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Unintended but always significant? A re-examination of the consequences of national education reform on local developments in the pioneering of comprehensive schooling c.1918–1950

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Unintended but always significant? A re-examination of the consequences of national education reform on local developments in the pioneering of comprehensive schooling c.1918–1950

Using the case study of Anglesey and its pioneering comprehensive scheme, this paper aims to re-examine education reforms and interventions by central government c.1918–1950. This is undertaken in a bid to reveal the significance of such reforms for the way in which comprehensive secondary education was able to evolve at the local level. Lesser-known consequences of well-known reforms will be explored with a view to assessing their significance for a Local Education Authority with a comprehensive vision. Furthermore, these localized findings will be discussed with the aim of discerning their significance beyond the local level. Attention will be paid to what the implications of the inclusion of the 'Welsh dimension' might mean for the wider historiography of comprehensive schooling in England and Wales. It will be argued here that this re-examination of education policy has implications for how the consequences of some of the key educational reforms of the twentieth century can be viewed and re-evaluated. Perhaps even more significantly, the findings from this investigation suggest that by re-examining the influence of key policies and central government intervention, our understanding of the pioneering of comprehensive schooling can be further developed.

Keywords: 1918 education act; 1944 education act; comprehensive schooling; Wales; secondary education; education reform

INTRODUCTION

The key objective of this study is to revisit selected education reforms and interventions by central government during the period c.1918–1950 in order to evaluate their impact on the development of comprehensive schooling for a pioneering Local Education Authority (LEA). The purpose of this investigation is not solely to illuminate the significance of particular pieces of legislation for the reorganization of secondary education in Anglesey specifically, but also to explore how these insights can extend our understanding of the consequences at the local level of certain education reforms. It

will be argued here that such an examination provides novel insights into the, often unintended, consequences of central government legislation and intervention. Therefore, by revisiting these educational reforms, original insights can be gained and added to the existing historiography of comprehensive schooling. The nature of this study also provides an opportunity to discuss the possible implications for the way in which the impact of these selected reforms is assessed and integrated into the existing historiography.

By examining the balance of power in the education system in England and Wales during this period, the scope of the investigation goes beyond the local case study. In light of the consequences of national education reforms, the power and agency of the LEA will also be discussed with a view to assessing the role of national education policies in the development of comprehensive schooling. The period under investigation saw significant societal changes and developments in education and schooling were integral parts of these wider change. The 1918 Education Act was debated and drawn up within the context of World War One, the extension of the franchise, and changes in public opinion that indicated the need for advances in education too (Sherington, 1981, p. 108). There was also sense that developments in education were being favoured in aid of Britain keeping up with advancements elsewhere, perhaps particularly in Germany (ibid). Similarly, the 1944 Education Act was a product of the context of the Second World War, the Beveridge Report, and consequent calls for social change (Hennessy, 1992, pp. 128–129).

It has been argued that one of the changes in education in the wake of the 1944 Education Act was the centralization of power with the newly established Ministry of Education (Fenwick, 1976, pp. 6–7; Jones and Roderick, 2003, p. 154). However, in the words of Bogdanor (1976, p.3), the education system in England and Wales was still a

‘national service locally administered’. Considering that the role of the LEA was to administer education reform, it is perhaps surprising that the balance of power between central government and LEAs, in relation to the comprehensivization process specifically, has not attracted more thorough scholarly attention to date. This balance of power has certainly been acknowledged in the historiography (Benn and Chitty, 1996, p.4; Benn and Simon, 1972, p.26; Barker, 1972, p.84); however, the power and agency of LEAs as regards the reorganization of secondary education remains relatively underexplored, especially in relation to their interrelationship with central government. In order to address this deficiency in emphasis, it is the intention of this study to put the balance of power and the agency of the LEA at the centre of the investigation. By viewing national education reforms through such a lens, the impact of the selected reforms on the comprehensivization process can be re-examined. It will be argued here that opposition to central government reform, and action taken in aid of opposing such reform, is an unintended consequence of that reform. This is why, when exploring development in Anglesey during this period, unintended consequences of reforms and interventions by central government during the 1930s and 1940s become highly significant.

The final objective of this study is to highlight the benefits of integrating developments in Wales (as well as other parts of the United Kingdom) into the wider historiography of comprehensive schooling. In order to establish a more amalgamated history, Anglocentricity needs to be avoided in favour of a more integrated history. There is otherwise a risk of reinforcing the notion of developments in comprehensive schooling as being Labour-led, and, therefore, often also urban, histories. The driving forces behind the comprehensive scheme in Anglesey were certainly different to those in often, but not always, urban English LEAs that introduced comprehensive plans

during the latter half of the 1960s. In fact, it can be argued that Anglesey was not even a part of what has often been referred to as the ‘comprehensive movement’, even though it was the first fully comprehensive LEA in England and Wales, and remained so until the mid-1960s. By exploring the Education Committee’s responses to interventions by central government, the significance of Welsh tradition and identity in the development of the comprehensive scheme become apparent. With regard to the wider historiography, this indicates that it is valuable to account for the agency of local government and the way in which it was possible to use administrative powers to drive through reforms of the education system. Additionally, it also reveals that driving forces at the local level were complex, especially when evaluating the interrelationship with central government. Early rural comprehensive schemes have sometimes been viewed as solely practical solutions for rural local authorities (Benn, 2011; Kerckhoff et al., 1996; Benn and Simon, 1972; Jones and Roderick, 2003). They have, therefore, been written-off as practical solutions in rural areas, lacking in any political rational; and as such, of less interest to those historians writing the political history of comprehensivization than urban local authorities, such as London, Liverpool or Manchester (Olsson Rost, 2016). The integration of the Welsh perspective into the wider historiography somewhat challenges the perception of the Labour Party as the chief designer of the patchwork of comprehensive schemes that emerged in England and Wales during the 1960s and 1970s. Instead, the picture that emerges is that of complex and sometimes unexpected interrelationships between local and central government,resulting in unintended, but nonetheless significant, consequences from central government interventions.

THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND HISTORIOGRAPHY

Many histories of comprehensivization in England and Wales understandably stress the significance, and the implications of, the 1964 Labour government's Circular 10/65. This was the circular that officially 'requested' LEAs to reorganize secondary education along comprehensive lines. The fact that this was a request rather than a requirement has attracted attention in the existing historiography and has often been viewed as a case of a missed opportunity for the Labour Party to impose wholesale comprehensive reorganization in England and Wales (Simon, 1991, pp. 280–282; Lawton, 2005, pp. 69–72; Benn, 2011, p. 51; Chitty, 2002, p. 17). This was the first official policy of a Labour Government in favour of comprehensive schooling and it was issued by Anthony Crosland (Education Secretary, 1965–67) in the summer of 1965.

However, although Circular 10/65 has often been viewed as the foundation of the establishment of comprehensive schools in England and Wales, there had in fact already been noteworthy moves towards multilateral and comprehensive schooling prior to this. Therefore, the significance of Circular 10/65 varies considerably depending on which LEA is under investigation. The significance of its introduction can only be assessed by considering how secondary education had been viewed and approached during the period leading up to Circular 10/65 in the particular LEA under investigation. As regards central government, Sir David Eccles was the Minister of Education during the mid-1950s and then again from 1959 to 1962. Eccles's stance on comprehensive reorganization was, in Simon's words, to pursue a 'policy of hostility' (Simon, 1985, p. 288) which cemented segregated systems of secondary education. Only in areas where there were no pre-existing schools at all, would comprehensive solutions even be allowed to be considered (Simon, 1985, pp. 288–289). In 1958 the White Paper *Secondary Education for All: A New Drive* was published envisaging reorganization in line with the tripartite system (or, as was more often the case, bipartite system, since a

majority of LEAs never implemented technical schools) (Simon, 1985, p. 293–294). During the 1960s, however, the Conservative government did facilitate gradual moves by LEAs towards more comprehensive systems, paving the way for Circular 10/65. Certain LEAs were already making the most of existing loopholes in their pursuit of more comprehensive systems of secondary education (Simon, 1985, p. 294) and by the early 1960s, over half of LEAs had started to consider submitting reorganizational plans that could, at least to a certain extent, be considered comprehensive in nature (Boyle, 1970). It was certainly the case that there was significant criticism within the Conservative Party of the abolition of the 11-plus examination, and perhaps even more contentiously, grammar schools (Crook, 1993). Despite such opinions from within the Conservative Party, changes initiated by the Conservative government in the period leading up to 1964 enabled a degree of comprehensive reform prior to 1965. Perhaps most notable, in terms of his open-mindedness towards the reorganization of secondary education, was Sir Edward Boyle (Minister of Education: 1957–59 and 1962–64). During both his terms as Minister of Education and beyond, Boyle expressed his support for experimental comprehensive schemes and explored the possibility of making testing at the age of eleven more informal, while also entertaining the idea of making the role of grammar schools less rigid (Knight, 1990, p. 23). The Conservative government also passed a bill in 1964 which would allow the creation of middle schools (the preferred option of some LEAs that were considering comprehensive reorganization plans). Boyle later, and admittedly with the benefit of hindsight, referred to this bill as his ‘parting gift to the Ministry’; he also suggested that by 1963 he had ‘no doubts that separate schools at eleven…would be increasingly on the way out’ (Kogan, 1976, pp. 78, 94). In an interview with *The Times* in 1965, Boyle did indeed express his support for ‘good’ comprehensive schemes in suitable local authorities.

However, he still retained the view that ‘stablished schools of real excellence’ should not be sacrificed through ill-considered comprehensive schemes such as those proposed in Liverpool and Manchester (*The Times*, 1965). This illustrates how the comprehensivization process was already partially underway by 1965, largely driven by local authorities. These local solutions resulted in early comprehensivization being patchy and uneven, but nonetheless significant.

Whilst different types of comprehensive schemes were already being trialled in a variety of LEAs during the 1950s and early 1960s, Anglesey remained the only fully comprehensivized LEA up until the mid-1960s. Therefore, the extent of the significance of Circular 10/65 for the development of comprehensive schooling in England and Wales is certainly up for debate, since the circular was virtually surplus to requirements in an LEA such as Anglesey, where the system was already fully comprehensivized by 1965. The role of Circular 10/65 in Anglesey was, therefore, largely one of reassurance: hard evidence that the LEA had pursued the right path and that the rest of England and Wales were now catching up. Furthermore, the significant role of LEAs in the development of comprehensive schemes also highlights the importance of accounting for local decision-making and developments when re-visiting histories of comprehensivization.

Despite the movement towards more comprehensive systems of secondary schooling in certain LEAs discussed above (Crook, 2002, pp. 248–250), the 1950s had nonetheless seen the majority of local authorities implement different versions of segregated systems (McCullough, 2002). The 1944 Education Act has sometimes been viewed as a deciding factor for the establishment of the tripartite system during the 1950s. However, the 1944 Education Act did not specify details for how to organize secondary schooling. The Act stated that:

> …schools available for an area shall not be deemed to be sufficient unless they are sufficient in number, character, and equipment to afford for all pupils' opportunities for education offering such variety of instruction and training as may be desirable. (Education Act, Part II (8), 1944).

Whist there was a requirement to offer a 'variety of instruction and training', there was no prerequisite that this variety should be provided in different types of schools within a segregated system. What the 1944 Education Act did stipulate, however, was that all age-appropriate children (11–15) would now be entitled to a free secondary education. 'Secondary Education for All', which had become something of a mantra associated with its editor R. H. Tawney, was the title of a rather well-known Labour Party policy document from 1922 and it was now to be implemented in practice on a national scale (Tawney, 1922).

The tenet of different types of secondary schools for different 'types' of children did not constitute new thinking during the 1940s and 1950s. The 1918 Education Act had stipulated that local authorities were required to establish 'central' or 'continuation' schools for senior elementary pupils (Education Act, 1918). Central Schools were not to provide academic secondary education and would operate under the Elementary Code. Such schools were thus established for senior elementary school pupils who would not be attending a traditional secondary school. Therefore, the process of establishing a segregated system of education for pupils over the age of eleven was not a novel development during the 1950s. Ideas around different 'types' of children, and, therefore, the requirement of different types of education, had become well established during the first three decades of the twentieth century. A collection of Committee Reports promoted differentiated secondary systems: The Hadow Report (1926) had suggested three different types of schools; the Spens Report (1938) reinforced this suggestion; and

the Norwood Report (1943) also advocated reorganization along these lines (Olsson Rost, 2016, pp. 13, 86).

The developments discussed above provide evidence for tracing the origins of Anglesey's comprehensive scheme to the 1918 Education Act, and perhaps more importantly, to the influence of the Hadow Reports (1923–33) and consequent calls by central government during the 1930s for LEAs to start reorganizing secondary education in line with some of the recommendations from the Hadow Reports. Traditional histories of comprehensivization tend to consider the 1944 Education Act and 'secondary education for all' a natural starting point for exploring the historical context of comprehensive schooling. However, this study will stress the significance of earlier developments and how interventions by central government during the 1930s provided noteworthy momentum for an LEA such as Anglesey.

THE 1918 EDUCATION ACT AND HADOW REORGANIZATION

The 1918 Education Act, just like the 1944 Education Act, was developed by a wartime coalition government with a range of views and interests that needed to be taken into consideration. H. A. L. Fisher (President of the Board of Education, 1916–22) viewed the 1918 Education Act as a measure to extend educational provision for the masses:

> 'I believe education itself is a great liberating power and the more education a young person has, the more power he has… Consequently when I am forcing young people to have more education than they now have, I believe I am increasing their liberty.' (Dean, 1970, p. 261),

Already by 1909, the Board of Education had been committed to extending the school leaving age to fourteen, as well as extending elementary education. In the Education Bill put forward in 1913–14, among other priorities such as continuation schools and

the raising of the school leaving age, senior education for elementary pupils was on the education agenda. London had introduced Central Schools during the early twentieth century, and in 1918, the Education Act made reference to the establishment of such schools in order to extend elementary education (Sherington, 1976, pp. 67, 71). In 1919, the Board of Education required LEAs to 'undertake a survey of their educational needs in its area and draw up a scheme for the progressive development and organisation of its own provision…' (Sherington, 1981, p. 119). By the latter half of the 1920s, some developments in respect to the extension of elementary education could be seen, with both selective and non-selective Central Schools having been established (particularly in urban areas). With the raising of the school leaving age in 1918 (Woodin et al., 2013, p. 643), this also meant that a larger body of pupils would have to be accommodated within the school system. The reorganization of secondary education became a priority, set out in the 1918 Education Act and followed up during the 1920s and 1930s. By the 1930s, the Board of Education demanded that reorganization was undertaken by local authorities and this reorganization drive has often been referred to as 'Hadow reorganization'. The Hadow reference originates from a number of reports produced by the Consultative Committee to the Board of Education under the chairmanship of Sir Henry Hadow. These reports, published during the period 1923–33, were consultative; however, they visibly influenced the Board of Education's thinking and policies during the 1930s and beyond (Olsson Rost, 2016, p. 8). One of the most well-known of these reports was *The Education of the Adolescent* (1926). This report, together with *The Primary School* (1931), significantly influenced developments in elementary education. One of the main features of *The Primary School* (1931) and the reason behind the urgency in reorganizing secondary education, was the recommendation that elementary education should no longer be provided in 'all-age' schools. All children should transfer

from primary school at the age of eleven. In line with the 1918 Education Act, post-eleven instruction should not be provided in the same type of schools for all pupils. Those pupils who were not successful in the entrance or scholarship examinations to the grammar school, or who did not apply for entry, would transfer to Central Schools where a more practical and vocational curriculum would be implemented (BoE, 1926, pp. 52–55). These recommendations, to implement a stricter separation between primary and senior education in elementary schools (at the age of eleven), necessitated the requirement for LEAs to produce Development Plans during the 1930s. As a result, LEAs were expected to start making arrangements for accommodating new Central Schools in order to implement the abolition of all-age elementary schools and ensure that the provision of education in the local authority was in line with the Board of Education's guidelines (Moore, 2001).

An essential part of the Hadow reorganization drive of the 1930s was, therefore, the establishment of supplementary Central Schools in order to implement a clearer division between junior and senior elementary school pupils at the age of eleven (BoE, 1926, pp. 52–55). The intention was to remove all-age elementary schools in line with Hadow's recommendations. However, this proved to be a drawn-out process, particularly in Wales, and it had not been completed before the outbreak of the Second World War. At the national level, the war established an acceptance of greater state planning and engendered calls for greater social equality, resulting in education being part of the emerging agenda as the war progressed (Ku, 2013, pp. 408–409). At the local level in Anglesey, however, the conflict effectively meant that reorganization of secondary education along Hadow lines stagnated, leaving Anglesey more or less 'non-reorganized' until after the war.

Central government had, at least at certain times and to an extent, treated educational developments in Wales differently to those in England. The despised *Enquiry into the State of Education in Wales* and the subsequent report published in 1847, often referred to as the 'Treachery of the Blue Books', exemplifies particular concerns in Wales. Similarly, the Aberdare Committee reported on the 'grossly inadequate' secondary education available in Wales and recommended a system of 'intermediate' secondary schools to be introduced. It was the Aberdare Committee's report that provided the foundations for the 1889 Intermediate Education Act (one of the first pieces of legislation of modern times to apply to Wales alone), which established a system of publicly funded secondary schools in Wales thirteen years before such developments were happening in England. The idea was that these Intermediate Schools would improve technical education in Wales. However, with academic education being held in much higher regard, many Intermediate Schools evolved into institutions more like grammar schools (Jones and Roderick, 2003, pp. 86 and 87, 93–95). Wales' distinctiveness was also acknowledged by the central government during the twentieth century, with the creation of the devolved Welsh Department of the Board of Education in 1907. Even though the Welsh Department was often overruled by its parent body, it was none the less an indication that Wales was easily distinguishable from England in educational matters (Jones and Roderick, 2003, pp.112–113). Therefore, by the interwar period, there was already a sense of distinctiveness of Welsh educational developments. Furthermore, under the terms of the 1944 Education Act, the Advisor Council for Wales had been set up alongside that of England (Jones and Roderick, 2003, p. 176). Although this had little tangible impact, in the 1956 White Paper on technical education, Wales was afforded a separate section (albeit not as substantial as the Scottish section) (MoE, 1956), and in the same year as the Plowden Report was published (1967), the Gittins

Report on the Welsh language and primary education in Wales was also produced (Jones and Roderick, 2003, pp. 176–178).

The creation of Central Schools generated debate in Wales due to both ideological and geographical issues. The debate revealed concerns in many areas of Wales as to whether Central Schools would become second class institutions, and geographically, many areas did not have sufficient numbers of pupils to establish different types of schools. As such, the development of these schools was particularly slow in Wales; for example, even in the relatively populous area of Glamorgan, only nine Central Schools had opened by 1936 (Jones and Roderick, 2003, p. 129).

THE 1918 EDUCATION ACT AND HADOW REORGANIZATION – UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES

By exploring the unintended consequences of the 1918 Education Act and Hadow reorganization, the role of central government initiatives in Anglesey's developments come to the fore. Whilst Anglesey's comprehensive Development Plan was not officially approved by the Ministry of Education until 1948 (MoE, 1948), moves against the implementation of a differentiated system of secondary education started much earlier and were direct responses to central government reforms. Anglesey's response to the demand for 'Hadow reorganization' along the lines described above, was to produce a scheme for a multilateral education system as early as 1931 (AEC, 1931). The 1931 Development Plan, as well as subsequent plans submitted to the BoE in the wake of the rejection of the first proposal, were all highly influential in shaping the scheme that was eventually approved by the Ministry in 1948 (Olsson Rost, 2016, pp. 109, 113). In fact, the Education Committee would not deviate from its multilateral plan at all until the approval in 1948. The fundamentals of the original Development Plan from 1931 remained the same. Apart from the change of terminology from multilateral to

‘comprehensive’ in 1947 (PWDESC, 1947), the plan developed during the 1930s provided the blueprint for the comprehensive scheme that emerged during the late 1940s and early 1950s. The proposed schools had been both described and perceived as multilateral throughout the 1930s and 1940s. It was only in November 1947 that the LEA formally recognized the proposed scheme as comprehensive rather than multilateral. The change in terminology was triggered as a response to the Ministry of Education’s Circular 144 in 1947 (MoE, 1947). It was noted by the Post-War Development of Education Sub Committee that:

> …the multilateral schools envisaged in the Anglesey Development Proposals are those described in this Circular as "Comprehensive Schools", viz. "Schools intended to cater for all the secondary education of all children in a given area without an organisation in three sides (PWDESC, 1947).

Provided with this description, the LEA had decided that Anglesey’s schools should be defined as comprehensive rather than multilateral. Therefore, the labelling of Anglesey’s scheme as comprehensive was a retrospective construction, hence making the scheme appear more radical by the early 1950s than it had been deemed upon its adoption in the late 1940s. However, this investigation into the LEA’s response to the reforms by central government during the 1930s reveals what might be described as a more radical rationale for Anglesey’s comprehensive scheme than has often been acknowledged in the existing historiography.

The LEA first expressed its support for a multilateral system in 1931 in a draft report submitted to the Board of Education (Sub-Committee Reorganisation of Schools, 1930) and the first official Development Plan for such a multilateral solution was officially submitted to the Board of Education in 1936 (AEC, 1936). Through an exploration of the interactions between local and central government in the wake of the

1918 Education Act and the subsequent Hadow reorganization, it is possible to start to discern the unintended consequences of educational reform imposed by central government. The response by the Welsh Department (of the Board of Education) to Anglesey's submission of its multilateral Development Plan exemplifies the commitment by the Board of Education to the division of secondary education, and its dedication to the creation of Central Schools in particular.

In the first instance, Sir Wynn Wheldon, the Permanent Secretary to the Welsh Department, used developments in other LEAs to justify the Welsh Department's rejection of Anglesey's multilateral scheme. It was emphasized that, in those local authorities where Central Schools had already been introduced, they had proven successful. Hence this solution should be implemented by LEAs wherever possible. Notable advantages were stressed to strengthen the case for the introduction of Central Schools. For example, it was suggested that some progress had been recorded in existing Central Schools for those pupils that had generally been considered 'unsuitable' for academic study. Wheldon stressed that such observations, based on practical experiences in Central Schools, could not be ignored. Multilateral schooling was experimental and untested, leading the Welsh Department to consider a wholesale shift to such a system undesirable. The fact that the benefits of Central Schools had been formally recognized, made the Welsh Department 'reluctant to abandon the general principle' of such organization of schools. Furthermore, the lack of experience of multilateral education meant that 'while there might be a case for an experiment in a circumscribed area, he [Wheldon] suggested that it would be unwise to regard multilateral schools as the solution of the post-primary problem for a whole county' (BoE, 1936).

Another serious concern was also raised: the unknown but potentially damaging impact that multilateral schooling might have on those academically gifted pupils who, within a traditional secondary school system, would have attended the grammar schools. It was feared that brighter pupils may be neglected in a mixed-ability setting and consequently, that the standard of their work might suffer BoE, 1936).

It has previously been argued that Fisher, the President of the Board of Education at the time of the 1918 Education Act, might have viewed the Education Act as a stepping stone to a more extensive reform programme for secondary education. However, according to Dean (1970), he eventually abandoned his initial support for the idea of universal secondary education up to the age of sixteen (Dean, 1970, p.262). Fisher's view that the division of senior education into different schools as a means of providing education to a higher number of children and thus an opportunity to increase their 'liberty' (Dean, 1970, p. 261), was not shared by the Education Committee in Anglesey. It viewed the establishment of Central Schools and the Hadow re-organization drive as an unjust process which deprived some children of the opportunity of a secondary education. Similar sentiments had also been expressed in certain Workers' Education Association and Labour circles, where proposals were made for universal and free secondary education up to the age of sixteen (Dean, 1970, p. 267). Similar arguments, founded on ideas and sentiments of Welshness and the requirements and needs in a rural Welsh local authority rather than socialism per se (Olsson Rost, 2019), were reflected in some of the attitudes expressed by the Education Committee during the 1920s and 1930s.

In light of the above, it is argued here that the 1918 Education Act, and to an even greater extent the reorganization drive in the wake of the Hadow reports, provided significant momentum for Anglesey's Education Committee's pursual of a multilateral

system of secondary education. Whilst there might appear to be a substantial distance, both chronologically and in regards to the intentions of the 1914 Education Act and the implementation of Anglesey's comprehensive scheme, the momentum provided by the opposition to the introduction of Central School was key for these developments. During the early 1920s, the Board of Education had already noted that reorganization of secondary education had proven to be particularly problematic in Wales. The Departmental Committee on the Organisation of Secondary Education in Wales had reported back to the Board that there was a widespread rejection of Central Schools in many Welsh areas because of a desire to provide compulsory *secondary* (rather than senior) education, free of charge, for all pupils up to the age of sixteen (BoE, 1920). This outlook was also very clearly expressed by Anglesey's Education Committee and most vociferously by E. O. Humphreys, who had become Director of Education in 1935. Humphrey's statement '[I]f we believe in Secondary education for all, let us say so' (Holyhead and Anglesey Mail, 1936), was certainly backed up in correspondence between the Education Committee and the Board of Education, as well as in practical steps taken towards this end during the 1930s. The tenet of providing education in the local authority's secondary schools to the highest number of pupils as possible would direct the actions of the Education Committee throughout the 1930s and beyond. Whilst 'secondary education for all' would be impossible to achieve entirely without the go-ahead of the desired multilateral scheme, the administrative powers enjoyed by the LEA would nonetheless be put to use in order to pursue their preferred option.

Whilst the Education Committee was devoted to 'secondary education for all', the achievable target set was to admit sixty per cent of age-appropriate children to Anglesey's secondary schools (AEC, 1936). Such targets were not in line with the Board of Education's desire to reorganize senior education into Central Schools

alongside the traditional secondary schools. As a result, the Board of Education was not inclined to approve any of the amended multilateral plans that were put forward at different points throughout the 1930s by the Education Committee. By 1938, Humphreys was described as 'bewitched by the slogan "Secondary education for all"' by Wheldon, who believed that Humphreys had convinced his Education Committee 'that no pupil ought to be refused admission to a secondary school' (BoE, 1938).

The Education Committee's dedication to providing secondary education to the highest proportion of children as possible was also reflected in the way in which it approached the administration of secondary education in the local authority. One of the most illustrative examples of this, which also shows how the Education Committee was able to use national education policy to further its own aims, was in relation to the provision of free Special Places in schools. The means testing of Special Places had been a contentious issue in Wales when first introduced in 1932. However, due to the levels of deprivation in the region, the new policy sometimes resulted in a doubling of 'free' places in a number of Welsh LEAs once places had been means tested (Jones and Roderick, 2003, p.132). In Accordance with Circular 1444 from the 1936–37 school year, there was no upper limit on the number of Special Places that could be granted within an LEA (HANSARD, 1937). In effect, this meant that 100 per cent of school places could be awarded as Special Places, provided the means test had been applied. This change in policy by central government provided the Education Committee with an opportunity to pursue its own policy: admitting up to sixty per cent of age-appropriate children to Anglesey's secondary schools. With no limitations on Special Places that could be awarded, any number of pupils from the Elementary Schools who passed the entrance examinations and fulfilled the criteria from the means test could gain access to the local authority's secondary schools.

Because of the LEA's administrative powers, it had the authority to manage the scholarship examinations (predecessor to the 11-plus examination), which also provided an opportunity to pursue the policy of 'secondary education for all'. In a report carried out in January 1939, the LEA's procedures relating to entrance examinations were scrutinized by the Board of Education. The report's findings demonstrate the agency of the local authority and the way in which it was possible to utilize administrative powers to pursue the Education Committee's agenda. The 'pass' grade had been set at 33 ⅓ per cent, which was considered notably low. Due to the low pass grade, of the 49 candidates over the age of thirteen who took the entrance test in 1938, 44 were successful. Of the remaining 372 candidates, 304 passed and 58 failed. Consequently, the pass rate for those pupils taking the test was 85 per cent. Not all age-appropriate children in Anglesey in 1938 took the test, but out of those who did, around 50 per cent went on to attend one of the secondary schools (LEA, 1938, pp. 2–3, 10). The report specifically commented on the low pass grade and that the bar had been set so low because it 'had been adopted, originally, in the light of the working of the examination, as likely to allow between 50 per cent and 60 per cent of an annual age group from the Elementary Schools to proceed to the Secondary Schools' (LEA, 1938, p.10).

By August 1938, Wheldon expressed his opinion that Anglesey's Education Committee had demonstrated that it 'did not want to reorganize' and that it seemed simply to be aiming at 'exceptionally high admissions to their secondary schools' (Board of Education, 1938). He also emphasized that the LEA 'must not assume that they could follow their own policy without reference to the Board' since admission of as many as sixty per cent of elementary school pupils to secondary schools was not a policy that would be supported by the Board of Education (Board of Education, 1938).

Wheldon's view in relation to the negotiations with Anglesey's Education Committee was that:

> The main difficulty in coming to an agreement lay in the fact that the Authority were attempting to press on with their own policy and to present the Board with a *fait a compli* [sic] by offering admissions to large numbers in September next…the Authority…had done nothing to meet the Board's wishes on the reorganisation question (Boar of Education, 1938).

These developments, alongside the capacity of the LEA to pursue its own agenda by utilizing its administrative powers despite the opposition of the Board of Education, illustrate the LEA's agency in its pursuit of a multilateral system of secondary education. However, these powers were limited and resulted in a half-way house rather than a wholesale multilateral solution. Perhaps more significantly for this investigation, is the unintended consequence of the 1918 Education Act and Hadow reorganization for the development of Anglesey's education system.

THE 1944 EDUCATION ACT – UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES

The 1944 Education Act was felt to be more controversial for educational powers in Wales than in England because the Welsh education system had historically been allowed to develop separately to that of England. With the introduction of the 1944 Education Act, however, the individuality of the Welsh education system was infringed upon (Jones and Roderick, 2003, pp. 87–89; Evans, 2000, p. 248). The 1889 Intermediate Education Act had allowed Wales to establish Intermediate Schools, and this had in turn made secondary education more accessible in Wales in comparison to England (Jones, , p. 343; Jones and Roderick, 2003, p. 89; Morgan, 1995, p. 204; Simon, 1959, p. 49; Davies, , p.617).

After the passing of the 1944 Education Act, LEAs were asked to produce and submit Development Plans in accordance with the new legislation. Plans were to be submitted to the Ministry of Education by 1 April 1945. It is certainly noteworthy that the Development Plan submitted by Anglesey's LEA contained plans for five multilateral secondary schools, each to serve all children within their catchment areas. In essence, the Development Plan that was submitted in the wake of the 1944 Education Act, was the same as the plan that had been produced in 1936 (AEC, 1936). However, in 1946 the plan was approved. Considering that the Education Committee had been pursuing a multilateral scheme for its secondary education provision determinedly since 1931, it is highly significant that the approval of Anglesey's Development Plan was unofficially forthcoming in 1946 and the final official approval was given by the newly established Ministry of Education in 1948 (MoE, 1948).

There were a range of reasons as to why the scheme was deemed agreeable by the Ministry at this point. For example, due to the drawn-out wrangling between the Board of Education and the LEA, Anglesey's provision for secondary education had not yet been reorganized at all, making it an area of priority. The Ministry's desire to move forward with Anglesey's scheme as promptly as possible was spelled out in its correspondence with the LEA, as well as in its internal correspondence (PWDESC, 1946; MoE, 1946). Additionally, the majority of Anglesey's secondary schools were inspected during the 1940s and were found to be inadequate, requiring new schools to be erected as soon as possible (apart from in Holyhead). The worst situation was in Amlwch, where the grammar school was situated in the town's Memorial Hall and where no school building existed at all. The HMI inspection at the school in Llangefni (1947) also highlighted the dire situation there, with the report admitting that 'there is nothing in this school on which the eye can alight with pleasure' (SESC, 1948,

Minutes). The fact that new schools were already required undoubtedly made the case for the multilateral plan more feasible. Since reorganization into Central Schools had not taken place, there were no existing structures to favour a differentiated system of secondary education. This, in combination with practicalities linked to the LEA's rurality and sparse population, undoubtedly reinforced the case for a multilateral system. This demonstrates how the combination of being both a small and rural Welsh authority made reorganization more plausible than in a larger urban LEA. Such organization made practical sense, but it also presented less of a politically charged scenario than the Labour-backed scheme in Swansea, for instance (Jones, 1990; Evans, 2007, pp. 251–253).

None of the above had been sufficient to allow Anglesey's scheme to go ahead prior to the 1944 Education Act. This is why the 1944 Education Act was essential in facilitating the approval and consequent implementation of Anglesey's Development Plan. As previously explored, the 1944 Education Act left LEAs free to propose various kinds of reorganized systems, rather than specifying that differentiated systems were a requirement (Lawton, 2005, p. 44; Jones and Roderick, 2003, p. 143). In the wake of the new Education Act, accompanying circulars, such as Circular 73, also stressed that there were no hard rules as to how secondary education should be organized. In relation to the establishment of tripartite systems of secondary education, for example, the belief was that 'it is not contemplated that this separate classification of schools will be irrevocable, nor is there anything in the Education Act to suggest that it should be' (MoE, 1945). The proposition was that with the evolution of secondary curricula and education, the three types of schools (secondary modern, grammar and technical) might eventually be superseded anyway (MoE, 1945).

Anglesey's comprehensive plan was also facilitated byfunding administered during the post-war years when reconstruction was still booming. Because Anglesey's Development Plan was produced and dealt with so swiftly, planning as well as the actual construction of the new school buildings was executed early in the immediate post-war period when funding was still available. By 1947, the Ministry of Education had received 117 completed Development Plans from LEAs throughout England and Wales, while ten others had submitted incomplete instalments of their plans and a further seventeen had not submitted any plans at all (HANSARD, 1947). It is illustrative of the speed of the progress of Anglesey's Development Plan that it had received informal approval by the Ministry in August 1946. Two years later, the foundation stone for the new school building which would finally provide purpose-built accommodation for Amlwch's secondary school was laid. At a time when Anglesey was building the first purpose-built comprehensive school in England and Wales (Grade II* listed today) many other LEAs were still only in the early development stages of their plans. After the Conservative victory in the 1951 general election, austerity measures were carried out. By December 1951, it was becoming clear that the government's plans to cut spending would also affect local authorities, and by extension, education (The Guardian, 1951). In the wake of these austerity measures, the schools building programme was reduced and the establishment of new schools, comprehensive or otherwise, thus became difficult (Kynaston, 2009, pp. 114–115; Lawton, 2005, p. 55; Jeffreys, 1997, pp. 14–15, 145–147; Seldon, 1981, pp. 270–276). In these circumstances, Anglesey had been fortunate to have its existing plans for the first newly built secondary school already underway two years prior to the revision of building schedules.

These developments in the wake of the 1944 Education provide further evidence of significant but unintended consequences generated from central government reforms. Whilst the 1944 Education Act did not set out to facilitate comprehensive schooling, it was certainly the passing of this Act, and the consequent acceptance of the LEA's Development Plan by the Ministry of Education, that finally allowed for the desired reform of secondary education to take place. Furthermore, the delays in reorganization due to the LEA's refusal to establish Central Schools during the 1930s ensured that Anglesey's Development Plan was dealt with as a matter of urgency by the Ministry of Education in the wake of the 1944 Education Act. This, combined with the fact that a blueprint for a reorganization plan already existed prior to 1944, amount to convincing evidence of the significance of unintended consequences from central government reform for the development of comprehensive schooling in Anglesey.

UNINTENDED BUT ALWAYS SIGNIFICANT?

The findings from this study present several novel insights into the interrelationship between Anglesey's local authority and central government. Having set out to evaluate not only this interrelationship, but also the agency of the LEA, a complex picture has emerged. Having previously focused predominantly on the significance of local developments for the evolution of comprehensive schooling in Anglesey (Olsson Rost, 2016), this re-examination renders such an interpretation too simplistic. The sharing of power between local and central government meant that the Education Committee was repeatedly frustrated and hampered in its desire to provide 'secondary education for all' during the 1930s. Simultaneously, however, the LEA was able to utilize both its administrative powers and national education reforms – the 1944 Education Act above all – in its favour.

The way in which Anglesey's pioneering comprehensive system was influenced by central government reforms, and the nature of the consequences of these policies, was diverse, unpredictable and unintended. The momentum provided by the 1918 Education Act and the consequent Hadow reorganization drive were certainly unintended, but also highly significant for both short- and long-term developments. Opposition to the division of post-eleven schooling was considered a principally Welsh standpoint (Olsson Rost, 2019) and the central government requirement for LEAs to produce Development Plans that diametrically opposed the multilateral ideal resulted in the Education Committee using its administrative powers to oppose Hadow reorganization. It is, however, particularly important to note that the 1918 Education Act itself was not the key trigger for the LEA's resistance and consequent campaign to admit the largest proportion of pupils to its secondary schools as possible. It was the Hadow reorganization drive and the requirement to produce a Development Plan that put the LEA on a collision course with the Board of Education. Similarly, it was Circular 1444 and the allowance for 100 per cent Special Places, that allowed the Education Committee to put its plan into action. This indicates the significance of the practical details and instructions related to education reform in spurring local government into action. The LEA may have disagreed with large-scale education reforms, yet it was in the practical detail, and the way in which these might be used to pursue their own agenda, that local government could be responsive and utilize its administrative powers. This is why the lack of specific detailed guidance for the post-war reorganization of secondary education in the immediate wake of the 1944 Education Act was so significant. In effect, the imprecise description of what secondary school provision should look like under the new Act allowed Anglesey's comprehensive scheme to become a reality. This certainly illustrates the importance of the 1944

Education Act in the establishment of the first fully comprehensive scheme in England and Wales, but these developments should also be put into the context of the lack of reorganization during the 1930s. The completely unreorganized system, itself an unintended consequence of Hadow reorganization, provided a justifiable starting point for a multilateral system. If the LEA had already implemented a segregated secondary school system with grammar schools alongside Central Schools, in line with the demands of the Board of Education, the multilateral option would not have been such a strong prospect with regard to practicalities.

The final aim of this study was to consider the implications of these findings for the wider historiography. It has been demonstrated here that reforms passed considerably earlier than the well-known Circular 10/65 had a significant impact on the development of the pioneering comprehensive scheme in Anglesey. With this in mind, it seems prudent to suggest that by examining earlier reforms, such as the 1918 Education Act and Hadow reorganization, the wider historiography can certainly be enriched and more fully understood. The agency of local government and the extent to which LEAs were able to utilize their administrative powers to pursue their own agendas, is something that deserves additional attention in the historiography. Such investigations can reveal the unintended consequences of central government reform at the local level and provide more nuanced insights into the history of key reforms. Whilst the 1944 Education Act is often viewed as the foundation for the tripartite system, for instance, for a pioneer of comprehensive schooling such as Anglesey, it was the very opposite. These findings also suggest that the incorporation of early rural pioneers of comprehensive education adds an additional layer to our understanding of the comprehensivization process. Furthermore, the ‘Welsh dimension’ reveals a more ideological rationale for a comprehensive scheme that might often have been described

as practical, rather than radical, in nature. Moreover, by actually allowing the history of comprehensivization and the interrelationship between local and central government to remain multifaceted rather than oversimplified, it is possible to gain a better understanding of the nature of unintended consequences and their significance.

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