

“What's wrong with education policy research? Seven Fallacies”

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University of Brighton, October 2014

Fallacies

- Nation states*
- Policy is political*
- Schools matter*
- Evidence-based
- Good ideas (authority and values)
- Policy is done by experts*
- Policy is rational

Does it matter?

- Matters to education policy researchers
- Matters to parents (and voters)
- Matters to teachers and other educational workers

Policy is political* except when it is not!

- Who gets to determine what 'the problem' is!
- Being in a position to speak, be listened to....

The problem: 2010 White paper

- So much of the education debate in this country is backward looking: have standards fallen? Have exams got easier? These debates will continue, but what really matters is how we're doing compared with our international competitors. That is what will define our economic growth and our country's future. The truth is, at the moment we are standing still while others race past.
- In the most recent OECD PISA survey in 2006 we fell from 4th in the world in the 2000 survey to 14th in science, 7th to 17th in literacy, and 8th to 24th in mathematics. The only way we can catch up, and have the world-class schools our children deserve, is by learning the lessons of other countries' success.

Making the political technical

- 2 interwoven issues here
- One relates to variations on school performance (quality) and the other to variations in student performance – represented as educational inequality (inequality).
- Coalition has tried to address these with a focus on measurement, inspection and **academisation.**

What is the problem?

Its schools!

- The central mission of the next Conservative Government is the alleviation of poverty and the extension of opportunity. And nowhere is action required more than in our schools. Schools should be engines of social mobility. They should enable children to overcome disadvantage and deprivation so they can fulfil their innate talents and take control of their own destiny (Michael Gove speech – 6th November 2009).
- Come back to this!

Schools matter 1

- Schools are not as important as all that!
- Explaining variance differently.
- Policy is looking in the wrong place.



Or do they?

- **School quality does not affect attainment outcomes for poor pupils**
- Professor Steve Strand from Oxford University has presented a paper at the BERA conference today that shows that the performance gap between pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM) and those who are not is unaffected by the Ofsted grade of school they attend. He concludes that current accountability mechanisms, such as performance league tables and Ofsted inspections, fail to adequately take into account factors associated with pupil background or the socio-economic makeup of the school, and calls for the reinstatement of the contextual value added measure which was removed in 2010.
- See coverage from [Independent, Guardian, Mail and Telegraph and TES.](#)

7% of the variability in secondary school GCSE grades are attributable to the school

93% of the variability in secondary school GCSE grades are nothing to do with the school

A student who gets eight grade Ds at an average school will get:

■ five Ds and three Cs at one of the best schools (1sd above mean CVA)

■ five Ds and three Es at one of the worst schools (1sd below mean CVA)

Its parenting!

- Nick Clegg: "Parents hold the fortunes of the children they bring into this world in their hands. All parents have a responsibility to nurture the potential in their children. I know, like any mother or father, how difficult it can be to find the time and the energy to help, for example, with your children's homework at the end of a busy day. But the evidence is unambiguous: if we give them that kind of attention and support when they are young, they will feel the benefits for the rest of their lives."

- Parents' social class has a greater impact on how well their children perform at school than "good parenting" techniques such as reading bedtime stories, researchers have shown.
- A study of 11,000 seven-year-old children found that those with parents in professional and managerial jobs were at least eight months ahead of pupils from the most socially disadvantaged homes, where parents were often unemployed.
- The researchers, from the University of London's Institute of Education, took into account factors such as ethnicity and family size. They found that parents' social class had a bigger influence on a child's progress between the ages of five and seven than a range of parenting techniques, including reading before bedtime.
- Alice Sullivan, the main author of the study, said the research showed that "while parenting is important, a policy focus on parenting alone is insufficient to tackle the impacts of social inequalities on children".

How do we think about the relationships between social and educational inequalities?

- Where else might we look for explanations of and therefore 'solutions' to policy problems?

Diet and school performance

- Youngsters who lived on sweets, crisps and chicken nuggets from an early age were 10 per cent more likely to be failing between the ages of six and 10 than their classmates, researchers found. The study of 14,000 children in Bristol shows that even when other factors, such as low income or poor housing were removed, diet significantly affected the children's development.
- The researchers say that the findings point to the long term effect that eating poorly could have on school performance. Eating too many foods high in sugar and fat could leave little room for more healthy alternatives, they believe, such as those packed with "brain building" Omega 3 fatty acids, like oily fish.
- Dr Pauline Emmett, a nutritionist from the University of Bristol who worked on the study, said that she was confident that there was a "robust association" between the children's unhealthy diets and their poor tests scores.(Daily Telegraph 2008)

Kathleen Kiernan (York)

- Poverty x parenting
- Persistent poverty + low level parenting = 19% good achievement
- Persistent poverty + high level parenting = 58% good achievement
- No experience of poverty + high level parenting = 73% good achievement

- “decompositional analysis suggest that about 50% of the effects of poverty might be accounted for by parenting quality”
- Independent – mediated
- COMPLEX

Parental resources/explaining advantage

- What can they 'invest' in their child's education?
- What might parent's do?
- The 'costs' of parenting?

Future dividends

With shrewd family financial planning you can maximize your resources to fund your child's education, advises Coutts' STEPHEN JACKSON

WHEN HENRY VI FOUNDED **ETON** in 1442, he instructed that no one with a yearly income of more than five marks should be eligible to enter the school. Five hundred years later and the story has reversed. Today, with the average annual cost of independent school fees around £10,000 (higher in London and the south east, and over double for boarding schools) the reality is that only families with a certain level of wealth are able to afford private education.

With such spiralling costs, it's not unusual for parents to start thinking about meeting the costs of school fees before the child is even born. While this may seem a little extreme, it is actually more sensible than you would think, especially when you consider that in most cases, parents are not trying to meet the cost for just one child's education, but for multiple children. Then of course, there are also other costs to consider, such as school trips, sports equipment, extra-curricular activities, additional tuition, travel to and from school, not to mention the likely costs of university.

Another one of the most important, yet often ignored factors that parents should take into consideration when looking at overall costs, is the impact of inflation. Research from the Independent Schools Council shows that between 1996 and 2006, annual private school fees have almost doubled, at an average increase of 6.4% each year. This is hugely significant, especially when you consider that if you educate your child privately from nursery school through to A-levels and then support them through a three-year university degree, is a total of around 18 years of fees. If inflation continues to increase at its current rate then, the total cost of educating a child from the age of three to 21 could exceed £300,000. As such, school fee



planning, with the guidance of a financial expert is an essential exercise to maximize all of a family's financial resources.

Guide to School Fee planning:

PLAN AHEAD

Planning ahead is critical. The earlier that school fees plans are put into place, the greater the potential increase in returns. This is particularly the case for parents with at least five to 10 years to go before fees are due because the annual interest accumulated on investments can greatly assist with meeting fees. Begin by assessing

I took her to ballet and it was about the same time that I started her at playgroup and I just thought she's too young, she sat rather frightened on my lap, so I'll leave that for a while. I sort of want to start her on violin, but I'm still debating because it's a big undertaking to do it, I'd have to also learn it apparently. I've sort of just got the papers, but I'm not 100 percent sure we'll do it.

I'm giving her options, or presenting options to her, so she can choose her way, how she wants to be, and what are her interests and what are her strengths. So she's given a variety of... maybe... today I bought her a little tennis racquet, because we went to this drop in thing at the tennis here, and she shows an interest in tennis, she likes kicking a ball. We go to a music class. She likes swimming. I like to give her a taste of different things to see if it's something she's interested in.

She's going to do ballet soon. They do extra lessons at the nursery if you want them so she does an hour a week of drama and an hour a week of music. And then we take them with us [out] on the weekends, but it's not another activity with other kids. And then I think we should think about a musical instrument. Oh God - the violin. (Jessica, Stoke Newington)



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CENTRE DIRECTOR: Lise Parkhill

EMAIL: edinburgh@explorellearning.ltd.uk



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THE PARENTING PRACTICE

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I'd like to know if other parents have the same problems

I need to be able to draw the line and stick to it

I want to know what's 'normal' behaviour

I want less shouting & screaming

I'd like my children to really listen to me

I'd like to be able to help my children when they're upset

I want my children to take their place confidently in the world



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(1) that increasing amounts of the work of learning is done, in some families, outside of school, in and around the home, although in schools this learning is read as an indicator of individual ability rather than an effortful and expensive co-production.

(2) increasingly demanding strategic and navigational skills are needed to manage children's learning in and out of school, and these rely on social, cultural and economic capitals that are unevenly distributed across the population.

(3) in effect what schools are doing is ramifying and giving symbolic value to inequalities which are rooted elsewhere – some of which are clearly economic and social.

The composite learner

Within all of this the child at schools comes to be seen as a bundle of talents, abilities and potential that are in fact complexly produced by families and 'bought in' resources.

Policy is evidence based

- Except when it is not

3rd September 2014

- Compulsory setting according to ability in England's secondary schools is to be proposed by the education secretary, Nicky Morgan, in her first big initiative since she took the role in July. She is due to make the announcement as early as today.
- The announcement, cleared with Downing Street, is likely to create a backlash as well as raise questions as to how the plan is to be enforced legally, since independent state academies were set up to be free of state control.
- It is expected that Morgan will ask the education watchdog, Ofsted, to implement and enforce the measure, probably by making it a condition of receiving an outstanding rating. Schools can currently decide whether to put children into classes according to ability.

The study analysed the results and backgrounds of 2,544 year two pupils (aged six and seven) in England who took part in the Millennium Cohort Study, a major research exercise which is following the lives of 19,000 children born in the UK in 2000-2001.

- The practice of "streaming" children by ability in the early years of primary school is widening the achievement gap between children from better-off homes and those facing disadvantage, significant new research reveals.
- One in six children in English schools is placed in ability streams – whereby pupils are taught in the same class, grouped by ability, across several subjects – while in Wales, the figure is even higher, at nearly one in five.
- But while relatively high-attaining pupils do better if placed in a top stream than they would in schools which do not have streaming, those given a place in the middle or lower streams do worse than they would if there were no streaming, the research finds.
- This means that streaming in primary schools would appear to increase the gap between higher- and lower-attaining pupils, and also to accentuate socio-economic differences, because more of those from poorer backgrounds tend on average to be in the lower streams.

Policy is done by policymakers
and experts???

- The profitable state
- The appointed state
- The sponsored state

1. Privatisation of statework and education policy

- Money to be made from policy and social problems
- Regulation is not a problem for significant parts of capital – it is an opportunity for profit
- Role of private in government and ‘for’ government – huge sector

PWC and Statework

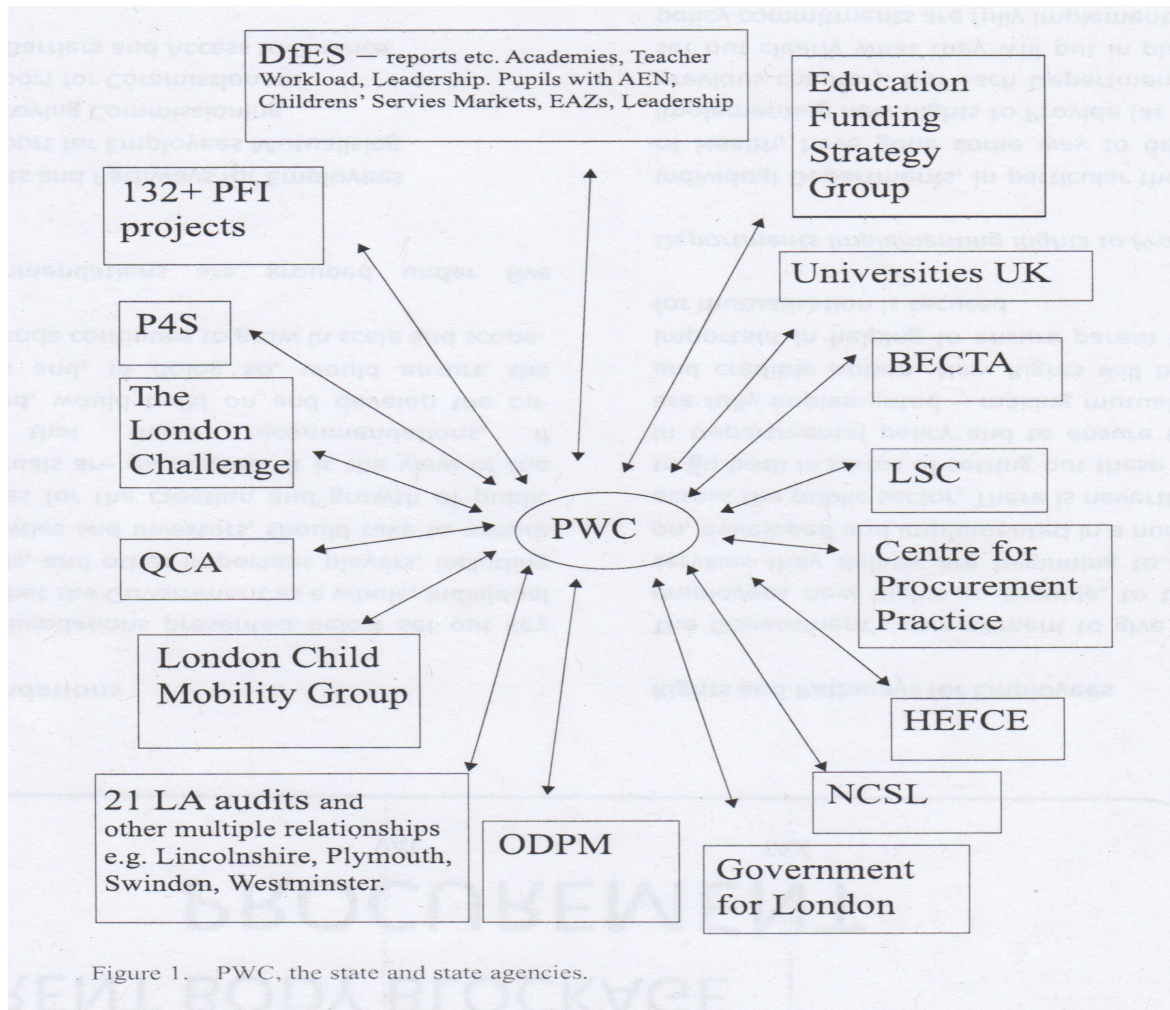


Figure 1. PWC, the state and state agencies.

consultancy

- Figures from the Office of Government Commerce show that spending on consultants rose by 42 per cent last year from £1.76 billion in 2003–04. Some private consultancies are now focusing entirely on public sector contracts, which can attract fees of up to £2,000 per day. Firms are being hired to advise on outsourcing, to ‘manage change’, to set up IT systems, to advise on advertising and communications and to conduct polls and surveys ...
- Douglas Johnson-Poensgen, director of SERCO Consulting, said that his firm had seen a 250 per cent increase in public sector contracts in the past two years, particularly from the NHS
Andy Ford, head of local government consultancy at PricewaterhouseCoopers, said his firm’s public sector contracts had doubled over the past three years.....

2. Bringing business to bear: New Chair of Ofsted

- Several names were discussed before the appointment was made. These included David Ross “playboy” co-founder of the Carphone Warehouse, Conservative party donor, and friend of Boris Johnson and David Cameron and Rebekah Brooks, whose charitable foundation supports more than 20 Academy schools. He was reported by the Guardian (5.7.14) as ‘in the frame’ for the Chair post. Another contender was reported to be Theodore Agnew (academy chain founder) and Tory Party donor. Other party donors are also Academy chain founders Lord Harris, Lord Fink (Ark) and Lord Nash, who is education spokesman in the Lords. Here there are complex overlaps, links and movements between business, philanthropy, politics and governance responsibilities.

David Hoare – New Ofsted Chair

- Hoare, who was schooled at the exclusive private school Marlborough College, has a 40-year business career, with a sideline in turning around failing companies. He started out in the oil industry, at Esso, before a 10-year stint at the Bain consultancy, and has been chairman of a number of companies including Virgin Express, Paragon Group and Laura Ashley. He is also a trustee of the Teenage Cancer Trust.
- The DX Group was owned via a holding company based in the tax haven of the Cayman Islands until February, when the company was floated on the Stock Exchange. Its new holding company is domiciled in the UK for tax purposes
- Hoare has a 40-year business career, with a sideline in turning around failing companies. He started out in the oil industry, at Esso, before a 10-year stint at the Bain consultancy. In 1987, he co-founded his own consultancy, Talisman, to help underperforming companies. He has combined this work with senior roles in industries from fashion and packaging, to shipping and postal services.

3. Philanthropy

‘world making’ (Maclean 2012)

(redistribution of moral authority).

- ‘New’ philanthropy is bringing new players into the field of social and education policy, repopulating and reworking existing policy networks, and giving legitimacy to the role of business or enterprise in the solution of ‘wicked’ social problems (like school improvement, and education and social disadvantage).
- Corporate and family foundations and philanthropic individuals are beginning to ‘assume socio-moral duties that were heretofore assigned to civil society organizations, governmental entities and state agencies’ (Shamir 2008).

Paul Marshall co-founder of ARK

- “the fact is British Education is a total disgrace in the way we have let down the most disadvantaged children. And there is a culture of low expectations, which is promoted by all kinds of people. And we have to break that” (Paul Marshall)
-
- “... the church has lost its role in society and there is a group within society which is just not taught how to behave. The school is the last institution left which can do that. But that means it needs to be a completely radical alternative to what they are learning on the street ... It’s like being in the army in that sense. And that works.” (Paul Marshall)
-
- “I don’t think it’s a particular skills set that you need, I think your passion for philanthropy ... there’s a really small group of people who make money but who want to give something back in a philanthropic way’ (PM).

A move from public to private morality?

Harnessed to technocratic solutions!

- “Bill Gates is the most influential individual in US education policy, according to a recent survey of nearly 200 education policy experts. The same group of experts ranked the Gates foundation as the third most influential institution, falling just short of the US Congress and US Department of Education” (Reckhow 2013 p. 12)
- ‘Creative capitalism’ (Gates, 2008):
 - an approach where governments, businesses, and non-profits work together to stretch the reach of market forces so that more people can make a profit, or gain recognition, doing work that eases the world's inequities

Policy is about national traditions and local problems

- The nation state is no longer the sensible level for policy analysis
- Global education policy
- Global education mobility
- Global education governance

examples

- 2010 White paper
- PISA
- Shanghai, Singapore, Poland
- Sweden – Free schools
- Charter Schools > KIPP > ARK
- ARK> Africa + India
- EIS
- John Bauer – Sweden
- GERM - Sahlberg

David Cameron, Speech Norwich, September 9th 2011

- Britain is a modern, developed country. If they're seeing excellence as standard in cities like Shanghai, why can't we see that in cities like London? If they're soaring up through the world rankings in Estonia, why can't we? If they're making huge strides in science and maths in India, what's to stop us. We've got the resources, we've got fantastic teachers, we know what works. Now we just have to have the will – the energy – to make this happen ... and believe me, we have it.

Shanghai Maths

- **Up to 60 Shanghai maths teachers are to be brought to England to raise standards, in an exchange arranged by the Department for Education.**
- They will provide masterclasses in 30 "maths hubs", which are planned as a network of centres of excellence.
- The Chinese city's maths pupils have the highest international test results.

EIS in Suffolk

- **A private profit-making Swedish company has won a £21m contract to manage a proposed free school in Suffolk.**
- Free schools cannot be run for profit - but their trusts can buy in services from private firms.
- The 10-year contract for Breckland Free School won by IES UK is believed to be the most extensive of such school management contracts so far announced.

Axcel/John Bauer – Sweden?

- **JB Education, one of Sweden's largest operators of publicly funded, privately managed free schools, announced on Tuesday it would declare bankruptcy.**
- A the end of May, JB Education sent shockwaves through Sweden's free school establishment when it announced it would be quitting its primary and secondary school operations in Sweden due to a drop in the number of students.
- 12 Jun 2013

GERM - Pasi Sahlberg

- the *Global Educational Reform Movement or GERM*. It is like an epidemic that spreads and infects education systems through a virus. It travels with pundits, media and politicians. Education systems borrow policies from others and get infected. (<http://pasisahlberg.com/text-test/> accessed 28.2.14)
- GERM infections have various symptoms. The first symptom is more competition within education systems. Many reformers believe that the quality of education improves when schools compete against one another. In order to compete, schools need more autonomy, and with that autonomy comes the demand for accountability. School inspections, standardized testing of students, and evaluating teacher effectiveness are consequences of market-like competition in many school reforms today. Yet when schools compete against one another, they cooperate less.
- The second symptom of GERM is increased [school choice](#). It essentially positions parents as consumers empowering them to select schools for their children from several options and thereby promotes market-style competition into the system as schools seek to attract those parents. More than two-thirds of OECD countries have increased school choice opportunities for families with the perceptions that market mechanisms in education would allow equal access to high-quality schooling for all. Increasing numbers of charter schools in the United States, secondary school academies in England, free schools in Sweden and private schools in Australia are examples of expanding school choice policies. Yet according to the OECD, nations pursuing such choice have seen both a decline in academic results and an increase in school segregation.
- The third sign of GERM is stronger accountability from schools and related [standardized testing](#) of students. Just as in the market place, many believe that holding teachers and schools accountable for students' learning will lead to improved results. Today standardized test scores are the most common way of deciding whether schools are doing a good job. Teacher effectiveness that is measured using standardized tests is a related symptom of GERM. According to the Center for Public Education, standardized testing has increased teaching to the test, narrowed curricula to prioritize reading and mathematics, and distanced teaching from the art of pedagogy to mechanistic instruction. <http://pasisahlberg.com/text-test/>
-

Depoliticising policy!

- Recent neo-liberal education policy has been deeply depoliticising in the sense of reducing properly political concerns to matters of technical efficiency.
- This depoliticisation is reflected in the prevalence of a managerial discourse and the absence of debate of terms like 'quality' and 'effectiveness', as well as in the apparent consensus around the necessity of particular practices, such as the adoption of 'standards' and the implementation of high-stakes testing regimes.
- The reduction of the political to the technical is not only anti-political but also anti-democratic.

Technocracy vs democracy

- ‘today, the main task is no longer to radicalize democracy, but to protect the democratic institutions – which we have taken for granted – from being dismantled and demolished’ (C. Mouffe 2006 p. 970)