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The Moral Imperative - The Case of the English Education System

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Abstract

In England social choice in education face trade-offs between equity and efficiency. The scope of this trade-offs ranges from the introduction of choice to correcting ‘market failures’ to reduce inequalities and restrict social injustices.

The paper analyses the English school education system and its relationship with social preferences. We argue that the moral and legal need for non-discriminatory education supersede perceptions of cost effectiveness and utilitarianism. We consider that the current system has failed due to inappropriate processes within social and public choice and that a reformed system based on a social democratic imperative will allow closer social integration on the basis of ability rather than privilege.

English School Education, Economics, Welfare

Introduction

The English school education system offers education at primary and secondary school levels as a public service. This service is financed through public funds and no direct payments by the users are required to gain access to this service. A three-tier system exists, i) comprehensive and free schools, ii) grammar schools, and iii) voluntary-aided and independent schools. An independent school system¹ exists in tandem this arguably creates and maintains a pronounced social divide. At a time of constrained resources and pronounced social tension, it is important to address central questions: does the English three-tier system provide equal access to equal education? Are those families who cannot afford independent

¹ An independent school is here considered in line with the official definition of ‘any school at which full-time education is provided for five or more pupils of compulsory school age and which is not—(a) a school maintained by a local education authority, (b) a special school not so maintained, or c) a grant-maintained school’ (HMSO, 1996, Part IV, Chapter 1, Section 463).

education or fail to gain access to grammar schools/free school or voluntary aided ones disadvantaged?

Therefore to address these questions in the first instance, the rationale behind the English system, a legal-historic basis of the educational system's development must be considered. In the second instance, whether the performance of the system is congruent with inclusive societal values. In the third instance, the nation's educational ethos must be identified to assess the institutional performance against its desired objectives. Fourthly, an analysis of societal aims to identify whether the system applied achieves the desired outcomes of equal access to education will take place. Fifthly, it will engage with societal aims and the current institutional framework within the framework of public economic analysis. Finally, it will reflect upon this issue making several recommendations.

Analysis methods

It must be noted, that this is not a sociological analysis or norm-based research. Instead, the paper locates its analysis in Cough (2009) social and public choice discourse. This primary aim is to establish whether the primary and secondary education system in Britain in its current institutional form conforms to the revealed preferences of society. The secondary aim is to analyse the foundations, benefits and costs of the given three-tier system

The economic analysis follows the principle of neo-classical public economic and social choice analysis as laid out by Besley (2003, 2006). This defines the scope of state intervention in the strictest case of market failure. It asserts that only when the market fails, should the state provide the service. In the case of educational service, the service itself is excludable and thereby fulfils the main characteristics of a private good. Within this analysis, education is defined as a public interest and located in the spectrum of a 'merit good' that serves society through improvement of knowledge creation, furthering economic production and facilitating economic growth.

As Cottrell (2005) notes, welfare efficient provision of a service requires the equalisation of social marginal benefits and social marginal costs. We must caveat this approach by noting that the value of the educational service however cannot easily be revealed due to the divergence of social and private benefits. The price mechanism fails to provide the necessary information to achieve market coordination. The social value of education can merely be

estimated as an aggregation of individual marginal benefits plus the wider social impact. This is mediated by an analysis of the qualitative consideration of the system revealed through civic opinions and electoral results. The scope of equal educational opportunity is defined as access to education. This is of importance due to the largely diverse performance of children within public or independent or voluntary aided schools. The respective performance of individual schools or groups of schools is represented through academic results in league tables, pupils securing places at leading universities and through career achievements. The underlying economic rationale for the current public/private education system is identified to assess the efficient provision of educational services using the qualitative analysis approach of pragmatic philosophy.

The English Educational System

The modern English education system dates back to the Education Act of 1870. The Act established state elementary schools for children aged between 5 and 13. These schools were intended to supplement the already existing schools that were operated by private individuals, the church, voluntary or philanthropic organisations. In 1891 these schools became fee-free and the Education Act of 1902 brought schools under the organisational supervision of Local Education Authorities. The Education Act of 1944 established the system of ‘tripartism’ (Coldon *et al* 2010, p. 20), fee-paying private schools, ability-testing grammar schools and secondary modern schools. In 2010, the group of secondary modern schools and academies was extended when the coalition government introduced free schools as all-ability and state-funded schools that operate outside the local educational authority. The rationale of free schools is located within the 1996 Education Act. The emphasis is placed on parental and voluntary input in Chapter 1, Section 9:

In exercising or performing all their respective powers and duties under the Education Acts, the Secretary of State, local education authorities and the funding authorities shall have regard to the general principle that pupils are to be educated in accordance with the wishes of their parents, so far as that is compatible with the provision of efficient instruction and training and the avoidance of unreasonable public expenditure (HMSO, 1996).

However, free schools runs counter to Chapter 2, Section 41 (a), “that a school which they or persons whom they represent propose to establish should be maintained by a local education

authority” (*ibid*). This change aims to improve educational standard and financial efficiency. These aims and the current institutional framework need to be placed under further scrutiny in relation to communal preferences and philosophical considerations in relation to societal values and norms.

Communal Preferences and Evidence of Social Divide

Revealed Communal Preferences

Communal preferences are societal attitudes towards various issues, in particular such as economic well-being, distributional equity, security and environmental quality. One of such societal values is educational attainment, the attitude to which can be revealed through a democratic system. Public choice would under perfect democratic assumptions be synonymous with societal preferences allowing for relative weightings for particular values, so that one society might place a larger value on economic efficiency compared to equity than another. Institutional epistemology views democracy as “*an institution for pooling widely distributed information about problems and policies of public interest*” (Anderson, 2006, p. 9). Anderson supports Hayek’s assumption that relevant economic information is transmitted in prices through the market mechanism and that knowledge and information is too vast to be collected and digested by a single institution. This allows the democratic system to reveal preferences. Here, Anderson (2006, p. 14) applies Dewey’s model of creative democracy that gives scope to represent dissent within the process of democratic decision-making, this will meet the “*three constitutive features of democracy: diversity, discussion, and dynamism*”. The mechanism of feedback, that Dewey suggests, can also be interpreted as a clear evolution of a civic society that allows continuous debate and institutional evolution in a positive way of internalising any possible value changes. The core element lies in revealing preferences, values and norms. English democracy can be seen as one that allows for such feedback, assuming that political choice reveals societal preferences.

Considerations of public economic analysis focus on communal preferences, the central one being equal educational opportunity for all children. The brief overview of the various legal enactments however represents the stronghold that the three-tier system has in English society. However, the implication of the current system can be addressed in terms of the opportunity cost of social mobility, here on a qualitative rather than quantitative basis. Assuming the societal objective to be equal opportunity, we can consider the extent to which

the current institutional organisation aims to achieve this goal. It is not part of the analysis to question this aim or set this aim normatively, however it is conceded that collective utility is neither identical with the sum of individual utilities, nor are collective preferences identical with the sum of individual preferences. Leaning on Veblen's pragmatic philosophy and critical theory of instrumental action, the economic considerations assume revealed communal preference and analyse the suitability of the educational institutional framework. It might be found that the "*predatory culture*" (Veblen, 1899, p. 220) permeates individual educational choice in the sense of status as the main merit. This can lead to a divergence between individual action and intrinsic communal preferences within a given institutional framework.

Party-political Concepts and Statements

Focus is placed on the policy proposals of four parties. Labour, Conservatives and Liberal Democrats are considered as is the Green party due to its focus on the education system and its reform agenda².

The Conservatives have fulfilled their manifesto commitment of introducing self-governing but state funded free schools. The Conservative Party with the agreement of their coalition partner have created a new generation of independently run state schools which allow 'for educational charities, groups of parents and teachers, cooperatives and others to start new Academies (independent, non-selective state schools). The Liberal Democrats still maintain that, "*Many affluent parents pay to send their children to private schools, which is not only expensive but saps the state funded sector of many able pupils and aspirational parents, both of which could act as peer role models for other students and parents*" (Liberal Democrats, 2010).

The Coalition's educational reforms can be summarised - breaking open the state monopoly, parent empowerment and educational entrepreneurship, i.e. the right of parents to set up a new school and diversity of choice. The educational principles of the coalition government follow neoclassical economic ideas, whereby the state shall provide what the private sector

² UKIP (United Kingdom Independent party) is here ignored due to their negligible share in the 2010 general election. However, the recent increase in votes in local elections requires us to point briefly to their education proposal: A voucher system that transfers the average cost of state schooling to the child's family which can be used for state, private or faith schools. As this policy proposal is vague in its current form we decided to neglect it in our analysis.

cannot, in this case education to those who cannot afford private education. The model aims to replicate the ‘achievements’ of the private independent sector, rather than identifying merit within the state sector. This is a clear market failure approach.

In contrast, the Labour Party (2010a) states that ‘*education is also crucial for breaking down the barriers which prevent genuine social mobility*’. The party claims that the Labour government narrowed the achievement gap through educational reform:

In the period 1999-2008 schools with the highest proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals (more than 50 per cent FSM eligible pupils) saw a 36 percentage point improvement in the number of their pupils achieving 5 GCSEs at A-C whereas the schools with the least deprived children (less than 5 per cent FSM eligible pupils) improved by 10 percentage points (ibid).*

However, the party does not explicitly address equal educational opportunities for children irrespective of their parental income. Instead the Labour party defines equality in the following statement “*Labour believes everyone is of equal worth and entitled to respect. Our vision is of a fair, inclusive society where there is opportunity for everyone regardless of gender, disability, sexual orientation, age, race, religion or belief*” (Labour Party, 2010b). The party emphasises educational access in Rawls’ sense of the first principle of justice. However, the current manifesto ignores the educational outcome and the result-oriented status that the current system perpetuates. Instead we can see traces of Nozick’s entitlement concept which is in stark contradiction to social-democratic notions of Rawls’ second principle of justice, here requiring educational redistribution, is neglected.

The Green Party position on independent schools is that they “*would remove the charitable status of all such schools and offer state funding to them so they will be accessible to all children in the local area*” (Green Party, 2010a). This reform proposal to the system of private tuition fees within the independent school system does not constitute as an abolishment of these schools per se. Instead, they argue that all schools are to be governed in the interest of the pupils and not by private organisations, leading to the party’s objection to City Academies or Trust Schools. The party’s position currently stands that all schools should be under the authority of the LEAs which also means that they object the self-governing Free

Schools system. The Green Party's Education Policy states the following linking integration to educational access and opportunity:

Children with a high level of ability or who are from a background where education is highly valued are likely to have a positive influence on the learning experience of their peers. Many of these young people are learning in the independent sector. This creates additional challenges to schools in the state sector and is to some extent causing social divisions in society. Overall standards are shown to be higher in mixed ability environments therefore the Green Party wants to create a system which facilitates and encourages greater integration (Green Party, 2010b).

The Green Party's educational concept goes beyond the two previously described educational concepts. It target the result distribution and thereby addresses a notion of justice that goes beyond the veil of ignorance and aims to correct the random access situations and targeting social mobility more directly.

On many levels it appears that the neoclassical notion of the market system is the preference of the English public given the electoral outcome in the 2010 general election. However we would argue that this is disingenuous, it is more a comment upon the electoral system as opposed to the belief and value of the English public.

Education and Social Mobility: Empirical Evidence

Research by Blanden, Gregg and Macmillan (2007, p. 58) found that parents with higher income generate sons with higher earnings. The intergenerational coefficient was found to have risen by more than 80% between 1958 and 1970 identifying a strong relationship between family income and educational attainment and ultimately showing a decline in intergenerational mobility in the UK. Coldron *et al* (2010) identified that social segregation and polarisation in secondary schools act as a contributor to inequality of opportunities. The proportion of children on free school meals is commonly used as an indicator for the proportion of children from poorer families. The disparity can be exemplified by data in 2006, the national average proportion of children on free-school meals in voluntary aided schools was 5.6% (Sutton Trust, 2006). In 2004, 12% of children in comprehensive schools were on free school meals compared with 2% of grammar school children (Atkinson, Gregg, 2004). However, social mobility is not simply a dependent of income inequality as national

with similar Gini coefficient to the UK achieve different degrees of social mobility. Furthermore, Atkinson and Gregg (2004) argue that grammar school selection is not purely based on ability; they found that able pupils from poorer families were disadvantaged on the basis of information deficiency. It could be conceded that this is due to parental responsibility to register children for grammar school entrance tests (11+). Some able children are not given the opportunity to access these better performing schools because they depend on parental incentives and actions.

In searching for further reasons for the lack of social mobility, segregation and polarisation, Coldon et al (2010) state that the education system operates like a market. This marketisation is conceived as the consumer selecting a public school on the grounds of their respective performance and past pupil intake, focusing on social factors and published GCSE and A-level results. The price is here replaced by non-price factors that are school-performance related. This marketisation of education inherently leads to the group of less highly educated, less-well off or less educationally engaged parents being disadvantaged. This group often lacks the ability to gather the relevant information or indeed the desire to search for this information (Education and Skills Select Committee, 2004). Coldron et al (2010, p. 24) state that this group could still be perceived as 'not deficient choosers' as this group selects on the grounds of 'social solidarity' and thereby reject the market paradigm as the fundamental problem of unequal access. It has also been suggested that different social groups place different values on schools and education (Ball, Braun, Vincent, 2007; Noreisch, 2007). The selection process and the selection criteria of parents appear to establish unequal school access amongst children from different social groups. This gives way to the notion of whether an educational authority (such as a primary school) should complement the parents' responsibility in this process (possibly through recommendations that are highly weighted by secondary schools).

The Education and Skills Select Committee (2004, Summary) was concerned:

That the Government seems complacent about the implementation of its objectives for the admissions system, the evidence we took during our inquiry indicates a troubling slide away from parents choosing schools for their children and towards schools choosing the pupils they wish to admit.

Thus, the school allocation system can be described as one where selecting a school is left to parents and there is room for schools to select suitable pupils. The current school selection ethos is one where parents are given the choice of school within the admission criteria applicable to each individual school. It can be argued that this choice is more easily taken advantage of by more well-off and highly educated parents whose children might also be more likely to fulfil the admission criteria set by the schools that are more difficult to gain access to, for example voluntary aided church schools. It is often the parents' foresight that allows children access to for example catholic schools that operate on a point system allocating points for active worship, a child's baptism within the first six months of its birth etc. All of these criteria are highly dependent on the arbitrary birth of a child into a particular family and as such often leave educational paths to the arbitrary mercy of birth.

Main areas of concern are the widening educational gap amongst and the reduction of social mobility associated with the current education system. The evidence is provided by the Sutton Trust:

The widening achievement gap is almost entirely accounted for by the fact that children from degree educated parents are far more likely to attend higher performing secondary schools and so benefit from a positive school effect. In other words, if every child went to a school with similar average test results there would be no further widening of the achievement gap that exists at age 11 (2010, p.3).

Focussing on the revealed opinions of the civic society through an Ipsos Mori poll, a clear majority of citizens (70%, 30% of which strongly agree and 40% tend to agree) believe that parental income plays too big a part in children's chances of doing well and getting on in life (The Sutton Trust, 2009, Table 12).

Institutional Rigidity and Social Grouping

Better-off groups of society appear to be in an advantaged position selecting secondary schools for their children. This is mainly due to marketisation of education and informational asymmetry. As Coldron (2010, p. 26) put it "...the problem [is]...the collective strategic practice of the middle class together with their historical achievements in influencing policy, and establishing congenial structures and procedures". This allows a process of educational stratification and social positioning. The selection process is undertaken by each individual

family unit. Although it does not classify as a collective action by a social class, it can be argued that the self-preservation of the group in educational terms and the pursuit of status create a process that takes a collective form. This bears the question of institutional rigidity that shall be understood as the degree to which the institution or the educational system can respond to norm or value changes. Certain social group interest could prevent institutional changes amending the school or pupil selection process. It can be argued that the rigidity enforces class security and class identification. Both Gillies (2005) and Grozier *et al* (2008) support this relationship and identify social division on the basis of collective action. Any group's collective action creates institutional rigidity and enforces self-protection and perpetuation of social divides. To which extent the individual action of the middle-class and the working class respectively is indeed rational and objective-related must be scrutinised under the psychological considerations. These considerations range from voluntary cooperation in a social dilemma to the effects of social norms, the influence of emotions on action and the extent to which institutions influence collective action or cooperative behaviour.

It could be argued that the current system guides parents into conformity and pursuing segregation-creating educational paths for their children. The institutional divide into public and private as well as comprehensive versus grammar/faith schools allows parents to identify certain strategies as being superior. This behaviour would seem to be individual family objective-driven and not necessarily symmetrical to social preferences. This asymmetry necessitates the question of whether the institutional framework is congruent with social objectives. Social choice is usually analysed in welfare terms, which cannot be easily quantified and expressed in monetary terms. Consequently, a cost-benefit analysis is not conducive and instead the further analysis is built on ideas of thoughts on justice, principles and objectives.

Political-Philosophical Considerations

Some Fundamental Concepts

Political-philosophical concepts identify to which the welfare state is deemed responsible for the creation of educational equality. The concepts range from a strict limitation of the state towards a more comprehensive assignment of functions to the public sector. Nozick's (1974) entitlement theory radically criticises the concept of the contemporary welfare state. The

main argument lies in his rejection of the state's imposition of taxes that are viewed as a violation of the person's liberty. In that sense, the ideals of Aristotlean, utilitarian, egalitarian, Rawlsian and contractarian theories are rejected due to their infringements on what persons can do to one another (Christiano, 2005). What remains debatable however within this notion, is to which extent things (here tax money or income) indeed form part of a person so that the assumed argument follows. If additional value can be created through redistribution, then this could suffice Norzick's argument, as it does not violate the person's liberty in that the person is well-informed and no random acquirments can be made by the state. Another principle in support of the rejection of this notion is that each individual holds social responsibility within a civil society. According to the principles by Dewey, a democratic society requires information to be exchanged and that debate takes place. In that form, we could assume consent to be revealed through the electoral process which allows liberty of the person and the majority identifies what qualifies as justice or indeed a fair distribution of income and wealth or access to educational opportunities, i.e. social choice.

However, most liberal philosophers tend to ignore the notion of compassion. In particular does Locke explicitly view the institutional framework created by society to serve the needs of the individual. In his argumentation the civil society is to serve the natural law that identifies each person with their own rights and duties. *"Thus every man, by consenting with others to make one body politic under one government, puts himself under an obligation, to everyone of that society, to submit to the determination of the majority, and to be concluded by it..."* (Locke, 1993 (1698), p.164). This allows for the individual liberty to persist and as a result of debate and consent for communal preferences to be formed. As long as this formation follows the rules of a civil society, no public policy can epistemologically be seen as one interfering with the conceptual liberty of the individual.³ Following on, the philosophical considerations of John Rawls (1971) and the capability approach to justice by Amartya Sen (2009) shall be employed.

The Philosophical Paradox

The philosophical dilemma is one whereby the current educational system primarily allows access to independent schools on the basis of parental income. This is indeed in contrast to the egalitarian principle of justice, as the child has not gained that propriety, rather is this

³ This will inevitably leave a remaining homogeneous or heterogeneous minority.

merely determined by birth, parental heritage or parental proficiency. To deny any child access to allegedly superior education denies individuals who are merely subject to random birth the equal opportunity that should be maintained prior to any proof of acceleration or proficiency. Individual liberty requests for appropriate redistribution to allow the human right to development and education to be maintained. The English case is one whereby, in a paradox way, the better of society is put before the individual rights on the wrongly applied notion of welfare considerations. The current system can be defended on the grounds of saving public funds and it in this sense creating a Pareto-superior outcome. In particular does the current policy of creating more voluntary free schools accentuate replacing public funds for educational purposes with private funds but this is allowed to take place at the fundamental expense of the individual's right of liberty, even in Locke's sense as he assumed egalitarian rights at birth, "*there being nothing more evident, than that creatures of the same species and rank, promiscuously born to all the same advantages of nature, and the use of the same faculties, should also be equal one amongst the other without subordination or subjection*" (Locke, 1993 (1998), p. 116).

This can be linked to Kant's support of a system of government that prohibits proprietary and hereditary rules. Kantian ethics are based on will rather than inclination and thereby fundamentally criticises utilitarian notions. The motive of any act will determine the degree of its morality. The Kantian doctrine of the categorical imperative underlines the democratic principle that all people are created as equals, in a democratic view this is interpreted that all citizens should be regarded equally before the law. The moral society should follow the categorical imperative in establishing a system where "*so act to treat humanity, whether in thine own person or in that of any other, in every case as an end withal, never as a means only*" (Kant, p12).

Habermas' (1981) considerations of *deliberative politics* for the expansion of power of public communication alongside the subordination of markets and government offer a clear portrait of the needed public discourse. He establishes a two-fold relationship between basic values of individual liberalism and the civic republican society. Firstly, only the democratic public life can secure individual rights. Secondly, substantive equality (in the sense of content) is defined by society's understanding of equality (McCarthy, 2005). '*On the republican view [fundamentally based on Aristotle], politics is not exhausted by this [liberal] mediating*

function but is constitutive for the socialisation process as a whole. Politics is conceived as a reflexive form of substantial ethical life’ and ‘...the republican concept ...points in the direction of a concept of law that accords equal weight to both the integrity of the individual and the integrity of the community in which persons as both individuals and members can first accord one another reciprocal recognition’’ (Habermas, 1998, p.123).⁴ Discourse theory and deliberative politics make the political success depend on the institutionalisation of political procedures. This is inherently synonymous with the aspects on velocity and rigidity of institutions. Habermas exemplifies the need for public debate to precede any acts of identifying particular rights and demands that those aspects that are considered relevant to equal or unequal treatment must be articulated by the affected persons. This however, cannot always be the case, in particular when we consider the rights of children to have equal access to education. Here, the debate must come from those who consider their needs.

Constitutional Considerations

If one accepts constitutional considerations as valid, then the liberal request for morally neutral politics which also involves neutral economic policy must be rejected. The constraint of liberal public reason is here rejected in acceptance with Sandel. As he noted in his description of *good political philosophy*, “*the attempt to detach arguments about justice and rights from arguments about the good life is mistaken for two reasons: First, it is not always possible to decide questions of justice and rights without solving substantive moral questions; and second, even where it’s possible, it may not be desirable*” (Sandel, 2010, p. 251). Sandel’s considerations include the notions that a just society requires a sense of mutual responsibility and that not all values have market values attached to them (in particular those he calls “*key social practices*” (Sandel, 2010, p. 265).

Ethical Synthesis

The debate of educational needs can follow realistic or idealistic notions. The realistic notion would seek to define truth via an understanding of reality. In contrast, the idealistic notion identifies truth as one that is coherent with the totality of beliefs (Scheffler, 2009). The totality of beliefs is fundamentally different from the utilitarian notion of accumulated values. Moral is substantially different from the perceived neoclassical value notions, as these ignore

⁴ It should be noted that the republican concept was used in the form of a republican constitution by Kant (Jaspers, 1992, p. 546).

the superior consideration of moral values that influence the creation of those but do not facilitate the quantitative calculation of values. Any moral-constitutional need of a non-discriminatory educational policy must supersede the pragmatic notion of cost effectiveness and utilitarian notions. Even if empirical evidence supports the financially superior system of a two/three-tier system, the latter would have to be rejected upon idealistic grounds. Even though the empirical evidence provides knowledge, not all policies can be based on the pragmatic use of the provided knowledge. Knowledge serves in a pragmatic way, but must accompany the pursuit of identified moral objectives. This process of exchange between knowledge and belief must be continuous as it allows the evolutionary development of values, hence also allowing for institutional changes to take place. We would like to term this view as optimistic in its combination of scientific knowledge and identification of idealistic values and belief.

Reform Suggestions

It is noted that the public choice process has failed and that preferences are not symmetrical to party policies. This given evidence can be used to call for a restriction of parental school selection. Children should be placed directly into schools (either comprehensives or selective) irrespective of their parents' wishes, income, faith or social class membership. Only this approach would allow fair equality of opportunity, the principle of which should be given preference over the concept of natural liberty in conjunction with Rawlsian and Sandelian ideas. An inclusive education policy is here suggested. This would provide the best possible education for each child irrespective of its social background and coincidental family status. The public policy that could achieve this aim is one that places children into state primary schools on the basis of their respective area of living. Faith schools should be converted into multi-faith schools and allow for religious education and practice to take place within the curriculum. Children who are considered able by the teachers should be tested for their ability to enter a grammar school at the end of their elementary school years. No schools should be allowed to charge fees. Given the evidence that parental educational ambition is highly relevant and determines besides other factors the child's educational opportunity, it could be suggested that all children are registered on the basis of their school reports in Year 5 for 11+ exams by their primary schools to disallow the unequal distribution of opportunity. It can easily be argued that this is in the interest of the public as society wishes to educate able pupils. This can be further supported by the evidence that able children progress better in

selective schools than in comprehensive schools. This selection process allows a closer social integration of society on the basis on ability rather than social class.

This proposed system does not solve the social advantages that children of better-off families or more highly educated parents enjoy, but it allows for increased social mobility and eventually is fundamentally congruous with the human rights of each child. This is further supported on philosophical grounds: it is the state's role to ensure that the rights of each child are maintained and that equity in education is achieved.

Conclusion

If the education of the public is of national interest, the performance of the current institutional system needs to be reviewed with a clear and transparent emphasis towards equal opportunities and social justice. The current system does not achieve the objectives of social integration and universal education. This may be a result of income constraints of families, where parents or carers cannot afford their children's education or suffer from disadvantaged informative distribution to access well-performing voluntary or grammar schools. It could be that the educational system has obtained epistemic powers itself. However, the moral imperative is to give access to all, not elites or those with the greatest advantage. This is still a radical concept but then again good education for all is still a radical concept for some to accept.

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