

# EDUCATION IN ENGLAND AND WALES

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## Part 1

Hello, Good Morning, nice to see you all. Yes, I'm talking about the education system in England and Wales, as Joan said. As you may be aware the system in Ireland, Northern Ireland is different and Scotland is different O.K. So we can only generalise today to talk about England and Wales. The second point I would make is although I work in the University, I am a lecturer, anything I say today is my own opinion. O.K. There will be some facts, but any comments I make about the education system are my own opinions, they are not what the University believes or what Joan, or Sebastian, or Pete here think as well. They are very much individual comments and opinions so please take them in that light.

OK. So just a brief overview of what we are going to look at today. I know that you are all experts on the education system having read the handout which you got at the end of last week, is that right Joan? 'Yes'. So I'll be going through some of the same points and occasionally I'll ask you just to see if you can remember what you read. I am going to do a quick overview of the history of the education system in England. We'll talk about types of school, we'll talk about the subjects that are studied at school. We'll talk briefly about Further and Adult Education. And we'll talk about Higher Education. What is Higher Education? Universities - yes thank you. We'll talk a bit about the important question of 'who pays?' and we'll talk about some of the issues for the future that are affecting education. Some of the things that are in the news at the moment, that people are discussing. So that is what we are going to do, those 7 topics. And I've got an hour, is that correct? Yes. Does that include questions Joan? Right I'll go quickly then.

Just to start off with the background, the history of the education system. Would you prefer me to put this light off? Then you can all sleep, not you, is that better? O.K. So compulsory education in England goes back 136 years now, to 1870 when the Education Act was passed making compulsory elementary education. We needed our people to be educated at a very basic level then because of the effects of the Industrial Revolution. Britain was industrializing, if people are going to work in factories they need to be able to count and they need to be able to read basic instructions. So basic reading and mathematical skills, but the purpose was to provide workers for the factories who would have a basic level of education.

So that's one of the main reasons why education was made compulsory. But only elementary education. Elementary means? Another word for elementary - primary thank you, primary. In 1918 after the First World War, the school leaving age was raised to 14. What is it now? What is the school leaving age in England now? 16, yes good. So 1918 it was raised to 14, and then to 15 in 1944 towards the end of the Second World War. And at that time secondary education was free for everybody with tests at 11; this test was called the 11+, and the test at 11

determined what kind of a school you went to. Do you know the names of these kinds of schools? Yes, grammar schools or secondary modern schools. Grammar schools still exist, secondary modern schools do not.

Grammar schools were where the top 5% or 10% of the population went, and we have two grammar schools near us in the University area. Have you, do you know the names of either of them – have you noticed them? No, but it's a good try. One is called, there's a girls' Grammar school near here which begins with K – Kendrick – and that's Kendrick Girls' Grammar School, which is on the London Road. As you go into town on the London Road, Kendrick Girls' Grammar School and the boys' grammar school is not far from there, it's on Erleigh Road, near the Royal Berkshire Hospital and it's called Reading Boys' School.

## Part 2

But Berkshire, the county we are in, only has two boys' grammar schools. One here and one in Slough so if people want their children to go to this kind of a school they have to travel if they don't live near. They take an exam at 11 and it selects the top few percent, but you don't have to take it. Up until 1944 you had to take it, this exam determined if you went to a grammar school or to a secondary modern school. Grammar schools are very academic, they used to teach Latin and Greek that's why they were called 'grammar schools' people went there to learn grammar, a very high, academic, theoretical level of education. Pure physics, pure chemistry, maths, the very academic subjects.

Secondary Modern schools also taught those subjects but were supposed to be – do you know what this word means? Were supposed to be anyway, more vocational. What does that mean? As opposed to academic? So academic is studying subjects for the sake of it, to improve your brain and a vocational education is more – training you, training your hands, training you to be a worker, giving you vocational skills for working. So the idea was that people who were less academic would go to secondary modern schools.

Right, you are a parent, your child takes an exam at 11, how do you feel if they fail – happy? No, that's the problem. Because it was seen as passing and failing. If you passed, you went to the grammar school, if you failed you went to the secondary modern school. Many people saw this as being unfair. 11, think of yourselves at 11, what were you like at 11? Boys at 11 are not as clever as girls at 11, for example. Some children develop later, it's not fair. That's one of the main criticisms. The secondary modern schools got less money, the teachers were not so good, it was not a good system I think, that's my opinion. So, a lot of people felt the same and in the 1960's and 70's people said its not fair, everybody should go to the same school and what's it called? What is it called where everybody goes – the comprehensive, so that's when they came in, in the 1960's and 1970's.

And we have some comprehensive schools near here. Do you know the names of any of the comprehensive schools near here. They're big, have lots of kids go, everybody goes at 11. One is called Maiden Erlegh, and another one near here is called Bulmershe, those are the two that are in the university area, and that many people go to, Maiden Erlegh and Bulmershe. So everybody can go to these schools at 11 if they live near, if they live in the 'catchment area'.

If you live in the catchment area, that's the area near the school then you can go to that school if it has places, that's another issue. O.K. so that's the sort of background up until the 1970's and in the 1970's the school leaving age was raised again from 15 this time to 16, and that's the school leaving age today.

Now, 1989, the National Curriculum. Before 1989, schools could teach students what they wanted. So if you went to a primary school and you had a teacher who was very good at music you did a lot of music. If your teacher liked maths you did a lot of maths, and any school could teach whatever it wanted. And then at 16 and 18, there were public examinations, so there was no assessment no checking up until 16 and 18. And the government said this is not good because some schools are better than others. We don't know what is going on in the different schools. So, in 1989, the government said we must have a national curriculum where the government will say first year maths is this, first year English is this, first year geography, science where we will tell the schools what they must teach in each year group.

Now your countries? Do you have national curriculum? What countries have we got here? Where are you from? Do you have a national curriculum? Ok, so that 's in Saudi Arabia. Where are you from? South Korea? Do you have a national curriculum? Ok? Do we have any other countries represented? Where are you from? Japan? National curriculum? Where are you from? Taiwan? National curriculum? Gentleman at the back, you don't look to me like you are from Taiwan or Japan. Where are you from? Saudi Arabia, the same? Anywhere else? Any other countries? China? Who said that? Right? National curriculum? Actually, most countries have a national curriculum. We were very odd not having a national curriculum before in Britain. Britain is now doing more what other countries do. And most people agree the national curriculum is a good idea because it helps the teachers, it helps the parents, it helps the children.

### **Part 3**

With our national curriculum, came something that was less popular. In 1992, coming really from the United States of America, this idea of testing. Scholastic Aptitude Tests. National tests for children at 7, 11, and 14. At 7 and 11, the tests were in English, maths, and science. At 14 in more subjects. Just to see, not for the child, but for the school, to see how the school is doing. Do you have tests in your country at these ages? Only? - not at these ages, yes. These are not qualifications, it's not like GCSE or A level, this is just to say this school is doing well on maths the children are reaching the right level, or this school is not doing well. The most controversial one was 7. 7 is very young to test children, and the children got the result, they were told you are doing well, you are not doing well. Not good for children at 7 to tell them these things. Many people feel 11 is also too young. So, very very controversial. And teachers were not happy with it. If you have tests, teachers teach for the tests. They prepare the kids, parents have extra classes outside, to prepare their children. And it has what we call very bad backwash effect, a bad impact on the teaching.

1999, the government introduced literacy, a literacy and numeracy strategy. What is literacy? Reading and writing, literacy is reading and writing and

numeracy is? Numbers, working with numbers and they said that in every primary school, every day one hour must be spent on literacy and one hour must be spent on numeracy. They said for the hour on literacy, 15 minutes reading a story, 15 minutes working individually, 15 minutes group work. Actually telling the teachers how to spend that hour. Some people said it was good some people said it was too much control from the government. But the idea was to improve literacy and numeracy, to make our children better able to read and write and better able to do the mathematics they need for secondary school.

Let's move on now to talk about types of school. We've mentioned some already. These are all in the State Sector, grammar schools, comprehensive schools, they are in the State Sector. There is another kind of school that's not in the State Sector - what's it called? A Public School, yes this is confusing. Our public schools are not public they are - private, OK why is that? Do you know examples of any famous public schools? Eton, yes, so an example of a public school is Eton, where is Eton? Near here in Windsor, yes thank you. In Windsor. Now Eton was one of the first Public Schools, public - it was one of the first schools it's about 600 years old, something like that. It was the first Public School because anyone could go if they had the money. Some of the schools also had scholarships for poor people. Maybe they were paid for by the Church, or by the king. So that's why they were called 'public schools' because they were the very first schools. We didn't have state education until 1870 - yes OK, so private schools were the first schools in Britain. They were often run by the Church, the Christian Church or by the king or a rich person would set up a school, So Eton is a good example.

So that's the kind of school they are private, independent or public schools, fee paying. Any idea how much it costs to go to Eton? If you go to Eton you live there as well. What do we call the kind of school where you live - a boarding school. Eton is a boarding school so you live there during the term time. It's a boarding school and the fees, I don't know exactly, but I know approximately, are something like £23,000 a year. Approximately. That's the average for the full boarding private schools out of taxed income. So you have to be earning quite a lot of money to pay that for one child.

#### **Part 4**

The percentage of kids who go there, it's about 7%, approximately 7% of our children go there, which is quite a lot, it's over half a million going to these schools, but it's only 7%. In the past, these 7% were very influential they would be the people who went into government, into business, into law, in the past. It's changing a bit now. But certainly universities like Oxford and Cambridge have been criticised for taking too many people from this sector. They may have 30% intake that comes from this sector, or 40%, 50% for some universities but it is only 7% of the population.

OK the other category as we have said is state schools which are free, you just have to buy the uniform. They are divided up from the age of 5 to 18 into primary school, which is infants, and they are 5 to 7. What age do you start education in China? 6 or 7. South Korea? 6. Saudi Arabia? 7. Taiwan? 7 or 8, anymore countries that we have missed. Thailand? 6. So it's very young. We start young, we're probably one of the youngest to get our children into primary schools. I know

other countries have kindergartens, but a primary school class will have 30 children in it, it's quite a lot when you are only 5. They start teaching them reading from the beginning and a lot of people say it is too young. We should wait until they are 6 or 7, we are starting too young. So, 5-7 is infants and then juniors 8-11. Some places, not Reading, not Berkshire, have a system of middle schools which change at 8 and they go to a middle school from 8 to 14, some places have that but not here. Then as I said we have secondary school. Secondary is typically is from 11-18 and I mentioned earlier the comprehensives, that's where 90% of our children go. 90% of them go to comprehensives from the state sector. We also have Sixth Form College, 16-18. There is a sixth form college near here. Do you know what it's called, and where it is - have you seen it? Reading College takes people for 'A' levels at that age group. Reading College which is part of Thames Valley University but that is also a sixth form college. You can go from 16 to 18, and there is another one in Henley, has one. So, people can leave school at 16, and go to one of these two colleges Reading or Henley.

And colleges are more adult, you don't have to wear a uniform, you are only with people your age or older. It's, people tend to go there if they fed up with school, they don't like school, they want something a little more adult.

Ok, moving on to look at the national curriculum. Ok, now we have core subjects, which everybody must study from 5 to 16. What do you think they are? What are the core subjects everybody must study? Maths. Literature? Science, not literature but no, English, ok? So, the core subjects are English, maths, and science, everybody must do that from 5 to 16. Ok, what is not a core subject you might expect in many other countries, that would be a core subject? What is not a core subject here? If you think English is our mother tongue, so what are we not studying? Another language, we are not say, we are not studying another language as a core subject.

In most other countries, in the national curriculum, core subjects would include English as a foreign language, ok. Ok, those are the core subjects, we also have foundation subjects. So what are the subjects you could you have? This is where students can choose, it's not compulsory. So, give me the name of some other subjects, French, geography, history, art, music, some more?

## Part 5

Citizenship it's called actually, have I've got that down? 'citizenship', yes, that's a new one, citizenship, training to be a citizen. I'm not sure, I'll write that on I don't know if I have that. Ok let's look at my list. Also computers, very important DT, IT. The first one, these are an alphabetical order I think, DT, Design and Technology, making things. Another one is ICT, information and communication technology, learning to use computers that as you said history, geography, art, music, one foreign language, it used to be that we started learning languages at 11. That's changed, it's now 7 to 14. This is very controversial. It's only just started. So, the idea is we start teaching foreign languages in primary school, but children can drop them at 14. You don't have to continue after 14. What do you think about that? Do you think that's good - to allow people to stop learning a foreign language at 14? Would that be ok in your countries? It's very very controversial, and those of us involved in language teaching are worried

about it. Because if you drop at 14 a foreign language you don't have a qualification in it. You don't do a public examination. And also, it means you don't know the language very well. The other problem is primary school, we don't have many teachers who can teach primary French. It's usually French, but it could be Spanish, or Japanese, or Chinese whatever, but there are not the teachers.

Ok. Physical education. PE, Religious Education. This is becoming quite popular because it also includes philosophy. And religious education means not just Christianity, but looking at other religions, looking at Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Atheism, looking at different religions and saying 'ok what do these people believe?'. My children have done it and really enjoyed it because philosophy also, the philosophy of education, thinking about the important things in life, what matters, thinking about things like abortion, euthanasia, you know whether people have a right to die if they are very sick, these kinds of things. So, that's becoming increasingly a popular subject.

Citizenship, it is there, yes, so learning about society, learning about what you need to do to be a member of society. That's new. And the other one, person, personal social and health, that's not just sex, but it's also drugs, diet, food, you know looking after your body, looking after yourself.

Ok, moving on to look at qualification. Do you know the names of any qualifications, in Britain, England? GCSE, yes, the other one? 'A' Level, thank you, that's good. GCSE, what age? What age? *Unintelligible reply.* no, 16, yes. And how many subjects? How many subjects for, 5, no. More than 7, more than 6. Usually about 9 or 10, ok? So the general certificate of secondary education GCSE, you take at 16 and you take up to 10 subjects, so - the subjects we looked at earlier. Information technology, history, geography, etc. etc. ok? There is another one before A level. And it's called, but it's part of A level, so you take that at 16.

How many subjects do you do for A level typically? 3 or maybe 4. But before that, you do 5. Ok? Many people said, ok this is good, 10, it's broad. But traditionally we then specialised our children at 16 would choose only 3 subjects. So, they might do history, French, and English? Arts? Physics, chemistry, math, sciences. So, at 16 traditionally our kids had to choose, are you going to do arts or sciences? Many people said that too young because if you are 16 and you choose history, French, and English, you cannot do medicine, or dentistry, or engineering, or train to be car mechanic or something. You know you need science for that. On the other hand, if you do Physics, Maths, and Chemistry, you can't go onto do a degree in History or in Geography or something like that. So, people said 'it's too young'. So the system was changed to include, what was called AS level, which is a year later. So public examinations in up to 5 subjects, so people might do, my son did Maths, Further Maths, Physics, History, and English. So, you'd have a mixture, more a mixture of arts and sciences, or they might keep music going or art or something like that. Up to 5, but typically it is 4 actually. And then they drop 1.

## Part 6

Or 2 after that. And then advanced level, which is a year later, at 18 where they do up to 4 subjects, but typically 3. Now this is a lot of exams. Exams at 16,

exams at 17, exams at 18, all public exams with qualifications. And this has put a lot of stress on our kids, I think, too much examining. They are getting bored, fed up, exam after exam after exam. So here you have exams in June, and then the next year you might have exams in January, and then in June again, and then the next year January and June. Public examinations which count, they're important, because they count towards your, your, these ones count for getting into university. And if you fail you repeat them, and it's just overwhelming, I think. And you get some people who are very worried about exams, so they stop eating, and they get all anxious. And you have people like my children who say 'can't be bothered, too much exams I'm not going to work.' And you know, and you know parents worry about both, you worry about ones who are not eating and you worry about ones who are not working. So, people are beginning to say it's too much, too much pressure.

Ok, I quickly want to mention something I think is great in England and Wales, Further and Adult education. In lots of countries, if you leave school that's it, finished, no more education opportunities, that's my experience in the countries I worked in. In England, if you leave school at 16 that's not the end, you can go back if you want to later. You can go onto further education or onto adult education. So, it means the door is not closed. You have the opportunity of going back later if you want to. It is largely vocational but not exclusively, and they have these qualifications, GNVQs, general national vocational qualifications. And some of these, if you get enough of them will also help you to get into university. They are considered useful for all sort of things, not just for vocational job purposes. And there are about 2 and half million people in this system.

Further and adult education. It's a good system, it allows people to go back or to leave school, and to go to a different kind of college, not university but a place that will give them the kind of education they have chosen at that point, not compulsory, voluntary.

Ok, let's move on to higher education. How many universities do we have in England and Wales? Any idea? A hundred? Yes, that's about right. I don't know exactly, it's so confusing now. But I think we have in England and Wales, we have about 90 universities but it's 115 if you count the universities of Wales and London. London University has lots of different bits, Birkbeck College, UCL, St.Mary's, there is lots of different bits. If you count each of them as a separate university then it's more.

Now, before 1992, we had some universities were called polytechnics, today they are called universities. So, for example, Oxford had Oxford University and Oxford Polytechnic. And the polytechnics, by definition, were more vocational. So, for example, if you wanted to study French literature, you would go to Oxford. If you wanted to study translation, and working skills in French, you would go to Oxford Brooks. Polytechnics did more vocational subjects, and also of the traditional subjects like French, they would do more vocational, more work oriented, more practical aspect of those subjects. But in 1992, all the former polytechnics became universities. So now we have Oxford University and, do you know the other one? What it's called? I'm running out of space here. I'll put it in here, we have Oxford- Brooks University.

In Liverpool, we have Liverpool University, and John Mores University. In Bristol, we have Bristol University and the University of the West of England. So, what happened was cities that had a university and a polytechnic, then had two universities. But one kept the original name, Bristol University which was the original university, and the polytechnic became the University of the West of England. So, when you are looking at, if the city has two universities in it, you can tell from the name usually the longer name is the polytechnic.

## Part 7

They became universities. And the reason was that many people felt that polytechnics were doing a fantastic job, but because they were not called universities they were not seen as equal. So the idea was make them all universities, and then students can choose whether to go to a more vocational, more practical university or more academic university.

Ok, 1979, about 12 percent of our school leavers went to university. Today, how many is it? What do you think? What is the percentage today of school leavers going to university? Have a guess. Any idea? 20? No, it's not less, it's more, 20 no, more than 20. 40, yes, it's closer to 40. What does the government want? What is the government target? *Unintelligible comment.* No, no no they want *more* people going to university, so we can compete with your countries. Yes. So what does the government want? 50, about 50. The government wants 50%. At the moment it's about 40, I think it's about 40.

Ok, since 1993, now remember 1992 all the polytechnics became university, so suddenly we had more students at university because now polytechnic students counted. But even so, the numbers have increased. Since 1993, 30% of school leavers have gone to university. And today it's about 40% in 2006. The government target for 2010 is 50%. At the moment, we've got about 1.9 million students, in full-time and part-time study in our universities. Ok, how long is a first degree in England and Wales, how long does it take, how many years of study? 3 years. And what do you get at the end of it? Bachelor of Arts or Bachelors of Sciences, yes, Ok.

Now, that's called the first degrees, second degree, there are a number of second degrees. What are they called? *Unintelligible answer.* No, second degrees, when you've got a first degree, you've got BA, BSc, you can do a Masters, either in MSc or MA, or you can do M.Phil, which is a two year research degree, M.Phil, Masters of Philosophy. Or PhD? How many years? Typically 3 or 4. PhD, that's called a Doctor of Philosophy. We also have one year diplomas, quite a lot of places offer 1 year postgraduate diplomas or 1 year MA or MSc, 2 year MPhil or a 3 year PhD. Can be longer, some people take more than 3 years.

Ok, so that's a quick look at higher education. Do you think it's a good idea to have 50% of the population go to university? Is that a good idea? Would you want that for your country? Is 50% enough? Should it be higher? Should we have more than 50% of the population going to university in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? Something to think about, isn't it? How many people should go to university. If they don't go to university, what will they do? *Vocational?* Vocational, maybe adult education, further education, perhaps they will do something more

vocational, perhaps they will train as a electrician or a builder or a car mechanic. And I think we need builders, and electricians, and car mechanics, these are very important people, we need them. So it's something to think about, do we need 50% of the population. *Unintelligible question* Ah that is a Masters in Engineering, so an MSc would be in a general science subject such as physics, or chemistry, or meteorology. M.Eng is a Master in Engineering. *Unintelligible question*.

Could, yes, some universities give them different titles. So, you might have a Masters in Law at some universities, but here an MSc includes engineering doesn't it? But another universities, it will be a Masters in engineering. *Unintelligible question*. Ah they probably are different courses then, there will be different programs of study. And if you are interested, you need to look at them very carefully to see what is the difference. And I can't tell you that. But they can, go and ask them, email. Ok? Find out, it's an important question if are thinking of being a student in that department. What's the difference between these two degrees.

Ok, we are going to look a little bit now at who pays. State schools, private schools, who pays? Public schools, the parents pay. Sometimes there are scholarships, scholarships. Ok, you can have a scholarship in a private school for sports if you are very good at football or hockey, or something. Or maybe for music, if you are very good at playing the violin, or the cello, or singing. There are also have scholarships for arts, and some schools have scholarships in DT, design and technology because the private schools want to have a rich mixture of pupils.

## Part 8

State schools are free to the parents, some money comes from the local education authority (the LEA), some money comes from the government. And this has been very controversial. Who pays for schools, is it local? Or central? if it the individual area, or is it the government? If the government gives the money it has more control over the schools and what they can do. And the present government, Tony Blair's government is wanting more of this, more from central government, less from local. He wants more control centrally. Universities, who pays for universities. Students? You do. Students pay, fees, and loans, but also the EU and Home students, European and Home, students money comes from, where? The government, yeah.

Ok, and the last point I want to raise, then we'll have time for questions - is issues for the future. The things that people are talking about now. Have you seen any discussions of education in the newspapers or on television? Have you noticed what's been discussed at all? What people are worried about, talking about? Not, in the UK, but your countries, I'm sure. Tony Blair, our Prime Minister said 'I have three important things for my government, education, education, education.'. And those three words have come back to haunt him. He is always being asked about education. And the government education policy has been very controversial. That means a lot of people are talking about it, criticising it.

Teachers are unhappy, university teachers are unhappy, parents are unhappy in some cases, not all. But education is very high on the political agenda. As we go into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and we know we have to compete with countries like Taiwan, Japan, Korea, Saudi Arabia for business, for Thailand, you know we have to compete, we cannot just say we have a tradition of good business, and London is where the Bank of England is and we are safe. We are not safe. We have to compete. China is coming, very very quickly,. India. So, we know that education is the key. We have to get it right. Education is very important. If your people are not educated in the future you will have no future. We cannot rely just on our hands any more. We have to be able to have an educated people. But what does education mean?

Ok, so issues for the future, I think that Joan and Seb do come in if you think I've missed something. Recruitment of teachers is very important it seems to me. And particularly in the subjects where there are not many people studying them at university. And if they do study them at university they can make more money in the private sector. What are examples of subjects where there may be a shortage of teachers? Have a guess - maths. We have a real problem with maths teachers, many of our schools do not have enough maths teachers. Physics is another one. We don't have enough physics teachers, not enough people are studying physics at a university. Modern languages, very few people are studying modern languages at university. And this will get worse if they give up languages at 14. So, if they give them up at 14 and they don't do them for GCSE and don't do them for A level and don't go to university, we don't have modern language teachers to schools.

IT, if you are good at technology, you can make much more money in business than in a school. So, these are shortage subjects. And how do you recruit teachers and then keep them. So, there are shortage subjects that are a real worry. Also the teachers say there is now this pressure for exams, GCSEs, AS's, and A2's, S.A.T.S., these tests for kids, a lot of pressure on them. Also pressure from society, saying you know the teachers, children are out of control, teachers are to blame, not the parents but teachers, everybody looks to the schools and says we have more litter in the street, more rubbish in the street. It's the schools, they are not teaching citizenship, they are not teaching. And teachers feel this pressure.

There is also the issue of morale. Morale means how they feel in their job. Are they happy? Do they go to work, feeling happy? Or are they worried and anxious? And there are a lot of problems in our schools, as everywhere. Discipline problems, social problems in the schools. Schools reflect society. So, that's an issue for us, recruitment of teachers and keeping them.

Another big thing at the moment is school selection of pupils. I talked about catchments areas and the government says, Tony Blair says, we have parental choice of school, parents can choose. Maiden Erleigh is a good school, I would like my daughter to go there. I live near it, good. No, Maiden Erleigh is full, it's very difficult to get in, everybody wants to go to Maiden Erleigh. You have to move into the catchment area, the house prices go up. You see the estate agents advertise houses in Maiden Erleigh catchment area, as I said 'Maiden Erleigh Catchment Area'. So parents who are moving into the area they know this is 'the good state school'. They try and buy their house in that area. I live on the wrong

side of the road, my house is here, the other side of the road, the catchment area, the line goes down the middle. So the other side of the road the children go to Maiden Erleigh, my side they go to Bulmershe. Maiden Erleigh is supposed to be a better school than Bulmershe. So my house is less valuable than the house on the other side of the road – crazy.

## Part 9

So, parental choice of school. Primary school – there are people who cannot get their children into the local primary school because it is full. So then the question is - OK if the school only has 50 places, and there are 200 children who want to come to the school how do we choose – how do we choose? You can go, you can't. Who decides which applicants a school takes? Is it the school, is it the local education authority, and how do they decide? Is it the government – how do they decide? Do they say 'we are going to take you because you're a boy and we need more boys. Or do they say we'll take you, because you're cleverer than he is, and we want our school to do well. Or do they say 'we'll take you because you are good at music and we want a good orchestra in our school'. How do they decide? This is very, very controversial, and the government is making a mess of it, I think, at the moment.

They are saying schools can choose by aptitude but not ability. I'll write those two words up because I'm not sure what the difference is. They are saying schools can choose by 'aptitude' but not 'ability'. Those are words you might like to look up in your dictionaries and see if you can see a difference between them, because I am struggling. So aptitude is OK, ability is not. So they cannot say 'you are cleverer than her so we'll take you'. But they can say 'you are very good at maths' or 'very good at languages or very good at music'. You have an aptitude for those special areas so we'll take you.' But they can't say 'you are cleverer' than she is. It's crazy, parents don't understand it, what is the difference? So it's a mess at the moment and people are getting very angry. They are saying the government promised this and we are finding that we choose a school and our children cannot go.

The other issue I have mentioned already - one of the other issues - is testing of school children. Is there too much – are we testing our kids to death? I think we are, it's too much, they get fed up with it and parents get fed up. It's not just tests they have coursework. So it's not just exams and tests, but also coursework OK. So for example GCSE History at (age) 11 three pieces of coursework. GCSE English three pieces of coursework, Geography a 10,000 word project. Maths - coursework, Physics - coursework and this is as well as exams in two years. So children are going 'Ahhh, what's due in tomorrow – coursework for history or maths or whatever'. And if the parents are helpful they help with the coursework. If you have a computer at home, you have an advantage you do your coursework on the computer. If you are poor or your parents don't help you or you don't have access to a computer its much more difficult.

So too much testing and we're also talking about, *maybe*, 'A' levels are too academic, too specialized. 'A' levels remember are at 18, still only 3 or 4 subjects. It's still too narrow, too specialized. Do we need something more like you have in your countries?

In your countries how long is university, a BA or a BSc.? How long is a degree? 4 years, in most countries it is 4 years because you don't specialize at school, the last two years. In Britain it's 3 years because we specialize at school in the last two years and people say 'why, why are we specializing it's too young'.

Universities, the other big issues are access; if it's 50% of the population, which 50%? The rich people, the middle class people. The present government wants to open it to the poor people to help them to go to university. Who goes - do you have to be clever or do you have to be rich. Or do you have to be a bit of both? Can you be clever and poor and go to university, can you be disabled, not able to walk, and go to university? Can you be black and go to university? Can you be black, disabled, and from a poor family and go to university? Yes, we think that's important we want to *widen* access so that the best people, regardless of their race, or their family background or their physical ability, can go.

As you know fees are coming in and some people say fees will stop the poor people going, they will say 'oh it's too expensive'. But actually for poor people there are scholarships. Universities will give bursaries, money, they don't pay, they won't pay this. But EU, European Union, and home students will be paying £3,000 from October. What do they pay now? Do you know? What do they pay now? What do Home students and EU students pay now? £1,200, at the moment. So it's a big increase and a lot of this money will be used to allow more people to go. So for scholarships to go out and advertise, and promote universities in the poorer parts of Britain.

But not much of that new university is going on this - staff salaries. More money is coming in, but Reading University for example is saying we will give none of this money to the staff and the staff are not happy. Because they say the numbers of students has increased, we have doubled the number of students at university and we have had no pay increase. In other areas of life, productivity - if you work harder, if you produce more, if you work in motor car manufacturing if you produce twice as many cars you get more money. Productivity is a relationship between work and pay. Universities have not done this. So, pay has not gone up in real terms for 20 years, whereas for other professionals it has. So we are voting to strike, and this could affect you, there could easily be a strike. Do you understand what I mean by strike? Ok, and the strike will mean, we will not mark exams, which will mean people cannot graduate, not such a problem for you, but it will be interesting to see what will happen. Ok, so those are the issues at the moment, as I see them.