student projects. Globes and maps

dominate the atmosphere. Mr. Tandon spoke quite rapidly during our conversation, though this seemed more a feature of his efficient style than from any need to hurry through the conversation. In my later visits to the school, Mr. Tandon has always been congenial and has seemed particularly interested in the progress of the research.

Mr. Trent was the first to volunteer to be interviewed. He has been a physical education teacher for 28 years, ten of those at Eastham. He prepared for his career by earning a Certificate of Teaching in Education. This is a teacher who clearly would choose to spend his time with his students than to be bothered with "paperwork." He is proud of his sports program and appreciative of the facilities that this school provides for both the PE curriculum and for extra-curricular athletic activities. As willing as he was to take part in the research, Mr. Trent seems always busy with children and so his interview was conducted on the playground while he supervised several groups of students playing badminton and volleyball. It was a sunny, mild but windy day and the setting seemed a natural for this down-to-earth teacher.

Mrs. Thompson began her teaching career in 1972 after earning a Diploma in Education. She trained as a primary teacher and is responsible for Year 5 children at Eastham, the youngest group in the school, at age 9 and 10. She left teaching for nine years to raise her own children, two sons, and returned to her work 11 years ago. Mrs. Thompson is interesting in that she invited me into a borrowed science lab for a hands-on science lesson on the solubility of various materials (sand, salt, etc) in water. It was quite a successful lesson, designed to encourage the students to work in small groups and to help each other discover some scientific truths by a series of experiments. And yet,

though obviously interested in my research topic, Mrs. Thompson was quite nervous about speaking out and was very reluctant to converse with the tape recorder running. In the end, however, she managed to overcome her initial apprehension and proceeded to provide one of the most lengthy and pithy interviews in the study. We met in a kind of workroom on the second floor of the school, almost a hall separating two classrooms. Again, she was scrambling to find a place to work while another teacher used the classroom.

Mr. Lewis has been a senior advisor for curriculum for the county Local Education Authority for ten years. Beginning in 1979, he held the posts of deputy head and head teacher before becoming an advisor. His job requires him to coordinate advisory services with schools in the county in the area of history. Mr. Lewis was recommended to me indirectly through a colleague in a local British university. Once I had contacted him and briefly explained the focus of my research study, he readily agreed to be interviewed. He arranged for us to meet in a county education building close to my home and asked his secretary to send me a map of the area with the building clearly marked. When I arrived for the meeting, both he and the receptionists greeted me warmly and led me to a second floor multi-purpose room. I was offered a beverage and we settled on two of the many padded chairs that circled the perimeter of the room. Mr. Lewis was slightly more formal in his demeanor than the other educators interviewed, but he was nevertheless, congenial and answered the interview questions with little hesitation.

Purpose of Schooling

The over-riding impression in talking to those involved in education at the local school level is that public schooling serves to prepare children for their future roles as both informed and productive citizens of the country (and realistically these days, of the world). There is a sense of introducing young people not only to basic knowledge, but assisting them to develop critical thinking skills to cope with their lives as adults. The welcome from the head teacher in the school Prospectus addresses this purpose directly. “We hope your child will have a happy and profitable time with us and that you will enjoy your association with this school (Eastham Middle School Prospectus, 2000/2001, p. 1).” The introduction to the most recent School Development Plan also touches on what the staff sees as a specific purpose of their school. “We recognize the need to provide pupils with the skills required to use new technology, and aim to ensure that pupils are adaptable and innovative, and are equipped to face new challenges with a positive approach. (School Development Plan 2000-2001).”

Mr. Trent believes that schooling broadens students’ knowledge and provides life experiences. He hopes that the skills students learn in school will enable them to find fun and enjoyment in their leisure time and even in their working life. Mr. Tandon expresses similar beliefs. Children need to be equipped with information and key skills to enable them to succeed in life. He particularly mentions deductive skills, that is, teaching children to look at information and be able to deduce what is being said. Preparation for the future includes not only concrete lessons for later work but more abstract ideas that help with social relationships he sees as important as well.

In some cases, dedication to the profession of teaching is so strong that it takes on a moral dimension. Mrs. Thompson is frustrated with the present state of British education and it shows in her concern for its effect on the children. She is unhappy with the overly narrow intent of government reforms that concentrates on the raising of standards in British education but neglects other values of education such as producing future citizens for a democratic society:

I think the aims that the government are trying to enforce look good on paper, but actually to implement it, I think you've got a lot of problems. I think to raise the standards, I think if that is the only issue they are going to really worry about, I think we've got more problems in future generations. Because I think we've got to look at the whole child. And moral issues, and the child's attitude, and also the skills needed to learn from themselves, are far more important. You might be able to raise standards, but in actual fact, does raise standards mean that you have a child growing into a good citizen?

Sometimes, teachers like Mr. Taylor, choose to remain in the classroom rather than advancing their career through promotions that take much of their time and energy away from the children. When he was in an administrative position as a year leader, he could eventually foresee, with the advent of the Education Reform Act, that the job was about to be transformed and that the stakes were going to be raised in terms of accountability.

I could see there was going to be a lot more paperwork, and a lot more social work, and counseling the children and that sort of thing. That just wasn't for me. I didn't feel that I was qualified to do that, or that I wanted to do that. When I was a year leader, my main job was to make sure the year was running smoothly, that the children were achieving, and doing their best. If there were any discipline problems, then I would step in there. But that was more or less my job, and I stopped there. But I didn't see myself as a counselor of any sort. The job from then on just altered out of all recognition.

Cynicism that the not so subtle motivations behind the 1988 government reforms in education did not parallel the goals of many educators was expressed by more than one respondent. The head teacher, Ms. Harris, is straight forward in her criticism.

I would cynically say that somebody was trying to push through a new idea and have their name on it while they were still Secretary of State for Education. I don't think that having a national curriculum has made schools more effective, because I don't think those goals belong to the school.

There is also concern for the educational experience of the less able children who are seen to lose confidence in the face of the demands of both the National Curriculum and the framework of assessments that serve to monitor a school's adherence to its guidelines. Ms. Thompson worries about the present stress on these children in particular and their future as productive citizens.

I am talking about them in 20 years time, when they've gone out to work, and they've got a family. I can imagine there will be a lot of problems with worries about whether they are competent enough in a job, what sort of job they are going to do. I think the stress of it all will be too much for them, because they have been in a competitive climate at school. A lot of them will actually fall out, I think, of the system, and become more of a problem. So although the government are saying yes, I am raising standards, isn't it wonderful for PR reasons, and to show the rest of society that they are doing something about education, it is not, I feel, the main aim of education.

Overall, teachers seem to want to be left to their own devices, planning lessons and activities that their professional experience tell them will tap the interests and curiosity of the children. They believe they are best able to judge for themselves how to match the pace of the instruction to the developmental capabilities of the students. Teachers also recognize that not everyone has the same teaching style and students benefit from a variety of presentations. Mr. Trent observes, "Teaching isn't about always

teaching the same things at the same time. We can't all teach in the same way. I think that's having an effect on people as well."

The head teacher would seem to have compatible views with her staff over the important goals of the school and its teachers. While she acknowledges the need to ensure that students acquire basic knowledge, she stresses that the focus of teaching should be on flexibility and the skills to use that knowledge. If she were in charge of education policy she would be concerned with understanding how children learn before attempting to help them develop content knowledge. It is implied that the National Curriculum places much time and resources into passing on content knowledge with little or no consideration about what can practically happen in the classroom.

The National Curriculum was based on what somebody, somewhere, some working party, thought people should be teaching children. It had very little to do with the way the children being taught were actually going to pick it up and learn it. It was entirely on the subject matter, not the teaching approach, the teaching strategy, not the learning. I don't think learning came into it anywhere along the line.

Experience with Implementing Reform Policy

The issue of the shift in the governance of education from the Local Education Authorities (LEA) to the Local Management of Schools (LMS) is fundamental to the intent of the Conservative policymakers. Arising from an over-riding belief in the classic market philosophy of the nineteenth century, the 1988 Education Reform Act arranged for control of schools to be devolved to the school level in order to place them in a position to become competitive with one another. Beginning in 1990, school budgets for staffing, services, and facility upkeep were to fall under the control of each school's

governing body which would be made up of a lay majority (Thomas, 1993). School budgets would be funded by a formula determined mainly by the school's student population and funding commitments would be met by a school's prioritizing of essentials such as staff salaries, educational resources, and facilities management. A budget deficit might now result in the dismissal of teaching staff as the Local Education Authority could no longer require a school to make a staff appointment against their wishes or their budget. This introduction of the marketplace into the state (public) school system was a deliberate move by the Tory government to force schools to become competitive, which in densely populated districts such as London might result in a school fighting for its very existence. Rural schools, like Eastham Middle, face little local competition except from a few expensive independent (private) schools in the area. In fact, EMS parents seem to appreciate the school's traditional function as a part of the local community. The marketing of schools was expected to be dependent on the publication of certain performance indicators such as exam results and inspection reports, and so attract families as consumers. The thinking was that if schools were forced to be competitive, they would have to raise their standards and improve the educational services they were offering, and those that were unsuccessful, then, in attracting pupils would be considered "failing schools." The Tory "free market" policy also meant that the considerable powers previously enjoyed by the local education authorities would be reduced. While governance under LMS delegated more decision making and responsibility to the local school, control was still held by the government ministers through the new National Curriculum and Assessment mandates. As my data will reveal,

a centralized policy doesn't always fulfill the original intentions of its architects when viewed at a local level.

In order to measure whether the values of the Tory reformers and those of the teachers who have been tasked with implementing the new education policy are aligned or in conflict, it is important to hear from the “mobilizers” of the reforms in their own words. Sir Keith Joseph, Margaret Thatcher's Secretary of State for Education from 1981-1986, expresses his basic philosophy about public education. “When I started the job in September, 1981, I was anxious to free up the system, to free it from bureaucratic controls” (Dunford & Chitty, 1999, p. 1). He had additional reservations about the place of government in education. “I've always been attracted to the idea of the education voucher and I've always worried about the state's involvement in education” (p. 2).

Joseph's successor was Kenneth Baker, the man who engineered the establishment of the massive education reforms in the late 1980s in Great Britain. He makes little effort to hide the fact that his motivation for change was instigated by the disruptive 18 months of teacher strikes in the mid-80s. “You can't overestimate the importance of that strike . It was impossible with the unions – endless meetings, getting nowhere, all fighting against each other” (Davies, 2000, p. 1). And his reaction was quite open. “I took away all negotiating rights from the union. It was quite brutal” (p. 1).

There were always rumors that Baker was angry about the closure of a grammar [selective secondary school] school in his old constituency by the Inner London Education Authority and wanted to settle old scores. Baker confirms that this move, and his observation of classes dealing more with social issues than with academics,

influenced his subsequent decision to restructure the education system, including destroying the power of the LEAs. "I wanted them to wither on the vine," he says. "I think they were behaving in a way that was so damaging to the process of education that I had to remove their power" (p. 1). The introduction of Local Management of Schools concept, researched earlier by Keith Joseph, also provided Baker with the opportunity to remove power from the LEAs and fragment the teacher unions. "I legislated for LMS and it diminished the power of the teacher unions and the LEAs. They hate me" (p. 1). But Baker felt justified in advocating the radical changes that LMS was about to wreak on educational institutions in the country because he felt the whole system was geared for the wrong people. "But then they had a political agenda too. The unions and the LEAs had got the system stitched up, the parents were just there. It was a huge producer-led cartel" (p. 4).

There were reasons for the introduction of parent choice other than to lessen the powers of the professional educators. Tories had always been supporters of the selective system of schooling that had been all but abandoned with the embracing of the comprehensive, or mixed ability, schools in the 1970s. Baker hoped to reverse that policy. "I would have liked to bring back selection but I would have got into such controversy at an early stage that the other reforms would have been lost" (p. 4).

The freedom that a parent choice policy allows was appealing to Kenneth Baker. "I hoped it would open it all up and it would lead to the poorer schools literally having to close" (p. 4). He combined parental choice of schools with a funding formula which meant that most of each school's budget depended entirely on the recruitment of students.

“In effect, it was a voucher system. I just didn’t call it that. It was a subtler approach”
(p. 4).

Accountability of teachers was another important goal of the Tory government. Peter Horton, chair of education in the city of Sheffield, felt that there had been too little government interference with the operation of the schools in his district. “There was a very great complacency about accountability and standards. There were half a dozen really useless head teachers, and there was nothing that could be done about it. And nobody was trying” (p. 5).

When the Labour Party formed a new government in 1997, their education policies were little changed from the education market and the accountability procedures of exams and OFSTED inspections that the Tories had introduced. Former Tory ministers like Kenneth Baker even seemed surprised that their policies have stood. In reference to his successor as Secretary for Education, David Blunkett, Baker remarks, “He seems to have recycled a lot of my speeches” (p. 5).

Indeed, education policy seems to fall more and more under a central command. Labour directives such as action plans, school and LEA development plans, target setting, benchmarking, league tables, baseline assessment, LEA and OFSTED inspections, and the continuation of parental choice, all represent top-down initiatives generated by the government.

As this study will show, a centralized policy doesn’t always fulfill the original intention of its architects when viewed at a local level.

It is difficult to discuss curriculum issues or the organization and governance of a school without referring as well to instruction, student assessment, teacher accountability, the relationships among the principal school players, or even financial matters. All of these areas overlap and are interwoven throughout the interview data, reflecting the interrelationship, however contentious it may be at times, of policy and practice in education. This section of the data reporting is an attempt to integrate all of these themes to create a portrait of how an average state (public) school in Great Britain attempts to implement a centralized educational policy.

Governance and Control

The Local Management of Schools policy tasks governors with powers for overseeing the smooth running of the school, as well as holding the senior management (Head Teacher, Deputy Head, Department Chairs) accountable for academic targets.

Mrs. Boyd, the chair of governors for Eastham Middle School, acknowledges that Local Management of Schools (LMS) concept has increased the involvement and power of the governors in managing the school. She believes that some schools found this increased responsibility threatening but that the previous head teacher of Eastham had found the increased autonomy liberating because he was able to have a choice about expenditures. But, it eventually became apparent to the head and the governors, that the budget formula used by the national government did not reflect the realities of school level expenses nor did it account for the actual numbers of pupils being served.

But despite the government's well-publicized intention to bypass the LEAs and to provide funding directly to the schools to be managed directly by their governors, in practice the idea seems to have been less than successful. Mrs. Grover explains.

Our school, and I think many others, welcomed the opportunities LMS gave individual schools to choose what they spend money on. When the money became less generous, and, in our case, we had the problem of rising rolls, there was not spare money to enable us to choose what we spent it on.

Local Education Authorities	Heads	Governors	Heads and Governors
Promoting high Standards	Pupils' education	Overall education Strategic framework (Policies, targets)	Annual budget Personnel appointments, pay, dismissals
Special needs	Day to day Management	Reviewing progress	Special needs
Enrollment/access	Implementing Governors' Policies	Investigating financial irregularities	Curriculum, sex education, discipline
Employing teachers	Teaching standards	Appointment, supervision, Dismissal of Headteacher	Performance management
School Improvement/ Tackling failure	Pupil Exclusions	Reinstatement of excluded pupils	Post-Inspection Action Plan
Educating excluded Pupils/truancy	Curriculum management		Annual meeting to and report to parents

Figure 2. Responsibilities of School Governance in Great Britain. Source: Who Rules the Schools? (2001, March 9). The Times Educational Supplement, p. 7.

With Mrs. Grover's uncertain attempt to explain the role of the LEA in school finance, it is apparent that the matter is complex and the new government formulas are not clearly understood by even the most experienced of governors like the chairperson. As she notes, "It's obviously more complicated than it seems." But it is evident that often the glowing pronouncements by the national government about increases in school funding do not always result in additional money for every local school. Mrs. Grover reveals a sense of frustration as she catalogues the many instances when the governors and head would choose to make certain decisions about program offerings, staffing, and building maintenance but would be restricted by budgetary limitations. For example, a teacher pay rise might be announced by the national government but, in fact, the funding for the increase must be taken from the school budget and necessarily shortchanges other priorities such as program offerings, class sizes, or materials and supplies. Autonomy then, often means the freedom to choose from among several poor options and taking on a burden of responsibility to administer the school without the benefit of enough funds to do so. It seems that the governors must act blindly most of the time, forced to prioritize and disperse funds with little or no knowledge of exactly how much money will be received or even how much will be deducted by the county.

The Governor observes that there have been some growing pains for both LEAs and governors in adapting to the change in governance under the ERA.

I find the relationship between the governors and the LEA somewhat difficult and uneasy. In many ways they are very supportive and have, in my experience, always been very good in a crisis. I think they have difficulty in accepting the new role of governors while realizing that many governors have difficulty in understanding their new role. Much of the governor training is good. However, in my opinion, their reaction towards

governors veers between seeing them as important when they need our support or something goes wrong in a school, and of very little importance the rest of the time. I suspect this is at least partly because they are not sure of their own role and are under a lot of pressure.

Nevertheless, Mrs. Grover thinks there has been a “slight pulling back” on the idea that ultimate power in schools should rest with governing bodies after the government realized that some governors had been trying to impose their own views, rather than using their role to primarily oversee and support the head teacher and the school. Governors are not immune, either, from bureaucratic difficulties. As an example, new rules for governors went into effect on September 1, 1999 but it wasn’t until April that the publication of those rules reached the governors. And then there is the sheer volume of documents that arrive regularly from the government. Mrs. Grover finds this “ludicrous” and complains that you can’t tell what is important and what is not. She shakes her head and chuckles at the latest offering from the government - a “bureaucracy-cutting tool kit” consisting of two books and which is supposed to help governors sort through all the directives.

Mrs. Grover also has a political observation about the shift in governance. “There is obviously a move to cut out, or diminish, the powers of the LEAs.” She feels that the LEAs have been forced into two roles that are completely contradictory.

On the one hand, they are advising and monitoring, which is fair enough. I would have thought, a good LEA is a sensible role. On the other hand, they are trying to sell their services to schools. Because they won’t exist if the schools don’t buy back advisory services, school meals, etc. I would have thought that those two are almost totally incompatible.

What she seems to mean is that there is a conflict of interest if the LEA finds fault with a school and then offers the school, at a fee, the advisory services the school needs

but which were previously provided at no charge. Advisors have traditionally been educators but now their other roles have forced them to become business people as well, a different type of job altogether. Mrs. Grover's observation about the LEA role is that if the *local* education authorities are further reduced, eventually advisory services would be provided county-wide, a mistake in her opinion, as different areas of the county have widely diverse children, expectations, and educational needs.

I think the LEAs are having a difficult time. Some of their powers are being taken away from them. Under Fair Funding they have been put in a difficult position. They are responsible for school improvement and the monitoring of schools' performance. They are also expected to sell their services to schools as advisors, providing a payroll service, governor training, school meals, etc. These two roles do not seem to me to be compatible. Added to which, of course, people in [this] post have no experience in selling their services.

In Mrs. Grover's opinion, the conflict between being an education leader and having to think like a businessperson now experienced by the LEAs is also faced by head teachers. Besides their usual responsibilities for staffing and program implementation, heads now have to engage in seeking contracts for building maintenance, fund raising, and public relations, which had been previously handled by the LEA. The concept is foreign to parents as well, she says, as they don't seem to understand the need to raise money for a public school.

But despite the radical changes that the Tory education policies have imposed on LEAs. Mr. Lewis can still acknowledge some benefits.

In terms of the relationship of the LEAs to the schools, I wouldn't want to go back to the authoritarian LEA. I think the relationships we have with the schools now is much healthier this way. It's a good professional relationship, I wouldn't wish to change it.

And Mr. Lewis is not alone in observing some positive aspects of decentralization of management functions. Local Management of Schools has allowed Mr. Tandon, at present one of only two teacher-governors, to be part of the decision making process at Eastham. He finds his position “particularly interesting,” and he can appreciate the benefits of the experience.

I think personally it has given me a much wider picture of school, obviously financially what position the school is in. Unless you are on the Governors you don't understand that side of things. You can see it in broad figures, but you don't understand what that actually means . . . I think it does give you a different perspective. Sometimes as teachers we do need different perspectives, because I think one of the problems with teachers across the world is we are surrounded by children all day. We have very little adult contact, and that can be a potential problem. For some people, a lot of us end up working a lot in lunch time, break time, so we hardly have any contact. So people have to make the effort to go and sit in the staff room and talk to their colleagues. Because you are surrounded by kids and it's difficult sometimes to see the wood for the trees, you need to get out and have a look, and you need to see it. You need to try and put yourself in different shoes and perspectives, which is one of the good things about being a governor, you talk to other people.

Mr. Lewis, a Senior Advisor for the county's Local Education Authority, understands the frustration of the school Heads and Governors in suddenly being expected to take charge of their school's financial management.

Obviously, the replacement and maintenance budgets, you never know how much you are going to spend, you don't know if the roof will start leaking, or the windows need repainting. It's not planned as a long term process. So we go year to year, we get money for some schools this year, and we think there will be money next year, but we won't know, until next year. So we live in this staccato approach, so that may be the complaint that schools have, that they don't know their budget from year to year. So, they can't say we will put aside 10,000 pounds each year, for the next three years, then we'll build that classroom, as they don't know what next years budget is. They may not have enough money to pay the staff next year.

As to the question of whether the governors are really in a position to make the kinds of local education decisions that the Local Management of Schools idea envisioned, Mr.

Tandon doesn't hesitate to respond.

No they are not, because they don't have the time again. There is so much required of the Governors legally, and unless they've spent five or six hours in school every week, there is no way they could really hope to do that. I think everybody knows it's kind of like a little game almost where the Chair of Governors is the one that knows everything, plus the Vice Chair and maybe one or two of the Governors . . . I think again a lot is expected of the Governing body.

And Mr. Tandon feels, there is no assurance the quality of the governors is adequate. "Some governing bodies out there are very on the ball, they know what is going on, they are good at financial decision making. There are others that are lesser, and they need a bit of help and guidance."

As mentioned earlier, a major part of the Tory education reform policy advocated market forces in education. Mrs. Grover touches on that aspect of the ERA in regard to the Local Management of Schools. She states that her natural inclination is to be pro-choice, and though she feels she is apolitical and would tend to be "right wing as opposed to left wing," there is much about the government's policy favoring autonomous schools that bothers her. The governor thinks the idea of allowing schools to be more independent and giving them more freedom to make choices about spending priorities is good. She also applauds the sensibility of the national curriculum and notes that the Labour Party, who had been so against the Tory education policy, are now embracing it because, as Mrs. Grover says, it was a good idea. But the necessity of forcing schools to compete for pupils in an educational market doesn't really work. "I think there is rather a

daft thing, that people can now move into the catchment area. Previously if you did that, you would have been allowed a place, but now you are not. That causes all sorts of complications . . .” And she points out that choice of school is not easy in rural areas such as the community in which Eastham Middle School is located.

While the governors and senior management of Eastham have experienced both the reward and burden of new decision-making powers at the school level, the impression of having any real control over the education process in the classroom is not borne out.

Mrs. Thompson seems to see through the rhetoric.

I think the schools still are worried about the government dictating to them. I don't think they have very much say in what they do. In a way they are pretending that they are giving them leeway on what they do, but I don't think it is. It is all to do with money, so they really haven't got that much autonomy, as much as the government say they have. They have guidelines from the government and also the money restrictions, so I don't think they have much say at all.

Mr. Tandon also appreciates the burden of responsibility that falls on the governing body under LMS.

Myself and a teacher coming in, have found this year, found it particularly hard, as we've had more governors' meetings this year, for various reasons. OFSTED and the fact we'd appointed a new Head this year as well, more so than we've had in the last three years combined.

Still, Eastham Middle School seems to be meeting the challenge of autonomy head-on.

The report on the most recent OFSTED inspection (June, 2000) is quite positive about the management of Eastham.

The head teacher has been in post for six months and is making very good progress in developing her leadership role. She has a clear vision of what needs to be done to move the school forwards. She is building up relationships in a perceptive and sensitive manner and is enabling the

school to recognize the areas for future development and to set clear priorities for action. In doing this she is being ably supported by the deputy head and other members of the management team. (p. 27)

The governors are complimented as well. “The governing body is effective both in its leadership role and in providing support and direction to the school. They are well aware of their responsibilities and fulfil their statutory duties for directing the work of the school, effectively” (p. 27).

Local Management of Schools also requires the governing body and the head teacher to form a plan for student achievement, including setting performance targets for the head and the teachers. The year 2000 School Development Plan resolves to increase the management role of subject area leaders. Budget allocations for subject areas takes lesson requirements into consideration and expects subject leaders to be making more decisions about resources beginning with the 2000-2001 school year. In keeping with this mandate, the year 2000 School Development Plan resolves to increase the management role of the subject area leaders. The school’s budget allocations for subject areas takes lesson requirement at all year levels into account and expects subject leaders to be making more decisions about resources beginning in the 2000-2001 school year. There is a further promise in the SDP to clarify and develop of the roles of senior management.

But again, the government has been slow in providing training to accomplish this task and there is no help to be had from the LEA because this is no longer one of their responsibilities. The School Development Plan for the year 2000 resolves to increase the management role of subject area leaders. Budget allocations for subject areas takes

lesson requirements into consideration and there is an expectation that subject leaders will be making more decisions about resources with the 2000-2001 school year. There is a further promise to clarify and develop the roles of senior management (Prospectus, 2000). OFSTED has already found that Eastham's resources are being used well.

Still, there is undoubtedly some nostalgia on the part of long time school leaders for the way things used to be in light of the prescriptive nature of the Tory reforms for education. Mrs. Grover expresses much sentiment for the previous head of the school, who, she says, was creative though somewhat unorthodox, much liked by the students, and generally considered a good head teacher. However, she says he was a strong Labour supporter and was bitterly disillusioned by the changes in education policy wrought by the Tory Party, believing that the focus was on all the wrong things. There seems to be an underlying regret that such a good administrator had been lost because of the policy changes in education.

Curriculum

The introduction of a mandated National Curriculum into British education is unquestionably the most dominating and far-reaching aspect of the 1988 Education reform Act. It fundamentally altered the focus of teaching in England and Wales and seems to preoccupy the thoughts of those on the front line of educational practice. Schools and individual careers of teachers and heads are sustained or damaged by the accountability procedures that the national government established to monitor adherence to the curriculum guidelines.

The question is do school level educators and governors see the National Curriculum and Assessment as educationally sound in terms of their own values about teaching and learning? In fact, most respondents in this case study accept that the idea of standardization and structure may have been needed.

The Local Management of Schools concept allows the school to express more local priorities for handling curriculum matters by building on the mandates of the National Curriculum. The school's Prospectus reveals that the objectives of the National Curriculum are integrated into a longer list of developmentally appropriate objectives selected by the school's staff and leadership. "In addition to our own broad aims set out above we embrace the broad educational aims set out by the Secretary of State in 'The School Curriculum' 1981" (Prospectus, 2000/2001).

While acknowledging that the intention of having a standardized curriculum content across the country has merit, a number of respondents take issue with the way the education reforms were introduced.

Mr. Trent admits that change is necessary and that in some ways the national curriculum is good. But he qualifies his statement by regretting the loss of spontaneity that has also occurred. Mr. Taylor agrees but he also understands the political viewpoint that motivated the Tory government to create a National Curriculum.

I think the National Curriculum was brought in because a minority of schools, in England, were going their own way. They had some of what was then called some strange ideas about education, and people in authority didn't like it, and they didn't think it was delivering the goods. So instead of going into that minority of schools, to sort them out, they said, right, we'll change the whole system, and make everybody change.

Deputy Head Davis misses the personal involvement of the old days, before the restrictions of the National Curriculum.

There was intense pleasure in those days, when you organized a course, it was the result of your own initiative, and you got satisfaction from that. Now there is a tendency to be delivering somebody else's ideas, to a greater or lesser extent, and you don't get the same satisfaction from that.

Davis understands that there were weaknesses in the old patchwork curriculum system before 1990 but he points out a few of the limitations that the National Curriculum has placed on school staff in regard to how a subject is covered.

It was probably just convention. We taught the full range of subjects. Humanities was a strange case I suppose. We acknowledged that we were supposed to be teaching history and geography, but ours was history led without doubt. That was partly because we didn't have a geography specialist in the school at the time. Obviously there was more uneven coverage what you could deliver to children here and other schools. The corresponding side of the benefit was you could go further in certain aspects. It was certainly easier to organize trips, you had more time to do it in. Mrs. Grover, as governor, has mixed feelings about the subject of the curriculum. I think the National Curriculum was a good idea but caused many problems for teachers because, as usual, too much came in too late to allow for proper preparation. The necessity for new text books caused problems as did the frequent changes.

While acknowledging the intent of standardizing curriculum content across the country, a number of respondents take issue with the way the education reforms were introduced. Mr. Tandon pointed to the acceptance of a national curriculum framework in numerous European and other English-speaking countries as an idea whose time had likely come. He makes reference to the famous Ruskin College speech given by Labour Prime Minister James Callaghan in the 1970s that is commonly credited with planting the idea of a national curriculum based on the Australian model.

Head teacher Ms. Harris expresses a view echoed by many teachers that they were the last people to be consulted when the new curriculum was being designed under the Tory government. But she does feel the situation has improved in recent years.

I didn't actually have any part at all in the making of it, the consultative procedure. When it came through, I had moved from being an A level teacher to teaching technology in a middle school. And the National Curriculum came in shortly afterwards. As a teacher at that stage, I was never involved in any discussion. We did have, when it came in, we were involved in a lot of discussion and argument, which took place at school level. the sort of things that had not gone on. The discussion of how much we should do in middle schools, and how much they were going to do in high schools, and all of that. So in all of that, it contributed to the rewriting of it, the second draft if you like, I was involved in it. But it was forced upon us, by the fact that we were told to teach this very, very unwieldy piece of National Curriculum when it first came out.

In fact, the Head says, the new curriculum caused disharmony among staff at her previous school.

We did have, when it came in, we were involved in a lot of discussion and argument . . . But it was forced upon us, by the fact that we were told to teach this very, very unwieldy piece of National Curriculum when it first came out. So it forced people into an argument.

Year Five teacher Ms. Thompson also feels left out of government educational policy decisions.

I don't think teachers had enough input into the National Curriculum. I think that's why it has failed, really failed. They are expecting far too much of the child, and far too much of the raising standards. One thing I was saying about they expect you to do all of these investigations, and they expect you to do investigations in maths as well, yet the child didn't have the skills in order to do it . . . They introduced all this investigation, where the child should discover, and the child should do it on their own, and they didn't have the basic skills to do it. I think that's where the National Curriculum went wrong in the 1980s. They just expected the child to know what to do, and to discover for themselves without the basic skills.

Mr. Taylor, close to retirement after a career of several decades, is no different than the others in feeling disengaged from the creation of the National Curriculum.

Nobody asked me. As far as we know, people sat around, there might have been 10-20-30-100 people. A lot of them obviously haven't got much to do with schools, because some of the things they've asked us to do are for children of 16-17 years of age. Some staff here have said, I was teaching that for GCSE [General Certificate of Secondary Education; equivalent to a U.S. high school diploma], or A level [Advanced; preparatory courses for university entrance], that type of thing. So the people in government departments sat down, and wrote this, and said yes, this is a good thing, go and do it. The fact that it's been altered several times, at enormous cost to teacher's time, plus monetary costs, it is just amazing. I think everybody is in favour of the National Curriculum, but as I said before, it is just the way it was introduced, the waste. Here, some of the coordinators they have just got to grips with something, got the scheme running, and it was changed. That was changed again, and changed again in some cases, so I really feel sorry for the coordinators, because they took the brunt of it . . . You had people all over the country, coordinators all over country doing the same thing.

Mr. Tandon, one of the younger teachers at Eastham, was a student when he first became aware of the National Curriculum. "The National Curriculum was already on line in 1991, and I'd heard about everything . . . and all teachers being frustrated."

Like many others in the school who are critical of the National Curriculum, Mrs. Harris believes most importantly, that it was formulated without first hand knowledge of the classroom.

The National Curriculum was based on what somebody, somewhere, some working party, thought people should be teaching children. It had very little to do with the way the children being taught were actually going to pick it up and learn it. It was entirely on the subject matter, not the teaching approach, the teaching strategy, not the learning. I don't think learning came into it, anywhere along the line.

When asked his opinion of the Tory introduction of the curriculum reforms, Mr. Davis has many of the same reservations as others have. And even now, under the Labour government, he feels schools are often reeling from a bombardment of initiatives.

I think the National Curriculum was developed by the School Council, which was an organization that existed back in the 70s-80s. It was run by people involved in education, and that would have been an excellent idea, as there wasn't enough consistency between what was taught, or enough rigour. But everything was imposed from the outside. They said the intention was to give a basic curriculum. Below which people couldn't fall, but that was wholly at odds with what actually happened. They set up committees with lots of university people on them, who had a completely unrealistic idea about how much time the children would have on each subject. When the National Curriculum first came out, you'd have had to increase the time spent in school by at least 30% to do it all. It has got more realistic since then, but there is still this tendency to change things, because something becomes fashionable. We've just had the renewed National Curriculum, it hasn't been in place one year yet, and we're already told that the English Key Stage 2 is going to be changed again . . . I could almost become cynical.

Mrs. Harris has the same reservations about Labour education initiatives.

I think what they are trying to do now with literacy and numeracy, whether I agree with those approaches or not, does not seem to be based on how children learn. So they are looking at pace, and taking a reasonable length of time, and saying a child cannot concentrate for that length of time. So small chunks, lots of repetition, make it fun, make it snappy, make it relevant, reinforce skills. That seems to me, to be based on that is how children learn.

But seeing the merits of a standardized curriculum does not mean that those effected approve of the either the mandate for educational reforms nor the methods the government employed to introduce them. Mrs. Thompson touches on a common problem with policy implementation. "I don't think teachers had enough input into the National Curriculum. I think that's why it has failed, really failed. They are expecting too much of the child, and far too much of the raising standards."

The head teacher, Mrs. Harris, feels the National Curriculum has done a disservice to teachers. “I think where it perhaps needed more of a focus is through the professional awareness of teachers, of what children should be learning, and how you, not test them . . . assess them.” She found the first version of the curriculum “unworkable” and felt it forced teachers, like those in design and technology, to conduct lessons without real meaning.

There were teachers who had been very skilled, experienced teachers of craft subjects, who were suddenly having to become teachers of this vague design . . . It didn't relate to real world experience, it didn't relate to what designers do, or architects or engineers or anybody. You couldn't have said, well yes, this is clearly based on that areas of careers. It wasn't based on what was currently going on in schools either.

The School Development Plan busies itself with describing how the school will respond to the expectations of the National Curriculum. The staff understands the present government's emphasis on mathematics (“maths”) and English by pledging to make all staff and pupils aware of the “language targets” and to implement their own “language across the curriculum” policy. The staff members also hope to raise the Key Stage Two maths results, especially the achievement level of low-ability groups. They further recognize that the introduction of a new “numeracy strategy” will also be benefitted by related training of teaching staff and they have therefore made this a priority for the school. Technology is another area of concern to Eastham. They want to provide pupils with the skills required to use new technology, increased access to computers for all subject areas, and “aim to that ensure pupils are adaptable and innovative, and are equipped to face new challenges with a positive approach” (School Development Plan, 2000/2001, p. 1). They further wish to see that all staff becomes confident in technology

skills and are to investigate the possibility of employing a technology technician to allow the IT coordinator more time for teaching and planning.

But the Eastham Middle School Prospectus also allows the school to express more local priorities for handling curriculum matters. The school staff grabs the issue and deals with it strongly, while giving the subject their own spin.

The school curriculum is, as it should be, a changing thing, to accommodate new ideas from the staff and changing circumstances including the assimilation of the National Curriculum . . . A balanced curriculum means that children have the opportunity to study as many areas of learning as possible in keeping with their development. (Eastham Middle School Prospectus, 2000/2001)

The aims of the school in regard to curriculum have much to do with recognizing the developmental stages through which a middle school student progresses. “We realize that it is vital to the child’s progress that we recognize we are part of a continuing process begun before the child comes to us and continued after he or she leaves us. We provide the vital link between infancy and adolescence” (p. 4).

A balanced curriculum incorporates both the basic disciplines of literacy, numeracy, science and history/geography, but includes other subjects important to this school. Art, music, physical education, French, and religious education are all considered opportunities to explore many branches of learning for later choices in life. Eastham, in fact, stresses the importance of sport, leisure and cultural pursuits and much personal time is donated by staff to planning educational field trips.

Despite strongly advocating their own approach to the National Curriculum, the latest OFSTED report (June, 2000) seems to accept the manner in which the school is implementing the curriculum standards, even supporting the school’s attention to

developmental issues. They note that the curriculum provided is good, meets the statutes required, and is enriched by a very good and wide-ranging extra curricular program.

“The curriculum offers a wide range of opportunities for good quality learning and successfully promotes high achievement and very good personal development” (p. 11).

In fact, OFSTED compliments the school for improving in its curriculum planning, with time provided for each subject now appropriately balanced. “A balanced curriculum means that children have the opportunity to study in as many areas of learning as possible in keeping with their development” (Prospectus, p. 5). Ofsted make several mentions about pupil attitudes, behavior, and attendance and praise the school’s approach to the curriculum as successfully promoting high achievement and very good personal development.

The curriculum offers a wide range of opportunities for good quality learning and successfully promotes high achievement and the personal development of pupils. The re-organization of the timetable [schedule of classes] has ensured that all subjects now have sufficient allocations of time and the curriculum meets statutory requirements, including the required elements within the National Curriculum subjects. (OFSTED, p. 19)

Performance Standards

The National Curriculum has a further impact on schools through a system of aligned assessment instruments. There is no ignoring the intention of the government to hold schools accountable for educating their pupils to a high standard as measured by regular exams at the end of key stages of the curriculum. The Eastham Middle School Development Plan accepts this fact of school life by scheduling a review of their own

assessment policy and promising to set a “simple and effective system of targets through the school and across subjects (School development Plan, 2000-2001).” They also feel it is important to make parents aware of such targets.

The public display of school exam results in national “league tables,” and now brings formerly insider information into the political arena as a component of the educational marketplace. The public nature of these results cannot escape notice by educators. Mr. Taylor comments on the high stakes involved.

Yes, everybody is aware of it. Even people who said to start with, I am not going to worry about league tables. I’m just going to do my own thing. But that has changed, everybody is aware of it, especially maths and science. Because the reputation of the school depends on that, obviously they are published nationally, and everybody all over the world are looking at these tables. So you have got to take them seriously.

Mr. Lewis, the LEA advisor, also has reservations about the consequences of depending so heavily on exams as a means of measuring high standards. “We are being driven to a testing culture . . . The test begins to drive the curriculum, and we’re getting a lot of coaching now.” As a science advisor, he has noticed an anomaly in the science exam results. Surprisingly, primary school students tend to perform better than secondary school students in science exams, despite the presence of specialist science teachers at the secondary level. Here is Mr. Lewis’s explanation:

One of the reasons is that in the primary they collapse their time table in the term leading up to the tests. They are saturating English, maths and science [the subjects tested]. History and geography is all put on one side, until after the tests. Then they forget the science and what have you. In a middle school that has a secondary time table with different teachers teaching the children, they can’t do that. So the testing is really skewed to some extent by the outcomes that we are getting.

Target setting is apparently a continual source of tension for both the schools and the Local Education Authority. Mr. Lewis talks about assessment and achievement before 1988.

There was no target setting then. I think the best way of summarizing is, pre-1988, the LEA was interested in the “process,” and not as interested with outcomes. It sounds ridiculous to say this, but a good school was a school that did things well. Didn’t necessarily achieve, but did things well. Now the emphasis has completely turned over, and is “outcomes,” and how they get them, to some extent, is immaterial.

The School Development Plan 2000-2001 acknowledges the importance of the whole school committing to a policy to raise standards but the wording such as “All staff and pupils aware of language targets and endeavoring to achieve them” (p. 2) and “Consistent marking [grading] throughout the school providing effective and appropriate feedback to pupils, and relating to assessment” (p. 5), offer only a vague reference to the importance of exams in this school.

Interestingly, the Eastham Middle School Prospectus for 2000/2001 never mentions exams. While there are passing references to the National Curriculum, the school’s philosophy and aims focuses on just those same “processes” that Mr. Lewis mentions. The staff hopes “to help pupils to develop lively, enquiring minds, the ability to question and argue rationally, and to apply themselves to tasks and physical skills” (p. 4). There is obviously a concern with producing good citizens and good workers for the future. There is a promise “to help pupils to understand the world in which they live, and the inter-dependence of individuals, groups and nations” and “to help pupils to acquire knowledge and skills relevant to adult life and employment in a fast-changing world” (p. 4).

Teachers also tend to have strong opinions about the effect of Key Stage exams, known as SATS, have on classrooms and students. Year Five teacher Ms. Thompson regrets the competitiveness engendered by an exam culture. She is an advocate of “setting,” or ability grouping, in classes as a way to minimize the amount of competitive pressure she thinks students suffer.

If they want me as a teacher to raise standards, I will raise standards, and I'd like setting in order to do that. But if you said to me, do I want the SATS, do I want them set, I'd say no, not in the fifth year [equivalent to fourth grade]. Because they need to settle into the school, they need to find their level, reach their potential in a non-competitive group, and then be set.

The British state or public school system had previously been a two-tier system, with the pupils tested at age 11 in order to identify the more able students to pursue a more academically challenging secondary education in a “grammar” school. All the rest were relegated to a “secondary modern” school. Ms. Thompson sees a danger in all the examinations aligned with the National Curriculum bringing back those times back.

So the SATS to me, I used to teach 11 plus [an exam formerly used to make selections of pupils considered capable of pursuing] when I first taught in London, and I feel as if we've gone all the way back, right the way back to when I was teaching the 11 plus. We used to have booster classes, raising standards classes, and we were dictated what we had to teach the children to pass the 11 plus. We had parent pressure, we had competitiveness.

A second source of accountability is the OFSTED inspection by an independent body contracted by the government. Currently, the prospect of an OFSTED inspection is reputed to plunge a school into months of paperwork frenzy, a week of sometimes unbearable stress, and a post-inspection period of let-down (Grubb, 2000). Dutifully, the Eastham Middle School Prospectus provides a summary of the Key Stage 2 exam results,

the most public aspect of accountability for the school. The school figures show largely above average results, with math[s] the only subject below the level of national expectations.

Teachers at Eastham are demonstrating symptoms of stress as their own OFSTED inspection looms in little over a month's time. Mr. Tandon comments.

I think there is a lot of increase in anxiety. Some self-induced, some due to the sheer pressure of the work. It's not one thing you've got to do, it's another thing. I think if you are a department head, or coordinator of a subject, you've got to make sure you have policies and plans in place. You've got to look at the resources, and lots of small things to worry about as well . . . You want to show yourself in the best possible light, anybody does. So I think there is a lot of pressure that does come, even though the new inspection system is supposed to be about less pressure, less notice.

Mr. Trent is well aware of the toll an impending OFSTED inspection can take on a faculty.

There are a lot of people who will buckle under the pressure, and are buckling, because they are worried about whether all the paperwork and so forth, is up to date, etc, etc. Again I think it is wrong because it takes a lot of their energy away from the actual classroom teaching.

Mr. Taylor also regrets the pressure generated by OFSTED visits. "Last time we had two people off for stress problems. One was off for 3 or 4 weeks before the OFSTED, the other one was off for about 9 months afterwards. Just completely washed out and upset by it all."

There are also teacher concerns about the practicality of the government's system of accountability. Mr. Trent describes the frustration of a colleague who is trying to run a physical education program for 36 pupils with inadequate facilities and equipment. Her requests for assistance with ideas for running a good program have yet to provide her

with any answers. And yet, Mr. Trent says with a disgusted shake of his head, “The people in offices, they wouldn’t want to do that job, all this stuff they write on paper, brilliant, but does it work?”

But it isn’t that Mr. Trent dismisses the idea of teacher accountability. He has mixed feelings about the role of OFSTED in the schools.

We should be accountable, we definitely have to be accountable, and I have no objections to anybody coming in and watching a lesson at any time. They can turn up tomorrow, and I would rather they did that, than the immense pressure that is put on people, knowing that for six weeks or two months that OFSTED are coming. It is totally out of proportion. Also the lessons they see that week are usually all false anyway. They have all been pre-planned.

Mrs. Grover, the governor, views OFSTED as having a different emphasis than the previous school inspection scheme managed by Her Majesty’s Inspectorate (HMI).

She speculates,

Whereas before it would have been more what I call a standard inspection, really what you would expect. I think it is still that, but I think the central thrust now is school improvement, as opposed to doing something else with it. So again, obviously, it is more difficult. We have always had good English results here. It would be very difficult to keep improving wouldn’t it?

The Deputy Head, Mr. Davis, is clearly reluctant to accept the idea of OFSTED inspections but must admit that it may be necessary.

We just weren’t accountable in a meaningful way before. When you are in a school that you know is running successfully, that didn’t seem to be too much of a problem. Of course, you looked in the newspaper and realized it was a problem in some areas. Although I don’t like that side of it, I have to acknowledge there were some areas where it was needed. The trouble is at the moment, things haven’t bedded down yet. We are expected to set targets for the children, which is very hard to do in a meaningful way, as there is not much consistency from one year to another, on the level of the testing and marking of papers.

But on the other hand, schools such as Eastham were aware of those they had to please.

You were answerable to the immediate community, to the parents. It was hard really to understand how some schools seemed to be in such a state. Having said that, you can see how a school could get into a downward spiral quite quickly, if a few key people left, or couldn't work positively with each other.

History teacher Mr. Tandon is suspicious of the government's motivations in imposing the stressful policies like OFSTED inspections on schools and teachers but he is also philosophical.

So that is the problem with all of it, if the politics could be taken out of it, but unfortunately it's never going to be the case. Different governments are going to have different agendas. When the next government comes along, if it is a different government, they will have a different agenda, and I'm sure they will set different targets. I think there is a room and place for it, because having looked at how other people work in other industries, they tend to have someone who checks on them. There is a place for it, and obviously in terms of being openly accountable to parents, and to the public at large, obviously we need to show that we are doing what we are . . . My personal opinion is that politics be taken out of a lot of institutions, then things would be much better. I think a lot of professional staff will take things on board much more wholesale.

It is not only the teachers who are stressed by the government's accountability measures. Mrs. Grover is disturbed that the shift in emphasis that OFSTED has ushered in to school performance measures can have a negative effect on what becomes important in the classroom.

It appears to be the thrust of teachers' thinking, to weigh up the best value against targets, not best value against the children. Which is sad because, surely, a middle school that is a comprehensive school, this is one place, where you ought to be able to pull everybody together. To have all peoples' outlook without the pressure of exams and so on, I don't know. It is a dilemma obviously.

Mrs. Grover also notes the government reforms, particularly the end of key stage assessments (SATS), seem to be responsible for additional stress on children. She offers as an example of misguided government thinking, the difficulties for a school in trying to accommodate disadvantaged children. Mrs. Grover's understanding is that LEAs are told that there are limits to the number of these children who may be "statemented" for special needs in a school and this figure is ultimately controlled by the allocation of the school's budget. But she also acknowledges the practical side by admitting, "What every school wants is able children coming in, having under performed."

Creating stress for school staff isn't the only consequence of an OFSTED inspection. It also considers how parents perceive the functioning of a school. What pleases parents the most, the OFSTED Summary Report reads, is that "pupils like the schools and are making good progress." Parents are comfortable about seeking information from the school or asking for problems to be solved. Although some parents "do not feel well informed about the progress their child is making" most parents are happy with the "high standards of teaching, and the expectations that children will work hard." They seem attracted to the "hidden curriculum" of the school in recognizing that "the school actively helps pupils' personal development and enables them to become more mature."

Despite the obvious frustration generated by a school's taking on financial and facilities maintenance responsibility under the mandate of Local Management of Schools, the full OFSTED report (2000) shows cautious confidence in the ability of the school leadership to handle these tasks. "Generally, accommodation [facilities] is well managed

and effectively used . . . Learning resources are generally adequate” (p. 28). But there are areas where the senior management of the school can still improve.

Development planning is another example where the processes and actions need clearer definition. The linkage between school targets and appropriate changes or development to achieve improvement are not yet consistently made . . . The issue was raised in the last inspection report and, whilst improvements have been made, there is still a need to develop further the link between the costs of resources to the plans for improvement (p. 28).

Instruction

When the Tory reforms in education were legislated, there appeared to be an expectation that increased accountability measures would have a positive effect on teacher competence and instructional practices. However, Firestone, Fitz, and Broadfoot (1999) examined implementation of assessment policy in the United States and in the United Kingdom and were able to draw conclusions about the extent of changes this kind of policy has made in teaching practices. Their conclusion was that assessment as a policy tool can influence the *topics* taught by teachers without having a noticeable impact on the *method* of conventional teaching. The researchers speculate that this is a result of a lack of staff training required when any new learning is required, in this case, the teaching strategies necessary for the demands of the National Curriculum.

It is interesting to note how local educators interpret the effect of a major change in government educational policy, that is the National Curriculum and the accompanying

assessments and inspections, on instruction practices at Eastham Middle School.

Eastham leadership and staff obviously recognize the importance of staff development in improving instruction. They pledge “to raise the quality of teaching and learning through the professional development of all staff, teaching and non-teaching” (School Development Plan, 2000-2001, p. 1).

Teachers and senior management appear to be well aware that the government’s goal in introducing the National Curriculum and Assessments is to raise standards. They do not necessarily agree that the 1988 policy reforms are the best way to accomplish this.

Ms. Thompson is skeptical as to the Tory’s motives

I think the aims that the government are trying to enforce, look good on paper but actually to implement it, I think you’ve got problems. I think to raise the standards, I think if that is the only issue they are going to really worry about, I think we’ve got more problems in future generations. Because I think we’ve got to look at the whole child. And moral issues, and the child’s attitude, and also the skills needed to learn for themselves, are far more important. You might be able to raise standards, and it says there, to raise standards, but in actual fact does raise standards mean that you have a child growing into a good citizen?

In general though, there seems to be a resigned acceptance that the demands of the first the Tory, and now the Labour government’s education policies detract from what can be practically accomplished in the classroom.

Mr. Taylor has always enjoyed being a teacher and has spent 38 years in this same school, beginning when it was a secondary modern. “It has been a good school, a pleasant school, pleasant children, pleasant staff, and I have enjoyed it. Once or twice I have applied for other jobs, but they didn’t come off, so I kept here.” But the National Curriculum has made a difference in how he teaches and is not necessarily enhancing learning.

It's taken quite a bit of freedom away from teachers, given them much more work in every way. Preparation, marking and everything else, and you don't have so much freedom. You can't do certain things in the classroom, that you would like to do. For example, I used to do some model making or posters or things, and you haven't got so much freedom to do that kind of thing. The children used to love that, and get a lot out of it, but you are restricted in that way.

The curriculum also requires a different approach to subject areas and teachers may not always be prepared to make the necessary adjustments. Mr. Taylor has struggled with that.

The curriculum, I thought, when it came in, it was okay for the specialists, but for the non-specialists in subjects, it left them floundering a bit. Because there was so much coming in, everything was new, and okay, it was a higher standard that you were supposed to teach at. The content was so different, that if you weren't a specialist, you were left floundering. I have found that particularly myself.

There is a sense, from some teachers like Mr. Trent, that expectations of what teachers can accomplish can become overwhelming.

And I say we can always improve, but on the other hand you can only do so much in a day. You work every break, every dinnertime, every night. I didn't get home until half past 7 last night. I have been working since 8 o'clock in the morning, and at weekends. How much do they want from you? In the end, how much can you give, how much more can you give?

Some teachers have been able to manage to accommodate both the National Curriculum requirements and their own ideas for teaching their subject. Mr. Tandon is one who believes it can be done.

I think you can work within the system, even in history, you've got to look at the medieval period, but medieval period is such a large period you can choose to focus. I think schools and teachers have to be strong enough to argue their own case, and say we are going to teach this way. I think as a school we've decided to do that with the literacy policy, being the only middle school in . . . [the county] who don't have a literacy hour every day. So I think we've taken a stand there . . .

But Mr. Tandon admits being so assertive in the face of government mandates is sometimes easier said than done. “A lot of us are very corporate. We’d rather not stick our heads above. I classify myself in that category. You don’t stick your head above the parapet, you don’t want to be shot down.”

Teachers like Mr. Trent seem to want to just be left alone to do their job of teaching children.

I’m very traditional, and I haven’t liked all the new things that have come in. I don’t think they have been for the benefit, in many ways, of PE. There are certain things, they broadened the curriculum for PE, and a wider range of sports. All the paperwork and bureaucracy that has come in is awful . . . I like the practical side of working with the kids and seeing them get exercise, enjoying themselves, and learning new skills. What they are wanting you to do nowadays, is almost to walk around with a clipboard in your hand and assess. I don’t like that. We do a lot of assessment within the group, the kids assess themselves and evaluate themselves with the work they are doing. We talk about things a lot, but I don’t like the idea of walking around with a clipboard.

Teacher performance evaluation is one facet of the accountability measures that seems to be a new idea to the senior staff of Eastham Middle School, and they acknowledge this to be a weak area for them. Mr. Davis, the Deputy Head of the school, shows a particular reluctance to interfere with the historically congenial relationship between administrators and teachers and probably would have been happy to avoid any potential hard feelings that increased supervision of instruction might engender. He also knows the government will no longer allow schools to harbor weak or incompetent teachers.

I suppose we shied away from difficult issues, when a teacher wasn’t performing very well. It is human nature to gloss over it, and think it will be better for the kids next year, a different teacher. We are having to grasp

that nettle a bit further, which is not comfortable, but perhaps we needed pushing in that direction.

Evaluating the performance of teaching staff is a responsibility recently transferred from the LEA to the head teacher. Ms. Harris explains:

The head teacher, then, has to set up an appraisal officer for each member of staff, this is from September, which is not a responsibility of the LEA, it is the head teacher who does that within a school. The Governors have to monitor it. The Governors are responsible for setting up performance management policy, which in many cases means they are waiting for the head teacher and senior staff to do it. They are looking at it, discussing it, and in most cases, approving it, as their knowledge of what is going on is less than the head teacher and senior managers. But that is a whole area of responsibility, it is not switched from the LEA, it is just a new responsibility which has grown, a new pay structure, that misses the LEA out really.

The Summary of the Inspection Report (2000) identifies the need for the school to initiate procedures “for monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and standards of attainment” (p. 2), but is also pleased with the progress on this front. “The school has made satisfactory improvements in teacher appraisal and development planning, but there is now more to be done to ensure that good quality teaching is maintained or further improved.” The overall evaluation of the quality of instruction at Eastham by the inspectors is positive. “The quality of teaching is good across the school, and in a quarter of lessons observed it was very good” (p. 1) and “the quality of teaching has made a significant improvement” (p. 2).

The full OFSTED report acknowledges the more intangible aspects of teaching as well as the emphasis on content.

The teachers create a positive atmosphere in lessons, there is very good rapport with the pupils, and practical work is always very well managed and organised. Over the course of a year a very good range of different

modes of learning is encouraged, which adds interest and variety to the work given pupils. (p. 42)

The Prospectus (2000-2001) explains the staff's views on marking to parents.

Routine tasks may be marked with a tick, to show that a task set has been completed, though there may be mistakes of expression. Major assignments are assessed according to criteria when they are set; comments are made about pupils' achievements and some areas needing improvement will be pointed out as necessary. (p. 5)

Similarly, the SDP indicates the staff understands the need for a "system in school for self-evaluation and performance management . . ." They pledge to have "all staff involved in open system of self-evaluation-to meet needs of Ofsted and to ensure high quality teaching and learning" (p. 4).

While the OFSTED report is largely positive about the success of this school, there are apparently still some weaknesses in some departments with regard to measuring accomplishments in teaching and learning, perhaps reflecting the government's continued concern with accountability.

Daily lesson and other assessment information is not used as well as it could be to help raise pupils' standards of attainment. Teachers do not elicit sufficiently detailed feedback in lessons to gauge exactly what pupils have learnt and use this later to make teaching and learning better. The department has gone some way to improve the marking of pupils' books but, overall, the comments still do not help the pupils understand what they need to do even better. Standards are not measured accurately on entry to the school and the academic progress of pupils is not tracked in sufficient detail. (p. 42)

But the inspectors also seem pleased with the state of the school. "The school has made sound improvement since the last inspection. Academic standards have remained good, with high standards being achieved in English, literacy, history, geography, art, and physical education" (Summary of the Inspection Report, 2000, p. 2).

The Affective Domain

The four domains or themes used above to organize the data for this research study were those into which the data seem to fall naturally. However, further examination of the both the interview transcripts and the school documents, began to reveal a rather dominant series of references to what the school itself called the “ethos of the school.” “One of the aims of the school as stated in the 1999-2000 development plan was to preserve the ethos of the school, whilst implementing statutory requirements and responding to the new NC [National Curriculum] orders” (School Development Plan, 2000-2001, p. 1).

The introduction to the school Prospectus also makes it clear how the Eastham staff chooses to manage the school given a measure of autonomy under LMS and shows where the school places its priorities when budgets are tight. “Welcome to [Eastham] Middle School. We have deliberately chosen not to produce a glossy, professionally printed prospectus because we believe that it is more important to spend resources on educating our pupils.”

And the goals go beyond subjects mandated by the National Curriculum. We set out to care for all our pupils and to help them to balance intellectual, social, moral, and aesthetic development so that they master the tools with which to handle a complex world. We are not merely trying to fit a child for society; we should like him or her to rise above it.

In a sense, “ethos” is an indefinable entity. Funk and Wagnalls dictionary (1982) makes an attempt by calling it “the spirit of an institution or system” and further identifies the word as representing “the characteristic spirit, disposition, or tendency of a people or community” (p. 436). Various words are key in describing a school whose staff values

ethos; words like “caring,” “supportive,” “safe,” “respect,” and “happy” indicate the priority placed on those non-academic but so important aspects of a school. Eastham school documents and individual members of staff clearly address this issue as they discuss a subject they care very much about-teaching and students.

In February, 2000 the whole school staff met to reach consensus on what was meant by “the ethos of the school.” The School Development Plan (2000-2001, p. 1) lists the main points that sum up that discussion, among them are these:

At Eastham Middle School:

- Staff and pupils are supportive of each other and make up a caring community
- Staff care for children, whatever their ability or background
- We aim to develop the whole child
- We aim to create a positive working environment for all
- We foster respect for other people, property and the environment
- We aim to provide a working environment where everyone, staff and pupils, feel safe, secure, happy and valued. (p. 1)

The EMS Prospectus (2000-2001) also stresses the value the staff places on the atmosphere in which children are to learn at Eastham, as well as recognizing the developmental stages through which middle school students progress.

In stating our aims, we realise that it is vital to the child’s progress that we recognize we are part of a continuing process begun before the child comes to us and continued after he or she leaves us. We provide the vital link between infancy and adolescence. (p. 4)

The following are among the aims that support the idea of school “ethos” and indicate that teachers believe school is more than curriculum and assessment:

- To provide a happy, purposeful atmosphere in the school, in which pupils feel secure and are accorded proper respect as individuals, irrespective of their academic /practical/ physical potential
- To help the pupils to grow and develop as rounded, happy young people of integrity, fostering their ability to think clearly and speak with confidence

- To help pupils to learn to live within the generally accepted framework of society, so that they develop emotionally and socially, respecting religious and moral values
- To foster good manners, politeness and consideration for others
- To ensure that pupils know that their honest efforts are valued and that their full commitment is expected. (p. 4)

April 27, 2001 While not all respondents talked about ethos directly, the concept was alluded to in various subtle ways. Teachers mention a need to pay attention to the developmental stages of children, a concern for the stresses of exams, the relentless demands of the National Curriculum and its effects on students, and issues of discipline and cooperation among pupils.

Working with Year Five students, the youngest class at Eastham Middle School, probably gives Ms. Thompson a particularly sympathy for the child's view of school. She is disturbed by the demands that the National Curriculum places on her time and worries about the price children might have to pay for so-called "high standards."

I feel now, that teaching from long ago, I had more time for the children long ago and also I was more autonomous. I had time for the children and I could let the child reach their own potential far more. Now, there are tests involved where children are competitive and lose confidence, also there is parent pressure on the children. I haven't got so much time for the child. I keep telling myself I have, and I'm trying to give the child more, but the time, I just haven't got it. I am under pressure to raise standards, which is the key goal as judged by the assessments. I think a lot of underlying issues, eventually in 5-10 years time; people will become more aware of them. We will raise standards, and it will say wonderful, all these children are getting degrees and isn't that wonderful, or whatever standard they are wanting to get. But they have forgotten about the social aspect of education, and learning skills about how to learn.

Mr. Trent is more philosophic about what he sees as the priorities of his job, despite government policies that emphasize content and assessment.

I have tried not to let all this get to me really, because I just enjoyed being with kids, and enjoyed teaching my subject. I get a lot of fun from seeing the kids, and the satisfaction they are getting, and I am not going to change the way I have been teaching.

He also understands the importance of relationships between teachers and pupils. “The best resource is pupil-teacher ratio isn’t it. For all subjects, whether it be text books or what, you need equipment, yes, but your best resource is the staff.”

As a governor and former parent of Eastham students, Mrs. Grover is concerned about the pressures that the government assessment policy places on students. “The Head who left, felt that the SATS week was jolly stressful for the children. He reckoned it was worse than the old eleven plus [selection exam for secondary school], and everybody was having to do it.” She further praises the former Head of the school for the importance he placed on school climate and the development of relationships in the days before the 1988 reforms.

Drama is no longer taught throughout the school, which was one of John’s things.

He felt that sometimes the less able could come out.

... Also there is this interaction between children ... Originally, all though the school Friday afternoon was activities, so you could do gardening, Latin, that kind of thing.

Mrs. Grover tells a school anecdote about the former head teacher that illustrates the importance of relationships and school ethos.

I think the other thing that is astonishing is, that many people round about say their children who are now 30 or 22, whatever, say the one place I really enjoyed was my time at your school. I thought it was extremely touching that when John left, we made a little fuss, a whip round. You know what children are like, the children arranged cards, presents for him. He liked his red jumper [sweater] and they decided they wanted to give him a new red jumper. Somebody’s brother was still here, and he sneaked

into his office, looked at his jumper, so they got the size right. So now I would have thought the feel of everything, we were very fortunate.

Even Mr. Lewis, the LEA advisor, recognizes the value of relationships and is concerned that government policy doesn't take such attributes into consideration.

That is where our current role is uncomfortable, because we have relationships with schools generally. We undertake a very thorough, professional dialogue to discuss targets, and we agree those targets with the school. Then we are told [by the government Department for Education and Employment-DFEE] sorry, they are not high enough, go back and reimburse, that's where the tension comes in.

The most recent inspection of the school by OFSTED, a institution created by the Tory government to assure accountability for high education standards, nevertheless now represents a different, Labour government. Therefore, while the aim of the inspectors remained focused on the school's compliance with the requirements of the National Curriculum and on the quality of teaching and learning, the OFSTED Report (2000) devoted considerable text to confirming, and presumably approving of, Eastham's emphasis on the school ethos. It seems apparent that the OFSTED inspectors recognized the significance of the ethos in making EMS a successful environment for working and learning. Several sections of the report illustrate the school's attention to relationships, support, caring, and respect and developmental issues underlying the academic lessons. "The provision for pupils' development is a strength, with a significant contribution being made through personal, health, and social education. Moral development is very good and social development is excellent" (p. 11).

And a reference to the attitude of the school's pupils in the OFSTED Report also addresses the effect of the school ethos on learning.

High standards of teaching and a very positive learning environment result in pupils wanting to come to school, enjoying the challenges set for them, and being keen to do well . . . By the time they reach Key Stage 3 [about age 11] they a considerable depth of thought and maturity in the views they express. Pupils respond well to the high expectations for personal organization and have a growing confidence in using initiative in their work and practical activities. This helps them to develop progressively as independent learners. (p. 15)

And there is more from OFSTED on relationships and respect.

Relationships are a strength of the school and, together with the response of pupils to opportunities for their personal development, make a very positive contribution to both teaching and learning. Pupils grow in confidence, both through their contributions to everyday routines that support the work of the school, and because of the high expectations for them to be concerned for the needs and feelings of others. Respect and goodwill towards others is a strong feature of the school community. This encourages constructive relationships to develop, where pupils help and support each other, and where they are confident to approach staff with problems. (p. 16)

Even attendance and punctuality are considered conducive to learning by OFSTED. “Pupils like coming to school. This results in attendance of 95.6% that is well above average and makes excellent contribution to learning” (p. 16) and “Almost all pupils are punctual for the start of the school day. Lessons usually begin on time ensuring the time available for teaching is used fully” (p. 16).

The inspectors for OFSTED were able to simultaneously praise Eastham for the positive environment they have nurtured and compliment the staff on covering related areas of the National Curriculum as well.

Issues of right and wrong are thoroughly explored in personal health and social education during topics on drugs and relationships. In history, consideration of right and wrong takes place when discussing Caesar as a liberator or criminal in Year 8, and in geography, moral issues concerned with the environmental versus economic growth are discussed. (p. 22)

Parent attitudes toward the school environment are considered by the inspectors as well.

Parents are generally satisfied with what the school provides and achieves. They feel comfortable about approaching staff with queries and concerns and are confident their children will learn in a secure environment, where they will be encouraged to work hard and develop maturity. The high standard of teaching achieved at the school is valued, as is the positive leadership and management. (p. 26)

And finally the OFSTED Report provides a direct reference to the dominant aim of the school's staff. "Provision for moral education is very good. The ethos of the school promotes the valuing of the individual and respect for each other and the environment" (p. 21).

Summary

As a case study is the preferred strategy "when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context" (Yin, 1994, p. 1), this method of research is instrumental in allowing the examination of a particular situation in depth from which it is possible to generalize to similar situations.

Chapter IV began by establishing the physical context that defines this case study site. Thick rich description was the tool used to characterize the local community and its school, and to introduce some of the key players in the research process - teachers, students, and senior management staff. The presentation of empirical materials drew first on observations of the school environment and student activities, for the purpose of setting the scene for the subsequent contributions of the local educators through personal interviews. Both men and women were willing to be interviewed, and they represented a range of ages and teaching experience, and included a variety of educational positions

and perspectives. As teachers, school administrators, school governors, and an LEA advisor expressed their views on the purpose of public education and about their own practical responses to the requirements of the 1988 Education Reform Act, various themes began to emerge, providing structure to the reporting of this data. These perceived domains of educator interest and concern became the basis for examining school artifacts that served to encapsulate the fundamental values of the case study school and so provided the triangulation of the data necessary to address the issue of internal validity. These documents included the School Prospectus, the School Development Plan, and a report of the most recent OFSTED inspection in June, 2000.

Internal validity concerns the need to show how the research findings of this study match reality. One assumption fundamental to qualitative research is that “reality is holistic, multidimensional, and ever-changing” (Merriam, 1998, p. 202) and thus the task becomes an attempt to make sense of the complex reality of how the people in this study construct their world. In this case, additional strategies such as member checks, peer consultation, on-going association with the case study site, and continuing to involve respondents in the research process were used to enhance internal validity. In several cases, further information from respondents provided clarification and expansion of the data. Finally, researcher bias, as noted at the outset of the study, was combined with researcher reflection and on-going re-evaluation of the data to further support internal validity.

Merriam (1998) suggests that “Because what is being studied in education is assumed to be in flux, multifaceted, and highly contextual, because information gathered

is a function of who gives it and how skilled the researcher is at getting it” (p. 206).

Reliability, then, can be elusive in qualitative studies. The intention, then, in this study has been that the results shown merely be “*consistent* with the data collected” (p. 206).

Chapter V will present the researcher’s analysis of the data discussed in this chapter and relates the findings to Guthrie and Koppich’s A.I.M. model (1993) of politics and education reform. A summary and conclusion about the research study appear in Chapter VI and include suggestions for further research and implications for practice.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

We regard cycles of policy talk, not as futile and irrational but as an inevitable result of conflicts of values and interests built into a democratic system of school governance and reflecting changing climates of public opinion. People are constantly criticizing and trying to improve public education. From time to time, worries about society and schooling so accumulate that widespread educational reform ensues. In such periods policy elites often take the lead in diagnosing problems and proposing educational solutions (Cuban & Tyack, 1995, p. 41).

Analysis of the data collected during this research study was an on-going process. Recordings and transcripts of initial educator interviews were examined for relevance to the purpose of the study and reviewed again for completeness of responses to the pertinent research questions. This early analysis provoked further refinement of the original interview questions and suggested slightly different approaches to undertake with subsequent interviews. Emerging themes from interviews then led to a more focused examination of school documents in search of corroborating data. Processing of the data was accomplished through the technique of the “constant comparative method” which “requires continual revision, modification, and amendment until all new [information]

units can be placed into an appropriate category and the inclusion of additional units into a category provides no new information” (Rudestam & Newton, 1992, p. 114).

Finding that the growing body of interview data was revealing some genuine concerns with implementation of a strong national reform movement, there appeared to be a need to verify that the education reforms of the last decade were indeed perceived as having a significant impact on teachers in general. As a result, a University of Cambridge survey on teachers’ reactions to “Government Initiated Change” was distributed to the faculty as a whole for voluntary responses, and thus providing triangulation of data. Over the seven months during which interviews were conducted, previous transcripts were reviewed and identified categories for organizing the information were revised and supplemented with new evidence. This process involved repeatedly reviewing the research questions and returning numerous times to the literature as a means of developing new perspectives on what the data were revealing.

The analysis of the data from this study reveals, in fact, that there is a disequilibrium between the core values underlying the intent of the national policymakers and the professional philosophies of the local educators who must implement that policy. Guthrie and Koppich’s (1993) key hypothesis addresses the question of when a governmental change qualifies as true and lasting reform.

The findings in this study would seem to indicate that the major components of the 1988 Education Reform Act that directly impact the school in this case study have been largely accepted by educators, albeit grudgingly, as now representing the permanent structure of British education. The idea of a National Curriculum seems entrenched,

through a preponderance of published materials, instruction schemes, and accountability measures, as if it had always been the backbone of the education system in England and Wales. The system of assessments at Key Stages of the curriculum, the earning of the General Certificate of Secondary Education, and exams to gain admission to advanced study coursework, have all become so embedded in the culture of British schooling and society, that the terms GCSE's, A-Levels, and "league tables," have become an integral part of contemporary British vernacular. This 1988 reform legislation shows all the signs of being one of those reforms that Tyack and Cuban (1995) would refer to as "real school reform," those reforms that actually enact fundamental change in the "grammar of schooling."

However, where values may coincide between the "actors" at the national and local levels, these two groups often differ significantly in their interpretation of those values and certainly in the priority in which the values are served. This chapter will address the three major components of the Guthrie and Koppich A.I.M. model (1983), drawing on interviews, school documents, and observations to compose a picture of the dominant values underlying the practice of educating the children of the Eastham Middle School community.

The three major theoretical propositions of the A.I.M. model serve as the conceptual framework for describing the findings in this study. Research by Marshall, Mitchell, and Wirt (1989) on public values and policymaking provided another perspective for interpreting the data collected in this research. Within this structure, headings representing the essence of the researcher's rules for categorizing information

derived from the data are used to organize the discussion of the results as a way to provide internal consistency. Though, in practice, these categories of governance, curriculum, instruction, and performance standards overlap, there are issues distinctive to each domain. Further subheadings within these categories seek to address the tensions between the values of the national policymakers and local educators.

Guthrie and Koppich (1983) and Marshall, Mitchell, and Wirt (1989) have agreed on several core values that are common to a democratic society. These include *efficiency*, *equality or equity*, *liberty or choice*. Marshall, Mitchell, and Wirt (1989) have added a fourth value of *quality*, which their research on public values and policy-making identified as another dominant value in American culture. They have defined each value in terms of behavior or policy statements and based on each value's political ideology. Their definitions, combined with the core societal value descriptions by Guthrie and Koppich, served as the working guidelines for analyzing the data collected in this case study. Ideas for analyzing the data collected were derived from a Public Values Instrument (p. 93, p. 203) used by Marshall, Mitchell, and Wirt in their research on public policy and values.

(M) Mobilizers of National Education Reform Policy

It is important to identify the political actors on the national scene in the late 1980s because their philosophies about their own democratic society are key to understanding the formation of the 1988 education reforms. The mandate for the position of Secretary of State for Education in the Tory Government describes the powers of the

Secretary, considerably augmented by the 1988 Act, and reveals the essence of what these particular politicians valued in regard to education.

He shall, in the case of his powers to regulate the provision made in the schools and institutions within the further education sector in England and Wales, exercise his powers with a view, among other things, to improving standards [*quality*], encouraging diversity [appears to be *equality*], and increasing opportunities for choice [*liberty*] (Education Act, 1993, Section 240).

Sir Keith Joseph, Secretary of State for Education in the early days of the Thatcher administration, was clear about his own vision for the education system. When I started the job in September, 1981, I was anxious to free up the system, to free it from bureaucratic controls [*efficiency*] . . . I've always been attracted to the idea of the education voucher [*liberty*] and I've always worried about the state's involvement in education. (Dunford, & Chitty, 1999, pp. 1-2)

All indications are that Tory politicians, like their Conservative counterparts in the U.S., placed a high value on issues of consumer choice (*liberty*) and believing that government bureaucratic organizations to be too inefficient, had already submitted other public services (like the railroads and utilities), to market forces by "privatizing" them. For a government committed to the values of *efficiency* and *liberty*, it must have seemed natural that a belief in the marketplace as a way to streamline public services, combined with a desire to put LEAs and teachers in their place, justified a restructuring of a state (public) school system. This could especially be true of a system which, from their own political perspective, the Tories perceived as liberal and out of control. Notice the

bitterness in these words from Kenneth Baker about the place of politics in previous education policy. “The 1970s reforms were driven entirely by lecturers and education directors and politically motivated union leaders. During the 1980s, Labour local [education] authorities used the teacher unions as a battering ram against the Tory government” (Davies, 1999, p. 5).

In a far-ranging interview with journalist Nick Davies (1999), Lord Baker was quite forthright about the motivations of Tory education policy concerning parental choice of schools. He admits his real target was the comprehensive system of schools which in 1965, under Labour, brought together under one roof, students from all social classes and with diverse post-secondary ambitions. By 1981, after a cycle of rejection and support by successive Tory and Labour administrations, 90 percent of children in the United Kingdom were attending comprehensive schools (Pring & Walford, 1997). Comprehensives were an attempt to *equalize* educational opportunities for students in the spirit of the “secondary education for all” philosophy introduced in the 1944 Education Act. There had been much criticism of the IQ testing that served as the selection factor that sent 11 year olds to widely different and life-shaping schooling options. Selective grammar schools were mostly filled with the “bright” children of the middle class while secondary modern schools served the rest, mostly the children of the working class. In a development in keeping with Guthrie and Koppich’s (1993) contention that reforms occur when there is a shift of cultural values, the post-war baby boom put increased pressure on local education authorities to provide more grammar school places. At the same time there was a rise in parental expectations for a higher *quality* education. “This individual

concern about sons and daughters was largely transmuted to a call for greater educational *equality* [my italics] of educational opportunity for all and greater national *efficiency* [my italics]" (Pring & Walford, 1997, p. 2). It is apparent that during the period when Comprehensives were expanding, *equality* was on the rise as a predominant social and cultural value in Great Britain.

Kenneth Baker and his Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, represented the sentiments of the political Right, which has always contended that the social mixing of the comprehensive system was achieved at the expense of academic success. Lord Baker admitted to using parental choice to correct the perceived flaws of the comprehensive system. "I would have liked to bring back selection but I would have got in such a controversy at an early stage that the other reforms would have been lost" (Davies, 1999, p. 4). He is referring to selecting children by means of an IQ test to attend grammar schools that catered to upwardly mobile students. As a political strategy, "choice means freedom and freedom is good" (p. 4). Baker combined this new parent choice scheme with a funding formula that caused the bulk of a school's budget to depend entirely on the recruitment of students. "In effect," Baker says, "it was a voucher system" (p. 4). There is a certain self-fulfilling prophecy about such a system. As a result, schools in poor areas, with many minority children, have been put at great disadvantage because the recruitment capability of a school, in turn, is greatly influenced by the school's standing in annually published league tables of students' exam results. In addition, the vast majority of "successful" schools, with good exam results, serve a mostly white, middle class student population. In other words, as Guthrie and Koppich (1993) might note,

under the Tory plans, *equality* in British education appeared to be successfully sabotaged and *liberty* was the value in ascendency.

The publicly stated intent by the Tory Party in introducing Local Management of Schools was to improve the *efficiency* of schools, both in the economic sense of value for money, but also in terms of the increased accountability of educators to the public. Such a goal is usually popular with taxpayers. But Kenneth Baker, former Education and Employment Secretary under Margaret Thatcher and a key architect of the reforms, has admitted to a hidden agenda for the market choice policy. This amounted to a concerted effort to remove power from the “producer interests” (especially *liberal* teachers and LEAs controlled by the Labour Party) and to transfer that power to “consumer interests” (parents and students). The solution was Local Management of Schools (LMS), conceived as a key marketing strategy in the 1988 education reforms and seeming to place more authority at the school level.

(I) The Initiating Event - The 1988 Education Reform Act

The Education Reform Act of 1988 in Great Britain appears to be, in the view of the Tory Government, the result of a convergence of economic, demographic, and ideological factors. There were concerns about student achievement and a widespread belief that the downturn in the global economy in the 1970s and early 1980s was a reflection of the poor performance of the educational system. The result of this thinking was a government compunction to reduce and control public expenditure following the oil crisis of the mid-70s and the inflationary period that followed. “Value for money”

became a Tory mission (Thomas, 1983). The public rhetoric on education by the Conservative Government policymakers took up this new societal concern for *efficiency* and as the words of Kenneth Baker have revealed, the politicians were able to couch what was really a power struggle with the more liberal education establishment, in more acceptable *efficiency* terms. The reforms that had begun as a purely educational project under Lord Baker's predecessor Sir Keith Joseph, became much more a plan to undermine the teachers unions when Baker took over. "It was impossible with the unions-endless meetings, getting nowhere, all fighting against each other" (Davies, 1999, p. 1), he remembers. And so, in the interest of efficiency, Lord Baker dealt with them. "I took away all their negotiating rights from the union. It was quite brutal" (p. 1). By legislating for LMS, Baker also was able to fragment the teacher unions by forcing them, as a group, to negotiate with thousands of different head teachers, thus providing no chance for teachers to bargain collectively.

There is little doubt that the restructuring of the British public school system by the Tory government in the late 1980s was a radical departure from the rather decentralized and uneven approach to state education of the earlier decades of the century. The Education Reform Act (1988) was only the beginning of a series of reform initiatives that proceeded to lap like relentless waves onto the shores of state schools all over Britain. The Tory reforms were detailed and complex, affecting not only primary and secondary schools, but technological colleges and higher education. However, for the purposes of this case study, there are four domains in which the mandates of the ERA appear to have had the most significant impact on the operation of the British middle

school selected as the site for this case study research. These areas are governance and control through Local Management of Schools (LMS); curriculum (or the National Curriculum); the impact of mandates on instruction; and accountability through performance standards for students (Standard Achievement Tests) and teachers (inspections by the OFSTED or Office of Standards in Education). In this analysis, each of the three components of the A.I.M. model (1993) are described in terms of the *values* intended by the policymakers and those held by the local educators. Guthrie and Koppich (1993) believe that a meaningful reform, like the Education Reform Act of 1988, is likely to be successfully adopted when there has been a shift in societal values. To a greater or lesser extent, previously dominant values begin to lose their appeal and the public sentiment permits the rise of different value streams more in line with the collective thinking. Reform then, Guthrie and Koppich suggest, “involves the development of a constituency of change” (1993, p. 17). This new constituency, they believe, becomes identified with any reform effort and so monitors the implementation of related policy.

(A) Alignment of Cultural Values in Great Britain

Education has been at the forefront of public issue concerns in many nations during the past two decades. Education policy in Great Britain is particularly of interest because of the major structural reforms that occurred with the passage of the Education Reform Act of 1988. Examined through the lens of Guthrie and Koppich’s (1983) A.I.M. paradigm, the economic crisis of the early 1980s and the election that brought the Conservative Party into power in 1979, may be viewed as an (I) initiating event that

coincided or aligned (A) with a period of shifting values in the country. For example, the 1960s and 70s saw a concern with the *equality* of educational opportunities as exemplified by the “comprehensive ideal” that guided an earlier transformation of the school system. On the other hand, education policy in the 1980s and 90s has been dominated by two very different values. The Tories brought *efficiency* or value for (public) money to the fore, along with a determination to apply market forces to public services and thus provide consumer choice or the value of *liberty*. The convergence of these value factors in Britain allowed several significant political (M) “mobilizers” or “policy entrepreneurs” the opportunity in the late 80s to promote policy reforms in keeping with their own conservative values and to elevate these ideas into “high politics.”

The purpose of this study was to examine the effects of the radical restructuring of the education system in England and Wales in 1988, comparing the values of the policy “actors” underlying the education reform decisions made by the Conservative (Tory) government in particular, to the values supported by local educators. Of particular interest to my research was the impact of the reforms on those local “entrepreneurs,” such as head teachers, school governors, and Local Education Authorities, on whom has fallen the burden of reconciling the intent of the policy-makers with the realities of meeting school and community needs. Teachers, of course, should be considered other important actors in the implementation of education reforms. However, as important as their role is in the successful education of the nation’s youth, they have been asked to make little or no contribution to the making of education policy. I have attempted to give voice to these

local-level actors and to examine the relationship between the dominating values of the education reform policy and the values of the players who must make it work.

Tensions Between National and Local Values

The research findings point toward a general divergence of fundamental values about state or public education between politicians and educators at the local level. The conflict has not yet taken the form of any open defiance but is instead, delivered in hushed tones with strained and weary voices. In large part, there is a difference in the interpretation of core values and it may be this that allows the teachers to cope with policies that otherwise might make their jobs intolerable on a personal scale.

The Concept of Liberty

The Local Management of Schools concept seems to be receiving mixed reviews at the case study site. While at the national level, the concept of *liberty* connotes the freedom of choice for parents within a publicly funded school system, there is little evidence at the local level that parental choice has any significance. Eastham Middle School has virtually none of the dilemmas of the inner city schools in the UK that commonly contribute to a school's "failing." The community that it serves is overwhelmingly white, though there is certainly a mix of social classes and an added component of a small transient population of children from a nearby British military base.

A section on student transfers and admissions in the Eastham Prospectus for 2000-2001 does make some concession to a passing need to appeal to prospective parents

by providing numerous opportunities for orienting children and their parents to visit the school.

The teacher in charge of Year Five visits each first school in turn during Summer Term to establish contact with the children who will be coming to us in September and to liaise with the Headteacher and the staff. There is an Open Evening in the Spring Term for Year 4 pupils and their parents to look around the school. In July, parents can attend an Intake Evening in order to meet the Form Teachers and also to find out about school routines. Year 4 pupils spend a morning visiting our school towards the end of the term. (p. 2)

Eastham Middle is oversubscribed, meaning it attracts not only students from the surrounding community, but also a few (currently 11) from outside the “catchment area.” In terms of an education market, this is in the school’s favor and the school management can afford, at this point, to remain somewhat selective about marketing their “product” and selecting their “clients.”

Parents moving into the district and wishing to view the school and meet the Headteacher, normally write or ring the Secretary for an appointment. We are required to advise parents that interviews with staff or the Headteacher do not have any bearing on the chances of their child obtaining a place at the school. (Prospectus, 2000/2001, p. 2)

One can suppose that an inner city school, struggling for academic survival and therefore trying desperately to attract pupils, would hardly choose such a nonchalant approach to admissions in their school brochures.

Mrs. Grover, the Chairperson of the Governors, seems unimpressed by the notion of parent choice, generally viewing it as impractical.

Catchment areas cause problems. Previously, if someone moved into the catchment area of a school they were guaranteed a place at that school even if the school was full. This is no longer the case. There are also problems where parents exercise their right to choose which primary school their child goes to. When the middle and upper school to which

that child would normally move are full, that child cannot go there without going to appeal if they do not live within the catchment area of the middle or upper school. School transport can also cause problems. This is normally only provided for children going to their allocated school.

Deputy Head, Mr. Davis, similarly minimizes the importance of competition and choice to Eastham Middle School, admitting almost sheepishly that efforts to market the school to attract new pupils have been a low priority. It is apparent that he would rather not have such business-like responsibilities fall to the school's senior management.

We constantly forget to tell the newspaper when we have done something, and it was a matter of principle that we weren't competing with other schools in the pyramid [numerous area primary schools feed to three middle schools which in turn feed students to one community college or secondary school]. We are fortunate we have a good catchment area, we have a stable staff, so we are a popular school. There was a time, we started French for children, a year before they started it at the neighboring school, so that is partly why we attracted some children from there . . . I think this is the most unfortunate aspect of all perhaps, in the last 15 years or so, the way the Government is going for all the LEAs, and encouraged every school to go it alone. It is not a realistic possibility for most parents in rural areas . . .

In fact, while analysis of the data collected at the local level revealed *liberty* to be a highly valued concept (see Figures 3 & 4), this value appears to have been given a wholly different interpretation by the Eastham school community than the idea conceived by the Tory Government in 1988. Time and again, the coding of local educator interviews for value statements revealed a strong belief in freedoms that had almost nothing to do with parental choice and nearly everything to do with autonomy and the freedom to make educational choices *within* the school. This included not only governance issues like school budgets, but being able to prioritize curriculum emphasis, and allow teachers' individual approaches to instruction.

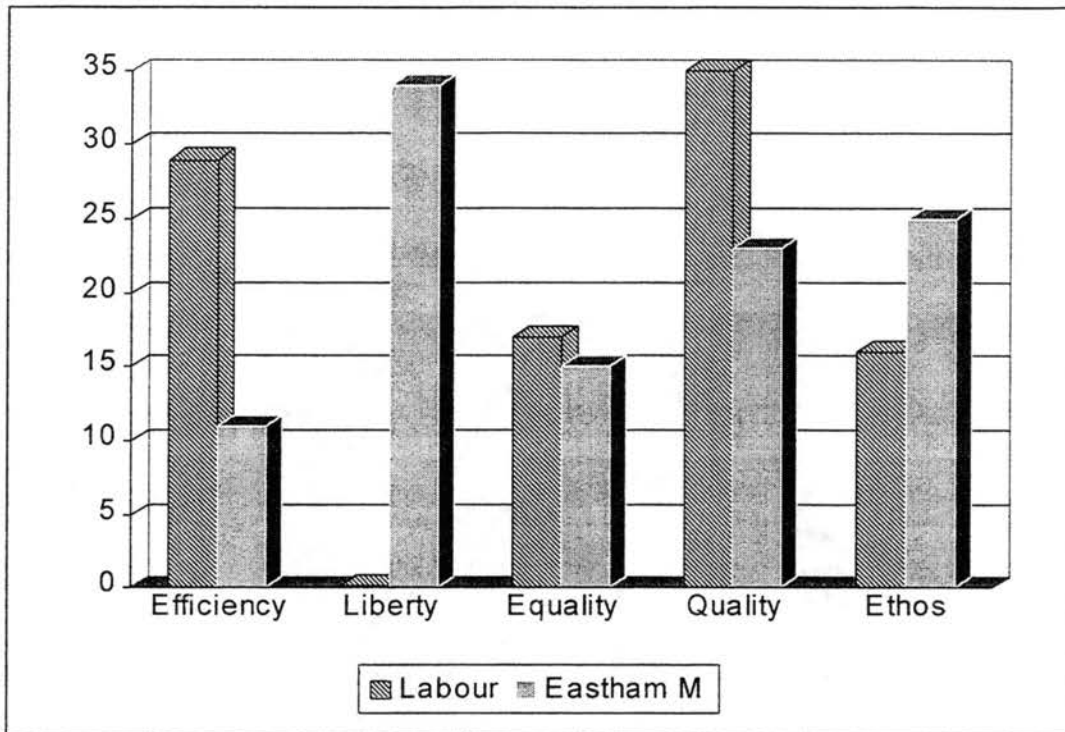


Figure 3. Percentage of Cultural Values Represented in the Language of Labour Policy and Local Implementation.

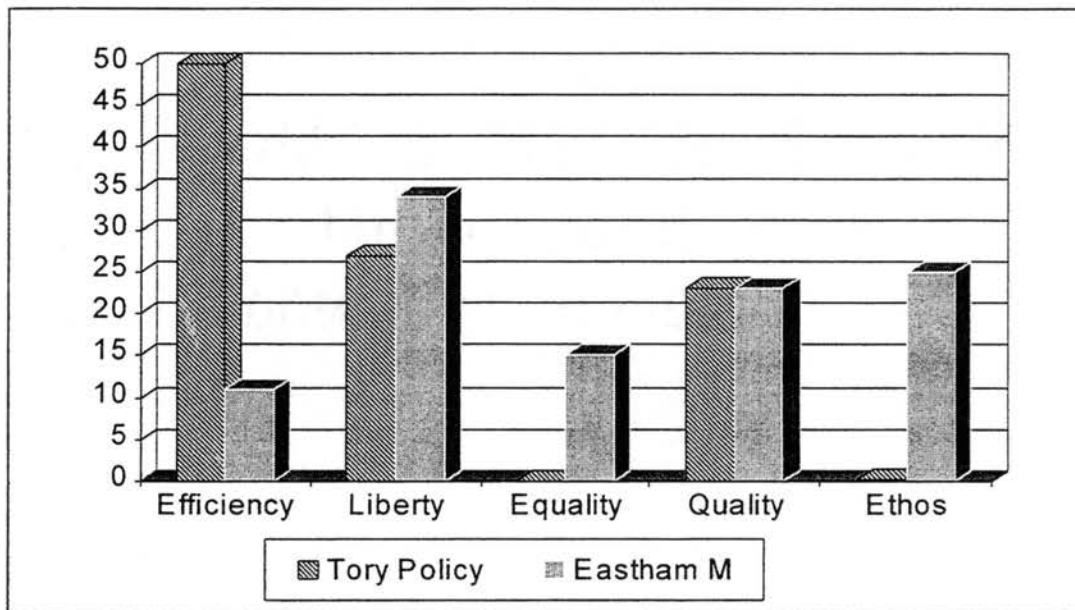


Figure 4. Percentage of Cultural Values Represented in the Language of Tory Policy and Local Implementation.

Ms. Harris, who speaks from the perspective of having been a head teacher for less than a year, seems comfortable with the level of freedom she believes she has in her position.

I think, actually, the head teachers in middle schools in [county] do have a fair degree of autonomy. Partly because I think that the governors in the school have a history of trusting the head teacher, and I don't think, so far, they've seen any reason not to. I think in a situation where I would be open with them about what I wanted to do, I think they would take the line that if I have an argument to say something is a change worth making, and the children would benefit from it, and staff will benefit from it as well, I suppose, in a sense, that I am manager of the staff, and they would go along with it.

Like other local educators, Mrs. Thompson values the freedom, or *liberty*, to be in charge of her own classroom.

I think when I first left college I was a very, very dedicated teacher. I didn't need anyone to tell me what to do, I was just able to get on with the job, and I thought I used to do it very well. So I, in a sense, get quite angry that someone is dictating to me what I have got to do. I resent it sometimes, that I haven't got the autonomy that I used to have, and again the child suffers. Because I am dictated to as to what I have got to do, almost to the point of how I teach now. And to me, I don't enjoy it, I don't enjoy it half so much, and now I could easily leave teaching . . . To me the money could have been spent better and much more wisely in a school.

But again, the freedom or *liberty* that is given by LMS is also curtailed by the funding formulas that have carried over, in part, from the Tory legislation. Increased autonomy or financing for school-level decision making is welcome, but the budget constraints and the "Fair Funding" that comes with strings attached, necessarily places many decisions in the category of "forced choices," with the government still very much controlling the purse strings.

Head teacher Ms. Harris explains,

We are quite restricted by our budget, but this is partly because we are a school in deficit. Therefore, although theoretically the money we have, I can spend how I think fit, I have got to pay teachers, and we can only be in deficit because the county has leant us money, so I haven't got an open hand with that . . . If we were not in the financial position we were in, I would have a reasonable degree of autonomy. A lot of money that comes from central government, is earmarked for one thing or another . . . This has to be spent in particular ways, so I think in that area, you have very little choice really.

Governor Grover is clearly frustrated as she explains how school budget deficits occur and also touches on the down side of Local Management of Schools.

Form 7, which gives the number of children on roll, is filled in on a certain date, usually the second Thursday in January. This figure is used to determine a very large part of the school budget which runs from April to April. If a larger number of children arrive in September than were on Form 7, then inevitably there is a shortfall in the funding until the following April. A rise in the school roll from 397 to 515, which we had, obviously causes major problems. Conversely, were we in a falling roll situation, we would have "extra" money. Before LMS, schools could say they needed another teacher in those circumstances and another teacher would be funded.

There seems no doubt that government budget formulas and funding earmarked for special purposes interfere with the freedom that the senior management staff of the school would normally expect to enjoy under the professed autonomy of LMS. But all are aware of the relentless oversight by the government and the public in these days of stricter accountability. Attempts by a school to display a bit more freedom are risky. Mr. Tandon, as a teacher and governor, can speak from experience, when asked about the willingness of the staff to resist government policy just a little.

A lot of people talk about it, a lot of people would be verbally in agreement. But how much support they have individually, would be questionable. I put myself in the same position, I wouldn't put myself

above anybody else. When push comes to shove, you wouldn't stand up for yourself. It's difficult when you are faced with a monolith with several millions of pounds, i.e., the DFEE [Department of Education and Employment] against a single teacher, a single institution.

Mr. Tandon seems to think that the United States can provide some insight into how local schools can have more freedom to operate.

In America there is a big thing at the moment, I am interested in looking at this picture, where everything is localized. It seems very localized, whereas everything in England is so centralized, so much government control, whereas less so over there.

The Concept of Quality

Raising standards and the *quality* of public education was high on the priority list of Tory plans for reform. The Government had little trust in teachers and felt that a strong monitoring system was needed to ensure the compliance of school staffs with the new tougher standards. As Dunford (1999) notes, "The huge increase in the centralisation of education policy which had occurred during the 1980s had its consequences for the Government in greater accountability" (p. 117).

But how do local educators define *quality* in education? In some cases, teachers agree that teacher qualification standards had been somewhat informal in the past and perhaps needed to be remedied. Teachers like Mr. Taylor, now a veteran of 26 years of teaching, were also caught unprepared for the sudden change in the rules for teacher preparation when the 1988 reform measures were introduced yet felt the government provided little support for professional development.

I was teaching Humanities and Maths and English at the time. But Humanities was a typical example. I was taking 7 year and 8 year

Humanities. Just after it [the National Curriculum] was introduced, I thought, I need to have a degree in this to be able to put this over. I don't know anything about this topic that I am supposed to teach, or that topic. I would need to really get a grounding in that topic, I would need a year off perhaps, which you could do at one time.

The concept of education *quality* for teachers is less about “higher standards” and more about allowing teachers to make professional judgments about the best kind of instruction and the level of student learning in their own classrooms, essentially the very opposite of what the government intended. For the senior managers of the school, quality has to do with staff and pupil morale and a concern with the environment for learning that is created. Quality then, at the local school level, seems entwined with the idea of *liberty* and *equality*.

Mr. Tandon can agree with some aspects of the 1988 reform policy. He acknowledges that there has been an historic need for some standardization in Great Britain's public education system, and he admits to having a fair amount of freedom to gear his Geography lessons to the local area. However, Mr. Tandon would have preferred a “skills-oriented” curriculum rather than the “content-oriented” curriculum that has been imposed, though that may be slowly changing under the Labour Government. He refers to the local county's education authority that already had an established and well-received skills curriculum in place but that was unfortunately superceded by the 1988 curriculum reforms from the central government.

Many people said it [the county curriculum] is the way it should have gone. It should have been literacy and numeracy, it should have been key skills evidence, enquiry skills, etc. A lot of the National Curriculum has got some ideas . . . It is not attacking that. It is looking at the politics behind it.

There seems little doubt that Mr. Trent is a teacher who values his independence and his feelings about the National Curriculum continue to be decidedly mixed. “The one good thing the National Curriculum has done, it has broadened my horizons in a couple of areas in PE and I have found that good. It is all the paperwork which is wrong, all the pressure that has been put on people is wrong.” When queried about the introduction of the National Curriculum and how it came about, Mr. Trent also seems to regret its effect on the way colleagues now teach. “No, I just keep out of it. I try not to get involved with it at all. We have to make changes, yes, and the National Curriculum in some ways is good. Again, I go back to a lot of people have lost their spontaneity.”

The Concept of Efficiency through Economics

The economic accountability strategies that the Tories established in order to maximize the *efficiency* of the education system, seem to have delivered mostly frustration and stress at the school level. Sometimes Government speeches and even initiatives aimed at increasing teacher morale and recruitment would boast of higher pay and benefits for school staff but such rhetoric can be meaningless at the school level.

Economic efficiency seems to be somewhat unappreciated among local educators. The concept has turned out to be a sort of mixed blessing. On the one hand, more funding now comes directly to the schools and a certain amount of autonomy allows for more choices to be made at the local level. And yet there is a lack of real control over several key elements of management such as numbers of pupils and a clear budgeting

formula. There remains a confusing array of funding grants, presenting senior managers with on-going dilemmas about how the money should be allocated.

Mr. Lewis, the LEA advisor, confirms that taking care of teacher salaries has been one aspect of LMS that has been fraught with difficulties for local school managers.

It has been the case in past years, that teachers' pay rise haven't been fully funded. So teachers' salaries have gone up by 3% and the budget has been enhanced by 2%. The schools are then expected to be short, and find money from other sources. So if I were a governor of a school, I would feel somewhat frustrated that financial planning is very limited.

Such dilemmas as governors having to weigh teacher pay against programs or supplies for pupils in the face of limited school financing would play into former Education Secretary Kenneth Baker's intent to suppress the producer interests (the educators) in education. Eastham's head governor, Mrs. Grover, expresses a similar concern with having to choose among equally important but competing uses of school budget funds.

Because our likely numbers [incoming classes] for the next few years are going to be between 120 and 135, we are going to need five classes per year group to keep classes below 30 but are unlikely to have the funding to do so. We may have to decide to group the children in four classes for registration, humanities, [subjects without exams] etc. while setting [ability grouping] them in five groups for the SATS subjects [subject with exams]. One of the OFSTED requirements is that the school gives *good value for money* [my italics].

In the Government's pursuit of increased economic *efficiency*, the Local Management of Schools concept also requires both local education authorities and school level managers to understand business management, a dimension of the job that would have been previously unnecessary for an educational leader. Teacher-governor Mr.

Tandon talks about the need to recruit members of a school's governing body under the present system.

I think, again, a lot is expected of the governing body . . . A lot of governing bodies these days, are trying to get people who have an industrial background experience as well, to help them with fund raising and marketing. Also, looking at issues of school management, financial management and things like that.

While she offers some support for the notion of efficiency, Mrs. Grover also points out the dilemma of Local Management of Schools for head teachers.

They [head teachers] are suddenly expected to have business skills. While I think schools and LEAs should be more business-like, I find it difficult to see how they can be run as a business when they have so little control over the intake of the pupils and the level of public funding.

Deputy Head Davis has similar concerns.

There have been lots of changes about the financing of education. So it would help if you were an expert in providing transport, and the rest of it. Running a school isn't the job it was. Some schools, larger schools, have a high profile manager . . . We haven't gone too far down that road. The day may come when we have to.

And despite the government's intentions, it appears that local educators find it difficult to recognize any increased *efficiency* in the system that was established with LMS. Indeed, what comes across more than anyone impression when school budgets are discussed, is just plain confusion. Mrs. Harris tries to explain the present fiscal relationships between the school and the local education authority.

They have been forced to delegate funds back to schools, by the Government, central government. So some of the things which have been provided through the county council, they now have to take the money that they have got for that, give it out to the schools, and then in many cases they are asking the schools to give it back to them, which I think is confusing more than anything else at the moment. The LEA here have provided quite a good service in terms of support. However I would say

they have been doing that as far as the school is concerned for free [my italics]. In the past, you could just call up and ask for advice.

The Concept of Efficiency through Accountability

Efficiency in terms of accountability has had a notable impact on both school managers and teachers at Eastham. Without anyone ever directly admitting that they are aware of Kenneth Baker's anti-teacher motives behind the accountability measures outlined in the ERA, there is little doubt that the introduction of the National Curriculum and the related Key Stage assessments have created tension in the school. It is in this area that the Government's goal of a more efficient school system, much more closely accountable to its "customers," the parents and students, seems to clash most passionately with the values held by educators.

First, there is the effect of the Key Stage exams on pupils. Mrs. Thompson feels strongly about these issues.

I think really the Government now, their main objective is to raise standards, In inverted commas. But really they are only doing it for the short term, and not looking towards the future, and will have a lot of problems because teachers haven't got time and I can see it becoming very, very competitive. Even now, the child is much more competitive in the classroom now, than say 20 years ago, very, very competitive.

It is doubtful that it is productive for pupils or teachers when a centralized policy, like the National Curriculum and Assessment, places undue stress on some teachers. Mr. Trent makes an observation about his colleagues.

I think it is very sad, there are a lot of teachers who are sinking, there are a lot of teachers going out of the profession, because they can't cope with the National Curriculum. I think it is very sad, a lot of good teachers, they can't meet what the national curriculum is asking them.

He suggests that the reason some teachers can't seem to cope with the curriculum might be down to personality. "Maybe they take it more seriously, and I have been someone who has been able to say, I can't do that. I am going to do it to the best of my ability and if it is not good enough, then it is not good enough."

Many of the concerns raised by Eastham's educators are child-centered, with an awareness and concern about children's developmental readiness, and that the national education policy does not take this important element of teaching into account. Head teacher Ms. Harris articulates what the teachers object to with a centralized curriculum.

I think you'd have to try and establish some basic knowledge . . . If you assume that you have to have a certain amount of knowledge in order to be able to move forward. But I think the focus would have to be on looking at how children learn, and the way in which they learn, being the best way to pick up that knowledge . . . I don't think that writing it all down in the National Curriculum, and saying you must teach this bit, you must teach that bit, has actually necessarily widened what is going on in education.

Michaelsen (1994) believes "the tendency toward the pervasive displacement of goals is the key factor in it causing school districts to depart from efficiency norms" (p. 35). It appears to have been the intent of the Tory education policymakers to create a more efficient school system, in part, by focusing on the "clear goals" of a National Curriculum. But Head Teacher Ms. Harris isn't convinced. "In terms of clear goals, I don't think having a national curriculum has made schools more effective." Instead she reiterates her own preference for autonomy, or the *liberty* to make choices appropriate for her particular school.

If you have a national curriculum imposed on you, which you had nothing to do with the writing of, no matter how many times you read it, it is not going to make your goals any clearer. I think probably what it does do, is help schools have a standard on which they can judge themselves. If you

don't really know what everybody else is doing, you can get to a point where you think, I don't know what I am doing But if you can say yes, we've got a broad consensus, this is what we should be teaching and then we do it our way, then you are going to get some sort of ownership, and some sense that those are your own goals, not what someone else has just told you.

Most teachers are able to see the merit in some sort of standardized curriculum throughout the country as a means toward a more efficient education system. Mr. Tandon seems to agree with the practicality of the idea. "Obviously, the advantages are potentially, that there is a set national standard . . . There are advantages in terms of management resources and staff, and the publishers are producing similar resources."

But Mr. Taylor points out that even the idea of standardization didn't contribute, in reality, to an efficient system for transient pupils.

We thought when the National Curriculum came in, that a child going from one side of the country to another, for example, moving school, then that was easy, because they would fit in to whatever topic they were doing . . . It's been worse, in fact, as we've had children here, and we say we are now going to do the Tudors in Humanities, and they will say, I've just done that at the other school. So that's made it worse, because it's happened several times, that they've actually done the same topic just before coming here. That hasn't made it any easier.

But while few people can argue with a call to the highest quality education possible, it was the Tory Government's almost punitive approach to obtaining those high standards that is faulted by local educators. *Efficiency* through accountability in the British education system also means outside inspection under the auspices of the Office of Standards in Education (OFSTED). The Government policies that mandated greater *efficiency* in the school system placed teachers and politicians on a collision course over

interpretations of *quality* educational programs, with most of the power on the Government's side.

Having spent time at Eastham Middle School in the months before an OFSTED inspection, accountability clearly was on the minds of many of those interviewed.

Mrs. Grover, who has been associated with Eastham for many years as a parent and then a governor, comments on the difference in school inspections both before and since the 1988 reforms. Throughout her interviews she has shown herself to be biased on the side of local school autonomy.

Last OFSTED you could get away with anything, if you said I thought you were really looking for outcomes. There are one or two things they could be. But now they are not doing that, they are looking for improvement, and the valuation of the value for money stuff. Which is not the same. We don't do literacy hour, which may well have to change. I hope not, we get good results.

Mr. Taylor questions the effectiveness of current inspection procedures.

I don't like the way they are set out. Okay, I think again, like teachers accept a national curriculum, they accept some sort of an inspection, it's only right. But again, the way it was set up, and what's being said in the press and by the Head of OFSTED rankles amongst teachers. I think they ought to just come in with hardly any notice to start with, and just come into the school. The amount of paperwork that they request, puts a terrific amount of pressure on coordinators again.

And Mr. Taylor is concerned about the toll such inspections take on staff.

Last time we had two people off for stress problems. One was off for three or four weeks before OFSTED, the other one was off for about nine months afterwards. Just completely washed out and upset by it all. So I think if they could separate the actual teaching bit from the paperwork and not give us much notice . . . If someone was coming in, I'd rather they just came in the door and sat there without telling me. Then they'd have to take me as I come, without any preparation, just see the lesson I would do normally.

Deputy Head Mr. Davis isn't sure of the effectiveness of the OFSTED inspections either. It is a question of whether the need for accountability in the name of high standards outweighs the effect of a visit on staff morale.

It was very stressful getting ready for it . . . The great majority of them were pleasant, they were trying for it not to be too stressful. It was very variable subject to subject, according to the personality of the people who came. Some were looking for things to praise, some were looking for things to criticize. Again, it left some people feeling sore, as they feel that their work has been undervalued, and had a different person seen it, they would have valued it more. They have the perimeters within which they work, but human nature being what it is, they haven't achieved consistency yet. It's a bit ironic as well, some of their criticisms were well over the top, and equally some of the praise was quite silly.

Mrs. Thompson is a teacher who seems to have great empathy for children. She worries constantly about the effect of such a prescriptive policy for curriculum and assessment on her pupils and the tone of her responses to questions about these topics conveys the compassion that guides her teaching practice.

It's all on paper you see. It is not the person, as a person. I think it has all changed, and everything is on the standard, how much you have achieved in the exams, instead of thinking about the qualities of the people really, and what they can do, what they can give.

Mrs. Grover had a great regard for Eastham's former head teacher and worked with him for years as governor. She describes a man so at odds with the values of the Tory reforms, he resigned from a job he had loved. "He was bitterly disillusioned, a very strong Labour supporter. Particularly when things like targets were going to affect people's pay, he felt that the focus was going onto the wrong things." The head who left, she says, "felt that the SATS week was jolly stressful for the children. He reckoned it

was worse than the old eleven plus [the exam used to choose pupils for selective grammar schools], and everybody was having to do it.”

The Concept of Equality

Government education reform as introduced by the Tory government in 1988, appears to have created curriculum and assessment policy to support the values of *efficiency and liberty* at the expense of *equality*.

The Eastham Middle School Prospectus makes a commitment to provide a quality education program for all students, whatever their requirements.

The Governing body recognizes its responsibility to ensure that any pupil with special needs is given the appropriate provision, and the school Special Needs Co-ordinator liaises with other staff to ensure that the progress of such pupils is regularly monitored. A copy of the detailed policy statement is available for inspection from the school office. (p. 3)

Further statements set out the staff’s philosophy including such *equality* references as, “to provide a happy, purposeful atmosphere in the school, in which pupils feel secure and are accorded proper respect as individuals, irrespective of their academic/practical/ physical potential” (p. 4). They also promise “to enable pupils to develop academic and practical skills as far as possible” (p. 4).

Likewise, the School Development Plan, 2000-2001, includes among the school’s long term aims, that “staff care for children, whatever their ability or background,” and “aim to create a positive working environment for all” with individuals “given opportunities to fulfill their potential in all areas” (p. 1). Among the school’s goals in math, the intended outcome is to “raise KS [Key Stage] 2 results and the achievement of

the lower ability groups,” and to “raise standards of attainment of less able . . .” (p. 2).

Even the plan for building projects is inclusive, calling for a “room equipped to provide learning resources for supporting children of all abilities” (p. 10).

It is not uncommon for institutions to give lip service to practices expected by the public. However, the following statements from the OFSTED Report of June, 2000 suggest that Eastham educators are putting their stated values into practice when it comes to considering the educational needs of pupils on either end of the ability spectrum. “Pupils with special education needs are well supported; they do well and make very good progress” (Summary of the Inspection Report, p. 1) and “teacher’s awareness of the learning needs of the more able is sound” (p. 3).

But official documents alone only provide the expected rhetoric on the issues of equality in education. Mrs. Thompson expresses great concern about a national educational philosophy wedded to efficiency and the effect that can have on the students. She is critical of the Government’s priorities that seem to ignore some real problems in schools that have little or nothing to do with exam results.

I think special needs especially, has been almost eroded. I think there is not enough money spent on special needs children, especially the children with behavior problems. Sometimes it is assessed whether a child has special needs, and needs money, on just their academic achievements. Yet we are getting a lot of children coming into school now, with behavioral problems and they are not actually being assessed on that quite so much. They become more of a problem, because it is competitive, and they know they are failing in a classroom. So I think the Government isn’t doing enough.

There seems to be a general regard for what is best for children among the teachers at Eastham, a fundamental acceptance that public schooling should be serving all

children regardless of their backgrounds. Mr. Taylor comments on the changes in the school population over the whole of his 38 years at Eastham.

From way back, people didn't move so much, so there were more [county] children here. But with people moving around easily, and for jobs, there are not so many local children. We have always had RAF [military base] so there has always been that element of newcomers as it were. It's been quite a nice mix, really, over the years, quite a good catchment area.

Respondents at Eastham do not directly express themselves in value terms but their words reflect a difference of viewpoint between government policies and their own sense of how education should be provided. Mr. Davis, Deputy Head, inadvertently points out the conflict between the Government's concept of *liberty* through parent choice of schools for their children and the concept of *equality* by which the comprehensive schools were established when he talks about the responsibility of schools to attract "customers."

But when the Tories have this high idea that you could decide for yourself, what your entry criteria were, it was just crazy. In theory, every school in the town could have said they were going to be selective, and only take the top children. It just proved they really meant it when they said, "there is no such thing as society." It was really bad.

Mrs. Grover has grappled with her own mixed feelings about the 1988 reforms. She sees the need to raise standards in schools but a real concern with the human cost in doing so.

I fully support the need to raise standards and enable every child to have the opportunity to fulfill their potential. However, I am very unhappy about league tables in their current form. They do not take into account the different catchment areas. A school could be doing really well with its intake but still appear very low in the tables [Intake refers to the students geographically eligible to enroll in a school. The word is often used to convey social-economic status].

The Governor goes on to explain the complicated formulas, termed “pandas,” which rate schools according to a formula that combines the number of free school meals they serve and the results of their SATS exams at all levels of ability. It is essentially a kind of “value-added” scheme, much like handicapping in horseracing or golf. Exam results are all about “progress” from one year to the next. Mrs. Grover is particularly concerned with the pressure on schools to push for extra time to prepare the highest level students for the exam, as impressive scores from this group make a school look good. The Governor is uncomfortable with the implications of this kind of thinking, believing there is a limit to how much pupils can “improve.”

I think stretching the able pupil is very important and something most state schools need to do more of but it cannot be at the expense of the less able in a comprehensive school. There is also much emphasis on value-added progress. I think this is a good idea but feel that it cannot be possible to get high progress figures for a pupil all the way through the system. Ideally a school would want an intake of able pupils who had not been very well taught at their previous school. What nonsense!

Eastham is struggling with the age-old dilemma of whether it is best to instruct all pupils together or to group them by ability. The situation is made all the more crucial by the public accountability requirements to deliver higher standards of education under the current reform policies. Mrs. Grover notes,

When comprehensives started, the pupils were all taught in mixed ability classes . . . It very soon became apparent at Upper schools that pupils doing either CSE’s [Certificate of Secondary Education; equivalent to today’s GCSE’s] or O levels [Ordinary-equivalent to the U.S. high school graduation diploma] could not be taught in mixed ability classes in subjects like Maths. I think setting [ability grouping] is now common in most schools for at least some subjects.

Eastham Middle School – Reconciling National Policy and
Local Values Reaction to Tory Education Policy

Educators who agreed to be interviewed for this research study revealed various levels of frustration, and even stress, with the government imposed education policy of the past decade. Analysis of Tory policy language and data collected at the case study site reveals a misalignment of values guiding national education policy and local implementation. It is evident that both the value priorities are different and there is a diversity of interpretations given to value terminology (Table 1).

TABLE 1
COMPARISON OF TORY EDUCATIONAL POLICY VALUES
AND MIDDLE SCHOOL/LEA VALUES

Tory Government Policy Values	Eastham MS/County LEA
Efficiency (Accountability)	Liberty (of school decisions)
Liberty (Education Market)	Quality (All areas of school)
Quality (High Standards)	Ethos of the school
	Equality
	Efficiency (Accountability) “ (Economic)

Note: Listed from most to least valued. There is virtually no mention of *equality* in Tory policy language or in their political rhetoric.

The problem appears to lie not so much with the idea of a National Curriculum itself, but with the issues of accountability. First, the Tory government's fierce commitment to *efficiency* seems to only be recognized at the school level in terms of the significant impact that the publishing of exam results in league tables and OFSTED inspections undeniably has on the staff and pupils. In fact, data from interviews and school documents indicate that the Eastham staff and senior management strongly value *liberty* in their vision of how they want their school to be. But unlike the Tory interpretation of liberty as a marketing strategy, Eastham educators seem to have a much different interpretation, viewing liberty as an independence from too many government restrictions, whether they be either financial or educational. Almost all educators, from LEA advisor to classroom teacher, expressed the importance of schools themselves being able to decide how to best meet the needs of their own students.

The ERA calls for higher standards, to be judged by strict accountability measures, thus effectively cloaking *efficiency* values in *quality* language. At Eastham, on the other hand, *quality* seems to have everything to do with understanding how children learn and with providing an environment that will encourage the development of both knowledge and citizenship in the students. And where the Tory government appeared little concerned with *equality* issues in any of their reform policies, this value is of great concern to most of the respondents at Eastham. They worry about the consequences of favoring strict standards and punitive accountability practices over being attentive to the differing needs of individual children. The LEA advisor, Mr. Lewis, also has concerns about the demands of the "testing culture" and what he feels is its restrictive effect on

instruction. “We are being driven to a testing culture . . . The test begins to drive the curriculum, and we’re getting a lot of coaching now.”

Other teachers on the staff, who responded anonymously to the “Government Initiated Change” survey (Appendix F), confirmed the mixed feelings many local educators feel about the education policies of the central government. Feelings ranged from not being sure what to think or being resigned to accepting the inevitable, to a cautious optimism about future benefits that might be derived from some of the government initiatives. What is certain, in the survey responses, is that teachers agree that the government has largely mismanaged the process of facilitating educational change. One teacher complains, “The tone [of the changes] was all wrong, and the tone is all important.” Another, who doesn’t agree fully with the changes, is willing to make the best of it, but takes issue with the government’s timetable for implementing new policy.

Too many changes happening at the same time can add extra work to an already very full workload. This then adds to the pressures and stress increases. There should be more time given to try things out before expecting everything to be perfect.

A third teacher views the pace of government change initiatives as “unprofessional” and feels betrayed by what are viewed as empty promises from the present Labour government to call a moratorium on new initiatives. Punctuation marks and underlining indicate the passion with which this opinion was written.

What happened to “no changes for schools to cope with for 5 years??”
The load of head teacher and all staff is ill-thought out and massive
leading to opt-out and stress problems visible in current staff and possible
trainees. (I have first hand experience of both).

But despite the admissions of stress and dissatisfaction with the reform policy mandated in 1988, teachers at Eastham carry on. Even the survey results indicate that, surprisingly, teachers display some degree of commitment to present policies and believe they can maintain at least some minimal control over their work world despite the centralized imposition of reforms on the very structure of British education.

Though all school-level educators cannot escape the impact of the National Curriculum and the Key Stage exams on their professional lives, the focus of concern between the senior management team and the classroom teachers is dissimilar. Teachers' talk reflects the great toll that the introduction of the National Curriculum has taken on their freedom to manage the content of their lessons, as well as almost an obsession with the relentless accountability pressures of league tables and OFSTED inspections. At the same time, the rhetoric of the school's senior management staff, to include head and deputy teachers, department heads, and the board of governors, is dominated by worries over financial matters. Carrying a budget deficit from several years ago is only one of the school's obstacles to establishing more autonomy. It is a serious burden and if the budget is not balanced within five years, the school could face take-over by the government. The head teacher is confident that this will not happen to Eastham, but the situation looms large in the financial prioritizing that must occur each year (Ms. Harris, Field Notes, May, 2000).

Eastham management must also grapple continually with the unpredictability of the student population figures and their effect on funding from the government.

Conversations with all three key management people revolved constantly around the

struggle to provide financial support for the National Curriculum, maintain and improve aging facilities, and still meet the financial demands for staff salaries and incentive awards touted by the government to boost teacher morale.

The Concept of Ethos

But while all concerned at the local level must acknowledge, however begrudgingly, the omnipresence of the 1988 education reforms in their professional lives, Eastham staff and management seemed to have managed to satisfy their own collective values. Examination of the recent OFSTED Report, makes it clear that local insistence on the importance of the affective domain not only attracts parents to enroll their children in the school, but may even be partly responsible for the largely above average level of achievement reached by Eastham students. The Eastham School Development Plan (2000), recently revised through whole staff consensus, is sprinkled with words that convey the importance of a safe and pleasant environment for both the adults and children in the school. Intended outcomes for buildings, for example, stress “pleasant working environment for staff and pupils . . .” and “School buildings exterior and interior to reflect high standards, particularly front entrance to make an impact on visitors, to convey more accurately the high level of achievement at Eastham Middle School” (p. 9). In keeping with that goal, a Review of 1999-2000 Priorities in the Development Plan (pp. 15-16) shows ambitious plans for building renovation, gradual acquisition of new furniture throughout the school, and the addition of a new science laboratory which, in fact, was recently completed and dedicated.

Teachers also know that in order for children to learn, they must be attentive and not distracted by the misbehavior of classmates. The Development Plan (2000) addresses this belief, striving for a “removal of low level disruption during lessons . . . clear roles for all staff understood by pupils . . . [and] expectations of high standards of behavior amongst all pupils” (p. 7).

The Eastham Middle School Prospectus (2000/2001) also represents the collective values of the administration and staff, being the result of extended discussion and debate among all concerned before being written into its present form (Ms. Harris, Field Notes, May, 2000). It starts with the primary mission of the school. “A middle school provides an opportunity for children to find out what branches of learning there are, and to have experience in all of them. Then they will be in a position later in life to make a sensible choice” (p. 6).

A key section of the Prospectus is entitled “The Hidden Curriculum” and describes the essence of what makes this site a school that rises above political policies. It sums up the values that represent the character of the school.

Every school has a “hidden curriculum” – the atmosphere that it generates, and this is based upon the way in which people regard one another. We hope that everything we do generates respect for each other in the way that we talk and behave. From the time the children come to school, from the first “Good Morning,” through Assemblies, which are one focal point when the school sings, listens to passages from a wealth of literature, including the children’s own work, through the timetable, throughout school activities – this set of relationships makes a school what it is, and that depends upon us as people. (p. 6)

And then comes an essential statement that really defines this school. “It is better to help make people good by setting the best example we can, and *it is better to show that*

learning is wonderful by believing it ourselves. Role models are vital, and they determine the ‘hidden curriculum’” (p. 6).

Eastham Middle School staff also emphasize responsibility, whether it be their own (meeting the expectations of the curriculum; protection from bullying), the parents (providing school supplies; ensuring that pupils attend school regularly), or the students (following the rules of good behavior; willing to learn). The Prospectus (200/2001) repeatedly emphasizes the language of responsibility within a positive school ethos. One of the promises is “to foster a respect for the environment and to encourage the pupils to accept a social responsibility towards it.” The staff also set themselves the task “to help pupils learn to live within the generally accepted framework of society, so that they develop emotionally and socially, respecting religious and moral values” (p. 4). Citizenship preparation is also considered important and children are introduced to the democratic process through regular meetings of the School Council, an elected body of Year Eight [12 and 13 year old] pupils. The school has pre-empted a recent statutory requirement by the present Labour Government that adds a citizenship component to their Curriculum 2000 (<http://www.dfes.gov.uk>).

In a section entitled “Working Together,” the school staff offers advice in response to parents who have asked how they might help their children. It again, reflects the philosophy and values held strongly at this school.

Finally, and most importantly, love your children and accept them for what they are. If they feel secure in this respect they will come to school relaxed and confident. If they feel that your happiness depends upon some academic or sporting achievement on their part they are likely to feel pressured and stressed and we may well experience problems as a result. Much more importantly, they may experience problems too. (p. 9)

While the advice list also contains suggestions for more practical support (supervising a balance of school work, sleep, food, and TV watching; providing uniforms and school supplies), it is based on concepts of *caring* and *security*. The Prospectus (2000/2001) and School Development Plan (2000) necessarily address academic matters, providing information on the content and expectations of the National Curriculum and Key Stage examinations. But the words also manage to convey the positive ethos that is truly valued by these educators as a foundation for learning, like *caring*, *respect*, *responsibility*, *happy*, and *secure*.

What would appear to be a courageous stand on the part of a school staff, to emphasize the *ethos* of the school over the *efficiency* and standards rhetoric of the Government education policy, seems nevertheless to have found support from an unexpected source – the OFSTED inspectors. Although personal, social, and health education are part of the framework for inspection (<http://www.dfes.gov.uk>), it is not a domain primarily associated with OFSTED. A sampling of remarks following the latest inspection in June 2000, reveals that the school seems to have achieved, for the most part, an acceptable balance between pursuing high standards through adherence to the National Curriculum and remaining faithful to the traditional collective values of the governors and staff. [My italics emphasize again, the words that typify *ethos*]:

- The provision for pupils' personal development is a strength, with a significant contribution being made through personal, health, and social education. Moral development is very good and social development is excellent. (p. 11)

- Inspection findings support the views of parents that there is a very good response from pupils, throughout the school, to the consistent expectations for high standards of behavior . . . This has a very positive impact on how well pupils learn. Pupils are *confident, friendly and welcoming* to visitors. At break and lunchtimes pupils usually socialise and play happily together, and no squabbles or differences between them were seen during the week of inspection. Bullying is not tolerated at the school; very few incidences occur and these are dealt with effectively by staff. (p. 15)
- The most successful teaching occurs when teachers have excellent strategies for managing pupils, including the *development of excellent relationships* and establishing very *high expectations* for behavior. (p. 17)
- Pupils *respect* and listen well to each other, collaborate in group work, and are able to explore social issues such as bullying and peer group pressure. Pupils also respond very well to the many opportunities for them to exercise *responsibility* within the life of the school. (p. 22)
- A working party to oversee arrangements for *health and safety* has recently been formed. Its role has been suitably clarified and membership includes governors with specialist knowledge of health and safety matters that support the school well. (p. 23)
- The merit system to acknowledge achievement is valued and motivates pupils well, although more so at Key Stage 2 than Key Stage 3 . . . Parents are kept fully informed and involved when any aspect of a pupil's life at

school causes concern; this effectively promotes a *partnership* in working toward improvement. (p. 23)

- Family values are promoted well and pupils are able to relate issues discussed to other aspects of family life, for example, the commitment needed to support a family. (p. 25)

Adjustment to Labour Education Policy

A probable explanation for the relative acceptance of the fundamental values underlying Eastham's educational philosophy, is that the current inspectors for OFSTED, tend to represent the values of New Labour, the political party that has been in control of the British Government since 1997. The more liberal of the two major political parties in Britain, the Labour Party were among the architects of the "comprehensive ideal" that called for equal access to education for children of all social classes in the 1950s and 60s. Since regaining office in the 1990s, the Labour Party has overseen the evolution of education policy from the radical reforms of the Tory Education Reform Act of 1988 to a more central position at least slightly more aligned with the values of the educational profession. It has not been a smooth transition and it is apparent from this research study that many local educators have yet to detect a discernable difference between Labour and Tory educational politics. Indeed, a major disappointment for many educators has been that, once elected, Labour ministers seemed so reluctant to abandon the more strident of Tory policies, in particular the "naming and shaming" of low-achieving schools that was so characteristic of education policy during the Thatcher Administration. Despite

claiming “education, education, education” to be the top priority of a prospective Labour Government during his election campaign, current Prime Minister Tony Blair seemed surprisingly reluctant to dismiss the very education policies that Labour so ridiculed as the Party in opposition. In many respects, even the present Labour Party’s concept of *quality* appears to mirror that of the Tory Party. Such Tory mainstays as selective grammar schools, the National Curriculum and Key Stage Tests and the OFSTED Inspection system remain major tenants of Labour’s school structure ([www. dfes.gov.uk](http://www.dfes.gov.uk)). Labour even kept in place the Tory Chief Inspector of Schools, Chris Woodhead, a man much reviled by the education establishment for his intransigent criticism of teachers. Mr. Woodhead has only recently stepped down from his government post and, after a few months silence, has assumed the bully pulpit of newspaper journalist, using his position to criticize what he considers the impotence of Labour education policy (Woodhead, 2001).

Instead of simplifying education, Labour education policies have led to a flurry of schooling initiatives over the past few years, many seeming to be in knee jerk reaction to school-related problems making headlines in the media. An analysis of Labour policy statements on education indicate a continued commitment to *efficiency*, both in economics and accountability, but with somewhat less interest in *liberty* in the form of the education market. Labour’s concept of *liberty*, instead, is more in keeping with the Eastham teachers’ view of school autonomy as Local Management of Schools (LMS) is becoming even more strengthened even while LEAs, schools, and the Government struggle with devising funding formulas that are fair and workable. Local Education

Authorities also seem to be regaining some of the power they lost under the Tories.

Labour describes the current role of the LEAs as being

responsible for promoting high standards of education. It is responsible for contributing to the spiritual, moral, mental and physical development of the community by ensuring that *efficient* [my italics] primary and secondary education is provided . . . to meet the needs of pupils living in the area. (www.dfes.gov.uk)

Calling their key “white paper” on education Excellence in Schools (Dfee, 2000),

Labour is declaring high standards as one of their highest aims. A check of the Department of Education and Employment (Dfee) Standards Site in October, 2000, produced a description of some 17 new policy initiatives, lending some credibility to the perceptions of many teachers that they are feeling overwhelmed by continual change.

Most of the Labour strategies are intended to raise standards in education, a clear sign that *quality* and *efficiency* (accountability) are still valued by this political party.

“Introduced in September 1998, the National Literacy Strategy (NLS) is designed to *raise literacy standards* in primary schools” and “All primary schools now teach a daily dedicated maths lesson. The strategy is already *raising standards* (www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/seu, 2000, p.1).” See Table 2.

But Labour also has begun to rectify the neglect of *equality* issues under the Tory education policies. Under the title “A New Approach,” Education Secretary David Blunkett establishes *equality* issues as a centerpiece of the Labour education policy.

In the 21st century, knowledge and skills will be the key to success. Our goal is a society in which *everyone* is well-educated and able to learn throughout life. Britain’s economic prosperity and social cohesion both depend on achieving that goal” (www.dfes.gov.uk/wpaper/mindex.htm, 1997, p. 3).

TABLE 2
COMPARISON OF LABOUR EDUCATIONAL POLICY
VALUES AND MIDDLE SCHOOL/LEA VALUES

Labour Government Policy Values	Eastham MS/LEA Values
Quality (High Standards)	Liberty (of school decisions)
Efficiency (Accountability) “ (Economic)	Quality (All areas of school)
Equality	Ethos of the school (Caring; Respect; Relationships)
Liberty (LMS)	Equality
Ethos (Caring; Respect; Relationships or Partnerships)	Efficiency (Accountability) “ (Economic)

Note: Listed from Most to Least Valued.

Many initiatives dedicated to higher standards also contain a strong message of concern for disadvantaged children. These include Excellence in Cities (EiC), which focuses on the special problems of inner city schools and will provide learning support with the help of “learning mentors.” Schools in “special measures” or failing schools, are to be monitored by OFSTED and the LEA but echoing Tory-like accountability regulations, they have only two years to be turned around. In the place of these failed schools, “Fresh Start” schools will be established. This concept “includes developing and implementing a support programme to ensure that Fresh Start schools establish themselves in their local communities and embed good practice during their early years” (www.standards.dfee.gov.uk/seu/2000, p. 3).

Finally, a Dfee Research Programme will receive considerable funding to bring together “the best researchers” and encourage longitudinal studies. Perhaps in reaction to the criticism directed at the Tory reforms that they were without empirical foundation, Labour promises to “establish more sustained, higher quality research and enable the Dfee to develop a working relationship with research teams so that interaction between research findings and policy development can be ongoing” (www.standards.dfee.gov.uk/seu/ 2000, p. 4). This is at least a *concept* that educators can probably endorse.

Further evidence of Labour’s commitment to *equality* issues can be found in Chapter 4 of the Excellence in Schools white paper, entitled “Modernizing the Comprehensive Principle” which stresses excellence for everyone in order to prepare students for the high skilled work of the 21st century (www.dfee.gov.uk/wpaper/mindex.htm, 1997). Labour has not forgotten the more able pupils either but they are committed to developing opportunities for disadvantaged students with potential, through Education Action Zones established using partnerships of schools and local businesses. (www.dfee.gov.uk/wpaper/mindex.htm, 1997).

Partnerships are the other key component of the Labour education policy (www.standards.dfee.gov.uk/seu/, 2000). Partnership initiatives include Beacon Schools, which are high performing schools whose good practices are to be shared as an exchange of knowledge between professionals. Specialist Schools will focus on specific curriculum areas and are intended to “encourage innovation in teaching and learning” and “secure private funds and other effective support from sponsors” (p. 2); and City Academies, which are publicly funded independent (private) schools (much like charter schools in the

U.S.) “aimed at raising standards by breaking the cycle of under-performance and low expectations” (p. 2) and in partnerships with business and sponsors are intended to replace “poorly performing” schools.

Labour appears to have no intention of lessening its pressure on teachers to strive for high quality standards in the schools but their policy statements, reflecting the importance of *quality* as a value in Labour’s education goals, at least give the appearance of recognizing that teachers need support. “The Government’s goal is a world-class education system where every school is excellent or improving or both. The modernization of the teaching profession is central to this ambition” (www.dfes.gov.uk/wpaper/mindex.htm, 1997, p. 1). But a further statement also reveals some of the same strategies for *efficiency* through accountability used previously by the Tories, in which the striving for standards and *quality* takes on a somewhat critical tone.

One of the most powerful underlying reasons for low performance in our schools has been low expectations which have allowed poor quality teaching to continue unchallenged . . . We now have sound, consistent, national measures of pupil achievement for each school at each Key Stage of the National Curriculum. They show that children, whatever their background, can achieve a great deal if they are well-taught and well motivated. (www.dfes.gov.uk/wpaper/mindex.htm, 1997, p. 2)

Additional Labour proposals on education continue to attempt to balance accountability pressures on teachers with plans for modernizing the teaching profession. “In the process, we hope to create a new and positive culture of excellence and improvement with the profession, and to restore teaching to the status it deserves – a profession essential to our success in the next century” (www.dfes.gov.uk/teaching reform, 2000, p. 1).

Education policy language in both Tory and Labour Governments seem to hold the key to understanding the somewhat mixed reaction of local educators to the British education reforms of the past decade. There appears to be, across the board, a sort of underlying resentment from educators about the very prescriptive nature of the original reform legislation in which the National Curriculum and Key Stage Assessments were introduced. The change was too much, too fast, for those at the implementation level and the implication from the Tories so often seemed to be that teachers themselves were the real problem impeding student achievement. The findings of my study seem to indicate that these local educators, in valuing the whole child and the *ethos* of the school over the *efficiencies* of curriculum and assessments, seem to have value priorities that are very different from the values that form the foundation of Tory policy, where the emphasis is on the market (*liberty*), accountability (*efficiency*), and national standards (*quality*). This can explain the basic disgruntlement with national education policy at the school level. And despite more of a shift to the political center on education issues by the present Labour Government, the perception that the principles guiding their own initiatives betray a priority placed on *efficiency* (accountability) and *quality* (high standards), means that Labour has not yet successfully won over the teaching profession. Labour politicians, themselves, confirm this perception.

It was right in the 1980s to introduce the National Curriculum – albeit that it was 20 or 30 years too late. It was right to set up more *effective* management systems; to develop a more *effective* [my italics] inspection system; and to provide more systematic information to parents [my italics]. These changes were necessary and useful. We will keep and develop them. (www.dfes.gov.uk/wpaper/mindex/htm, 1997, p. 3)

But at the same time, Labour minimizes the Tory concept of *liberty* that created the education market.

We face new challenges at home and from international competitors, such as the Pacific Rim countries. They do not rely on market forces alone in education and neither should we. It is time now to get to the heart of raising standards – improving the quality of teaching and learning. (www.dfes.gov.uk/wpaper/mindex.htm, 1997, p. 2).

In the end, the question is how do local educators reconcile the apparent clash of their values with those of the policymakers? Teachers especially, but also Heads and Governors, seem to have an attitude of weary acceptance of the inevitable in education policy. Such conciliatory strategies as expanded teacher training programs and funding for longitudinal research have been so buried in the flood of new ideas that educators can only view them as overwhelming, at this point. This seems to be true, whether it is a governor or head teacher attempting to make sense of funding formulas and performance assessments, or a staff of teachers trying to keep pace with the content-laden National Curriculum or feeling under pressure to properly prepare students for high stakes exams.

It may be, however, that by the time this study was conducted, the anger and passion that so many of these educators must have felt in opposition to the radical Tory reforms, has somewhat dissipated. Even though the perception may be that Labour has changed little of the previous policies, in terms of personal value systems it may be that many educators sense the gradual softening of those policies as the Labour Government hits its stride on education issues. Values of *equality* and school *ethos* may be the key to an accommodation between local educators and Labour government ministers. These

values are strongly held by teachers, heads, and governors at Eastham Middle School and are reflected, as well, in many of the latest Labour initiatives for education.

Tory policy was an attempt to hold onto the two-tiered structure that had been traditional in British education and which provided a selective system that essentially divided the children of the working and the middle classes. Labour policy, on the other hand, seems determined to deal with the increasingly multi-cultural nature of British society by molding a school system designed to include all of these children.

A further statement from the Excellence in Schools chapter on “A New Approach” seems to indicate Labour’s appreciation of the concept of *ethos*, setting the stage for adding a new citizenship component to the National Curriculum.

There are wider goals of education which is also important. Schools, along with families, have a responsibility to ensure that children and young people learn respect for others and for themselves. They need to appreciate and understand the moral code on which civilized society is based and to appreciate the culture and background of others. They need to develop the strength of character and attitudes to life and work, such as responsibility, determination, care, and generosity, which will enable them to become citizens of a successful democratic society.
(www.dfes.gov.uk/wpaper/mindex.htm, 1997, p. 2).

However promising the policy rhetoric may be, teachers in my study are reflecting continued dissatisfaction with the politics of education even under a Labour government. And they are not alone. Teachers in England are now leaving the profession in droves. As the new term begins in 2001, schools across England and Wales are facing a teacher shortage of crisis proportions. Schools in London and the more affluent southeastern counties have been particularly hard hit and as these higher social-economic areas would normally be considered prime teaching locations, one of the key problems appears to be

down to teacher pay. Rising housing costs have effectively excluded teachers from the housing market, especially newly qualified teachers at the lower end of the pay scale. In some areas, education authorities have had to resort to four-day school weeks in secondary schools because they do not have enough staff to cover the full curriculum. In an attempt to give the impression of managing the situation, the Department of Education offered, in December, to set up a unit to “advise schools who thought they were in danger of having to cancel classes” (Kelso, 2001, p. 3). This could be viewed as a somewhat patronizing approach that seems to imply that school governors and head teachers are incapable of figuring out what needs to be done in their own schools.

Schools minister Estelle Morris continues to claim that teacher recruitment is, in fact, up from previous years and that the shortage has not only been exaggerated but is only temporary as new candidates enter teacher training programs. However, headteachers, those tasked with the difficulties of delivering the education programs the public expects and deserves, point out that Ms. Morris is planting false hopes about the increased recruitment figures by ignoring recent survey results about the escalating renouncement of the profession. These reports show that up to 1,400 newly qualified teachers in England have dropped out during their first year in the classroom. Additional research by the House of Commons library has calculated that 31,000 teachers will need to be recruited over the next four years (Carr-Brown, Elliott, & Hamzic, 2000; Henry, 2000; Kelso, 2001).

There are also discrepancies between teacher shortage figures published by educator groups and those by the Department of Education and Employment (DfEE).

The government claims that England is short only 1,000 teachers but a survey by the Secondary Heads Association (SHA) revealed 4,000 vacancies. John Dunford, general secretary of the SHA observes, "For too long the government has underplayed the extent of the crisis. The situation is really serious" (Carr-Brown, Elliott, & Hamzic, 2000, p. 10).

The National Union of Teachers have conducted their own research to properly document what they suspected was a disturbing trend. They found that 400 of the 20,000 who started teaching in 1999-2000 resigned during their probation year (Henry, 2000).

A further 800 did not complete their induction and half a percent, or about 100, of NQT's [newly qualified teachers] were judged to have failed – a rate far higher than the government's figure of 0.1 per cent. A further one per cent had their trial period extended. Poor support for new teachers in some areas and the stresses of the job were blamed (p. 1).

There seems little doubt that because of the appearance of similar values, most educators I interviewed place more hope in Labour politics than with the Tories. But at the same time, they appear frustrated by a general lack of respect for workers in public service jobs as well as clumsy proposals by the present Labour government to solve problems of low morale (Carr-Brown, Elliott, & Hamzic, 2000). OFSTED recently heaped praise on the Nottingham, England LEA for sharp improvements in the national tests for 11 year olds (TES, 2000). Previously one of the country's most deprived districts, their pupils had demonstrated substantial gains in only two years, placing them well above the expected national levels expected for student achievement. But the catalogue of newly earned strengths contributing to this exemplary improvement gave

credit to “corporate plans,” “school management support,” [meaning the LEA] and “early years support,” among others, with no specific mention of teacher efforts.

According to a Sunday Times report (Carr-Brown, Elliott, & Hamzic, 2000), the main reasons teachers are leaving the profession are excessive workloads (the result of too much assessment), struggles with pupil discipline, and poor pay. Interestingly, higher pay and better conditions for teachers and significantly higher salaries for administrators have prevented similar shortages in private schools in Britain.

There is also the issue of professional respect and public trust seldom accorded to educators. Tristan McCowan, a 26 year-old graduate of Oxford University should have been an ideal teacher recruit but he was quick to perceive attitudes toward teachers, particularly from the government in the one year, as a bright and energetic new teacher, he taught modern languages in a London comprehensive school.

It wasn't a bad school, but there was little optimism. The way you're treated is quite patronizing. The government seems to be saying you're not capable of doing your job and that you need to be assessed constantly. It's very bad for morale. (Carr-Brown, Elliott, & Hamzic, 2000, p. 11)

Such negative perceptions by many young people about working in many public sector jobs, including police and nursing as well as teaching, may mean that they will never consider this type of work.

A recent study by the University of Birmingham appears to support this explanation, finding that teachers experience by far the greatest stress of any occupation in Britain (TES, December 29, 2000). And forced to cope with plummeting staff morale, headteachers are demoralized themselves. In research by the Secondary Heads Association, 50 per cent of heads surveyed indicate they would like to leave the

profession and that only a significant improvement in the pay and conditions of the job would remedy the situation (Mansell & Kelly, 2000, p. 3).

The Labour government also seems to be missing the larger point of what is going terribly wrong in the teaching profession with their further proposals to resolve the immediate problem of teacher shortages. They point to the “pay for performance” scheme already in place. The proposal is designed to add up to £ 2,000 to a teacher’s pay check provided he or she fulfills a set of criteria related to instruction and extra-curricular commitments, but which amounts to a pittance compared to the cost of living in Britain. But the leaders of the Secondary Heads Association warn that performance pay alone will not avert a teacher shortage because the scheme is not only too complex, but the criteria that must be met indicates that the government operates from a misunderstanding of what good teaching involves (Mansell & Kelly, 2000). Even with additional performance pay of £ 2,000, nearly half of experienced teachers would be earning under £ 26,000 [about \$39,000] a year, far lower than many other similarly educated professionals.

There is also some discussion about providing subsidized housing for teachers recruited into schools in areas with prohibitive housing costs, and even a suggestion that special teacher housing could be constructed (Carr-Brown, Elliott, & Hamzic, 2000). Such solutions may or may not temporarily appeal to newly qualified young teachers eager for a job, but there is no guarantee, as the surveys have shown, that this will solve the teacher shortage problem in the long term. It also could be perceived as an insulting remedy that places education professionals in the same category as less skilled laborers in the early decades of the century, whose whole existence was subsidized and thus

controlled by their employer. There are a few political voices struggling to be heard on the issue, arguing that nothing will truly solve the crisis except the legitimate offer of a more generous salary level, something like an increase of ten to twenty thousand pounds annually.

Another government proposal trumpets the bestowing of extra funding, up to £140,000, on schools with some of the worst exam results in the country. But this money comes with strings attached, the prospect of additional school inspections to insure accountability. These plans were first presented to a conference of headteachers in December of 2000, and many who heard the idea were concerned that placing so-called “failing” schools even more under the microscope would hardly attract the potential staff members so sorely needed (Thornton, 2000). John Birchall, head of a community school in Southampton, remarked, “The one thing that’s going to stop me being successful is recruitment. That can’t be solved by schools on their own. The politics of the past few years have achieved some things but had a negative impact on recruitment in difficult schools” (p. 1). And Phillip May, head of a school in Gloucester, echoed those same concerns. “A regime of inspections is going to deter staff. For the same money, should I go to an “easy” school or one where some of the children are challenging and I’m going to get termly inspection visits” (p. 1)? Research at Eastham Middle School revealed a similar preoccupation with the stress generated by inspection visits every few years. One can only imagine the results of several such visits *within* a single year.

The low morale among teachers seems to also be down to a lack of respect for the profession and a lack of appreciation for the often adverse conditions under which they

work. The shortage of both permanent and supply (substitute) staff in schools has meant that already over-burdened teachers have been expected to cover classes and grade papers for missing colleagues. March 2001 has finally produced a sense of “enough is enough” from British teachers who, frustrated with a decade of government disregard for the problem of teacher shortages, have resorted to industrial action. At present, teacher unions are urging their members to follow a policy of “working to rule,” whereby teachers refuse to provide cover for colleagues beyond three days. This strategy is clearly not a strike, and workload and accountability pressures seem more the issues than pay. Yet, it is somehow not surprising that the Education Secretary has scolded teachers for their disservice to the pupils and claims that limiting teachers’ hours would be “difficult and cumbersome” (2001, p. 3).

The Consequences of a Centralized Education Policy

The results of my own research study only confirm the frustration and hopelessness that teachers feel in the face of centralized control by politicians. More than a decade of reform initiatives imposed by a series of government ministers, far removed from the realities of classrooms and governing boards, have taken their toll. The recently publicized teacher shortage has been looming for years but has been kept at bay, for much of that time, by teachers resigned to giving the benefit of the doubt to yet another politician’s idea for improving the quality of education. Despite the rhetoric of balanced governance schemes through the Local Management of Schools concept, the reality of the

controlling nature of education policy in Great Britain at present, appears uppermost in the minds of local educators, particularly teachers.

Education continues to be both a politically prominent and controversial issue in many of the economically advanced nations. England is not alone in facing a teacher shortage. Australia and New Zealand, normally a reliable source of “supply” [substitute] teachers brought in for the first term of the new year, are themselves experiencing a drop off of students interested in teaching as a career. Germany too, has had to cancel many classes as thousands of teachers opted for an early retirement, creating a severe teacher shortage in all subjects. As a result, ten years after reunification with the east of Germany, teachers from the former Soviet region are being attracted to the west to fill the teacher shortfall and may finally receive parity with their western colleagues on pay and benefits. One German state, Hesse, has broken ranks with the rest of Germany and is offering higher salaries to attract badly needed staff (Henry, 2000).

The story is shaping up to be the same in the United States with “too many students, too few schools and teachers” (Henry, 2000, p. 7). Add to those problems, an increasing difficulty in finding qualified school administrators, continuing concern about school safety issues, and the early stirrings of a potentially explosive backlash against the use of high-stakes testing to measure the success of educational reforms (Chase, 2001; Marcus, 2000; Shepard, 2001). Mary Fulton, a policy analyst at the Education Commission of the States, comments, “The teacher issue, both quantity and quality, is probably the biggest problem. We’ve seen some districts practically recruiting people off

the streets. Parents want high-quality teachers, but finding them is extremely difficult” (Marcus, 2000, p. 7).

But how would schools measure up if there were no OFSTED or no publicly reported exam league tables? What if the Local Management of Schools concept were truly a local responsibility? What if educators were left to their own devices and education were truly a local responsibility and not under such stern vigilance by a Government committed to preserving *efficiency* and *quality* standards? Both Tory and Labour politicians might well familiarize themselves with a school system within the very borders of the United Kingdom that, by all reports, is considered successful by the Local Education Authority, heads, teachers, and the community. The Isle of Jersey, in the Channel Islands off the coast of England, runs its own schools. They, indeed, are not subject to Government accountability measures. Schools set their own academic targets and performance is self-monitored, with assistance from the LEA. While a school spokesman describes the Jersey inspection process as quite vigorous, the difference between Jersey and the rest of the UK is that in Jersey the “*process* [my emphasis] is as important as the outcome” (Ravell, 2000, p. 28).

Tom McKeon, the current Director of Education, explains the philosophy behind the self-monitoring. “If the accountability process is to be of value, it has to lead to development and that has to come from within” (Ravell, 2000, p. 28). He believes that education is valued highly by the community and that the procedures that Jersey has put into place to assure a high quality of education would stand up to any other measure.

Peter Bray, Head Teacher of one of the primary schools on the island thinks the key to Jersey's successful system is the trust that exists among teachers, administrators, and the community. The result is a slightly more low-key accountability plan in which teachers are viewed with professional respect.

What we have on the island is a system which says to the schools: You are the experts at what you do, you know your school and your children best. You have the freedom to manage that. We will resource you properly and we will check that your systems for self-assessment are delivering what is required. (Ravell, 2000, p. 28)

Jersey educators will admit that teachers can still feel stressed, but in these island schools they do enjoy smaller class sizes and the opportunity to reflect on their practice. Most of the National Curriculum has been adopted but the highest priority in Jersey is on the quality of the teaching and learning environment. This small example of successful decentralized control over schools could serve as a model for what many local educators would like to see established in their own communities. Jersey's experience illustrates that school or LEA autonomy is workable even under the strict measures of the 1988 Education Reform Act.

Mr. Lewis, the LEA Advisor in my study, seems as if he would be willing to support a Jersey-like system in his county.

I'm a reactionary, I trust teachers. I think one of the reasons we have this testing climate, is a lack of trust in teachers making their own judgments of pupils. So I would be keen to reintroduce schemes that are more teacher based, assessment that is on-going and it is teachers who make judgments . . . I think the pendulum has gone too far. I'd want to bring it more back to the classroom, and free up the activities that the teacher can do, so they can introduce the creative, investigative approach. They can follow their own interests, to some extent.

The governor, Mrs. Grover, describes her own wishes for autonomous decision making at Eastham Middle School. Her words reinforce the valuing of *liberty* according to the true sense of freedom of choice and action as she names local priorities for the school.

I'd like to go back to some of the freedom we had. I'm extremely interested in IT [technology], and nobody has really grasped the nettle at all about how it be used in education . . . I think [the] Internet is marvelous . . . I'd want more of that here. We do competitive sport here, which I hold with . . . I am very keen to encourage that sort of thing. I would rather do citizenship through that sort of thing, than debating and maybe in drama.

Re-Examining the A.I.M. Model

I have chosen to design a single explanatory case study as the method for conducting my research because of what Yinn (1994) describes as “the desire to understand complex social phenomena” allowing “an investigation to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events . . .” (p. 3). Through observations of numerous typical days in the life of Eastham Middle School pupils and staff, I have absorbed a sense of the school community that has been established and nurtured there. These observations have served as corroboration of the public rhetoric appearing in school documents, verifying, for the most part, that a staff commitment to a positive school ethos truly does describe the reality of this school.

This research study is essentially about “human affairs . . . reported and interpreted through the eyes of specific interviewees” . . . who “can provide important insights into a situation” (Yinn, 1994, p. 85). My interviews with a cross-section of staff members, then, have been crucial elements in my interpreting the responses of local

educators to the 1988 education reforms. Having examined the values implied in the whole of the collected data, it is now expedient to reconsider Guthrie and Koppich's theory of reform and high politics (1993), in light of the case study findings.

Guthrie and Koppich (1993) disagree with the idea in some quarters that education and politics aren't supposed to mix. "Sometimes in contemporary settings, education is mostly politics, and sometimes, though more rarely, politics is mostly education" (p. 12). Their tripartite paradigm was designed to examine why educational issues periodically assume predominance on national political agendas as has been the case in both the United States and Great Britain during the past several decades. The A.I.M. model that Guthrie and Koppich (1993) propose, requires that in order for "real" reform to occur, several political phenomena must align (A) and are contingent upon an initiating (I) event, or series of events. Reform, they speculate, can only become meaningful when policy ideas are "mobilized" (M) by a catalytic person or group who are in position to take advantage of conditions. Guthrie and pose several questions that provide the theoretical foundation for their A.I.M. model. These include how, why, and under what conditions does an education issue escalate into the domain of "high politics," what causes education reform movements to ebb and flow, and what are the policy dynamics behind national education reform? As Guthrie and Koppich believe that reform is likely to occur during periods of value disequilibrium, these dynamics would include, importantly, the values underlying the aims of the policymakers (Guthrie & Koppich, 1993, p. 13). This research study has attempted to find answers to these

questions by focusing on the values held by policymakers and implementers and how those values lead each to interpret the purposes of public education.

The Conditions for Reform

The Education Reform Act of 1988, leading to such a radical restructuring of the British state (public) school system, seemed naturally to be the kind of “initiating event” that Guthrie and Koppich (1993) would consider to be a corner stone of a major reform policy. It is also probable that largely economic factors in the 1970s and early 1980s gave rise to the British reforms and were often cited as the reasons for the perception that low achievement standards in schools were the cause of economic malaise.

Policy Dynamics

Tory politicians, elected to office in 1979, came upon the scene at a crucial time and grasping the mood of the public for higher standards (*quality*) and value for money (*efficiency*), set about creating an education policy according to that thinking. But British politicians were not acting in a vacuum. Literature on policy sharing between the United States and Great Britain also indicates that similar reform movements were gaining prominence during the same time period. Although the United States has much more decentralized school control, both nations have experimented with combinations of national and local governance and a belief in the efficiency of the free market (*liberty*) even in education, has become prevalent among more conservative politicians. Site-

based management initiatives in the U.S. parallel the concept of the Local Management of Schools plan in the 1988 Education Reform Act.

Has the Education Reform Act of 1988 become a true reform, as defined by Guthrie and Koppich (1993), meaning it must then become an integral part of the culture? This study seems to indicate that major components of this reform are indeed a part of British culture after little over a decade of implementation.

The National Curriculum

Despite receiving mixed reviews from educators, the National Curriculum is clearly entrenched as a mainstay of the British education system. There seems to be no overt movement to discard it and in fact, whole industries have grown up to support both reinforcement of the content and preparation for the assessments at key stages of the curriculum. Respondents in my study seem nostalgic for the freedom of the days before the National Curriculum and almost all would be rid of the stress that Key Stage exams places on everyone. Yet terms like “league tables,” “Key Stages,” and “revision,” [reviewing] have indeed become terms engrained in the British vernacular. Just as the Labour Government has gradually modified and trimmed the vast bulk of the original curriculum, so might future ministers place their own mark on this idea. It is difficult to argue against the values of *quality* and *efficiency* that the National Curriculum promotes.

Local Management of Schools

Again, Labour has not only accepted a Tory idea but have expanded it, though perhaps for different reasons. The Tory education market idea, representing a value of *liberty* as a way to force *efficiency* through accountability seems no longer the motivation for Labour in encouraging local decision making in schools. Ms. Harris, Head Teacher of Eastham Middle School, in fact, anticipates an increase in school autonomy and expects that teachers will also need to be involved more fully in understanding school funding and will carry more responsibility for prioritizing school level expenses in the future.

Has the Education Reform Act of 1988 made any impact on the *quality* of education in Great Britain? Educators have repeatedly experienced all manner of reforms, all intended to provide better public education. The sheer number of small and large initiatives have almost made teachers numb and they have learned to pull into the relative safety of their classrooms and attempt to ride out the storms of reform that frequently disturb their world. There have been calm periods when local educators' values have been a good fit with those of the policymakers and then periods, like the current one, when these values clash and the profession becomes rebellious or at least uncomfortable and on edge. The generally healthy status of Eastham Middle School's position in the league tables no doubt provides the school with a nationally-recognized credibility, enabling the local educators to argue that their caring and responsible approach to educating children is a successful approach. The educators and governors of Eastham Middle School have maintained a steady course in the face of government mandates. The reason seems to be that they firmly believe, and have stated publicly, that

the school ethos that has been nurtured over many years, is valued above all else, even while the school is still accommodating the values of the larger reforms.

Firestone, Fitz, and Broadfoot (1999) explain this in terms of legitimation. This perspective helps to explain the persistence of problems with implementation under any kind of mandated policy. It says that “schools and other organizations survive and flourish in part by *adopting* institutional form that are current in, and expected by, the larger environment ” (Firestone, Fitz, & Broadfoot, 1999, p. 762).

Suggested Revisions to the A.I.M. Model

Guthrie and Koppich’s A.I.M. theory (1993) has been a useful model for understanding the societal context in which the 1988 education reforms in Great Britain were conceived and developed. It also might explain how a number of key concepts, particularly the National Curriculum and Key Stage Assessments, seem to have become entrenched in the national culture. However, the findings of this study suggest several reservations in accepting the model in its entirety.

Analysis of interview transcripts and school documents for value-laden content revealed that the three core values of society identified by Guthrie and Koppich (1993) – *liberty, efficiency, and equality*- were not comprehensive enough to describe the values reflected by the local educators. Marshall, Mitchell, and Wirth’s (1989) inclusion of *quality* as another vital cultural value provided a necessary fourth value with which to categorize collected data, particularly in light of the prevalence of both policy and local references to “standards” in education. It wasn’t until well into the analysis process, and

particularly when school documents were examined, that the idea of *ethos* seemed to predominantly represent the essence of the local school rhetoric and a re-examination of all the interview data confirmed that indeed, this was an important finding. In terms of society's values, *ethos* may perhaps be interpreted as the national "character" of a culture, or the "human climate" distinctive to the people of the society (Funk & Wagnalls, 1981, p. 436). In a sense, *ethos* is an almost indefinable quality that emanates from a place, a combination of philosophy, beliefs, relationships, and common goals. It seems to be an essential element in that it allows all other concepts to work.

There are certainly additional core cultural values that Guthrie and Koppich (1993) have not included. The American Air Force, for example, incorporate their core values of *integrity*, *service before self*, and *excellence (quality)* into their mission statements and making them a foundation of all they do. Colonel Bruce Burda, Commander of the 100th Air Refueling Wing, RAF Mildenhall, England, stresses the importance of such a value system and his words could be applied to the values held by any public service organization. "Our core values are about doing much more than the minimum. They remind us of what it takes to get the mission done, inspire us to do our best at all times, and are the glue that holds our force and our country together" (Jan. 26, 2001, p. 4). These same core military values, in a sense, also describe an *ethos* or culture that fosters achievement. Words like *integrity* and *service before self*, are analogous to similar words that describe *school ethos* – words such as *responsibility*, *respect*, and *citizenship*.

Guthrie and Koppich (1993) also claim that political reform is able to take hold particularly in a period of value disequilibrium. It is not clear that this was the case in the 1988 education reforms. Certainly there were major economic concerns throughout the industrialized nations in the decade of the 1980s and this explains the embracing of *efficiency* principles in much of the legislation enacted during that period. But there are not always simple explanations for the ascendance of a political party to power. The value systems politicians represent may appeal to only certain segments of society, enough to bring them into office but not indicative of the values of the society as a whole. Such may have been the case in 1979, when the Tory Party, led by Margaret Thatcher, took over the government in Great Britain. These politicians brought with them a large parliamentary majority (Thomas, 1993) and this enabled Conservative political philosophy to guide much of the legislation during this period. This thinking, however, did not necessarily reflect the will of the populace as a whole and may have been more of a function of a returning to power and being determined to redress what they saw as damage done to the traditional selective system of British education by liberals.

It is to be expected that Conservative values would represent the other end of the political spectrum from those of teachers and other educational professionals as witnessed by the Tory educational goal of severely reducing the “producer interests” (teachers and LEAs) which they felt had been considered for too long. The liberal approaches to education advocated by the education practitioners is what had angered Tory education ministers in the first place and so provided impetus for such radical reforms. As a case in point, Chris Woodhead has recently resigned as the Labour Government’s Chief

Inspector of Schools, having originally been appointed by Tory Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. Though he claims to be a non-political person, his recent, very public remarks about education policy reveal his more conservative philosophy about reforms (Woodhead, 2001). He had been determined, as Chief Inspector, “to challenge child-centred, progressive orthodoxies in the classroom” and “to challenge the irrelevance of much teacher training – the source of resistance to government policies such as the National Curriculum and the literacy and numeracy strategies” (p. 29). Eventually his frustrations with Labour ministers over their lack of progress on these, and other, fronts, finally caused Woodhead to seek a more autonomous outlet as a newspaper columnist to express his views on education.

But Guthrie and Koppich (1993) may be correct in suggesting that a convergence of factors is necessary to establish lasting reform. In the last years of the 1980s, there seemed to be a pervasive sense among industrialized societies that the poor state of public education was responsible for economic woes. Similarly conservative policies were also finding support in other nations, particularly in the U.S., and this may probably be more crucial than an “alignment” of Conservative values within British culture. As Guthrie and Koppich maintain, the “policy entrepreneurs” are essential for seizing a window of opportunity for change and “mobilizing” resources and public opinion behind any reform initiatives. This was true in England in the late 80s, when certain key actors in the Tory Party, like Margaret Thatcher and Kenneth Baker, found themselves in positions of power. There had been previous proposals for a national curriculum but they had proved

unsuccessful until the Tories were able to shrewdly shape a new proposal to be consistent with the concept of *liberty* in the form of market competition.

This approach is one that the Conservatives have often advocated as a strategy for producing higher standards and providing value for money. But there is also evidence that public opinion was not ready to accept the headlong rush to *efficiency* and *liberty* by eclipsing *equality*. Even some Conservative constituencies adamantly resisted attempts by their own Party to abandon their Comprehensive schools in order to return to selective grammar schools, believing that would benefit middle class children over those of the working class (Thomas, 1993). Instead, there appeared to be a bipartisan consensus to support any educational programs that would contribute to a meritocracy.

But it is true that *efficiency* presented in terms of *liberty* was more easily accepted. The idea that parental choice of schools would create competition and so force school staff to raise standards of instruction and assessment seemed to be accepted by most of the populace, although understandably less so by teachers. It is they who have suffered the consequences of stricter accountability and they who question the worth of government mandates in terms of increased student learning. Government and business people rely on numbers and it simplifies things to measure learning, like sales figures or product inventory, by exam scores. Educators understand that learning is far more complex and does not lend itself to fitting into neatly reportable statistics. Sometimes it takes years to measure learning and even then it may be subtle and private. It may come as a sudden insight, or it may be bound up in a fond memory of a teacher or a meaningful lesson, or as one of those unique educational experiences that is remembered forever.

Educators recognize that for some children, learning may be merely the slightest improvement in a difficult subject, the moment when a problem or concept finally makes sense. Many of the educators I interviewed believe instinctively that the atmosphere of a classroom and of the school, the development of respectful relationships between students and adults, and a sense of caring and security, can all have more positive influences on student achievement than any specific curriculum content or any threats about failure from politicians.

In order for implementation of national reforms to succeed, are “*local entrepreneurs*” needed? Judging by the findings of this study, it seems that if true quality education is the goal, than local educational leaders must be able to be in control of the destiny of their own schools, staff, and students. The Labour Government shows every sign of maintaining the structure of Tory education reform and *efficiency* and *quality* values will still be manifest through accountability measures and the push for higher standards. League tables will still publicly “name and shame” successful and failing schools and OFSTED inspections will probably still cause undue stress on school level educators. But Eastham Middle School has proven in the past year, that these school practitioners can live by their own collective value system and yet still satisfy the demands of government mandates.

The Education Reform Act of 1988 appears to be a permanent reform, upheld through the administrations of both major political parties. In fact, a Daily Telegraph study (Clare & King, 1999) found that more than two-thirds of British adults see no improvement in schools since Labour took control of the government despite the sizable

mandate won by the Party in the 1997 election. Any shift in values between the two political parties would probably result in only a modification to the present structure of the National Curriculum and Assessment system. It is unlikely there would be a return to the widely diverse education policies formerly permitted by regional LEAs and resulting in a “post code lottery” in terms of school quality throughout the country.

Strengthening the Local Management of Schools concept should allow more opportunity for local leadership to assert itself. The senior management of Eastham believes they will be able to carry on as they have always done, creating a safe and caring environment for learning that attracts children and parents to the school. It is part of the long-range plan. The Head Governor, Mrs. Grover, confides that an important part of the selection process for a new head teacher last year involved searching for a person who reflected the *ethos* value. The governors specifically sought someone who would be willing to preserve the particular climate that has allowed this school to remain unique regardless of what national policy dictates.

But trying to wield strong central control over education policy may produce unpredictable results. If the Labour Government proceeds with their own plans to shift the balance of power among local level policy “mobilizers” in favor of headteachers, it is possible that this increased autonomy (*liberty*) for Heads will take the British education reform in a different direction than intended by its Tory architects. Already there are signs that there is increased conflict building, as each member of the local level tripartite (LEAs, governors, and Heads) jostles for control over personnel and even curriculum matters (Henry & Thornton, 2001). This situation may be indicative of a climate in

which another societal value shift is occurring, nudged by more traditional Labour support for equality issues. It will be interesting to see where that will leave the centralized education policy in a few years time.

Values and the Purpose of School

What do the values of a school system say about the purpose of school? The issues of standards, in fact, will be interpreted differently according to what people believe is the purpose of public schooling. “On the one hand,” reports Alfie Kohn (1999) “there are humanistic goals: helping children become contented and fulfilled, helping them grow into adults with a deeper understanding of themselves and the world around them” (p. 49). Concern about issues of *democratic equality* indicates a commitment to public schooling for *all* pupils in order that students be prepared to become capable “citizens.” This requires young people to become informed about the structure of government, to develop an understanding of the society in which they will hopefully participate, and to possess enough basic knowledge to take a stand on important political decisions. The role of schools, in this case, is to provide equal access to a certain level of competence, offer common social and cultural experiences, all the while attempting to bridge the gap between the advantaged and disadvantaged. Eastham educators and governors seem to be articulating this view in numerous ways. *Equality* is a high priority in their school. They also express concern for the developmental needs of their students and believe in the value of a positive learning environment.

But on the other hand, Kohn (1999) continues, business interests have prevailed in the late 20th century debate on education, pitching an agenda that “whittles the purpose of schooling down to an almost sinister notion of making good little workers for future employment” (p. 49). Kohn may also have encapsulated the economic justification for schools that seems to have influenced the education reform policies of the Conservative Party in the late 1980s.

This rationale is consistent with all the talk we hear today about tougher standards and accountability, the huge role played by standardized testing, the references to education as an “investment,” and the prevalent idea that our students must be Number One. (p. 49)

Efficiency, both in terms of economics and accountability (value for money), is a value essentially derived from the influence of business managers (Berliner & Biddle, 1995; Boutwell, 1997). As such, it seems likely that those who regard efficiency as a key measure of any successful enterprise, would view the purpose of schooling to be the training of productive “workers” in order to better support the national economy in the future. Students then, are viewed as “products” to be polished and mass-produced in the most “efficient” manner, through the articulation of specific outcomes and holding teachers and school administrators accountable for reaching those outcomes. The result can be a narrowness of purpose that has a tendency to place undue faith in easily measurable goals such as those exemplified by exam league tables and inspection reports. There seems little doubt that government policymakers, over the past decade or so, have emphasized the importance of schools in producing *efficient workers* and this appears to be the basis for the notable clash of values evident between school practitioners and politicians. Former Chief Inspector Woodhead (2001) offers a similar indictment of the

Labour view of education, deriding their emphasis on thinking and social skills while reducing the importance of the basic knowledge base of the National Curriculum. He takes Labour Education Minister David Blunkett to task for his focus on providing the United Kingdom with a well-functioning labor market.

The problem is the black hole, the failure to understand that education is important because it is intrinsically valuable, not just because it contributes to our social and economic good. Yes, we must ensure that young people leave school with the skills and attitudes they need to secure a worthwhile job. But education ought to be far more than a preparation for adult life in this utilitarian sense. (p. 29)

The standards movement, or concern with *quality*, may be viewed from several perspectives according to one's view of the purpose of school. On the surface, it appears that *equality* concerns can be met, since the idea is to raise the educational competence of *every* students to a higher level of shared knowledge and to lessen the gap between the advantaged and disadvantaged. Theoretically, the barriers to economic and social mobility should at least be lowered, if not eliminated. *Efficiency*, however, stresses specialized preparation for particular kinds of work. This means that those who have ambitions for higher education and professional status would require far different standards than those who aspire to more menial or less skilled career paths. Similarly, from the *liberty* perspective, calls for higher standards usually intend that the more savvy of consumers may demand school programs and structures that will provide for their needs even if it is at the expense of other students. Private gain is allowed to take precedence over public service. Such an attitude is revealed by calls for sorting and selecting students and schools in the name of higher standards.

Liberty, as this study has shown, may be interpreted both in the business sense of “market incentives,” and in the purer sense of freedom of choice and action. In Great Britain (as well as in other advanced nations), market choice has been introduced to various public services, such as health, transportation, and of course the schools. In the latter this has actually been a business strategy designed to coerce higher *quality* education by threatening failing status and closure for schools who could not attract sufficient numbers of pupils or who could not successfully reach a particular target for success. As this definition of *liberty* derives from the business concept of free enterprise and competition, it implies, again, that schooling is to be conducted as a business and should produce a “product” which meets the agreed upon standard.

The market choice interpretation of *liberty* in terms of the purpose of school also has other, more subtle, implications. It construes education, even though a public service, as a *private* good to be purchased by the individual consumer of education. This view is concerned with social mobility and requires comparisons and competition (such as student test scores, grades, class rank) so that some students enjoy benefits that others do not. Education systems that serve such a purpose must necessarily sort and select students and increasingly, under the guise of higher standards and *quality*, whole schools are graded as “passing or failing.” In England, the Labour Government has recently been calling for just such a move, with a return to more selective grammar schools, some under the guise of newly created specialist schools, city academies, and beacon schools (www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/seu).

Alfie Kohn (1999) acknowledges this trend.

Those who are busy arguing whether we should think of education in terms of what it can do for democracy [as opposed to the economy] may be missing the more fundamental shift, which is toward asking what can it do for me? (p. 49)

The purpose is to preserve the advantages already held by some students, what Marshall, Mitchell, and Wirt (1989) refer to as increased personal capacities, and to increase the distinctions between educational consumers. The recent British practice of publicizing the failures of some schools (often those institutions whose clientele are decidedly disadvantaged socially, economically, or ethnically) and the American interest in education vouchers, are designed to organize schools to enhance consumer rights at the expense of public benefits for all. The study on public values and policy culture by Marshall, Mitchell, and Wirt (1989) stresses this point, concluding that measures of the value preferences are “ipsative;” that is, an emphasis on one value results in a lessening of another. They describe the inevitable tension between the values of *efficiency*, *quality*, *equity* and choice (*liberty*).

Consequently actors within meritocratic, egalitarian, and democratic cultures pursue in public policy their respective values of Quality and Efficiency, Equity and Choice, and their claims often conflict. We have noted how value priorities shifted quite dramatically among these cultures since the 1970s from Equity to Quality in federal policy . . . (p. 139)

Summary

This chapter contains an analysis of the data collected by the researcher.

Categories for examining the results of interviews, observations, and artifacts emerged as the data was being collected and reflected the evidence of core societal values defined by

Guthrie and Koppich (1989) and Marshall, Mitchell, and Wirt (1989). Continual revisions, modifications and additions helped to ensure that the information gathered during the case study was sufficient enough to answer the fundamental research questions about the implementation of education reforms in Great Britain. The policy language of the political entrepreneurs who brought the Education Reform Act of 1988 life, was analyzed for evidence of the values guiding the policy. Similar analysis was applied to the words of local educators who were interviewed for this case study and the findings were subsequently reported in terms of the key elements of Guthrie and Koppich's A.I.M. model of education reform and high politics. Finally, a value analysis of education policy language from the current Labour Government expanded the knowledge about the political context in which the local educators must perform their work. While the value belief systems held by the Tory politicians can account for the rather radical reforms put into place at the national level, there was a question as to whether local educators would be able to accept the mandated policy practices in light of their own value systems. This chapter addressed the juxtaposition of national policy and local implementation through each component of the A.I.M. model, including (A) the alignment or conflict of social values, the Education Reform Act of 1988 as an (I) initiating event, and (M) the crucial mobilizers of reform. The better part of the chapter presented a discussion of the values reflected in educator interviews, in the documents that describe Eastham Middle School to the public, and through personal observation and interaction with the school staff. Careful examination of local values forms the basis for interpreting how these school practitioners are coping with the pressures of implementation in the face of some distinct

value clashes between politicians and educators. The chapter closes with a look at how the various perspectives about the purpose of public schooling in a democracy represent the dominance of particular cultural values and highlights the inevitable creation of value tensions within education policy.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

Given the many compelling reasons for inclusion of the thinking of school people, it is astonishing to me that the voices and visions of teachers and principals are not more audible and visible in the current discussions and debates about school improvement. It is unthinkable that any other profession undergoing the same close scrutiny would allow all the descriptions of practice, analyses of practice, and prescriptions for improving practice to come only from outsiders looking in. Where are the voices of the insiders? Why can't we walk into a school and see and hear the mission of that school conveyed with clarity and conviction in corridors and classrooms? How can the professionals who work in schools rally around a common purpose? Under what conditions will their individual and collective visions be formulated and revealed? What will enable teachers and administrators to take their own visions seriously, have confidence in them, and act on them (Barth, 1990, p. 153)?

The purpose of this study has been to examine the significance of the 1988 educational reforms in Great Britain within a context of politics and values. Using

Guthrie and Koppich's (1993) A.I.M. theory of social values and policy reform as an evaluative lens, the study considered whether the values guiding the making of national education policy by politicians are shared with local level "actors" who have been tasked with implementing the reforms. More specifically, I searched for evidence of *liberty*, *efficiency*, and *equality*, the values which Guthrie and Koppich consider fundamental to a democratic society, and a fourth value, *quality*, suggested by the research of Marshall, Mitchell, and Wirt (1989), in the policy language of Tory Party politicians and in the interviews with school level teachers and administrators.

Chapter I presented the proposal for the study, including its purpose, the conceptual levels through which the data was examined, the research questions guiding the study, and the significance of the study. Chapter II, through a review of the literature relevant to the case study, "provides a framework for establishing the importance of the study, as well as a benchmark for comparing the results of a study with other findings" (Creswell, 1994, p. 21). In this case, key concepts addressed in the literature included education and democratic values, the Standards Movement, high stakes assessment, influences from reform movements in other advanced nations, centralization and decentralization, Effective Schools Research, and policy sharing between the United States and Great Britain. Chapter III described the case study design and methodology for the research and presented the data collected through observations, interviews, and artifacts. All fieldwork was focused on two primary research questions:

1. How do educators at the local level view the purposes of public schooling?

2. Given the mandate of the 1988 Education Reform Act in Great Britain, what have been the experiences of educators in implementing the education policy?

Chapter IV presented an analysis of the data from the perspective of the social values identified in Guthrie and Koppich's A.I.M. theory of reform and politics, and the cultural framework for studying education policy proposed by Marshall, Mitchell, and Wirt. Several findings emerged from this analysis of the data:

1. Local educators agree that there is a need for a standardized curriculum in Great Britain but feel the National Curriculum is too content-oriented and are uncomfortable with its prescriptive nature.
2. The amount of paperwork facing teachers and administrators continues to increase, despite the change from a Tory to a Labour Government in 1997.
3. Local educators, but particularly teachers, are experiencing considerable stress from the pressures generated by Key Stage exams and OFSTED inspections.
4. Teachers are frustrated with having too little time to develop lessons that would enable children to assimilate knowledge while also enjoying learning.
5. Local educators generally believe that government bureaucrats lack the knowledge of how children actually learn and feel the cumbersome nature of the National Curriculum reflects this lack of expertise.

6. There is a concern among educators at all levels locally (teachers, heads, governors, LEA) that the developmental needs of the children they serve may not be considered even under the Labour Government education policy.
7. The furious pace of government initiatives, from both the Tory Party who wrote the 1988 reforms, and the Labour Party presently continuing education reform, has left educators with little time to absorb the changes and to reflect on and evaluate the effectiveness of the ideas.
8. The senior management of the school does not view the “education market” as significant to their school, believing that limited competition and lack of transportation in rural areas means that parental choice of schools is essentially non-existent.
9. Eastham Middle School educators have placed the school climate or “ethos” as a top priority. As a staff, they believe that a caring environment that encourages respectfulness and responsibility will provide a positive atmosphere for the increased student learning intended by the national education policy.
10. The priority order of the social values underlying the national education policy and the practice of local educators differ in important ways. Nationally, *efficiency* (economic *and* accountability), *quality* (standards), and *liberty* (the education market) guide policy. Locally, concern for *equality* and *quality* (primarily through establishing a school *ethos* that

encourages a high standard of education) are most valued and *liberty* is interpreted as autonomy in the school and in the classroom.

11. Despite the evidence of a conflict between the values of the policymakers and their successors and local implementers, Eastham educators have quietly found ways both to accommodate government policy and yet to exert their own values on the school program. The general satisfaction that parents and community express about the school (OFSTED Report, 2000) may indicate that the values of parents and pupils are being satisfied as well.

Conclusions and Discussion

What this particular research study has revealed, about the extent of both teacher stress and general disgruntlement with centrally administered policy mandates, is not in itself particularly new or surprising information. Educators have long been at odds with those outside of education, like politicians, who historically have wielded considerable control over public education. But what appears to have changed in Britain in the 1980s under the Thatcher government is the introduction of the thin edge of the wedge toward allowing *business* principles and interests to guide educational policy.

In the United States, public schooling has been under the influence of business for decades, but all the more so from the 1980s on, when the economic downturn was attributed, in part, to the woeful state of the public school system (Berliner & Biddle, 1995; Koppich & Guthrie, 1993; Slater, 1983). Conservative politicians in Britain, in a

period of unprecedented policy sharing with the Reagan government in the U.S., embraced the “efficiency managerial model” inherent in business practice and adopted it for their public school system. Hence, the emphasis on the public choice (*liberty*) component of the 1988 Education Reform Act that portrays individual schools as “markets” and puts them in a position to compete with each other for “customers.” The Public Choice model described and analyzed by numerous researchers (Cohen, 1990; Levin, 1990; Michelson, 1989) has been applied to other public service sectors of society in Britain such as health care and transportation. The predominant measure of success then becomes the *efficiency* of the operation. In a school, this means, in part, the management of a school budget, but a school is also accountable and is judged in terms of a school’s standing in national “league tables,” a ranking determined by the students’ aggregated exam scores. This fundamental change in the management of schools appears to be having a domino effect on educators’ views of their roles.

It is not difficult to suspect that, like the United States, once business interests and principles have gained a foothold in influencing government education policy, especially in a nationally centralized system such as the one in Great Britain, it is unlikely that educators will ever regain the upper hand. As we have seen, even with the change of government in Britain in the late 1990s from a conservative to a more liberal party, the efficiency managerial model remains strongly influential.

Policy sharing on education reforms between Great Britain and the United States reaches beyond the influence of corporate thinking. The development of a standardized National Curriculum and aligned assessments in Britain parallels the Standards

Movement in the United States through which politicians and others present the almost unarguable pledge to improve the *quality* of education. In most of the American proposals for “higher standards,” there is also, as in Britain, the essential element of accountability (*efficiency*) to guarantee to the public that they are receiving the kind of education they deserve. In other words, that they are receiving “value for their money” (*efficiency* again).

Daugherty (1995) followed the difficult months of developing the National Curriculum and Assessments that were the cornerstones of the Tory education reforms. He expressed concern that the goals for the curriculum were too broad and worried that there was not a pilot project for the scheme. Eastham educators expressed similar reservations about the nearly unmanageable early versions of the curriculum. The initial assessments were also comprehensive. They were intended to diagnose students’ strengths and weaknesses, provide information on pupil achievement at key stages, provide feedback for instructional planning, and yield evaluative data on the quality of teaching.

There is little argument about most of these intentions but it is the last goal which has caused much angst among the teachers at Eastham and, according to press accounts and numerous research studies (Barnham, 1996; Thrupp, 1998), among the majority of the British teachers. The data from this case study indicates that the stress caused by the prospect of exams and inspections, coupled with the relentless appearance of new initiatives, has become an enormous, lurking presence in the professional life of nearly every teacher. One reason for the low morale that has emerged in various ways during

my research study, is that teachers feel disenfranchised professionally, concerned that their voices have been continually ignored in the exchange of political rhetoric. They feel that their judgments as experienced teachers have not been acknowledged above the school level, probably indicating that values other than those of the policymakers have not been considered. These findings confirm those of Elizabeth Barnham (1996) who concluded that the direction of British education policy had progressed according to political party ideology without intellectual debate or any reference to educational theory. Teachers in her study, as in this study, believed that government ministers had the last word in educational matters regardless of what educators thought.

Thrupp (1998) studied the impact of school inspections in New Zealand and in the United Kingdom. Much like the teachers in my study, he also found that educators in Britain believed school inspections have been highly contentious . . . misguided and unfair in the way they evaluate schools” (p. 196). These feelings were cause for an adversarial relationship to develop between the schools and the external accountability agents and creating an atmosphere that Thrupp calls “the politics of blame” (p. 196).

But despite the value dissonance between the intentions of the politicians and the realities of classroom practice, Eastham, as a school community, has managed to preserve programs and approaches that *do* meet local values. They have cushioned the harsh and stressful reality of tests and inspections by creating and nourishing an atmosphere of caring and respect. They communicate and practice this ethos to students and parents, and, within this positive learning environment, children appear relatively content and secure. Barnham (1996) also discovered in her research that each of the schools she

studied had developed its own culture within the main social culture, with what she calls a policy of “adapt and survive” in the face of politicians trying to provide “education by remote control” (p. 37). Teachers, she observed, managed to maintain observable control over the day-to-day translation of central policy into practical applications in the classroom.

A similar quality was identified by Sarason in his comprehensive School Change Study (1996). His findings indicated that not only must the three key issues of curriculum, instruction, and assessment be attended to simultaneously in order for school reform efforts to be effective, but that the “school culture” was an essential part of the whole process. At Eastham, the curriculum and assessments are obviously prescribed by government policy, the source of considerable stress, but aspects of instruction and school culture seem to remain under local influence and this may be enough to make teaching at Eastham palatable.

Bottery (1999) posed a question in relation to this issue, wondering if it is true that teachers do not mind losing their autonomy in exchange for a clarity of purpose, however mandated? Eastham teachers seem to understand that they must compromise with government over public education. They recognize the benefits of such clarity of purpose, for standardization and even for accountability, but chafe at the persistence and interference of government policy initiatives that intrude unnecessarily on their judgment as professional educators with their students’ best interests in mind.

My research has focused on the impact of a centrally-imposed policy on local implementation in terms of value systems. Political rhetoric is usually intended to

convince the public that proposed policy will bring results – higher *quality* education, parental choice of schools, more *equality* of educational opportunity. But Firestone, Fitz, and Broadfoot (1999) speculate about the factors in a centralized policy most likely to influence actions at a lower level. One perspective suggested is that “political games” played at each level of implementation (national government, LEA, school) are relatively independent of each other and that winning and losing are defined within the context of each level in terms of how individuals use power resources. They suggest that one explanation for the increase of centrally deployable sanctions for non-compliance with policy is that this is a practical reaction to the fact that central governments lack sufficient power to truly shape local responses. In that light, the Firestone, Fitz, and Broadfoot study concludes that the National Curriculum and associated assessments, the inspections, the insistence on teacher and school accountability, and recent calls for merit pay are attempts by the British government to use sanctions as “policy levers” to more effectively influence local implementation.

Other researchers have concluded, as I have, that nurturing a strong sense of ethos in a school is an important value for the successful education of children. Eastham Middle School data describes a motivated and well-behaved student body, dedicated teachers, and a high priority placed on providing a pleasant learning environment. The most recent OFSTED inspection in June 2000 resulted in praise for the accomplishments of the school’s pupils and staff, specifically focusing on the relationships between staff and students and the *ethos* that has been created. Clarke (1997) also found that learning takes place best when teachers have developed good relationships with their students and

there is mutual respect. Gewirtz (1998) would support the strength of this approach. He theorizes that schools deemed “successful” exhibit certain positive characteristics, all of which Eastham can claim to have in place or to have placed in high priority in their School Development Plan (2000). These include motivated and undemanding students, adequate resources, dedicated teachers, pleasant facilities, and a devotion to a “vision” by the staff.

Roland Barth (1990) also recognizes the importance of a school vision.

Another reason to take the concept of vision seriously is that the personal visions of adults, no matter how fragmentary and rudimentary, are not inconsequential to the education of youngsters. Many researchers are finding a consistent relationship between the presence of teachers’ and principals’ visions and the effectiveness of their schools. (p. 151)

But is a local vision for a school possible in a centrally administered and highly structured education system? Guthrie and Koppich’s model suggested there could be multiple “mobilizers” for reforms and it is possible that teachers in Britain are able to occupy that role more often than might be expected under such a strong centralized policy. Despite the obvious stress of the job and dissatisfaction with the radical changes wrought by the school reforms, the teachers in my study seemed willing to accept some standardization of the curriculum as long as they were able to maintain at least some amount of control over their classrooms. Tomlinson (1997) also found that teachers were not unduly critical of the National Curriculum but he advocated a partnership among the central government and the key actors in a community school (governors, heads, parents, teachers, employers, and community leaders) to achieve the best quality of education for pupils.

Teachers in my study clearly hold different value priorities than the government ministers who developed the education reform policy and the absence of *equality* concerns during the Tory years are certainly a source of distress. In a pilot project commissioned by the National Union of Teachers, Tomlinson (1997) sought teachers' perceptions about the academic/vocational system under the ERA. He found, not surprisingly, that 98% of teachers support the comprehensive ideal in education, where all abilities are cared for, there is *equal* opportunity to succeed, and there is a facilitation of social integration. In 1997, before the new Labour Government had any influence on education, he predicted that given the government's priorities, it was likely that the forces of *efficiency* would continue to prevail over those of *equality*. My own analysis of Tory and Labour policy language (shown in Figure 5) tends to confirm that conclusion but

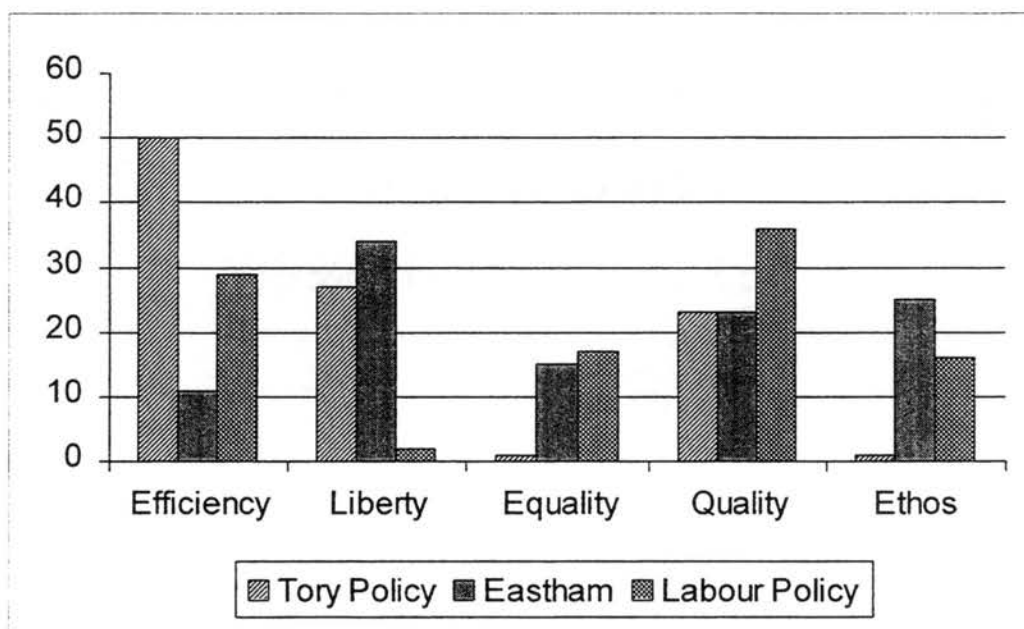


Figure 5. Policy Language Comparison.

there is also a hopeful and significant shift by Labour of late, to revisit and update the comprehensive ideal.

The Local Management of Schools (LMS) concept is another important aspect of the 1988 Education reform Act. It has its counterpart in experiments with site-based management of schools in the United States even though schools in Britain are subject to considerably more centralized control over curriculum and accountability (Lawton, 1996; Pierson, 1998; Whitty & Edwards, 1998). Portin's six year study (1999) on the changing function of head teachers under LMS, noted a shift in their responsibilities from an instructional leadership role to one requiring more broad managerial skills. However, he also found that by the end of the six years, those same heads were beginning to regain their positions as educational leaders as they began to master the formerly unfamiliar tasks of business management. Ms. Harris, expressed similar alteration in the nature of her job as head teacher of Eastham Middle School. My observations and conversations with her revealed her to be someone who is still a teacher at heart, still concerned about how children learn and genuinely enjoying her daily interactions with students in her own classes. But despite such educational priorities, Ms. Harris was finding her time increasingly appropriated by management concerns. Analysis of the interviews concerning her responsibilities as a head teacher exposed almost a preoccupation about financial matters, including worries about meeting the payroll for staff, the need for economies with supplies and materials, and planning for an extended program of facilities maintenance, renovation, and expansion. Ms. Harris is, of course, in the midst of her first year as head teacher and she admits, with what seems like regret, that she feels this aspect

of her job is being neglected at present. It is too soon to tell if Ms. Harris will eventually be able to resume the more traditional role as an instructional leader as Portin's head teachers were able to do.

The very title traditionally given to British school administrators has, in the past, aptly described their role as the head *among* teachers, not a manager *over* their colleagues. The accountability measures of the 1988 education reforms seems destined to somehow interfere with that relationship and the prospects are not viewed positively by either heads or teachers. The interviews with both the Head teacher and the Deputy Head at Eastham touched on their awareness of another eminent shift in the responsibilities of their jobs, as a result of the demands of LMS. Both administrators expressed reluctance about creating a more adversarial relationship between themselves and their professional staff but felt such a situation was inevitable as they took more responsibility for the performance evaluation of teachers. Hall and Southworth (1997) found that heads were forced to become "local chief inspectors" of schools and to become uncharacteristically more invested in "outcomes" rather than processes and skills.

Other local relationships have been affected as well by the ERA. As my research has found, Local Education Authorities have been caught in the middle between a political policy that was designed to minimize their influence and their schools which had been accustomed to relying on LEA colleagues for their support and expertise. LEA advisor Mr. Lewis expressed regret that the relationship between schools and their LEAs have become more of a business arrangement than a collaboration of educators. Haigh (1996), a secondary head teacher, laments as well, that schools have now become

“clients” of their LEAs, forced to pay out of a limited school budget for services such as curriculum assistance that were formerly provided free.

Through analysis of the data collected for this case study, it can be concluded that despite the strong control of education by the national government under the Education Reform Act of 1988, the Local Management of Schools idea has nevertheless allowed the continued influence of local actors. Mrs. Grover as Chairperson of Governors at Eastham certainly exudes a passionate interest in her school. Her conversations revolve predominantly around how to maintain the integrity and ethos of a school that has always been a vital and valued part of the local community, known for providing a special environment in which several generations of children have been happily educated. Mrs. Grover hints only briefly at any personal political leanings but is essentially a non-political person who bristles at new, mandated, educational policies that she seems to see as an affront to those local educators who she thinks have been providing an exemplary education to the community for years. A study on management perspectives by Evans (1998) noted a similar point of view among the school managers she interviewed. None of the heads or governors felt that their governing bodies were political and they felt that the governors most valued *caring* and a sense of community where children and staff come first.

Even as a newly hired head teacher, Ms. Harris seems to have established a congenial working relationship with her board of governors. She has had to overcome some natural resistance to her replacement of a well-loved and respected former Head. However, Mrs. Grover confided that Ms. Harris had been selected as Head precisely

because the governors were convinced that she could support a positive school ethos as a community priority. I have a sense that, like the school administrators in the Evans study (1998), those at Eastham might be willing to risk rejecting government directives if they appeared to run counter to the interests of their pupils. There is certainly no open defiance of government policy at Eastham, but the implication from Mrs. Grover was that this school and governors would adopt a passive-resistant stance if government policies do not reflect their collective values as a school. Indeed, such quiet resistance has already occurred in regard to a government mandate requiring a daily literacy hour which Eastham educators had determined was not as effective as a literacy program they had already created.

While the traditionally more liberal teaching profession would be expected to be resistant to the policies of Conservative politicians, their disenchantment and even disillusionment with the education policies of the Labour Party is revealing, if not unexpected. Teachers at Eastham Middle School are cautious in their criticism of present government policy, admitting to mixed feelings about many of the education initiatives yet unmistakably expressing their weariness over the pace of reforms and their stress over an ever mounting workload resulting from inspections and exams. After all, they seem to be saying, if a Labour government cannot understand the perspectives of the education professionals on how to achieve educational *equality*, what other government would offer any further hope?

In terms of what Eastham teachers value most in education, that is *equality* and the importance of school *ethos*, the Labour Party, in fact, has more recently shown some

signs of compatible values in their policy proposals. This may account for the “wait and see” attitude of many teachers. While Labour has been willing to abandon neither the *quality* promoted by the standards movement nor the *efficiency* of the National Curriculum and Assessments, certainly the Party has now turned its attention to meeting the educational needs of an increasingly diverse society. They are also attempting to reverse Tory attempts to return to the traditional two-tiered school structure of earlier times which provided separate educational tracks for the children of the poor and the working class and those of the middle and upper classes. Labour has even sought to soften the effect of school inspections by placing more emphasis on such elusive factors as “school culture” by looking beyond exam results to attendance figures, student discipline, and parents’ view of the school program as other measures of student satisfaction.

But while value alignment between teachers and government appears more favorable under the Labour government, the fact remains that a politically motivated education policy, Guthrie and Koppich’s (1993) “initiating event,” still exists. It is one that is still centrally controlled and wedded to efficiency/accountability principles. It also continues to contribute to an environment at the school level in which the educational professionals believe that they have little control over their work, and in which they suffer from a decided lack of trust and respect from both the government and the public.

The lack of alignment between the values of government policy and the teachers at Eastham understandably continues to cause stress. They can only hope for a continued consensus among the school’s staff on local mission and belief priorities and an

alignment of values with the Head and the Governors. But as time passes and schools adjust to the current system, new “mobilizers” or “entrepreneurs” may arise. Given the continued support for Local Management of Schools, this role may fall to head teachers and governors who choose to seize the initiative and place their own spin on government policy.

Limitations of the Study

The relatively small number of school level educators interviewed within a single case study naturally limits my ability to make strong generalized statements about what seems to be a conflict of values between the government policymakers and those who must implement that policy at the local level. However, my findings seem to complement much of the research I was able to consult related to the 1988 ERA in Great Britain and issues of policy implementation. Within the limits of the sample size, this study looks not only at the implementation of national policy at the local level, but also offers some insights into the values that guide the practice of both policymakers and implementers. As such it provides an explanation for the historic clashes, both overt and covert, between politicians and educators.

There are a number of alternative perspectives that may place my conclusions from the data in a different light. The Eastham Middle School community is predominantly white, middle or working class, and rural. Those factors are key to the interpretations I have given to the data. Issues that plague inner city schools in both Britain and the United States, such as a diverse and multi-cultural student body, poverty and unemployment, and racism, are complicating factors that hardly touch Eastham and

therefore my analysis of teacher and community values has been made more simplified. *Equality* as supported by Eastham educators, for example, generally means an attention to a wide range of academic *abilities* rather than to concerns about ethnic and racial disadvantages. In inner city schools such common problems of diverse languages and different cultural interpretations would also add to the normal stresses of curriculum and assessments but are not important factors in this case study. *Liberty* as a value underlying the education market and encouraging parental choice for schools would probably command a much higher priority as an issue in an urban school. As a result, the values revealed by Eastham's educators could be considered typical of similar rural schools where "school choice" remains a rather negligible proposition.

The research study also is limited to the case study of a single school and because of geographic and bureaucratic restrictions on researcher access, the study includes only a small sample of representatives from the several layers of local governance – teachers, school administrators, governors, and Local Education Authority. It purposely did not include others with an interest in the school, that is, the parents and students of Eastham Middle School, because the focus of the study was on the values inherent in the *implementation* of national education policy. Views on this issue rested with the professional staff of the school, the governors and the LEA.

The socioeconomic status of Eastham pupils is at least average and their respectable ranking on national league tables. It could be said that these factors have provided the school with the sufficient credibility to create the kind of learning environment that the staff collectively values, while keeping the accountability agents at

bay. An inner city school facing the embarrassment and pressures of “failing” due to low league table ranking might have other problems. They might have to cope with pupils who struggle with the English language, those who are mired in poverty and despair, or who constantly divert attention away from the lessons with distracting, even violent behavior. Inspectors might not allow them the luxury of focusing on the *ethos* of their school when the focus should be on improving test scores. But having acknowledged the differences between a rural school like Eastham and less advantages city schools should not minimize the importance of the sense of community within a school. Eastham educators may have discovered an important axiom - that the caring, the close teacher-pupil relationships, the mutual respect, always must come first, and that such a positive atmosphere, for pupils and for staff, is essential before any learning can take place.

But does the rhetoric about school ethos represent a true consensus of staff value priorities? A school is a complex and evolving organism. Much like a coral reef, it contains a central structure – curriculum, government policies, operating procedures, traditions. But each school year, new layers of people and ideas join the host structure. Each new addition contributes in some way to the whole, sometimes negatively and sometimes to enhance, but always altering the organism slightly. In any school it would be unusual to find individuals with all the same values and ideologies. The structure that embodies the school’s spirit and sense of mission may be viewed one way from within, yet be perceived as quite another entity from the outside. A microscopic view, on the other hand, might reveal cracks and crevices not seen from a distance. Eastham's educators have chosen to support and enhance the *ethos* of the school as a manifestation

of their “collective” values whatever the variations among their individual positions may be. There is evidence that the governors view ethos as the highest priority, both from sentiment about school traditions and because they believe it is the reason for their school’s commendable academic reputation. There are similar values embedded in the words that express the philosophies and concerns of many of Eastham teachers I interviewed. The OFSTED report confirmed that a positive school culture was central to the school’s success on inspection. But all may not be as congenial as the rhetoric would convey.

Recommendations for Further Study

While policymakers can point to increasingly better test results as evidence of the success of a policy focused on higher standards and accountability, there seems to be no definitive evidence that these measures have actually improved student learning. Reducing the measure of a school’s success and determining the level of student achievement to a single number ranking on a league table is not only naïve, it is detrimental to the quality of learning to which everyone aspires. With this in mind, a potential extension of this research study might be to examine the issue of whether the efficiency model for education has produced a more educated populace or whether the more decentralized and less standardized practices of earlier years were more or less effective in terms of actual learning. A similar study on policy and local values could be undertaken as well in an American community in a state where high-stakes testing has been mandated by the state.

To test Guthrie and Koppich's theory (1993) that value shifts are one yardstick for measuring true policy reform, the present study could be expanded to include the larger community surrounding Eastham Middle School. Such a study would provide a wider perspective from which to examine the extent of public support for the values underlying Tory education reforms. The present study could also be expanded to include the range of schools, from primary to secondary and even vocational colleges, and to examine the effect of the 1988 Education Reform Act on the values underlying implementation at different levels of schooling.

The present reality of a growing teacher shortage in Great Britain also provides the impetus for quantitative-qualitative research. This research could study the extent and distribution of the shortage and explore the reasons in terms of teacher and policy values.

The work of Firestone, Fitz, and Broadfoot (1999) suggests a different approach to analyzing and categorizing the data collected in this present study. They examined the implementation of assessment policy in two American states and England and Wales. Their research examined how such policy affected classroom practice and found that a mandated assessment policy generated overt conflict between "conventional," "constructivist," and neutral views of education. From this perspective, it could be said that the market incentives mandated by the Tory policymakers were used to reinforce a "conventional" (content over process) approach to education while many of the teachers I interviewed reflected a "constructivist" philosophy (process over content) about teaching and learning. It would be possible to re-examine the data from my study by defining each

respondent in terms of teaching philosophy and the values implied in the words they use to describe their own classroom practice.

Implications for Professional Practice

In addressing transatlantic experiments with “mixed school governance” initiatives, Halpin and Troyna (1995) point out some of the differences, at least on the surface, between the ideologies in Britain and the United States. On the issue of school choice, for example, liberals in the U.S. argued for choice as a way of expanding opportunity for the disadvantaged while conservatives in Great Britain were pursuing a market policy for public services in general. There are also differences in legislative power in the two nations. In the United States, education policy has been formulated largely at the state level while in Britain, the concentration of power in the central government has allowed a very comprehensive education policy to be mandated by the political party in power. And yet in the U.S., despite no constitutional authority for a federal education policy, such political control over education is not impossible.

In Britain, school budgetary matters, ostensibly managed by the local schools, can be subtly but effectively manipulated by “fair funding” formulas and policy initiatives from the Government. Whitty and Edwards (1998) warn that just because there has been previous disinterest by Americans in a national standards and assessment system, it does not mean that the idea cannot regain support and momentum. Indeed, the change to a more conservative administration in the United States in 2001 may very well mark the beginnings of a federal education policy. While the rhetoric and a Constitutional

omission may recognize the power of individual states and communities to develop their own initiatives, in reality, the awarding and withholding of federal education dollars according to states' compliance with national education policy, could firmly limit and, indeed, shape those local policies.

The key question remaining is whether a lack of value alignment between policy and implementation actually affects instruction and learning. In addition to this study, much of the research along similar lines (Barnham, 1996; Firestone, Fitz, & Broadfoot, 1999) appears to cast doubts on the ability of centralized policy to truly have an impact on what happens in the classroom. Firestone, Fitz, and Broadfoot (1999) raise an essential question.

In many ways, England and Wales represent a level of policy alignment and centralization that many American reformers would envy, and assessment is integral to this aligned policy. Yet this alignment is around a vision of intensified conventional pedagogy with which many American (and many English and Welsh) academic reformers would be uncomfortable. In this regard, assessment appears to be another institutional reform. Debates about what to assess, instrument design, what sanctions to apply, and so forth, become a venue for working out larger questions about the power of different occupational groups and what *values* [my italics] should be institutionalized in the larger society. (pp. 788-789)

Strict accountability policies can sometimes have a ruinous effect on schools, educators, and even pupils. In my research I found glimpses and rumors of the personal toll such policies can take on those who probably cannot reconcile the contradictions between their own values and those of policymakers. The former Head of Eastham, for example, was a warm, child-centered educator who had been left, for many years, to create a school in his own image and who was not willing to adjust to the mandates of

politicians interfering with education practice. He resigned instead. And now, just recently, the gentle and modest Deputy Head of Eastham has chosen early retirement because “there must be more to life than this.”

It can be unfortunate to lose those educators who leave the profession either on the strength of their convictions or who have enough seniority to financially afford to retire. But those who, by default or enthusiasm, choose to remain as school practitioners, find ways to accommodate their own values despite having some disagreement with the tasks demanded of them. But what is the cost of such accommodation? If *high quality* education is the goal of reform policies, should the public be satisfied with policy that promotes the *efficiency* of value for money and accountability procedures as evidence of *quality*, at the expense of the more subtle and less politically viable issues reflecting *equality* and *ethos*.

Roland Barth (1990) believes there is a consequence to not acknowledging the beliefs of the professionals who know schools best.

Why should educators be placed- or place themselves- in the position of only implementing the grand ideas of others, ideas with which they may not agree? Nothing is more toxic to the development of a community of learners or a community of leaders. The greatest tragedy I know is to be caught every day in a position of doing something one does not want to do or does not believe in. As we saw at the outset, too many educators are playing out this tragedy, functioning as assembly-line robots whose main business is production, not learning. This condition, above everything else, diminishes both learning and professionalism in the public schools. (pp. 150-151)

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

PILOT INTERVIEW GUIDE

Initial Interview

Opening Questions for All:

1. Talk about what you think are the five most important responsibilities a school has.
2. If you were to develop your own educational policy, what are the main components it would have and why?
3. If you were in charge, how would you judge the effectiveness of schools?
4. What contribution, if any, did you (as a teacher; head teacher; governor) have in the formation of a national curriculum and assessment system?
5. It has been said that an organization with clear, consistent goals is more efficient. Do you agree with this statement in regard to the national curriculum?
How would you define the goals of the Education Reform Act (ERA)?
What are your own goals for educating students?
6. Talk about the connection between the (30%) increase in GCSE A-C grades, the increase in A-level entrants, and more students entering higher education and the Education Reform Act.

Specific Questions for Teachers:

7. Talk about your teaching methods and responsibilities both before and after the institution of the national curriculum and assessment.
8. How do you feel about your job of teaching? Talk about the factors that influence your feelings.

Specific Questions for Head Teachers:

9. Talk about the demands of your job both before and after enactment of the Education Reform Act (ERA).
10. How much autonomy do you feel you have to run your school under the present educational policy?
11. What portion of your time is spent on
 - a. Educational leadership and staff supervision?
 - b. Community relations and public relations?
 - c. Administrative tasks?
12. Talk about the changes in the organizational structure of schooling since the ERA, including issues of accountability.
13. Given a choice, how do you think effective teaching should be judged?

Specific Questions for Governors:

14. How do the duties of this governing body since the ERA compare to the governors' duties before reform?
15. Talk about how the OFSTED inspections affect your job.
16. What would say is the most difficult decision this governing body has had to make since 1988 (ERA)?
17. Talk about educational reform policy under both the Conservative and Labour parties.

Follow-up Interview

A follow-up interview will be conducted to clarify information obtained during the original interview or to gather additional information along important lines of inquiry.

APPENDIX B

INTRODUCTORY LETTER

April, 2000

To: The Head Teacher and Staff

Re: Research on Current Educational Policy in England

I am an American teacher and school counselor, working for the U.S. Department of Defense schools at the RAF Feltwell. I have lived in England, in Norfolk, for over five years. I am currently completing a doctoral degree in educational administration with Oklahoma State University. Since my area of research centers on the British education system since the 1988 Education Reform Act, I am hoping to form a partnership of sorts with a local British school. I appreciate your willingness to consider allowing me to work with your staff. I would like to briefly tell you about the subject of my dissertation.

My study is, in broad terms, about the values that a democratic society wishes to see reflected in a public education system, and whether those values are served by the current educational policy in England and Wales. This policy combines a strong centralized governance of schools, through a National Curriculum, and a decentralized, market system, ostensibly encouraging competition among schools by means of parental choice. I am particularly interested in the impact such a dual policy has on local school staffs and whether local educators believe that social or political values are being served. My purpose is to view the national policy from the perspective of educational professionals as a counterpoint to the opinions and judgments of political policymakers.

I hope to conduct a qualitative case study of a British state school. This would involve my observing various aspects of the school to include the school setting and staff and parent meetings, as appropriate. I would expect to observe in classrooms only if a teacher felt this would add to my understanding of the school or of his/her expressed opinions. My primary focus would be on interviewing any school personnel who would be willing to participate in this study, including the head teacher(s), faculty members, and if appropriate, members of the board of governors. Interviews would, of course, be on a strictly voluntary basis and would be taped for later transcription. My intent would be to interview each person once, although brief follow-up conversations might be necessary for clarification at a later time.

I would like to assure you and your staff that Oklahoma State University has quite stringent requirements protecting the privacy and maintaining confidentiality of subjects used in research studies which I am pledged to honor. All information gathered during the research process would be kept in the strictest confidence. Demographic characteristics of both the school and individuals involved in the study would be altered to protect the privacy of all concerned.

Why would you want to be involved in such a research study and an American one at that? The educational policy in England and Wales since 1988, like similar developments in American education, appears to be formed largely by politicians, with seemingly little or

no contribution from the teachers and heads who must cope with the day to day complexities of contemporary education. In all the rhetoric about what makes good schools or produces higher student achievement, one rarely hears from the professionals who know most about the subject. I would like to give voice to some of those professionals in my research. I believe that their experiences with the centralized -decentralized system in the UK could provide a lesson to inform the debate over those same policy issues by those who want to reform American education at the end of the twentieth century.

I would be most appreciative if you and your faculty would be willing to contribute to this field of research. Should you agree to participate in this study, I would be interested in beginning my research in the next few months, at your convenience. Participants would be given consent forms that more fully describe the research process involved.

Thank you for your consideration of this research project. If further information is needed, I may be reached by phone at 01842 827314 or by e-mail at mhmUK@aol.com.

Sincerely,
Mary H. Montano

APPENDIX C

GOVERNMENT-INITIATED

CHANGE SURVEY

RESPONSES TO GOVERNMENT INITIATED CHANGES: PART ONE

In recent times there have been many changes introduced by the government within a short time frame. What has your reaction been to this period of change as you look back on it? Here are five views expressed by teachers on their response to RECENT GOVERNMENT CHANGES taken in general and as a whole.

Which is the closest to yours? Tick the one that gives the best match.

(Please tick ONE BOX ONLY)

I have very mixed feelings about most of the recent changes. Some I like and I think will help to improve things. To me others just seem daft or irrelevant and so frankly are a waste of time and energy. Right now, I'm not sure what I think about the changes as a whole.

I object very strongly to most of the changes. It's not just that they haven't been thought through: most of them are actually misguided and make things worse. In my view we shouldn't be afraid to oppose the changes whenever and wherever we can.

I don't agree fully with all the changes. But things often turn out better than they seem at first. In such circumstances the thing to do is make the best of it. There'll probably be some real benefits later on, and I prefer to be optimistic about that.

I don't think most of them have been adequately tried out. This is not a very professional way to make changes. But with many we've been given no choice so, for the most part, I don't feel any real commitment.

Most of the changes we're making will prove to be very worthwhile in the end. Some won't work and will have to be dropped or revised - that's inevitable when you do something new. But I'm confident the benefits will outweigh the drawbacks.

What are your own views?

<p>What are your own views?</p>	
---------------------------------	--

Table 1-1
Data Collection for Eastham Middle School Case Study

- PHASE I:** A guided tour of the school was arranged for the research by the headteacher. Interviews were then conducted with the headteacher and chairperson of the governors using an interview protocol. Three classes, two English lessons and a Science lesson, were observed to provide a sense of the rapport between students and teachers, as well as to understand the variety of teaching methods used in interpreting the requirements of the National Curriculum.
- PHASE II:** In depth interviews were carried out with four teachers, of different ages and gender and covering a range of subject areas and grade levels. A questions guide or protocol was employed.
- PHASE III:** The researcher was referred to an official of the Local Education Authority through a British colleague leading to a formal interview with a senior advisor for the county LEA. Once again, an interview protocol guided the discussion.
- PHASE IV:** School documents, including the School Prospectus (2000/2001), the School Development Plan (2000/2001), and the most recent OFSTED inspection report (2000) were examined for cultural values embedded in the language. There was opportunity for observing several school assemblies and an open evening for parents. An interview was conducted with the deputy headteacher.
- PHASE V:** Initial analysis of the data gathered through observation, artifacts, and interviews provoked further research. A brief survey on "Government-Initiated Change" was administered voluntarily to the remainder of the faculty. Member checks with all respondents were used to verify early findings and follow-up interviews were also used to confirm impressions and to clarify information. Analysis of the data was on-going

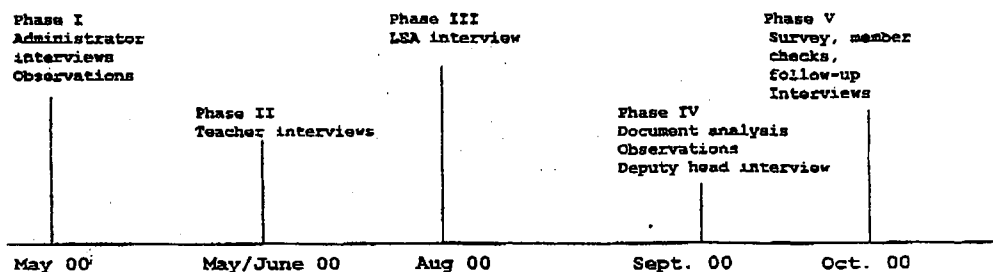


Table 2

RESPONSIBILITIES OF SCHOOL GOVERNANCE IN GREAT BRITAIN

Local Education Authorities	Heads	Governors	Heads and Governors
<input type="checkbox"/> Promoting high Standards	Pupils' education	Overall education Strategic framework (Policies, targets)	Annual budget Personnel appointments, pay, dismissals
<input type="checkbox"/> Special needs	Day to day Management	Reviewing progress	Special needs
<input type="checkbox"/> Enrollment/access	Implementing Governors' Policies	Investigating financial irregularities	Curriculum, sex education, discipline
<input type="checkbox"/> Employing teachers	Teaching standards	Appointment, supervision, Dismissal of Headteacher	Performance management
<input type="checkbox"/> School Improvement/ Tackling failure	Pupil Exclusions	Reinstatement of excluded pupils	Post-Inspection Action Plan
<input type="checkbox"/> Educating excluded Pupils/truancy	Curriculum management		Annual meeting to and report to parents

Who rules the schools? (2001, March 9). The Times Educational Supplement, p. 7.

APPENDIX D

CONSENT FORM

I, _____, agree to participate in the research project conducted by Mary Montano. I understand that the empirical materials (data) collected during this study will be used by Ms. Montano to fulfill the requirements necessary for the completion of a doctoral program of study in the Educational Administration program at Oklahoma State University in Stillwater, Oklahoma.

By agreeing to participate in this study, I agree to the following:

- 1) to participate in a personal interview;
- 2) to provide a copy of the most recent OFSTED report on the school;
- 3) to provide other artifacts (school brochures or newsletters, parent information, statistical data on the school) as appropriate;
- 4) to participate in a follow-up interview to clarify information and provide additional information as needed.

I further understand:

- 1) interviews will be tape recorded and transcribed verbatim;
- 2) all empirical materials collected will remain confidential and that access will be limited to the researcher and the dissertation advisor;
- 3) all source materials will be destroyed by the researcher two years following the satisfactory completion of the doctoral degree;
- 4) prior to presentation in final form, all data will be encoded and pseudonyms will be used in all text and graphical representations of the data.
- 5) This research project is being conducted with the intent of contributing to existing research and knowledge regarding centralized and decentralized educational systems and whether this policy aligns with the values important to a publicly supported school system.

I understand that participation in the interviews is voluntary and that, at any time, I am free to notify Mary Montano if I would like to withdraw my consent and participation from this research study.

Should I wish further information about the research project, I may contact Mary Montano at 01842 827314. I may also contact the dissertation advisor, Dr. Adrienne Hyle, PhD., by mail at the School of Educational Studies, College of Education, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma 74078 or by telephone at (International code- 001)-405-744-7246.

I have fully read and understand the consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily. A copy has been given to me as well.

Date _____ Time _____ (a.m./p.m.)

Signed _____
(Signature of Subject)

I certify that I have personally explained all elements of this form to the subject or his/her representative before asking the subject or representative to sign it.

Date _____ Time _____ (a.m./p.m.)

Signed _____

APPENDIX E

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SHEET

Please complete the following information:

Name _____

Current Position _____

Number of years _____

Area(s) of Certification _____
(If applicable)

Position	Place	# of years
----------	-------	------------

Previous Work Experience in Education Pre-ERA (before 1988):

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Previous Work Experience in Education Post-ERA (after 1988):

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Work Experience Outside of Education:

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Thank you for your assistance in this research project. If you would like further information or have questions, please contact me at 01842 827314.

Mary Montano

APPENDIX F

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

APPROVAL FORM

Oklahoma State University
Institutional Review Board

Protocol Expires: 5/22/01

Date : Tuesday, May 23, 2000

IRB Application No: ED00273

Proposal Title: THE VALUES IN GREAT BRITAIN'S EDUCATION REFORM ACT: MEASURING
CONGRUENCY BETWEEN NATIONAL POLICY AND THE LOCAL SCHOOL

Principal
Investigator(s) :

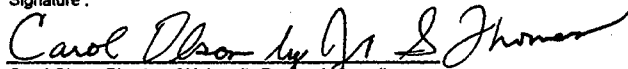
Mary Montano
314 Willard
Stillwater, OK 74078

Adrienne Hyle
314 Willard Hall
Stillwater, OK 74078

Reviewed and
Processed as: Exempt

Approval Status Recommended by Reviewer(s) : Approved

Signature :


Carol Olson, Director of University Research Compliance

Tuesday, May 23, 2000

Date

Approvals are valid for one calendar year, after which time a request for continuation must be submitted. Any modifications to the research project approved by the IRB must be submitted for approval with the advisor's signature. The IRB office MUST be notified in writing when a project is complete. Approved projects are subject to monitoring by the IRB. Expedited and exempt projects may be reviewed by the full Institutional Review Board.

APPENDIX G

INTERVIEW GUIDE QUESTIONS

For Headteachers and Governors:

1. What is your own philosophy of education?
What would your education policy look like and why?
2. What has been your experience as a British educator both before and after the 1988 Education Reform Act (ERA)?
3. It has been said that an organization with clear, consistent goals is more efficient. Do you agree with this statement in regard to the National Curriculum?
4. According to the intent of the Tory Government, the role of the LEAs has been reduced and more power given to the school governors. How do you view that change in terms of your own position?
5. How much autonomy do you feel you have in managing your school?
6. How do you feel about the accountability aspect of the ERA?
What has been your reaction to the OFSTED inspection the school has experienced recently?
What effect do you feel an inspection has on teachers?
7. What changes, if any, have you observed in education policy under a Labour Government compared to a Tory Government?
How do you feel about the various initiatives proposed by the Labour Government?

Additional Questions for Headteachers:

8. Could you talk about your job and your responsibilities in the school?
Would you describe how those responsibilities might have changed over time?
9. What contribution, if any, do you feel you had in the development of the National Curriculum?
10. What portion of your time as a school administrator do you spend on educational leadership? On staff supervision?
11. If you were Secretary of State for Education, how would you judge the effectiveness of the schools?
12. One aspect of the ERA is the idea of schools marketing themselves to parents to allow more educational choice. What have you been doing as a school to meet this challenge?

Questions for Teachers:

1. How would you describe the purpose of school? The role of teaching?
2. What do you know about the 1988 Education Reform Act?
Talk about your first reactions to those reforms.
3. What contribution, if any, did you feel you had as an educator to the development of the National Curriculum?
How did you decide on the content of lessons before the National Curriculum?
What do you see as the advantages and disadvantages of a National Curriculum?
4. Discuss your feelings about the current education policy in Britain.
What do you think of the balance between a strong centralized education policy and local management?

5. How much autonomy do you feel you have in managing your own classroom?
6. How would you describe the feelings of members of the faculty toward the current education policy?
7. How would you describe the atmosphere of the school in these weeks prior to the OFSTED inspection?
8. Do you agree or disagree with the accountability measures mandated by the government (OFSTED, League Tables)? What suggestions would you have for providing accountability for student learning?
9. How do you see the current goals of raising standards fitting into the idea of comprehensive schools?
10. What effect has the policy of parental choice of schools had on this school?

APPENDIX H

FOLLOW-UP LETTERS

4 September

Dear

I want to thank you for agreeing to participate in my research study on the implementation of the 1988 education reforms in Great Britain. You have been a vital part of this process and I appreciate your willingness to share your views.

I am sending you a transcript of the conversation we had last spring. This taped interview has been transcribed by a secretary who has no knowledge about the school in which I've been conducting my research. I can assure you that your identity has remained anonymous throughout this process.

In order to assure that the interview transcript truly represents the intent of your responses, I want to offer you the opportunity to read through the interview and to correct or expand on any of the information contained in it. If you also feel you would like to elaborate or clarify anything you've said, please do that as well.

Again, thank you for assisting me with this project. I am very grateful. It has also been a pleasure meeting you and sharing our concerns about education.

Sincerely,

Mary Montano

March 2001

Dear

I want to thank you for being willing to participate in my research study. You have been of immeasurable help in allowing me to complete my dissertation.

Attached to this letter is a draft copy of my analysis of the collected data, including personnel interviews, observations, and a review of school documents. I want to assure you that your name and those of your colleagues, as well as the name of the school and LEA, have been replaced by pseudonyms for reasons of confidentiality.

I would very much appreciate it if you would be able to take a little time to review the draft. This would provide me with a check on the accuracy of my findings and increase the likelihood that my conclusions are well founded. If you choose to make any comments or suggestions, you are welcome to send them to me in the stamped envelope that I have provided for you.

I hope you have also found this research process interesting and that it provides you with some small insight into the concept of the values underlying educational policy and practice.

Thank you again for sharing your valuable time with me.

Sincerely,

Mary Montano

VITA ²

Mary H. Montano

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Thesis: THE VALUES IN GREAT BRITAIN'S EDUCATION REFORM ACT:
MEASURING CONGRUENCY BETWEEN NATIONAL POLICY AND THE
LOCAL SCHOOLS

Major Field: Educational Administration

Biographical:

Education: Received a Bachelor of Arts degree in English from Beaver College, Glenside, Pennsylvania in June, 1965; received a Master of Arts degree in Counseling Psychology from Chapman College, Orange, California in July, 1986. Completed the requirements for the Doctor of Education degree at Oklahoma State University with a major in Educational Administration in May, 2001.

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