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Does School Choice Improve Standards, Performance and Accountability?

Introduction

The Grant Maintained Schools Centre (GMSC) was founded in 1989, with assistance from the Department for Education and Employment for England (D~E), with the main aim of assisting grant-maintained (GM) schools with the provision of information and services. Since then, GMSC has worked closely with GM schools and others and now produces a range of services for the GM sector and other interested organizations. GMSC is now independent of government support, but maintains close links with the DfEE and other key agencies.

Through conference activity and an information-based subscription service, GMSC works with over 80% of grant-maintained schools. GMSC publishes a range of literature for the GM sector, dealing primarily with management issues.

GMSC has developed links with leading educationalists in Australia, the United States and New Zealand, with GMSC staff regularly participating in international conferences. Olive Newland is Director of Information and Publications and has the overall responsibility for the subscription services and all GMSC publications.

Background

This presentation will consider education reform in England since 1988, making specific reference to grant-maintained schools. Wales has an education system, which is parallel to that in England, and Scotland quite a separate system.

It should be noted that this paper was prepared before the UK General Election on 1st May 1997. As the election campaign progressed, it became difficult at

times to see the traditional difference of views on education that one might have expected for the Conservative and Labour parties.

The Times newspaper on 15th April summarized a speech made by John Major where he promised “an expansion of the schools which now specialize in languages, sports, arts and technology and can select up to 15 per cent of their pupils on ability. He made it dear that he would encourage schools to apply for the extra funding in specialist areas, particularly those in inner-city areas” In the same edition of The Times, Tony Blair was quoted as saying, “GM schools will prosper. Church schools will too: they have been a key part of our education system for 100 years, and long may they remain so. We will tackle what isn't working, not what is.”

Where there is complete agreement is on the issue of raising standards and quality control structures put in place by the present Government are discussed later in this paper. Chris Woodhead, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector sees no room for failure:

> '"Take, for example, [our] inspection of reading standards in Islington, Lambeth and Southwark. HMI, working with the LEAs' own advisers, judged 50% of the Key Stage 2 [age 11] lessons they observed to be unsatisfactory or poor. That to me is a highly significant and deeply disturbing statistic and I make no apologies for the fact that it was reported very widely. I wanted that coverage and the subsequent debate because I want solutions to be found to the problem of reading failure.”[1]

Tony Blair's view is that "Schools must have zero tolerance of failure.[2] The standards debate can become entrenched in arguments about the validity of school league tables, statutory testing and the role of socio-economic factors in determining 'value added'. It is reassuring, therefore, to see one of the key figures in the educational establishment, Dr Nick Tate, Chief Executive of the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority, taking a more rounded view:

> "The current focus on ways of raising standards of achievement is wholly desirable and long overdue. But it is not always accompanied by debate about the nature of the standards we are trying to raise. If the balance between elements in the curriculum is not right, if we are following the letter of the syllabus and not the spirit, if we lack a sense of why we are teaching things, what price standards?[3]

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[1] Chris Woodhead, HMCI, writing in the May 1997 edition of *GM focus*
[2] The Times, 15th April 1997
[3] Dr Nick Tate, writing in the April 1996 edition of *GM focus,* a GMSC publication

Education in England prior to 1988

England has a national Minister for education, but schooling has largely been funded and delivered at local level via the Local Education Authorities. These Local Education Authorities (LEAs) are responsible for delivering an education system within the county or city they serve. The structure of schooling can vary widely from LEA to LEA. Across England as a whole there is little consistency as regards education for under fives, the age of transfer to secondary education, the types of school provided or the availability of single sex, selective or comprehensive schools. In all LEAs there are also a number of schools with a religious foundation, usually Church of England, Roman Catholic or Jewish, where the church has an ongoing responsibility for the buildings, the employment of staff and the religious character of the school. Until 1988, the content of the curriculum at all stages was the decision of individual schools.

There is also the potential for confusion between the private, fee paying sector and the state sector - this is not helped by the application of the nomenclature 'public' to schools within the fee paying sector. This paper will make reference only to the state sector and it should be borne in mind that that grant-maintained schools are free, state schools. They do not charge for the education provided and are subject to the same curriculum, testing and inspection regimes as all other state schools.

There are several unions active in the education sector. The headteachers have two discrete unions and there are in addition three major unions for the remainder of the teaching profession. All have a differing stance on GM schools.

A changing culture

It is important to look at the GM movement in the context of various cultural shifts that occurred in the UK during the 1980's.

The Conservative Government in the early 8O's developed a view that the state was overactive, individuals were over-cosseted, and, given the dear demographics, there would be insufficient tax revenues to sustain the welfare system into the next century. They began a systematic review of governmental involvement. Utilities were privatized, the health service was re-aligned, private home ownership and personal pensions were not only advocated but also fiscally encouraged. The education service, as a major consumer of national tax revenues, was the target of particular scrutiny.

In the UK by the mid 80s the Governmental view of education, driven principally by Margaret Thatcher, might best be summarized as follows:

> 'For the last 30 years school Inspectors have been telling us that 25% of lessons are poorly taught. We face a developing European economic challenge for which our education system is failing to prepare the nation's children. If we are to survive we need to end the process of drift and take control.'

Business management in this same period underwent a period of radical review. Corporations were re-engineered; management and staffing levels downsized and high performance teams became the order of the day. The business management gurus advocated that small teams be given more control over day-today operation and also made accountable for meeting performance targets. This philosophy has its parallels in the changes made by the government to both education and the health service.

At the national level the National Health Service was broken down into regional health authorities, each accountable for its own spending and the provision of health care to its region. At a local level, doctors were given control of their own budgets, buying in care from whichever hospital they deemed provided the best service. The aim was to deconstruct the sizeable bureaucracy that the National Health Service had generated over the years, create internal markets and run a service that made the most of resources that can only be set to decrease.

Raising standards through increased accountability

In the UK, as elsewhere, education is seen as a national priority to be delivered by locally elected Councils and their officials. Prior to 1988 Central Government raised 75% of the money that Local Authorities spent on education. The Local Authorities spent the money raised by Central Government. Central Government made a little money available for special projects but even that was bid for by the LEAS and spent by them.

LEA officers inspected the schools and developed their own styles within the curriculum: they controlled the spending within the schools, and the governing bodies that 'ran' the schools. With the exception of schools with a religious or charitable foundation, no appointment of any significance was made in any school without the direct involvement of the LEA. Furthermore the LEA dictated where the children would attend school.

Despite all this control, it was invariably the Government that was held accountable for poor standards, inconsistency, trendy methodology, and variable content.

In the education service, the government showed a determination to raise both standards and levels of accountability at all levels. They elected to revise the systems of inspection and training, the curriculum itself and, most significantly, the issue of who raises the money and who spends it. Quality control and accountability became the key issues for education in the late 80's and remain the issues of the 90's.

In 1988 the Government enacted the Education Reform Act ~RA) which sought to re-define some of these issues of accountability.

As in the National Health Service the education system in the UK prior to 1988 carried a considerable weight of bureaucracy. Each Local Education Authority had its own central administration, taking up a considerable proportion of the resources available for education. Again, the guiding philosophy behind the government's reforms was to pass on ownership and accountability closer to the point of delivery through radical changes to traditional funding routes.

The ERA, therefore, introduced a system which has become known as the Local Management of Schools. Under the provisions of the Act, LEAS had to delegate resources to schools. Over a given time span LEAs would delegate up to 85% of their budget[4] to schools in order that the governors and staff might make the spending decisions. That time span was short and gave an initial impetus to a period of rapid change within the education system.

Parental choice was seen as a vital part of this cultural shift. Parents did not have to accept the school that the LEA might have wished to allocate their child to. Following a High Court judgment, it was confirmed that parents could apply for a place in an area outside the LEA in which they lived. The issue of parental choice has taken on a particularly sharp perspective during the election campaign - the leader of the opposition and other key figures in the Labour party have chosen to send their children to either grant-maintained or selective schools.

Under the ERA and subsequent legislation the LEAs lost control of pupil placement, teacher training establishments, the curriculum and teacher appointments. These elements also increased the pace of change. The biggest catalyst was, however, the introduction of the concept of grant-maintained status.

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[4] This figure represents 85% of the schools' budget, not the LEA's total education budget. GM schools can be very sceptical as to some LEAS interpretation of 100%.

The creation of the grant-maintained sector

The ERA gave rise to the grant-maintained school. This type of school has been one of the principal vehicles for change, contributing substantially to the pace of change throughout the education system.

The legislation provides for parents or governors to hold a ballot and elect to leave the care of the LEA. If the ballot is successful the school then submits proposals to the Secretary of State for Education and Employment. If the Secretary of State approves the proposals, the school acquires a new corporate identity and structure. Not all schools have their proposals approved; some 10% are rejected because the Secretary of State is advised that they would not be viable as GM schools. Many of the schools in this 10% were earmarked for closure when they started the process and had taken the grant-maintained route as the only alternative, rather than as an alternative means of managing the school.

Initially the initiative was slow to take off, but after the General Election in 1992 the numbers rose rapidly and there are now over 1200 GM schools across England and Wales. The balloting pattern in the last six months has been quite different to that prior to the last General Election. In 1992 ballots stopped almost completely in the run up to the election. Balloting activity over the last six months, however, has been positive, with one school receiving a strong majority vote from parents some three days before the election.

The grant-maintained school becomes a statutory corporation and a statutory charity. Its governing body holds and owns the property in trust and is entirely responsible for the welfare of the children, the staff, the site and buildings, health and safety, the curriculum and the finances of the school. The teaching and support staff are employed by the governing body, not the LEA. GM schools, on application to the Secretary of State, can opt out of the national pay structure for teachers, although only one school has pursed this option.

Rather than funding being top sliced to provide for LEA administration, 100% of the school's funding passes directly to the institution, to be spent on priorities identified by the headteacher and the governing body. It is for the school to determine where essential services will be bought, always with an eye to the most effective use of available resources.

GM schools have no difficulty purchasing services such as insurance, cleaning, catering or grounds maintenance. Professional development for teachers and

governors is well funded in the GM sector[5] and it is for the school to identify needs and then source the most appropriate level of training. Previously the LEA had determined funding priorities at an Authority level - strategic planning in GM schools is carried out by those most directly involved. The school can plan, therefore to meet the needs of its pupils, staff and the local community. There is no longer an LEA administration to interfere, and, as a necessary corollary, no one else to blame for a school's lack of success.

What have GM schools achieved?

Academic excellence

Test and examination results are published locally and nationally in newspapers in 'League Table' form. Grant-maintained schools consistently perform well in these league tables. Some 20% of state secondary schools are grant-maintained: in the 1996 A level[6] results seven of the top ten schools, four of the top ten comprehensive schools, six of the top ten girls' schools and eight of the top ten boys' schools were GM.

It is not just at A level that such improvements can be identified. Baverstock School is a mixed, non-selective schools in the Birmingham outer ring, an area identified as one of the most deprived in the European Community. The headteacher of Baverstock has an almost Messianic determination to ensure that the 1,200 youngsters in the school will be given opportunities, care and attention at every turn:

"We believe Baverstock to be the centre and, therefore, the powerhouse of the local area and community, with the ability to change the lives of the children in our care."

Since becoming GM in 1989, examination results at 16 have improved each year, with the number of pupils gaining five GOSEs[7] at gmdes A - C rising from 7% to 32%. The school now has a sixth form for A level studies and the school has developed into a highly respected and oversubscribed school with a national reputation for academic, sporting and personal achievement.
John Major has noted the achievements of Baverstock School, the Prime Minister in a speech he delivered on urban regeneration.

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[5] The grant made available to GM schools for professional development is based on pupil numbers in each school.
[6] A level is the examination taken at 18 and is often referred to as the 'gold standard' of UK examinations.
[7] GCSE is the examination taken at 16 which replaced the O level system.

> "In Kings' Heath, Birmingham, a secondary school serving some of the poorest neighborhoods in the city is surrounded by council house tower blocks," said Mr. Major. "A decade ago, plagued by gangs and daubed with graffiti, Baverstock School was one of those schools that no parent would want their child to go to.
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> "Now a grant-maintained school, an enthusiastic headteacher has restored pride, discipline and standards."

Primary schools are no less dear in the vision they have for their pupils' success:

"We are here to build strong foundations of excellence through quality and aspiration in all we do for our children, so that they may live harmoniously together and enjoy success and fulfillment throughout their lives."

Thus said the headteacher of Crosshall Junior School (age range 7 - 11), a school that was named as "an excellent school" in the *1996* Chief Inspector of Schools' Annual Report.

The fabric of the school

Poorly designed and maintained buildings hamper many schools in the UK. On incorporation to grant-maintained status, a large number of schools have inherited a legacy of neglect. In addition to funding for major capital projects, all GM school receive ongoing funding, based on pupil numbers, for maintenance and minor capital works. This combination of funding opportunities has enabled GM schools to make what are often substantial improvements to the fabric of the school. The following case studies give an indication of how successfully GM schools have used this increased financial flexibility.

St James C of E Primary School

St James C of E Primary School in Rochdale, Lancashire is a 4 - 11 primary school of 240 pupils. On incorporation as a GM school on 1st April *1994,* the headteacher, Philip Ford, was faced with a poorly maintained building that was designed in an open plan manner that created teaching spaces which did not meet the current need. He integrated a successful capital bid with an ongoing programme of planned maintenance funded from Formula Allocation.[8]

"Headteachers, bursars and governors know only too well how' the change to GM status is at one and the same time exhilarating and exhausting. It is also tremendously worthwhile. The same is true when dealing with Capital Bids, Formula Allocation and other building related funds allocated from AMG[9]. In our case, we chose to prepare for using these various funds for estate management by having a full and extensive condition survey carried out. Our own knowledge of perceived problems on the school site, combined with outside professional expertise, produced a detailed report.

“In terms of the bid we made for capital funding, subsequently successful, the major priorities were clearly health and safety issues related to a dilapidated lighting system and an unsafe, tank fed water supply. The condition survey, along with reports from our insurance company engineers, confirmed the need for boiler replacement and the fitting of radiators to replace the inefficient and worn out warm air fan heaters that, combined with strangely sloping roofs, created the problem of “stratification" of heat, i.e. cold at child level and warm ceiling and roof spaces!

“The major problems having been identified and Capital Bid made, other funds were carefully allocated to deal with immediate smaller scale situations, e.g. kitchen refurbishment to conform with health and safety and environmental health issues. We also used Formula Allocation to create new walls and place folding screens in what could best be described as an “imaginatively” designed open plan school. The involvement and ideas of teaching and non-teaching staff at all stages are, in my view, essential.

“As managers of GM schools our responsibilities in managing the various sources of capital are enormous yet we can watch our school environment grow and develop for the benefit of the children that we teach. We must not forget the need to apportion appropriate funds from Annual Maintenance Grant for smaller building work and refurbishment and maintenance.

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[8] The Formula Allocation is an ongoing funding route for all GM schools, based on school population, and intended for maintenance and minor works

[9] Annual Maintenance Grant (AMG) is the core funding received by GM schools

“We were able to set aside half of our Formula Allocation from 199415, to which we added the 1995196 Formula Allocation to build a classroom extension for Year 2 and a toilet block for Year I and Year 2 children. We also intend to create enough space for pupils, especially those with special educational needs. The changes we have been able to effect in the school are quite remarkable."

The Priory Primary School

The Priory Primary School in Hampshire is a 5 - 11 GM rural primary school. The school has seen a steady increase in pupil numbers over the last six years (90 in January 1993, predicted to rise to 150) and on incorporation as a GM school on 1st January 1993, space was at a premium. Headteacher, David Hale, describes how a major capital project was managed with as little disruption as possible to the life of the school.

"The school occupies a site of about 6100m^2 and consists of a small mid-nineteenth century village school building, incorporating a school-keeper's house, and a separate mobile classroom unit approximately 23 years old. It is a very picturesque site, standing in open country, and includes recreation area of over 3000m^2 of which about 500m^2 is hard paved and a small playing field of about 60 x 20m.

"The school suffered from an acute shortage of teaching space/office accommodation/PE and dining facilities coupled with the fact that the temporary classroom had to be evacuated in high winds. A development plan was produced jointly by the Building Sub-Committee members and our architects to bring our teaching areas up to a reasonable level."

The comprehensive and ambitious development plan was as follows:

- two new classrooms;
- technology/practical area;
- resource area;
- special needs room;
- multi-purpose hall with store;
- accommodation for headteacher, general office and medical inspection;
- cloakrooms;
- junior changing rooms.

The project has now been completed, with the new extension providing the much-needed space in a style sympathetic to the original Victorian buildings.

All Hallows Catholic Secondary School

"Where there is no vision the people perish," concludes the mission statement of All Hallows Catholic School, a mixed 11-18 GM school situated on the Surrey/Hampshire border. However, like many other successful GM schools, increasing pupil numbers have put considerable pressure on the available space at All Hallows. In *1994* the school was unsuccessful with its Capital Bid and was forced to look at alternative strategies to cope, not only with the increased numbers, but also a need to upgrade science and technology facilities. The school's approach to this problem has more than confirmed that it possesses the 'vision' mentioned in its Mission Statement.

Having analyzed their spacing needs the school decided that the construction of a new Arts Centre would not only assist further developments in their liberal arts programme, but would also release classrooms within the main school which could be refurbished as science and technology areas. All Hallows then embarked upon a self4unding initiative which financed the building of their half million pound Arts Centre, housing art, drama and music.

The first step was the establishment of All Hallows Famham Charitable Trust, a separate legal entity that enabled borrowing in excess of £400,000 from the private sector. The governing body with the broad object of advancing education and the Roman Catholic religion within the school established this Charitable Trust. The Charitable Trust is registered with the Charity Commission and accepted by the Inland Revenue for covenant (charitable giving) purposes.

The Charitable Trust negotiated a bank loan sufficient to fund its building programme and at the same time launched a Development Appeal to attract donations, grants and covenanted income. The school launched its appeal to a broad constituency for its ambitious £2,000,000 development programme. Within six months the school raised £100,000 on a covenanted basis from the parent body alone.

The governing body of All Hallows has leased the site to the Charitable Trust which rents the building to the governing body. This very simple statement hides the wealth of detailed work that was required to put the development plan into action.

The school has now acquired technology college status, securing the necessary sponsorship, and has improved its science and technology laboratories. A project is underway to build a new restaurant with seating for 250 - double the existing

capacity. By taking advantage of a Private Finance Initiative and a land-swap a new sports hall is being built. Also planned are improvements to the pastoral facilities and the provision of a school chapel.

These three case studies outline projects have been funded by a variety of means. Each one gives a dear indication of the entrepreneurial spirit to be found in GM schools and the determination of headteachers and governors to explore all possible routes to improve the learning environment. In these examples, as in GM schools across the country, the local community has also benefited from the school's endeavors.

Managing for excellence

Grant-maintained status has ‘forced' a consideration of management styles and school improvement strategies. Without the creation of an Authority wide plan by the LEA, GM schools have taken on this element of strategic planning with closer reference to their own local circumstances than might otherwise have been the case. A paper written by Dr Pamela Sammons and Josh Hillman at the Institute of Education at the University' of London identified 11 key factors found in effective schools. GMSC undertook a research project with a number of GM schools identified as 'effective' and it is from this research that the following points are taken.

Professional Leadership

Trying to tie together the disparate strands that seemed to unite the practices of three schools that have been applauded by OFSTED was not an easy task. However, there are certain elements which, in varying degrees, were viewed as significant in each of the schools.

These leaders were able to articulate clearly the vision of the school, but no amount of talk about vision will have any effect unless a significant group identify with it and 'sign up' to it. Mission statements were clear statements of intent that were not allowed to be consigned to an under-used staff handbook, but guided practice throughout the schools. The mission statement in each school was deceptively simple. The headteachers embellished the core statements with deliberate aspirations which were, at heart, based firmly on a morality with which no well-intentioned professional could take exception. This calls for communication on personal, professional, formal and informal levels and must appeal to the moral high ground to acquire resonance.

The recruitment of staff came under close scrutiny in each of the three schools; the appointment of staff who identify with the mission and actively wish to be a part of its promulgation was the preserve of the headteacher. In each case there was a clear view as to the type of person required. Appointees must be 'well centreed": as one head observed, damaged teachers damage children".

It was also apparent that the headteacher must chose from amongst the plethora of current educational initiatives those with which he/she will be seen to be most actively involved and then consistently apply themselves to those issues. 'Cherry-picking' or irrational and inconsistent involvement provokes nervousness and is destructive of trust and performance. The heads shared the belief that it was their role to identify which of the many educational initiatives or fashions would achieve longevity and have intrinsic long-term worth for their school. Having decided on priorities, policies and practices in these areas would be markedly thorough. This does not mean that these headteachers were unwilling to take risks - in one school the examination targets were published in the local press and in another the head and governing body made application to the Secretary of State to add a sixth form to the existing 11 to 16 school.

The school without a short-, medium- and long-term strategic plan that is owned by all the constituents is unlikely to be effective. In these schools targets were unambiguous, and in some instance voiced outside the school community. Target setting does require confidence and the ability to take risks, but is an immensely important ingredient. Targets inform performance, provide stability, and act as triggers for purposeful action. None of these heads subscribed to the notion that educational outcomes, for staff and pupils, cannot be effectively measured. Data collection is a key element in the monitoring of targets, but is useless if it is not carefully planned, tested for worth, built into decision making, rigorously maintained and regularly re-appraised.

The establishment and maintenance of the culture of the school is an essential ingredient. All of the heads interviewed took a very high profile leadership role, both within the school and in the local community (and in some instances at a national level). However, it was apparent that the truly effective leader is also a good maintainer - not just one who enjoys the 'sexy' elements of leadership. Each of the heads demonstrated a thorough approach to any new initiatives undertaken and keen eye for the minutiae of school life - litter and uniform, for example, received their daily attention. This approach ensured that the culture they had created permeated every aspect of the operation of the school. 'Walking the job' was a practice adopted by each head. These successful headteachers have achieved a synergy between leadership and good management skills.

It is interesting to note the comments of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector, Chris Woodhead, on the quality of leadership in GM schools:

“The headteachers of GM schools are men and women of confidence and vision who lead from the front and who create a positive ethos in their schools. Such leadership is to be found, of course, in LEA schools, but, in my experience, it is particularly common in the GM sector.”[10]

How are GM schools monitored?

Grant-maintained schools are subject to a stringent financial regime. In its early days a GM school is obliged to put in place a set of financial regulations which will enable the school to comply with best practice and the financial reporting required of the sector. In order to cope with the surge in demand - at least in part - the Government created the Funding Agency for Schools (FAS), a new agency with a remit to allocate and monitor expenditure in the GM sector. Critically the FAS also had a role in local strategic planning which previously had been the sole preserve of the LEA.

It is interesting that the creation of GM schools has pushed the pace of devolved budgets to all state schools. Unfortunately, it is believed within the GM sector that some LEAs have responded to the threat of GM schools by managing their finances in such a way as to deprive GM schools of funding. other LEAs have responded quite differently and are selling good quality, cost effective services to GM schools.

In other respects GM schools are subject to the same controls placed on all state schools. Several of these mechanisms have been developed recently as part of the Govemment's determination to raise standards and levels of accountability.

Quality control - inspection

In 1992 the Education (Schools) Act created a new inspection framework. The old system headed by Her Majesty's Chief Inspectors, assisted by the LEA advisers and inspectors was replaced with a new agency and revised systems.

The creation of new agencies accountable to the Secretary of State and Parliament has been a feature of this reengineering of the country's education system. In the case of the Inspection Service the new agency, Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED), now administers a system whereby it

[10] Chris Woodhead, HMCI, writing in the May 1997 edition of *GM focus.*

appoints teams of Inspectors who work independently and bid for the inspection work. Every school is due to be inspected on a six-year cycle.

Inspection teams now have to follow clear Systems in preparation for the Inspection. The period in the schools is also the subject of clear guidelines and, after the Inspection and debriefing is complete, the school must evolve an Action Plan and implement it. Much of this process is very public and involves the local press, parents and other interested parties.

It is worth noting that, once again, accountability has shifted. OFSTED is accountable for the provision of a structure to inspect but the schools are now directly accountable for delivery. GM schools are included within this inspection framework.

Quality control - curriculum

Prior to 1986 the responsibility for the curriculum lay firmly with the individual school under the guidance of the LEA. Of the 106 LEAs no two had an identical stance to the curriculum. In a series of major pieces of legislation[11] the Government introduced a National Curriculum which, after much negotiation and discussion, has settled down to a coherent set of subjects, attainment targets and testing procedures.

At the head of this curriculum structure is another new agency, School Curriculum and Assessment Agency (SCM), which is charged with the maintenance and development of the curriculum, the testing and evaluative processes and the provision of data against which progress can be measured.

Once again, however, the accountability chain is very clear. The school is responsible for its policy statement on the curriculum. It should also ensure that quality control is in place in the selection of testing materials. The school is responsible for religious and sex education and must have clear policies on both.

The creation of a second curriculum-related agency, the National Council for Vocational Qualifications (NCVQ), has added further weight to post 16 educational reform as the Government has driven up the numbers of students staying in full time education between ages 16 and 18.

The national publication of examination league table has already been mentioned. This move has been controversial and such public accountability has been painful for some schools. It is not surprising that this whole process has

[11] Education (#2) Act 1986, ERA 1988, Education Act 1993.

opened up the question of Value Added in schools. It is certain that the national testing and reporting structures will remain but many hope that the nature of that which is being reported upon will become more refined. The standing of GM schools in the league table has already been noted.

Quality control - teacher training and career advancement

Again, with the exception of schools with a religious or charitable foundation, LEAS were perceived to exercise considerable influence over teacher training and staff appointments.

In 1993 the Government created a new agency: the Teacher Training Agency ~ The TTA's first Chief Executive had been the Head of Inspection Services at OFSTED. The TTA was charged with ensuring the supply of teachers into the profession and their adequate professional training.

Once again funding was a means of exercising control and breaking power bases. The legislation and subsequent regulation also made it clear that schools could receive funds directly to train teachers. Entry to the profession was widened to include new categories of trainee which could include returners, mature students, articled teachers and so forth.

Subtler changes, largely unheeded in 1988 despite the clear clauses in the ERA, began to have an impact. The ERA had made it clear that in all schools governors would appoint staff and bear the responsibility for those appointments. The LEA's role began to diminish from that time.

GM schools - a change in culture and organizational design

With the acquisition of authority and responsibility in equal measure, GM schools had to consider the organizational and cultural implications as a matter of urgency.

Culturally, some heads were not really ready for the change - others, however, welcomed the opportunities presented by GM status. Headteachers and principals were used to an environment in which they could, at best rely on the LEA and. at worst, blame it for everything that went wrong. They now headed institutions and were both responsible and accountable. They had the power too and some preferred the latter more than the former. A number of those did not last long. others learnt to change. Governors were similarly not entirely at ease with the new culture. The effective partnership between governance and management is critical to the success of a GM school.

The GM sector developed quickly and culturally it is now more robust than it was. There is a developing consciousness of the need to connect the leadership style to thorough management. Under the LEA a headteacher did not have full authority and could afford to be more drawn to the leadership role and less driven by management needs.

The need to develop and maintain the strongest links with the community has been given a sharper edge. Parents can chose schools, read results, make decisions and ask questions of schools. If they don't like what they see and hear they can put their child into another school. As the child leaves the headteacher knows that his or her budget will be directly affected: funding follows pupils. Culturally, like it or not, staff in schools need to be thinking of marketing the school in the community. If the community turns against a school, teaching jobs are at risk.

It was initially claimed that GM schools would become isolated institutions. However, staff in GM schools developed strong networks very quickly which, together with the newly acquired spirit of independence, made for a very strongly developed sense of identity - particularly amongst senior managers. These networks did not historical LEA groupings, but were formed as needed with membership based on like responsibilities or broad geographical considerations.

Organizationally, schools needed to change in order to absorb the new responsibilities. Management teams became flatter almost immediately in most schools in older to absorb the financial, personnel and buildings responsibilities that had previously been handled by the LEA. Now the structures are changing more subtly and we are seeing the start of a fusion between middle and senior management which, in some small way, reflects the downsizing in middle management in industry and commerce.

The aim throughout all of this change has been to educate young people in the UK in a manner that will meet the challenges and demands of the twenty-first century. The failings of the education system are being addressed and change effected; it is good to see GM schools at the forefront of that change.