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The reluctant state and the beginning of the end of state education

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This paper argues that English education policy has come full-circle – from the first constitution of a state system of education in 1870 to the beginning of the end of state education in 2010 – and that this circularity can be understood in relation to the reluctant state. That is, in the nineteenth century, the English state hesitantly and slowly moved from a patchwork education system of many providers to a national system locally provided. In the twenty-first century, the English state is moving back towards a patchwork of many providers with enhanced institutional autonomies and marginalising the role of local delivery and coordination.

Keywords: the state; privatisation; philanthropy

Introduction

This paper is organised around a heuristic device. A device that is employed to unsettle and raise questions about the current phase of education policy in England, that of New Labour and the new Coalition government. What I want to suggest is that English education policy has come full-circle – from the first constitution of a state system of education in 1870 (or 1833) to the beginning of the end of state education in 2010 – and that this circularity can be understood in relation to what we might call the reluctant state. That is, I want to draw a link or a parallel between the period of the early to mid-nineteenth century, and what we might call the first liberalism, and the late twentieth–early twenty-first century, and what we might call the second liberalism, or what is often called neo-liberalism.

The first liberalism

The mid-Victorian English state was modest in both size and ambition and strongly invested in the rules and spirit of the market economy:

The very complexity of the new social and economic environment and the comparative caution of the mid-Victorian elites meant that comprehensive and drastic solutions rarely seemed attractive let alone plausible.1


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The state was hesitant and reluctant to become involved in direct responsibility for the provision of elementary schooling and prior to 1870 had limited itself to: small-scale financial grants (initially £20,000 pa to build elementary schools, for not less than 400 children, alongside local subscriptions — half of building costs and maintenance — paid to the National Societies. The figure had risen to £836,920 by 1859); some support for teaching training institutions; and the creation of an Inspectorate which had responsibility for a system of testing the value for money of the grants system — so-called ‘payment by results’ (the Revised Code), as recommended by the Newcastle Commission (1861), and which lasted until 1897. Under this system, the state paid capitation grants, and an additional grant for pupil-teachers, based on the attainments of pupils in each school as assessed by the Inspectors. Rapple describes this as an ‘economic market-driven system’ which was ‘totally in keeping with the age’s pervasive utilitarian belief in laissez-faire and the law of supply and demand’. In an 1867 speech to Parliament on the Revised Code, the Chancellor of the Exchequer Robert Lowe said:

I would not grudge the sum of 70,000 pounds per annum, or a much larger sum for the education of the people, if I believed that the money would produce a beneficial effect. I have assisted on more than one occasion in reducing the amount of the grant for public education; but on those occasions I saw the reductions were consistent with — nay, I believed would be the cause of — the greater efficiency of the system. Therefore, I beg the House will understand that, although I am a friend to economy, I only uphold economy when combined with efficiency. I think that no sum that this House would grant would be too large if by its aid the education of the people would be rendered more efficient. (cited in Sylvester 1974, 61)

Politically, Robert Lowe was a free-trade liberal, and his economic theories led him to be deeply suspicious of state interventions and inhibitions to the freedoms of the market of almost any kind (see Keith Joseph below). However, Sylvester argues that he became in the late 1860s a dramatic convert ‘to the need for a speedy implementation of a more national system of education’ (16) and its moral and civilising benefits. In a series of speeches in 1867 and 1868, he outlined a framework for state education.

Despite the gradual, piecemeal and hesitant nature of these initial state involvements, they nonetheless eventually required the setting up of an Education Department (1856). It is difficult to understand the slow progress towards a free, state-provided system in the nineteenth century until we grasp that

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2That is, the non-conformist British and Foreign School Society for the Education of the Labouring and Manufacturing Classes of Society of Every Religious Persuasion, and the Church of England’s National Society for Promoting Religious Education.


education had long firmly been regarded as a family decision, an issue of freedom from the state. Furthermore, issues related to the role of religious education and the growth of local provision by deeply antagonistic, powerful denominational groups (Church of England, Non-conformist and Catholic) ensured that state interference was resisted by many of the extant providers until increasing concerns about social control, political legitimacy and economic improvement became overwhelming. Drawing on Gramsci, Hall and Schwarz argue that:

The question of liberalism in mid Victorian society was, in the end, always a question of how the delicate power balance was maintained and reinforced in a rapidly changing society. The crisis of liberalism was, therefore, ultimately connected with a crisis of hegemony in the whole social formation.  

The 1870 Act was in part a rear-guard action, a compromise with voluntarism, working against the grain of prevailing nineteenth-century liberal political thought. Nonetheless, it also signalled a set of profound shifts in ‘the very ideas of state and civil society, of public and private’. It fermented serious divisions within the Liberal Party which were evident in the parliamentary debates, and the original proposals were considerably modified by the Radical Non-conformist wing of the Liberal Party, many of them recently elected MPs. Nonetheless, the Education Act was to be part of a more thorough-going set of transformations within which, in the last 20–30 years of the nineteenth century, the modern state was constituted through what Foucault calls a new political strategy – bio-power. That is, a new mode of governing and management of populations, an explosion of numerous and diverse techniques for achieving the subjugations of bodies and the control of populations, which rests on the recognition of human beings as a species. There was a proliferation of ‘state’ bio-discourses which were realised in particular in the knowledges and practices of new state professionals such as teachers, social workers, public health officials, etc. Hall and Schwarz make a similar point; the transformation of state regulation in the late nineteenth century they say, ‘was not merely quantitative but effectively produced a new idea of the “social”’.  

Then as now, there was a broader social and political and economic and decisively ‘classed’ background to the debates about education, and public

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5 The 1870 Bill was modified several times to accommodate the various religious sensibilities.
7 Ibid., 11.
9 Hall and Schwarz, ‘State and Society’, 30.
health and housing. A variety of popular, bourgeois and nationalist interests came together in support of change. As Simon puts it, there was a:

concatenation of circumstances, embodying different (and even opposite) perspectives on the part of widely differing social groups or classes, that created a climate where change, reform and even transformation now came on the agenda, the need for it being widely recognised.\(^\text{10}\)

A similar description could be offered of the current education policy climate. Simon also points out that traditional educational institutions ‘were being perceived as increasingly dysfunctional’\(^\text{11}\) – this also sounds familiar. The ratcheting of change, the small moves and trends leading to bigger changes, and increased expenditures, an incremental expansionism, is also an aspect of current education policy.\(^\text{12}\)

**Patchwork schooling**

Let us remind ourselves what the ‘system’ prior to 1870 looked like. It was patchy, messy and very diverse. There were a wide range of national and local charitable providers, some self-help groups, and a small and virtually invisible, front room, private sector – ‘dame schools’ – and the Sunday schools. Fees of various kinds were paid. The three faith-based national societies (Church of England, Non-conformist and Catholic) had the largest number of schools and widest coverage (by 1830, the National Society claimed to be teaching 346,000 children). However, in 1818, just 7% of children attended a day school and further growth was slow, although faster than that of the population. By 1870, about 700,000 6–10-year-olds were in schools, while about 1 million were not.\(^\text{13}\) Organisations like the Anti-Corn Law League were campaigning for rate-supported, local and democratically accountable, secular schools. In 1824, the London Infant School Society was founded by Samuel Wilderspin, inspired by the example of Robert Owen. In 1844, the Ragged School Union was founded to open schools for children of the poorest classes. There are hundreds of examples of local, philanthropically supported ‘poor schools’. The compromise that was written into the 1870 Education Act was that the state through local School Boards would ‘fill up the gaps’ in, rather than replace, the existing provision. Following the passing of

\[^\text{11}\]Ibid., 90.
the Act, 1600 applications for building grants for new schools were approved. Between 1870 and 1876, a million and a half new school places were provided, but two-thirds of these were created by the church societies. The National Society responded to the Act by raising £10 million and almost doubling the number of its schools to 12,000 in 15 years. The 1870 Act left the administration of schooling and building of new state schools to local School Boards who ran 3692 of them by 1883, though in 1902 voluntary elementary schools still out numbered state schools 2:1. Compulsion was not introduced (for 5–10-year-olds) until 1881, while provision for 10–14-year-olds differed widely around the country. Fees were not abolished until 1891, a move viewed with alarm by many politicians and commentators. In introducing the 1870 Bill in parliament, W.E. Forster had argued that providing the full cost of elementary education would be ‘not only unnecessary but mischievous’. The annual central education vote rose from £1.6 million in 1870, 4.1% of government expenditure, to £2.2 million in 1885, 8.6% of expenditure, in addition to local and voluntary funding.

The 1870 Act is often now misunderstood and mis-represented; it was neither the beginning of a state system of education, that arguably was 1833, nor the moment of the creation of such a system, that was a long drawn-out process which began before 1870 and which was completed long after, arguably around 1902. The process of creating such a system was halting, bitty, uneven and contested. It involved a series of ragged stages from piecemeal philanthropic, faith and private provision, through local School Boards, local education authorities (LEAs), to a situation now of unprecedented central powers and central direction of education, in the hands of the Secretary of State, stemming mainly from the provisions of the 1988 and several subsequent Education Acts, including the 2010 Academies Act. The Church of England and Catholic faith-based schools continue to exist throughout all of this and since 2000 have accounted for the majority of newly founded schools, and there are now schools of various other faith varieties. Timmins suggests that, ‘by opting to subsidise church schools rather than create secular state ones [in 1870], Parliament invested in a problem Butler would still be grappling with more than a century later’ and which remains topical in education policy debates.

\[14\] The issue of compulsion is one which indicated the tensions in contemporary political thinking. The provisions of the Act left it to parents rather than the state to decide whether a child should go to work or to school. See N. Middleton, ‘The Education Act of 1870 as the Start of the Modern Concept of the Child’, *History of Education* 18, no. 2 (1974): 166–79.

\[15\] Between 1870 and 1902, local School Boards administered elementary schools and were directly elected, giving rise to a wide variety of political representations and struggles; for an example, see, J. Martin, *Making Socialists: Mary Bridges Adams and the Fight for Knowledge and Power* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010).

The second liberalism

What I want to suggest is that what we are now witnessing in the politics of education is a kind of re-winding of history, a *discontinuity* as Foucault would call it, within the context of the *second liberalism*. This second liberalism began in earnest of course with Thatcherism and Margaret Thatcher’s conversion to Hayekian free-market economics by her mentor Keith Joseph and the concurrent agitation of various Hayekian and free-market Conservative think tanks, such as the Institute of Economic Affairs and Adam Smith Institute – I have written about these before. 17 Education came into the purview of this political-economics in a number of ways, as part of a general critique of the inefficiencies and biases of the state. 18 Subsequently, the 1988 Act introduced into the English school system a framework for an education market (choice and competition, what Hatcher 19 calls endogenous privatisation) but some neo-liberal campaigners were already calling for forms of exogenous privatisation – the entry of non-state and private providers. In the run-up to the 1988 Education Reform Act, Under-Secretary of State for Education, Bob Dunn, floated the idea of Crown schools and Company schools. The former is a version of grant-maintained (GM) schools, the latter would be groups of schools tendered to private companies, as packages, with attendant tax relief. Their performance would be compared with LEA schools after a five-year period. Teacher salaries would be set by the companies and related directly to performance. While radical then in the current policy climate, this now sounds very reasonable.

While Bob Dunn’s proposals did not gain much support at the time, GM schools and City Technology Colleges (CTCs) were introduced and are forerunners of trust schools and academies. The Conservative reforms of the 1980s opened up opportunities for further reforms and they served to ‘soften-up’ or weaken the embedded assumptions of the welfare model of education and public service. The ‘liberalising’ of the state school system was taken much further by New Labour. Indeed, according to Novak, ‘the triumph of Tony Blair may in one sense be regarded as the triumph of Margaret Thatcher’. 20 And as John Major saw it, ‘I did not, at the time, appreciate the extent to which he would appropriate Conservative language and steal our policies’. 21 New Labour took the Conservative infrastructure and gave it meat and teeth although with a different emphasis. The Conservative reforms, national curriculum aside, were locked into classic neo-liberal, small state thinking. Indeed, as a Hayekian purist, Keith Joseph voted against the government’s National Curriculum

18 Ibid., chap. 2.
measures in the House of Lords and presented a classic neo-liberal argument for a curriculum market. In an interview I conducted with him in 1989, he explained:

we have a bloody state system, I wish we hadn’t got. I wish we’d taken a different route in 1870. We got the ruddy state involved. I don’t want it. I don’t think we know how to do it. I certainly don’t think secretaries of state know anything about it . . . and we tyrannise children to do that which they don’t want to do. 22

Later in the interview, Sir Keith made an argument against compulsory education.

New Labour, initially through the political trope of the ‘third way’, moved on to what we might call a ‘post-neo-liberal’ policy phase in which the state became the powerhouse of public sector reform and a ‘transformer’ and market-maker. 23

In a sense New Labour ‘did’ many of the Conservative policies but ‘did’ them differently. The Coalition are now beginning to ‘do’ many policies set in train by New Labour but are doing them differently.

We may now be seeing in 2010, and I write ‘may’ deliberately, another change of emphasis. While Labour sought after 1997 to reform education by regulation and through centralised programmes, the Coalition government in 2010 (following the Conservative election manifestoes) intend to achieve change by reducing and stripping out regulation, giving schools and headteachers more autonomy, and allowing even greater diversity (of some sorts) and a much greater emphasis on consumerism. Supply side measures are to be put in place to ‘set education free’ by introducing new providers and new choices, wresting schools from local authorities by creating many more academies, cutting excessive red tape, scrapping unnecessary quangos, and creating a streamlined funding model where government funding follows the learner and is dispensed directly to schools from central government: 24

We will change the laws – on planning, on funding, on staffing – to make it easier for new schools to be created in your neighbourhood, so you can demand the precise, personalised, education your children need . . . The money currently wasted on red tape and management consultants instead invested in books and teachers. 25

In the hotch-potch of political ideas and influences which inform current Conservatism, there is even a modern reworking of nineteenth-century mutualism, articulated as a part of Philip Blond’s so-called ‘red conservatism’ 26:

22See Ball, Politics and Policymaking, 62.
24Conservative Party website, accessed 28 March 2010. In this section of the paper, I am drawing on some collaborative writing with Sonia Exley.
This is step one in a revolution which will see more and more of our schools run by professionals — who are accountable to parents not central or local bureaucracy.27

The Conservative vision for education is one where individuals, families, school staff and communities will be given ‘freedom’ to ‘take responsibility’ for the education system. The 2010 manifesto built on earlier proposals for ‘free schools’, also past initiatives such as GM schools and CTCs, with plans for hundreds of new academies set up by independent providers of different sorts. As well as a range of indigenous influences these policies draw on initiatives such as US and Canadian (e.g. Alberta) Charter Schools, and the Swedish system of state-independent schools, many of which are run by for-profit education businesses. How new schools will be funded in a period of cuts to public service budgets is not entirely clear (cutting £4.5 billion from the school rebuilding initiative ‘Building Schools for the Future’ has been suggested28 as one source).

Schools will be subjected to market accountability (as well as government performance requirements). Parents will choose schools, with all schools – state and otherwise – liberated to innovate (to some extent) and set teacher salaries. Where schools attract pupils, they will be permitted to expand (this was attempted in 1992 by Kenneth Clarke, with little success). Where they do not and/or where standards decline, they will face closure or will be tendered out to other providers — a promise reflected in the 2010 manifesto commitment to turn into academies any schools classed as being in ‘special measures’ for over a year. The new Academies Bill, laid before Parliament just 14 days into the new Coalition government and passed in July 2010, enables not just secondary schools but also primary and special schools classed as ‘outstanding’ to become academies without barriers such as a requirement to consult local authorities. In November 2010, the possibility of schools applying for academy status was extended to those deemed ‘satisfactory’ by Ofsted, if partnered by an ‘outstanding’ school. Michael Gove expects that academies will become the norm among English schools.29 Regulation over school admissions in the form of the School Admissions Code (brought in by Labour in 1998) has so far not been targeted for reform as part of the deregulation project. However, there is lukewarm support for the Code, and Gove has expressed derision towards, ‘bureaucracy which has allocated school places in such an antique command and control fashion

27 Gove, ‘Failing Schools’.
and which now seeks to criminalise parents who simply want the best for their children\textsuperscript{30} while praising deregulative practices in the commercial world:

\begin{quote}
We will reduce the number of staff at the DCSF, and the number of things they regulate, monitor and issue decrees on.\textsuperscript{31}
\end{quote}

There are commonsense limits to what you can do. You can’t micro-manage the admissions policies of 20,000 schools. You can’t have the government inspector sitting on the shoulder of the admissions panel as they decide individual cases.\textsuperscript{32}

In all of this, the relationship between educational quality and social deprivation is to be addressed by plans for a ‘Pupil Premium’ (first suggested by American pro-marketeers Chubb and Moe\textsuperscript{33}) – extra money per head where pupils come from ‘poorer homes’, ‘making schools work harder’ for pupils in these circumstances.\textsuperscript{34}

Central to the shifts adumbrated above is what Jessop\textsuperscript{35} calls ‘destatisation’: a complex ‘redrawing [of] the public–private divide, reallocating tasks, and rearticulating the relationship between organisations and tasks across this divide’ (199). This re-drawing and reallocation involves things like the creation of executive agencies (and boards, councils and trusts), the establishing of private–public partnerships (of many different kinds), contracting out state services to private providers, the use of think tanks, consultants and knowledge companies for policy research and evaluation, philanthropic activity and sponsorship to fund educational programmes and innovations, the involvement of the voluntary sector (charities, NGOs, trusts, foundations, etc.) in service provision, the ‘incorporation’ of public sector organisations, and the use of social entrepreneurs to address intractable and ‘wicked’ social problems – sometimes in complex combinations. In other words, tasks and services previously undertaken by the state and public sector organisations are now being done by various ‘others’ in various kinds of relationships among themselves and to various parts of the state.

There are already academies of various kinds, which were established by New Labour, and in late 2010, 224 applications for academy status under the new legislation had been received from about 200 existing schools, including those in federations, have been given an Academy Order, and 80 were open including

\textsuperscript{31}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{32}David Willetts, ‘Better Schools and More Social Mobility’ (speech to CBI, May 16, 2007).
\textsuperscript{33}J. Chubb and T. Moe, \textit{Politics, Markets and America’s Schools} (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 1990), 139.
\textsuperscript{34}Announcement by Nick Clegg, Deputy Prime Minister, October 15, 2010.
7 primary schools. A further 64 academies have replaced schools that were failing. In September 2010, 16 ‘Free schools’ were approved, including five proposed by faith groups, two involving ARK Schools, one each The Childcare Company, King’s Science Academy, Discovery New School, etc., and nine more were announced in November 2010. New Labour also introduced legislation (2006 Education and Inspections Act) which requires newly founded local authority schools to be put out for competition. These tendering arrangements have again brought a variety of new groups and organisations into school governance and management, as well as some established ones, including faith groups, voluntary and community groups, universities and academy providers, and at least one parents’ group, and some local authorities. By November 2010, there were 36 competition schools open and 12 more out to tender.36

In addition, at this time almost 400 trust schools have been established which include a vast range of partners in their governance and management arrangements, including 108 Cooperative Society schools – although the Coalition seems not to want to promote the trust school model.37 The establishment of trust schools was also part of the provisions of the 2006 Act and they have considerable freedoms from central and local authority control in almost all areas of their functioning. In effect, the Act proposed that all local authority schools would be academies, voluntary-aided, foundation or trust schools. LEAs would be left to work alongside a newly created national schools commissioner to promote choice, diversity and better access of disadvantaged groups to good schools. Trust schools own their own assets, may contract or procure their own building projects and may be established by or, in the case of existing schools, may establish partnerships with ‘a foundation’ and ‘allow that foundation to appoint a majority of governors’. Any school may become a trust school and schools may join together to form a trust (e.g. proposals for the Aspire Trust Wakefield bring together three schools within a charitable trust involving Bearing Point (a US management services and consultancy company), Hi Tec Ltd, Leeds Metropolitan University and Wakefield District Housing). There is no single blueprint for becoming a trust – schools can choose whom they work with in order to ‘best meet the needs of their pupils’.38 Again through this mechanism, new ‘agents’ can become involved in the running of state schools – private companies, charitable foundations, religious organisations, voluntary associations, local community groups or groups of parents. According to the 2005 White Paper, such relationships would offer to trust schools: ‘external support and a success culture, bringing innovative and

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36Given the pace of change these figures will be out of date as soon as this paper is finished!
37There is another circularity here; one of the earliest manifestations of schooling for the poor in the nineteenth century, the factory school founded by Robert Owen, is taken by the Cooperative movement to be the first Cooperative schools.
38DfES website (accessed February 23, 2006).
stronger leadership to the school, improving standards and extending choice’.39 Once again, two key dynamics of New Labour’s reforms come together here, autonomy, flexibility and business-like innovation, on the one hand, and consumer choice and the freedom to respond to parent ‘demand’ in terms of substance or scale, on the other. Furthermore, one other effect and intention of these reform moves, both those of New Labour and the Coalition, is a whittling away of the national agreements on teachers’ pay and conditions, and opening up new routes of entry into teaching – most recently for ex-service personnel. In effect, the teacher as ‘state professional’, one of the key policy subjects of nineteenth-century education, is being gradually dispensed with.

In another return to the sensibilities of nineteenth-century welfare, New Labour was also responsive to and supportive of a whole array of other philanthropic involvements in education policy and education services (Figure 1), aside from the high profile examples from the academies programme. More generally:

... commercial enterprises increasingly perform tasks that were once considered to reside within the civic domain of moral entrepreneurship and the political

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The distribution of responsibility for the solution of social problems is changing and indeed philanthropy and business are now essential parts of the policy process, and of what Ong calls the ‘humanitarian industry’, re-defining policy problems and constructing and enacting new ‘market-based’ solutions. Figure 1 indicates some examples of the participation of business philanthropies and business leaders in various aspects of education policy – curriculum development (like Every Child a Reader and Every Child Counts), school sponsorships (such as specialist schools, trust schools and academies), innovative programmes (such as Teach First and Future Leaders), early intervention and gifted and talented initiatives (SHINE), policy-related research (The Sutton Trust), and science and maths bursaries (Ogden Trust). It also gives one example of commercial engagement with education and some of these new players: Explore Learning, which is a chain of ‘learning shops’ based in larger Sainsbury’s stores, which offer software tutoring programmes ‘in partnership with schools and parents’ for between £80 and £98 per month:

We use a variety of resources, including sophisticated learning systems such as SuccessMaker™, innovative tools like Kar2ouche and Longman’s Digitexts, internet activities and paper-based materials. All our tools map closely to the national curriculum and many adapt to the ability of the child so that he or she is challenged at exactly the right level.

A new patchwork

Putting all of these policy moves together, we are moving back towards a ‘system’ of education that is messy, patchy and diverse, involving a variety of providers, as before – voluntary, philanthropic, faith, self-help (parents) and, on a small scale so far, private; although at this point in time, public sector providers remain as the main providers. The neo-liberal Conservative and post-neo-liberal Labour governments have both been keen to break the public sector monopoly and get new actors into the provision of state schooling in response to a continuing ‘discourse of derision’ that constructs public sector schooling as dysfunctional. As Tony Blair challenged a conference of local authority leaders in 1998: ‘If you are unwilling or unable to work to the modern agenda, then government will have to look to other partners

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to take on your role’. In effect, the state is now eager to shuffle off its accumulated responsibilities for the delivery of public services across the board—the hard services (water, gas, electricity, railways, banking and telecommunications) have already returned to private sector ownership. Various soft services (advice, job-training, social care, youth work, ‘activation’ programmes, prisons and prison education) are already all or in part contracted out to private companies or the voluntary sector. The struggles over the role, scale and scope of the state in the second half of the nineteenth century are being replayed in the first part of the twenty-first century, albeit subject to some different ideological and intellectual influences.

One of the issues in dispute here is the implications for equity of access and opportunity of the shift from education services organised by local authorities and delivered by relatively few providers to a much more open system with many more different sorts of providers with greater autonomies and more competition and choice. The pro-liberal campaigners, in a reversal of the nineteenth-century positions, argue that state-centred schooling embeds and reproduces a whole set of social inequalities and disadvantages that can be remedied by giving more choice and power to consumers. The anti-liberal campaigners make the opposite point that the more diversity and ‘fuzziness’ in the system, and the more responsibility given to the consumer, then the more likelihood there is that certain social groups will find ways of using their skills and resources to achieve social advantage and the greater potential for ‘slippage’ in procedures for ‘fair’ admissions. The anti-liberals also point to the ‘democratic-deficit’ in the new diversified system and the loss of local accountability and transparency. The latter plays out elements of very classic liberal debates both about the definition of public and private goods and the role of individual as against state responsibilities in risky and uncertain social environments. In effect, ‘the framework of relations between individuals and governments is currently undergoing a profound transition’. That is, the re-grounding of social relations in the economic rationality of the market—the generalisation of a neo-liberal epistemology. The modalities of state power are once again changing, as is the conception of the social. The burdens of social risk are being shifted back to individuals and families and re-embedded in discourses of responsibility, calculation and prudentialism, so that: ‘To rely on the state to deal with the harmful effects of known calculable and individually manageable risks appears feckless and culpable’. Indeed, for many parents, educational opportunities are now being

sought for their children through a judicious mix of state and/or private institutions and paid-for add-ons, such as educational toys and software, tutoring and commercial educational services and activities, drawing on diverse sources of advice and information (like ‘Good School’ guides) and support like parenting courses.\textsuperscript{47} While ‘the contemporary family is under \textit{pressure to educate}’ as Beck-Gernsheim\textsuperscript{48} puts it, a great deal of this work of education is now thoroughly commercialised and commodified. Education and children’s services are a lucrative area of profit for capital, little different from other sorts of goods and services (e.g. Explore Learning, discussed above). All of this is part of a more general conceptual shift in the relationship between citizens and state and the market and what it means for a society to educate its citizens. It also brings schooling into closer and complex relations with the market — through competition and the making-up of entrepreneurial schools, through the deployment of hero entrepreneurs as models for school leadership, through the participation of commercial actors in school sponsorship and governance, and through the steady inroads of for-profit activities into the daily practices of schooling.

Having said that, under both the Conservative governments of 1979–1997 and New Labour 1997–2010, the coordinating role of the state increased and may increase further under the Coalition, and considerable investment and infrastructural support may be needed to ‘enable’ other providers to take on the delivery of state services.\textsuperscript{14} Middleton argues that the ‘dispersal’ of government, which was a key feature of New Labour modernisation of the public sector, and which the Coalition wants to take further, does not signal an abandonment of close control by the centre, and that we should understand this is \textit{deconcentration} rather than \textit{devolution} and that is ‘not an irrational contradiction, but a predictable consequence of the overall logic’ of reform.\textsuperscript{49} In effect, the current state of governance, at each level, is a new mix between hierarchy, heterarchy and market.\textsuperscript{50} The second liberalism may still best be understood as ‘post-neo-liberalism’ inasmuch that the state is both reluctant and assertive, both shuffling off old responsibilities and defining and distributing new ones. Just as in the mid-Victorian period, the form and modalities of the state itself are a focus of contestation.

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\textsuperscript{49} Ibid., 122.
Notes on contributor
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