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CAN SCHOOLS MAKE SCOTLAND A MORE INCLUSIVE SOCIETY?

Pamela Munn[-]

'Education, education, education' was identified by Tony Blair as the key policy priority for his government on winning the general election in May 1997. Education is seen as a means to achieving a major New Labour public policy goal, that of social inclusion. The high profile of this goal is evident in the decision to establish a Social Exclusion Unit in 10 Downing Street. In Scotland, a Social Inclusion Network was formed in 1998, consisting of representatives of Government and other national public and private sector organisations, alongside individuals with direct experience of tackling social exclusion. The network has agreed three areas for priority attention:

- excluded young people
- inclusive communities
- the impact of anti-poverty action.

A Social Inclusion Minister has been appointed as part of the Scottish Executive signalling the political importance of policy development and implementation in this area in Scotland too.

The role of schools in tackling exclusion and in promoting inclusion has already featured heavily in policy initiatives. For example, in Scotland, the Early Intervention Programme aims to raise standards of literacy and numeracy in the first two years of primary school, with an emphasis on overcoming the educational disadvantage experienced by many of those living in poverty: £23 million has been made available under the Excellence Fund for Schools, to assist local authorities to develop strategies to reduce the

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[-]*Pamela Munn is Professor of Curriculum Research at Edinburgh University. This article is based on the Lothian lecture given at Edinburgh University, 6 December 1999.*

numbers of young people being excluded from school for misbehaviour; this is in addition to the £3 million available through the Alternatives to Exclusion Grant scheme which is encouraging authorities to pilot innovative alternatives to exclusion. New Community Schools will bring together a team of professionals to provide integrated support to children and families, supported by £26 million of government investment. South of the border the Social Exclusion Unit has issued guidance to Local Education Authorities on the development of behaviour support plans in a bid to reduce exclusion from school and has issued a series of papers highlighting aspects of school life which contribute to social exclusion and disaffected behaviour. The literacy and numeracy hour and educational action zones likewise are attempts to raise pupil attainment and to highlight the worthwhileness of schools in particular and education in general as a route out of poverty and general disadvantage.

Is it going to work? I want to answer this question in the following way. Firstly, I want to say something about the notion of social inclusion. Secondly, I want to remind you of the contested relationship between schools on the one hand and social and economic structures on the other. From this I wish to argue, along with Michael Young, thirdly, that if 'solutions to the problems of social exclusion focus only on an identifiable excluded group, they are doomed to failure, just as countless compensatory education policies for the disadvantaged have failed in the past' (Young 1999, p. 210). In this part I comment on the role of independent schools in sustaining class divisions in British society and on the lack of political will to tackle this issue seriously. Lastly, I wish to look inside British schools at their practices and to relate these to notions of social inclusion. In this part I highlight the importance of schools in promoting i) the attainment of young people, reflected in public examination results, ii) their achievements beyond the cognitive-intellectual and iii) a sense of social responsibility.

So you can see that I intend to be provocative. My starting point, however, is to celebrate the undoubted success of Scottish schools. They continue to provide the main meritocratic route from which individuals can escape from poverty and other disadvantage. This is no mean achievement.

Yet the emphasis on educational attainment which necess!rily accompanies notions of meritocracy tends to individualise explanations for success and failure in examinations, pointing to explanations of ability and/or intelligence and to distract attention from structural explanations of disadvantage. I had the good fortune to grow up in a small burgh with one omnibus comprehensive school whose teachers encouraged and expected me and many

others like me to go to university. I left school in the mid 1960s when universities were expanding after the Robbins Report and when students got a means tested maintenance grant - paying tuition fees was unheard of. If I had been brought up in a large city, or if my parents had had to fund my university education, or if I had had to shoulder a large debt, things might well have been different. On a very personal level, then, I can see the importance of structures such as the availability of a high quality comprehensive school, the expansion of higher education and the financial support available to students as well as my own effort or agency, in gaining the educational qualifications which allowed me to enter the labour market at a level undreamed of by my parents.

WHAT IS SOCIAL INCLUSION?

The UK government defines social exclusion as follows:

> Social exclusion is a shorthand label for what can happen when individuals or areas suffer from a combination of linked problems, such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime environments, bad health and family breakdown.
> (SEU 1999)

Social inclusion then might reasonably be inferred to be the antithesis of the above. The Scottish and UK governments have a twin track approach to social inclusion. One track concerns investing in opportunities for individuals to increase the extent and level of their educational qualifications, thereby increasing their likelihood of employment and so of avoiding poverty, a key element in the linked problems which the government identifies as comprising social exclusion.

Thus the early intervention programmes in literacy and numeracy and the setting of attainment targets for schools by which they are encouraged to increase the numbers of pupils achieving bench mark standards are clearly part of this track. So too is the welcome attention to the continuing professional development of teachers, encouraging them to keep abreast of new developments in their subjects, teaching methods, learning styles and so on.

The definition from the Social Exclusion Unit draws attention to the second track, that of developing strong communities, with shared norms and values, and people committed to participation in shaping and developing community

life and indeed in the way the community sees itself. The role of schools in this process is perhaps best summed up by a headteacher from a primary school in Newcastle, part of an educational action zone:

> There is nothing in this [school] that does not come from the parents. Unemployment had created an area in which people were used to other agencies doing things for them. That is what we have to change: not just how the children are educated, but how the community sees itself. (Quoted in Gamarnikov and Green 1999, p. 58)

There is quite a long way to go on both tracks. If we look at bench mark qualifications for entry to higher education, for example, only around 20 per cent of youngsters in Scotland nationally are achieving 3+ Highers at grade A-C in S5 and this percentage has not changed over the last three years. Like all averages, this figure masks quite large variations, from 11 per cent in Glasgow to 37 per cent in East Renfrewshire in 1999, largely a reflection of the contrasting social and economic characteristics of these areas. But there are also problems across the country in S1-S2 (pupils aged 12-14) about pupils' lack of progress from primary school, reflected in Assessment of Achievement surveys and reports from schools inspectors.

Likewise recent research in Scotland on school collaboration with local communities, conducted by a team from the Faculty of Education in Edinburgh and the School of Education in Birmingham, revealed, firstly, how little collaboration was taking place, (schools mostly collaborated with other schools) and the rather different purposes of the collaboration that did take place. In brief, rather more collaboration was orientated towards helping individual youngsters improve their educational qualifications and very little was directed towards helping the development of strong communities. It is easy to see the reasons for this. Schools see their core business as teaching and learning and they are publicly accountable for the progress their pupils make in reaching attainment targets. They are not publicly accountable (yet) for community development and teachers have little training in collaboration with other agencies. The New Community Schools in Scotland are one attempt to promote this aspect of social inclusion - a practical attempt to encourage joined up thinking and working across a number of agencies, education, social work, health and others.

SCHOOLS AND SOCIETY

The connections between schooling and society have long been a matter of debate. Unsurprisingly, perhaps, those who have been most prominent in theorising connections have tended to come from a Marxist or quasi-Marxist standpoint, arguing that schooling serves to reproduce the social relations of production. It does so by elites determining what counts as really useful knowledge via the formal curriculum and by instilling values such as respect for authority and obedience. Theorists in this tradition, such as Althusser, Bourdieu and Passeron and to some extent the American sociologist James Coleman, seek to explain how schools reproduce economic and social relations using ideas such as cultural and social capital. Essentially they argue that schools embody middle class values and that middle class parents instil these values in children from birth, particularly those relating to the worth-whileness of qualifications, and use networks to maximise the chances of educational success of their children. These theories have been criticised not only because of their portrayal of teachers and pupils as passive, helpless to resist the roles in which they have been cast, but also because the only solution they seem to offer is the overthrow of capitalism - clearly some way off!

The close correspondence between the nature and quality of schooling on the one hand and economic and social relations on the other has been a view held across the political spectrum in Britain, although no major political party has adopted a Marxist analysis. The need for an educated flexible workforce, so that Britain can compete successfully with other advanced economies in the world, runs through the rhetoric of both Labour and Conservative parties from at least the Great Debate - instigated by James Callaghan in the late 1970s, through Margaret Thatcher's attempts to revolutionise the school curriculum in the 1980s, to the current Scottish and UK governments. This rationale has underpinned almost all major school reform reflecting the general acceptance of human capital theory, that investment in education and training are viewed as profitable both for the individual and for society. This view continues to go largely unchallenged today, even though the globalisation of the economy casts doubt on the ability of individual governments to manage continued economic growth. Halsey et al sum up the situation thus: 'In a global market for labour, workers are rewarded according to their contributions based on skills and productivity, rather than political settlements between governments, employers and trade unions' (Halsey et al 1997, p. 157). Emphasis on skills and productivity in a world where knowledge and technology are changing rapidly has profound implications for schools. We can see a move away from situation-specific skills and

knowledge in the school curriculum to a greater emphasis on critical thinking competencies and problem solving. The core skills in Higher Still are a recent example. More than this, however, we see an unparallelled focus on education as the protector of a nation's economic prosperity and a determination by government to force the pace, particularly of curriculum change, and to increase academic standards in order to achieve this goal.

There is a debate, however, about whether schooling can be directly related to productivity and economic growth. Those on the right of the political spectrum argue that 'if education were more in tune with the needs of industry and there was greater flexibility within the labour market' (Halsey et al 1997, p. 159) countries such as the US and the UK would prosper even more than at present. Those on the left argue that while education can influence the supply side for labour, it cannot influence the demand for productive workers, however much it migh seek to foster individual skills of enterprise or entrepreneurship. This demand has to be created by a range of complementary conditions. Here issues concerning not only macro economics but a range of other factors come into play, for example, those concerning relations between workers and management, investment in plant as well as marketing the product. Whether schools can or indeed should teach entrepreneurship so that young people leave school fired up to start their own businesses is an open question. My own view on this is that schools are much more than a production factory for the economy - even if we had a consensus on the kind of curriculum which promoted economic growth. I also think that our present curriculum is hopelessly overcrowded and that we should resist attempts to cram more and more content into it.

There is also a question of time lag of course. In a paper recently published in **Scottish Affairs**, Webster cites work showing the huge loss of manual jobs in Glasgow 1981-91, this loss being more than that in the rest of Scotland put together. The argument is that relatively little adjustment to this loss has been possible through migration and commuting, with the result of increasing unemployment, particularly among men. The Scottish Office's own analysis of social deprivation since 1991 showed that half the total is in Glasgow as a direct result of the city's huge loss of manual jobs. The school curriculum and assessment policies in the 1950s and 60s were to some extent reflecting the occupational structure then in existence and labour market forecasting is a hugely uncertain art. Glasgow schools today have to deal with the day to day reality of unemployment and what this means for the children now at school. Thus the need for flexibility, life long learning and up-skilling are evident but only in a context where jobs exist. In the meantime Glasgow schools must

have a tough job convincing their pupils of the extrinsic worth of qualifications - their value in the labour market.

Finally in this section, there is a the body of work associated with Giddens (1994, 1998) in which, amongst other things, he draws attention to the 'manufactured risks' of modern societies, contrasting these with the natural risks which primitive societies had to endure. Manufactured risks are the results of policy decisions and thus risks which we, as a society, might anticipate and control. Viewing social exclusion as a manufactured risk encourages us to think more deeply about the causes of social exclusion rather than blaming the excluded for their fate. In schools, for instance, it might help us to see excluded pupils as victims in contrast to the current tendency to see them as culprits, authors of their own misfortune with little entitlement to education.

My intention is not to indicate that one of these theories is right and the others wrong. Rather, I want to illustrate that there are different ways of thinking about the relationship between schools and society and that the prescriptions on offer for schools reflect assumptions about that relationship which may not have been made explicit or debated. My own view is that there is a relationship but that it is indirect, mediated and uncertain and that we need a range of theoretical lenses through which to view education policy and practice at both macro and micro levels.

Let me now turn to the matter of public schools and social inclusion.

COMMON SCHOOLS

The previous section has indicated that the relationship between schools on the one hand and social and economic structures on the other is contested. However, many commentators point to two great social principles of the Enlightenment to which I think modern democracies subscribe. The first is that the determination of life-chances by accidents of birth should be driven out of society; and secondly, there should be mass rather than elite participation in democratic societies (Halsey et al 1997). Successive UK governments over the nineteenth and twentieth centuries encouraged the masses to participate by extending the right to vote, even to women by the late 1920s, and by enabling ordinary people to stand as candidates for parliamentary and local election. The abolition of the rights of hereditary peers to legislate or delay legislation is the most recent working out of this principle - although it does seem to have taken rather a long time!

It has been much more difficult to level the playing field in terms of life-chances when it comes to schooling. This is largely because parents want the best for their children, although, of course, what counts as the best for their children will vary according to needs and interests. In a pluralist society there are bound to be debates concerning the provision of schools which reflect specific religious and ethnic interests, values and customs. This is inevitable when one considers the role schools play in socialising young people. I am not arguing in this section that an inclusive society is a homogeneous society and that therefore all schools must be the same. Indeed several commentators predict an increased diversity of types of schools in the 21st century and the growth of home schooling, as developments in information and communication technology make it easier to individualise learning plans and choose from amongst a range of suppliers of the curriculum in order to attain educational qualifications. I am arguing that since the possession of educational qualifications is a positional good, conferring distinct advantages on those who have them and distinct disadvantages on those who do not, in terms of direct entry to the labour market or to further and higher education, then access to opportunity should not depend on where you live or can afford to buy a house; nor should it depend on you ability to pay directly for schooling. We do not choose to be born, and we do not choose our parents. The provision of high quality, freely accessible schooling, then, ought to be the hallmark of a civilised society aspiring to be socially inclusive. It is noteworthy that while a great deal of attention has been focused on the improvement of state education, to which I will return later, there has been no debate about the role of independent schools in a socially inclusive Scotland or UK. Access to these schools, as we know, is largely determined by ability to pay, and indeed part of the cachet is their exclusivity, the very fact that not everyone can attend, the antithesis of social inclusion, in fact.

Now there seem to me to be three kinds of arguments for preserving independent schools, all of which, I may say, I find pretty unconvincing.

The first is that these schools somehow preserve the best there is both in terms of educational standards and of developing in their pupils personal qualities and attributes which have generally served the UK well. This is what I call the Battle of Waterloo being won on the playing fields of Eton argument. There is no doubt that many of the great independent schools provide a benchmark against which state schools can be compared; think for instance of class size, unit cost per pupil, salary and conditions of service for staff. In short, they reveal a great deal about the level of investment needed to create comparable conditions in the state sector. Their role as beacons of excellence, however, completely fails to address equity argume.ts, and the

existence of elite institutions accessed largely by ability to pay in a modern democracy.

The second set of arguments concerns the personal freedoms of individuals to establish schools and to pay for their children's education if they want to. Here we encounter the arguments so forcefully put by Isaiah Berlin, concerning the trumping of freedom to do something over freedom from something. In essence this argument says that liberty matters more than justice. Space does not permit a full development or exploration of this position. All I will point out here is that in modern democracies a balance has continually to be struck between collective welfare and individual welfare rights. My colleague Ruth Johnathan has written persuasively on the philosophical weaknesses of the idea of natural rights, unfettered individualism as it were, and Michael Adler in discussing the role of quasi markets in schooling has highlighted the need to take into account the social and economic consequences of the exercise of individual rights of parents to choose the school their children attend and so of the need protect the interests of all children, not just those on whose behalf choice is exercised. In other words there is a public interest in access to schooling. Michael Prowse writing in the October edition of **Prospect** put it this way:

> It is true that some people benefit from the right to buy a private education, but those without financial resources undoubtedly lose; their children are put at a clear disadvantage. Those losers can't be ignored. (Prowse, 1999 p. 38)

A third set of arguments relates to the political practicalities of doing anything about the independent sector. There are two aspects to this set of arguments. The first is that the independent sector attracts a very small percentage of the school population, about 7% across the UK as a whole, about 4% in Scotland. (The small percentage in Scotland conceals wide variation across the country. It is estimated that about 20 per cent of the school population in Edinburgh City, for instance, attend independent schools.) Therefore it is not a priority. Needless to say the influence of this small percentage in terms of entry to Oxford and Cambridge (50% of entrants) and in the City, upper reaches of the civil service and the professions belies its size. The second aspect is that if state schools raise their educational standards then the independent sector will decline and this is politically preferable to a long drawn out battle. I am sceptical about this argument because school improvement has been on government agendas from 1872 and because as people's disposable income grows some will want to use

it to confer educational advantages on their children through paying for their children to be educated away from the mainstream.

I have spent a little time on the independent sector in order to illustrate the importance of structure as well as of individual agency if we are serious about tackling the causes as well as the symptoms of social exclusion. I have no easy answer to the question about what to do about the independent sector, although I am sure there is much greater scope for collaboration between it and the state sector. Rather I am drawing attention to the lack of debate on the issue from a government committed to social inclusion and in a Scottish Parliament one of whose first major pieces of legislation concerns school improvement. Furthermore, to quote Barber (1997, p. 22):

> [state] schools are not just merely schools for the public but schools of publicness: where we learn what it means to *be* a public and start down the road toward common national and civic identity.
> (orginal emphasis).

He goes on to argue that a 'Titanic' mentality of building walls between different sections of society cannot succeed and that,'we can only stay afloat if we recognise that we are all aboard a single ship'. If one accepts the importance of schools in fostering a common sense of identity - and the recent focus on education for citizenship would suggest that the present Scottish and UK governments do so - then it is all the more strange that there has been no serious attempt to address the issue of public schools.

MAINSTREAM SCHOOLS AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

Given what I have been arguing about the relationship between schools on the one hand and social and economic structures on the other, should we just throw up our hands in horror and say there is nothing to be done? Far from it! I do not see teachers, pupils, parents, local and national education officials as passive, helpless in the face of social and economic forces over which they have no control. So what should we be doing? I would highlight three things.

Firstly, we need to improve initial and continuing education for teachers. This is not just self interest from a teacher educator but a recognition that teachers' hearts and minds have to be won over to tackling social exclusion. They need to be convinced that schools are for all pupils not just those who arrive on time, with the necessary materials, and ready and willing to learn. In order to do that they need to learn more about learning, engage with pupils' abilities

rather than unquestioningly accepting ability as something innate, immutable and fixed, and they need to keep abreast of developments in their subjects. One of the many exercises we ask trainee secondary school teachers to carry out is to shadow a class throughout the school day. This enables trainees to see a range of teaching approaches in action and to observe how pupils behave in different contexts. Experienced teachers in some of our partner schools have found this a useful exercise too. Teachers rarely see each other teaching and rarely have the opportunity to discuss the pros and cons of a range of teaching methods. While the technology of teaching has changed little over the years - books, pens, paper and the basic teaching methods of exposition, questioning, discussion, experiment, investigation, problem solving, etc - remain the same, the way these are used varies hugely. So I think structured opportunities for teachers to see each other teaching, to discuss the assumptions underlying the methods used and to develop criteria to assess their effectiveness would be a step in the right direction, especially if underpinned by a good understanding of new theoretical developments. Furthemore, teachers need to be exposed to contemporary social debates about the nature and purpose of schooling - something which tends to be missing from the current obsession with teaching and management competence. Space has to be created for this to happen, of course. One of the things I remember about my own school teaching days was their busy-ness and my obsession with the day to day. I also remember the joy of attending a refresher course on A level world history where we debated the meaning of the latest developments in China and where I met other teachers interested in the same things. We need to sustain a motivated, highly skilled and thoughtful teaching force, whose continued professional needs are systematically and routinely discussed and provided for - not dependent on evening classes after a hard day at school, or the odd day of in-service training here and there.

Secondly, we need to think hard about the structure and balance of the curriculum and how it relates to life outside school. Let me hasten to add that this is not a plea for a narrow-minded relevance. It is a plea to resist the temptation of piling on more and more content to an already overcrowded curriculum and to see covering the syllabus as the main job of the teacher. It is to consider how things are taught and learned as well as what is taught in considering structure and balance. Richard Pring (1997, p. 3) summed up the purposes of education thus:

> Emancipation is a useful metaphor, for education is to be contrasted with the kind of enslavement associated with ignorance and with the lack of those mental powers, without which one is so easily duped and deceived. To be educated, therefore, is at least this - to be in a possession of those

> understandings, knowledge, skills and dispositions whereby one makes sense of the world around one.

And he goes on to elaborate this world in terms of the physical world, the social and political world, the moral world of ideas and responsibilities and the aesthetic world of beauty and style. He adds however:

> But entry into these different worlds is more than making sense of that which is inherited from others. It gives access to the ideas, and thus the tools, through which the learner's own distinctive personal development might actively take place.

For this to happen, of course, we need to value all these worlds, equally, and provide opportunities for pupils to participate in active problem-solving or problem-posing learning styles as well as more passive styles of listening. I also think we should share much more openly and explicitly with pupils and their parents the rationale of ways of knowing on which the curriculum is constructed, and the function of cross-curricular topics or projects. What has this got to do with social inclusion? It provides opportunities for pupils to experience success and for success in different modes to be valued, thus broadening the notion of achievement. It also emphasises skills and activity as much as knowledge.

Thirdly, schools need to be socially inclusive institutions if they are to promote social inclusion. For me this means the genuine participation of young people and their parents in decision-making about, for instance, school rules, rewards and sanctions and the school development plan. In recent discussions on the role of schools in helping to develop young people as active citizens, it has become evident that the opportunities to practise active citizenship are as important as knowledge about how political institutions work. It has also become clear that the tone and intent of the 1995 Children (Scotland) Act, emphasising children's rights and responsibilities, is rather different from that of much legislation in education where mention of such rights is conspicuous by its absence - an omission which the new Scottish Education Act, passed by the Parliament this summer, begins to remedy.

More than formal statements of rights and responsibilities, however, a socially inclusive school would promote the development of young people's self-esteem and self-confidence, and motivate them to aspire to or attain high standards of achievement. Fine words, but what does this mean in practice?

It means providing a range of curriculum opportunities in which young people can experience success. Success is a powerful motivator. Being told you are hopeless and no good is hardly likely to inspire greater effort. Hence the importance of curriculum balance I mentioned a moment ago.

Young people need to feel safe and secure in school so that the good work which many schools are doing to pre-empt bullying and to tackle it when it takes place needs to be reinforced and become embedded in the culture of all schools.

Being excluded from school deprives young people of opportunities for learning, means they have to catch up on the work they've missed and, we know from research, can promote feelings of stupidity, and lack of self worth, and impose additional stresses and strains on already disadvantaged families. We also know from research that schools with similar school rolls vary quite markedly in the use they made of exclusion. So again there is the need to share experience and practice across Scotland of alternatives to exclusion now being funded by government.

Working with the key agencies and institutions in local communities helps to embed schools in the real world and can open the eyes of young people to opportunities in further and higher education.

In short, I am suggesting that schools need a socially inclusive ethos which encompasses the formal curriculum, the informal curriculum of clubs and societies and the so-called hidden curriculum of beliefs, expectations and values that characterise relations between pupils and teachers.

Schools are now required to collect statistics on attendance, truancy and exclusion, thereby signalling national concern about these matters. And this is an important way to affirm the values of those who regard the inclusive nature of schools as paramount. Unlike public examination results, however, attendance and exclusions data are supplied by schools themselves, with all the scope for massaging the data that such a system brings. Furthermore, a reduction in the number of pupils being excluded, for instance, may conceal poor quality provision for pupils in trouble, such as sitting in corridors or other forms of internal exclusion. So monitoring schools' commitment to social inclusion needs to go beyond statistics to qualitative evaluation of provision and experience taking into account the views of teachers, parents and pupils. I can see ways in which we can develop schools' existing experience of self-evaluation so that they regularly consider the extent to which they are using socially inclusive practices.

Let me end then by affirming that there is a great deal that schools are already doing to make Scotland a more socially inclusive society. There is a slow but steady improvement in the percentages of pupils obtaining qualifications at Standard Grade, and Higher Still developments should increase the percentages obtaining qualifications at ages 16+. We have also seen a massive growth in the proportion of under-21 year olds participating in higher education from 16 per cent in 1984 to around 50 per cent today, and female participation has now overtaken that of males. Much, however, remains to be done in state schools and in higher education institutions to broaden the social class composition of entrants to higher education. Young people from working class backgrounds are still massively under-represented, track one of social inclusion. There is also still a large agenda relating to community development in which schools have a part to play alongside other agencies, track two.

I do not believe that there is a fundamental tension between a school seeking to improve the educational qualifications of young people and a school striving to become more socially inclusive. I hear some teachers say that these goals are incompatible. I hope it is clear from what I have been saying that the possession of educational qualifications is part of what it means to be socially included, because qualifications play such an important part in people's life chances. The development in young people of self-esteem, self confidence and active participation in school and community life will help them to learn and so obtain qualifications. Likewise school, home and community working in partnership can help the individual achievement of a young person and the development of the community. It is not an either-or situation

So schools have an important role to play in promoting social inclusion. But they are only part of the story. Halsey, writing in 1972 about the introduction of Educational Priority Areas, said that we should avoid treating education as the waste paper basket of social policy, a repository for dealing with social problems where solutions are uncertain or where there is a disinclination to wrestle with them seriously. And many European commentators have pointed out that common social problems which are difficult to resolve have come to be blamed on schools, with little thought about what is appropriate or realistic to expect of schools or the purposes for which schools are resourced. I believe the present Scottish and UK governments are serious about wrestling with social problems. We have begun to see the term social justice emerge in statements from the Scottish Executive and the UK Cabinet and this is surely to be welcomed even if the timetable for achieving it seems rather protracted. On the other hand, 'Britain stands out internationally as having experienced

the largest percentage increase in income equality between 1967 and 1992 and the proportion of children living in poor households is now 32 per cent, compared to the European average of 20 per cent' (Eurostat 1997). In Glasgow, for example, over 40 per cent of children are entitled to free school meals, in Castlemilk and Drumchapel this rises to almost 70 per cent, while the average in Scotland in 1996 was 20 per cent. So changing these patterns will take time.

So while schools are an important part of the jigsaw promoting social inclusion, economic policy is the most important part. Measures to reduce unemployment and child poverty, and changes in the tax and benefit system to alleviate poverty, are the drivers which will help schools perform their role in social inclusion. Just as we need joined-up policy to promote social inclusion, we need joined-up thinking and research among academics so that school improvement is placed firmly in the spotlight of economic and social policy and becomes less of a merely managerialist endeavour. Schools alone cannot make the UK more socially inclusive but educational policies combined with those which tackle poverty and all the related disadvantaged of health, housing and the rest, mean that we have the prospect of a more socially inclusive UK and Scotland in the 21st century.

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