Rebooting Education - CASE Conference October 2024

Introduced by Melian Mansfield, Chair, Campaign for State Education

Theme 1: Fragmentation

"Fragmentation: The National Picture" – Carl Parsons, Emeritus Professor, Canterbury Christ Church University

- *Carl Parsons (Canterbury Christ Church University) on Fragmentation of the school system in England reports on the academized (not adopted in Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland) which has led to a chaotic situation where, alongside the diminished role of the 151 local authorities, there are over 2,400 school trusts, 1,250 of which are single academy trusts (SAT). Applying the CASE Fragmentation Tool https://fragmentedschoolsystem.org.uk/ revealed that a big authority like Essex, with 560 schools, nearly three-quarters academies, had a total of **99 providers** including the LA, and some of those MATs have schools in other local authority areas. This semi-privatised arrangement is wasteful, incoherent, chaotic and anti-democratic.*

"Systems Matter: Academy Management Costs" – John Galloway, Co-chair of CASE

- *John Galloway (Vice-chair of CASE) on Systems Matter and Academy Management Costs, summarised Warwick Mansell's gave details of the unjustifiably high salaries of senior management in Mats, a use of public money 'that could be better spent on improving children's education and supporting frontline staff' (Public Accounts Committee, 2018). Comparing the 50 largest MATs and the 10 largest LAs, each with about 850,000 pupils showed that large trusts spent the equivalent of £79 per head on management costs compared with LAs of the same size spending £28 per head.*

"MAT and Free School Impact on Local Outcomes" – Rob Higham, UCL

- *Rob Higham (UCL) reported research on No Significant Differences Between LEA and MAT Outcomes: smaller MATS perform better than larger ones but there is diminishing knowledge of local educational concerns and services are now bought and sold, not allocated according to need rand resources have been focused on marketing, promotion and recruitment rather than the quality of teaching and learning. The opening of Free Schools has led to local disruption in provision and increased educational inequalities, with evidence of social segregation along ethnic lines, with no improvement in the performance in local primary schools and limited improvement in secondary schools.*

Theme 2: Professionalism

"How the Academies System has Changed Staffing in Schools" – Warwick Mansell, Journalist & Founder of "Education Uncovered"

- *Warwick Mansell (Journalist & Founder of Education Uncovered) on How the Academies System has Changed Staffing in Schools reviews two recent reports written for CASE and begins by re-emphasising the huge financial waste in the*

academies sector with which can be shown from trawling the accounts of hundreds of trusts and comparing spending with similar costs in a comparison group of the 10 largest local authorities: the 50 largest trusts were spending eight times as much on management costs compared with the comparison LAs, indeed calculated at an average of £130,000 annually. Interrogating DfE data on staffing clearly showed academy trusts spending less in classrooms with higher teacher pupil ratios (highest in the biggest chains), lower paid teachers, on average £2,000 less in sponsored academies where staff tend to be younger, fewer have Qualified Teacher Status with higher turnover of staff. It fuels the surprise that the academy sector should be favoured by the government.

"Deprofessionalisation: How Teacher Roles Have Changed" – Louise Vincent, Doctoral Teaching fellow, University of Oxford

- *Louise Vincent (Doctoral Teaching Fellow, University of Oxford) discussing deprofessionalisation and how teacher roles have changed, points to the loss of control over their teaching which teachers experience and the national curriculum, standardised tests which focus them on test results rather than more holistic educational goals and the character of Ofsted. These factors inhibit focus on the unique needs of students. This is a tragedy for teaching staff and students as, without teacher autonomy, they cannot cater for student needs with any creativity and spontaneity. Academies operate like businesses with performance management regimes – corporate oversight rather than educational leadership.*

"Roles of Support Staff in Schools" – Chris Fabby, Unison

- *Chris Fabby (Unison), on Roles of Support Staff, emphasised the major impact of the underfunding of education over the last 14 years. Teaching Assistants have been increasingly used to substitute for teachers, sometimes to the extent of teaching subjects to GCSE level. A poorly paid section of the workforce is used routinely exploited to carry out work of teachers but more importantly, they are taken away from their primary roles in delivery one-to-one support to special needs students. work which research has shown can add five additional months of development to a student supported in this way.*

"Recruitment/Retention and Shortfall in ITE" – Philip Foyle, NEU

- *Philip Foyle (NEU) Recruitment/Retention and Shortfall in ITE confirmed that recruitment and retention figures are remaining low in an education system which we see is under stress and over-loaded amongst student teachers and early career teachers (ECTs). We need a fundamental recasting of what education is and what it is that teachers do and particularly what ownership they have over the language which describes them and their work. There are vital steps to be taken within ITE and induction, but we want to see a better shared understanding, subject to wide consultation, on what new teachers will need. We need better frameworks, something that speaks of a more ambitious vision of what teachers do, more generous ways*

of talking about pedagogy and the roles, capabilities and professionalism of teachers.

- *There are no unchallengeables in the plans for teacher recruitment and professional preparation. CPD needs to be much better. Teachers need to be recognised as intellectuals and to have agency in their work. Teaching takes place in an untidy reality with unpredictability and we need to learn how to fail better – and learn from it!*

Theme 3: Inclusion

"Who Is In Our Schools? Admissions, Exclusions, and Unofficial Managed Moves Determine Access to Schools" – Dave Thompson, FFT Datalabs

- *Dave Thompson, FFT Datalabs: 'Who Is In Our Schools? Admissions, Exclusions, and Unofficial Managed Moves Determine Access to Schools'*

- *14% of state-funded students in mainstream education leave by year 11. 50% of these students change mainstream school, 50% leave mainstream education with. 7000-8000 students are permanently excluded. Disadvantaged students, including students with SEND, have higher levels of mobility.*

"SEND: The Patchy and Unequal Provision" – Christopher Robertson, Visiting Professor, University of Derby

- *Negative experiences in education are regular for SEND and disadvantaged students. There is some good practice in schools but this is isolated and not shared. Recent 'naive' policy decisions have failed to anticipate the role of local authorities and has led to no improvements in education with a poor response from government and leadership in education who can seen to be missing in action. There is a current 'blame game' as to who is responsible for higher SEND numbers and provision with collectively 500,000 SEND students being 'written off' due to perceived over-identification.*

"Mental Health and Wellbeing: Action to Support Children" – Dr Xin Shao, Cosmo project UCL

- *There has been a measurable increase in mental health issues in school age children. This can be seen to have risen over the pandemic years with very patchy provision provided across schools. The LGBTQ+ community suffered from poor mental health disproportionally. Mental health services were required more in disadvantaged areas but this was not evident.*

"Poverty and Deprivation: The Role of Schools and Need for Government Action" – Kate Ansty, Child Poverty Group

- *During the years 2022-2023, 30% of children were living in poverty; 4.3 million children. Poverty is a strong predictor of educational outcomes. It costs on average £18 a week to send a child to a primary school and £39 for a secondary school student, this is difficult to meet for many families. There is also a link between poverty and lower school attendance, higher incidences of SEND and poor mental health.*

Theme 4: Curriculum

"The Bold and Balanced Curriculum: Need for a New Vision" – James Lane, Head Teacher, ST Francis de Sales School

- *James's talk emphasised the entrenched challenges to curriculum reform, pointing out how difficult it is for individuals to disrupt long-standing institutional practices. He called for educators who are willing to envision new alternatives that could make the current system obsolete.*

"Discipline and Behaviour: Towards a Humane Consensus" – Laura Oxley, University of York

- *Laura's presentation centred on current behaviour management paradigms. She advocated schools move away from punitive models towards approaches rooted in compassion, mutual respect, and humanistic democracy.*

"Prioritising Early Years" – Michael Freeston, Early Years Alliance

- *Michael presented the evidence-supported, crucial role that early years education plays in shaping children's academic and life outcomes. He was critical of the reductive perspective that early years education is mere child-minding, arguing for higher standards across the sector.*

Conclusion and Open Discussion – Melian Mansfield

- **Presenter**: Melian Mansfield

- Summarizing key points from each session and setting the agenda for future advocacy.