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Anna Olsson Rost & Marc Collinson

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DEVELOPING THE LABOUR PARTY'S COMPREHENSIVE SECONDARY EDUCATION POLICY, 1950-1965: PARTY ACTIVISTS AS PUBLIC INTELLECTUALS AND POLICY ENTREPRENEURS

by ANNA OLSSON ROST, *Faculty of Health and Education, Manchester Metropolitan University, Manchester, UK* and MARC COLLINSON, *School of History, Law and Social Sciences, Bangor University, Bangor, UK*

ABSTRACT: The main aim of this article is to use the case study of comprehensivisation to examine the role of party activists as policy entrepreneurs and public intellectuals during the period 1950–1965. The intention is to widen the traditional notion of the public intellectual in order to better evaluate policy-making processes within the Labour Party. It will be argued here that these figures were also policy entrepreneurs, who actively created and advocated new policy solutions, not just unconnected idea merchants hawking impractical or ignorable ideas without a clear strategy. Previously, Labour policy on comprehensivisation was viewed as a 'missed opportunity', a case study of ambivalent policymakers lacking vision. However, this article demonstrates that, over a long period of time, a methodical policymaking process considered and adopted a position that advocated a more comprehensive schooling system. In this process, the sustained activities of Fabian Society and NALT members, acting as policy entrepreneurs within the Labour Party's policymaking organs to transform often non-committal and vague conference resolutions into a usable policy solution.

Keywords: Labour Party, policymaking, comprehensivisation, public intellectuals, Fabians, Labour Teachers, circular 10/65

1. INTRODUCTION

Across the twentieth century, the public intellectual was often considered an important voice in public affairs, engaging in central debates due to their accepted authority on certain issues (Brahimi *et al*., 2020). As Christopher Hitchens (2008) once argued, they define someone who makes their 'living through the battle of ideas'. In recent years, there has been a sense that public intellectuals have become an endangered species (Mishra and Gregory, 2015), but for contemporary historians exploring post war Britain in the long 1960s, the role certainly existed. Yet, for many, it is the gold star figures like historian A.J.P. Taylor, or philosophers Isiah Berlin and Bertram Russell, or the economist John Maynard Keynes who most

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clearly suited this definition (Qvortrup, n.d..) In this article, however, we have taken a more general definition, assuming that a public intellectual is someone who engages in the development of ideas, partakes in debates about these within the public sphere, and also practically engages within the policymaking process to ensure the adoption of the ideas they championed. We argue that public intellectuals who fit the definition might also be defined as policy entrepreneurs, who have received a more negative press.

First outlined by American political scientist John W. Kingdon in 1984, policy entrepreneurs are usually considered problematic, unaccountable freewheelers, operating in elite-centric policymaking processes (King and Roberts, 1992, p. 173; Arnold, 2021, pp. 439–440). In many ways, however, the term is almost as vague as the public intellectual, historically being applied to legislators, local authority leaders, public agency executives, and even legal officials (Roberts and King, 1991, p. 150). Some policy historians have used historical case studies to demonstrate that policy entrepreneurs 'have succeeded in overcoming obstacles and offer a guide to political groups' attempting similar actions (Zelizer, 2000, p. 384). Recent work by Mintrom (2019, pp. 319–320) outlines a clear criterion for a policy entrepreneur, and most interestingly determines that they will often be viewed by some as 'heroic and … [by] everyone else as troublemakers or crazies'. Interestingly, for scholars of the British Labour party, such descriptions are markedly familiar, as this is often how press and political opponents discussed its committed activists (Tanner, 2000, p. 248). In short, this article argues that the definition of the public intellectual must not be limited to writer's newspaper columns or accessible scholarship to shape current affairs. It argues that they can also be seen as policy entrepreneurs whose roles are not as malign and problematic as sometimes perceived. The significant influence of intellectual thinking and ideas on politicians has been highlighted in existing scholarship (Collinson, 2021; Williams, 2015). The individuals discussed in this article engaged in such intellectual work, demonstrating the point that political actors are not necessarily unintellectual. Their activities in the Fabian Society and the NALT represent their involvement with the battle of ideas, and how to get these transformed into policy.

Labour party activists served as both public intellectuals and policy entrepreneurs. While they operated in the narrower parameters than the traditional intellectual, they did engage in the battle of ideas of the eventual shape of public policy. Through their commitment to social democratic ideas, they were inspired to take part in what Labour politician Roy Jenkins called the 'positive side of politics', which was about 'getting ideas translated into policies, and the policies translated into legislation' (Silver, 1968). Our central contention is that during the post-war period, small and organised groups of activists, working through affiliated organisations, which acted as networks within the Labour party, were able to shape the development of party policy. We suggest these activists must be seen as both public intellectuals and policy entrepreneurs. This article initially discusses how policy

was made within the Labour party and how agents advocated change within the system. It then explores the origins of the policy of comprehensivisation of secondary education within the Labour party. After this, the role of activists and groupings of activists will be examined, specifically the Fabian Society and the Association of Labour Teachers. The article then explores how the idea of comprehensivisation gained acceptance as party policy, before analysing how comprehensivisation transformed from party policy ideas into an implemented policy within Anthony Crosland's Department of Education and Science.

2. Party Organisations and Their Members in the Policymaking Process

Political theorists Jean Charlot (1989) and Duverger (1954, p. 91, p. 101) have posited that the inner workings of political parties are kept hidden away from the public and are only accessible to a group who Charlot refers to as a 'secret world' only accessible to 'activists and true believers'. As Michels (1962, p. 71) highlighted long ago, committees often managed and altered policymaking, a process that Minkin (1980, p. 311) has argued clearly existed in the post-war Labour party. In recent years, policy historians like Cooper (2013) have argued that small groups like the Fabians were influential in the Labour party's policymaking process. As Ludlam (2003, p. 152) and Randall (2003, p. 20) have argued, scholars must not discuss a historical political institution in terms of a generalised synthesis of views, but should apply a disaggregated approach in order to understand their plural internal power dynamics. How these groups operate within this process was never showy or public, but it was with the intention of shaping eventual public policy through participation in meetings, authoring useful memoranda, and submitting draft policy papers. These documents contained the ideas which they hoped would gain support within party committees and perhaps underpin future policy of a prospective Labour Government.

Comprehensive education was a complex issue for the Labour Party in the wake of the 1945 general election. Inside the party, many prominent activists owed their own education to the grammar schools and often expressed their support for these institutions (Lowe, 1988, pp. 37–42). Simon (1990, pp. 155–156) stressed how, what he considered the 'Fabian element' of the Labour Party, was often opposed to comprehensive education. There were certainly also ardent comprehensive supporters within the post-war Labour Party. The National Association of Labour Teachers retained its belief in the common school, and other individuals such as Margaret Cole (member of the London County Council) and W.G. Cove were consistent and vociferous in their support for comprehensive education (Lawton, 2005, p. 44; Lowe, 1988, p. 39; Simon, 1990, p. 105). Histories that focus on the Labour Party during the time of opposition in the 1950s often emphasises the significant divide in opinion in

relation to the education question. Lawton (2005, p. 55) has suggested that the 'humanist and ethical socialists' in the party had very different opinions to the meritocratic 'Fabian element', describing these disagreements as 'complex and confusing'. This being the result of a wide range of views on the desirability of grammar schools and their role in educating a small elite, the dangers of large schools, and different points of view in relation to the benefits of pupils from different abilities and social classes mixing in the same school. At this point, we must consider the Fabian Society's significance within party policymaking.

Formed in 1884 and affiliated to Labour from its creation as the Labour Representation Committee in 1900, the Fabian Society can (and does) claim to be the party's oldest surviving founder organisation still in its original form (Fabian Society, n.d.). Throughout its existent, the Fabians have remained a predominantly London-based, intellectual organisation focused on influencing policy proposals, lacking the industrial priorities (but also authority provided by large memberships) of trade unions or sectional focus of other Socialist Societies, like the Association of Labour Teachers or the Socialist Medical Association. However, more notable was the ability of the Fabian Society members to shape party and government policy. For instance, in 1964, 120 of Labour's 317 MPs were Fabians, as were 12 of 20 Cabinet ministers, which encompassed the ministers that developed education policy (Fabian Society, 1964). This included consecutive Education Secretaries Michael Stewart, Tony Crosland, and Patrick Gordon Walker. This was incredibly significant. After all, the most impactful role any Fabian public intellectual and policy entrepreneur could hold was that of the relevant Secretary of State. More importantly, Fabians Reg Prentice, Shirley Williams (Society General Secretary 1960–1964), served as Junior Minister's in the Department of Education and Science through most of the 1964–1970 Labour Governments. This gave the Fabian Society, its ideas, and its policy documents, considerable influence. Furthermore, well-placed members of their organisation could introduce these into the policymaking process.

A similar insider status was held by the National Association of Labour Teachers (NALT). Founded in 1927 to replace the Labour Teacher's League which had fallen under Communist control, the NALT developed during the interwar and immediate post-war years as an important policy developer within the party (Barker, 1969, pp. 42–43). The NALT, which became the Socialist Education Association in 1959, had long been committed to the creation of a 'comprehensive, non-selective education service … within which compulsory education is free, well-resourced and organised within a local democratic framework' (Socialist Education Association, n.d.). Leeds Labour MP and future 1960s Education minister Alice Bacon was major figure who operated through the NALT throughout her career and remained an active member after she finished working as an educator (Reeves with Carr, 2017, p. 27). The NALT

supported her successful campaigns to Labour's NEC, which gave her significant influence over party policymaking, especially over education. The fact that she was chair of the 1950–51 Ad Hoc Committee and the post-1951 Education Advisory Sub-committee, as well as being a leading member of the 1957–1958 Study Group on Education, gave the NALT significant influence over party policy development (LPSG, 14 November 1950; LPSG, 27 March 1952; LPSG, 27 March 1957). Another leading member during the late 1950s and early 1960s was Norman Morris, a Manchester University lecturer and Head of the NALT (McCulloch, 2016, p. 239). The organisation was re-named to represent its focus on education more widely, as the Socialist Education Association in 1959 (Socialist Education Association, n.d.). With his professional interests as an educationalist and his activities as a local councillor, Morris represented two stakeholder groups alongside his commitment, through his leadership of Labour's only education-focused affiliate.

These activists should not just be defined as dreaming intellectuals who floated ideas with no chance of success, they were also clearly focused political operators who were keen to influence party policy. They sought and gained membership not only of relevant, focused organisations within the Labour party that gave them opportunities to draft policies, but they moved within these organisations to gain positions of influence on party committees. These activists were, therefore, committed to not only writing down, but advancing their ideas through party committees. This was not an easy process, one Fabian official estimated this might be a two-year process (Pugh, 1984, p. 264; Williams, 2010, pp. 137–138). As active Woolf (1969, pp. 158–161) and backbench MP Sorensen (1968, p. 237) separately reflected in memoirs, activists often expended great effort, with little reward, over extended periods before any draft policies were adopted, if they were at all. Yet, even if their policy idea or document was not wholly adopted (an unlikely prospect), as Labour's then leader Harold Wilson advised the journalist John Cole, 'if you have written the first draft, something of your ideas will survive' (Cole, 1995, p. 19). Through considering how these activists navigated these complicated processes, we can see how they were really both public intellectuals and policy entrepreneurs. They sought to advance their vision of a more comprehensive education system through sympathetic organisations which provided activists the opportunity to champion their policy in party committees, and interact with Fabian and NALT members who were leading figures in the Parliamentary Labour party.

3. Origins of 'comprehensive Schooling' in Party Policy

The historiography of comprehensive schooling and the Labour Party often considers the period after the Second World War a case of missed opportunity (Lawton, 2005, p. 47). Most LEAs had implemented a segregated system of

secondary education in the wake of the 1944 Education Act. The potential alternative of establishing 'common schools' had been discussed during the late 1940s, and certain sections of the Labour Party expressed support for comprehensive schooling, but this was not consistent, nor was it the official party line. It was not unusual for Labour politicians to favour the idea of a meritocratic system, and individuals such as Ellen Wilkinson, David Hardman, and George Tomlinson believed that a differentiated system of secondary education was the most efficient way to deliver 'Secondary Education for All' (Lowe, 1988, pp. 37–42).

The 1951 pamphlet *A Policy for Secondary Education*, which was published at that year's Labour Party conference, favoured a comprehensive education system, and in Lawton's view represented the views of the ethical socialists within the party (Lawton, 2005, p. 55). Developed by an Ad-hoc Committee on Comprehensive Schools, commissioned by the Labour party's National Executive Committee, and chaired by Alice Bacon, the committee included a number of luminaries, including MP and former teacher Peggy Herbison and party General Secretary Morgan Phillips (LPSG, 1950). Rao (2002, p. 105) has also stressed that the party ran the risk of losing control of education policy to the party conference, where egalitarian groups and teachers' organisations could wield a lot of influence. However, the committee's existence was a response to a successful conference resolution that passed at the 1950 conference at Margate (LPSG, 14 November 1950). Fundamentally, the role of the MP-heavy committee, to which Education Minister George Tomlinson submitted a paper for the grouping's first meeting, showed that the party hierarchy was very much involved in the process (LPSG 7 November 1950; LPSG, 14 November, 1950). Party committees existed to develop policy initiated by conference, but often had sufficient leverage to define what the policy should actually look like (LPSG, 7 February 1951). Unfortunately, once the committee signed off the report in spring 1951, the Labour Government were soon to be defeated at the October 1951 election.

A more permanent 'Education Advisory Committee' was only created after the election in 1952 and, with Labour not back in office until 1964, Labour-affiliated public intellectuals and policy entrepreneurs were focused on shaping party policy and manifestos. While in opposition, Alice Bacon, the NEC spokesperson, urged local councils to pay more attention to conference decisions (Rao, 2002, p. 105). However, it remained unlikely that anything would change until Labour won a general election. Within the party, however, long-suggested, much-discussed ideas and perspectives were digested by policymakers. For example, one Labour committee discussed both a pamphlet that favoured comprehensivisation produced by the reformist 'English New Education Fellowship' and earlier documents produced by Fabians Michael Stewart and Margaret Cole, which remained the most up-to-date party statements on the topic (ENEF, n.d.; LPSG, May 1957).

Before the war, Stewart had worked for Margaret's husband G.D.H. Cole's New Fabian Research Bureau (NFRB), which revived the Fabians from an initial inter-war irrelevance (Stewart, 1980, p. 38). Furthermore, he was described as a 'workhorse' of the opposition frontbench between 1951 and 1964, and was clearly a significant policy entrepreneur within the party (Dalyell, 2004). These old relationships were very important, and played a key role in the ongoing development of Labour's comprehensivisation policy.

Other important Fabian were members of Cole's organisation, which connected the Coles and Michael Stewart with other figures (Harrison, 1991, pp. -251–252). For example, educationalist and future Ruskin College Oxford Principal H.D. 'Billy' Hughes later became a Labour MP and ministerial aide to Ellen Wilkinson, George Tomlinson, and Michael Stewart in the late 1940s. Hughes had become the assistant secretary of NFRB in the 1930s, and with the merger of NFRB with the Fabian Society in 1938, Hughes became the organizing secretary. Hughes remained an active Fabian policymaker and vocal practitioner-theorist with regards to state education throughout his career (Bailey, 2004), and published the Fabian pamphlet *A Socialist Education Policy* in 1955. As the 1950s progressed, Labour party policy itself adapted to take account of new policy frameworks and ideas. However, the creation of initial policy ideas, their progress into the party committee structure, and presentation by accepted 'insider' policymakers owed much to the role of affiliated socialist societies. This provided opportunities for individuals, such as Hughes, to put policy-making suggestions forward for consideration within the party.

4. Making Friends and Influencing People: aDvancing a Comprehensive Schooling Policy within the Labour Party

Labour had begun discussing comprehensive schooling while still in government. However, it was not until it began developing a fuller programme in 1953, when the conclusions of the social services committee of the NEC was accepted and published in *Challenge to Britain (*1953), that party policy can be considered to have fully shifted (Rao, 2002, pp. 105–106). One of the documents few 'solid achievements', according to Watford MP John Freeman (1953), was 'the section, for instance, on education outlines a sensible and reasonably precise ten-year plan for improving the quality of state education and beginning the all-important task of ending the socially bad segregation of the private schools.' Even then, the policy was not necessarily popular across the party, and did not automatically generate a lot of interested among policymakers. The conclusions were criticised for not going far enough from those who opposed selection at age 11, and the NALT suggested that social inequalities might even increase under these proposals. It took a later vote at the 1953 party conference to settle the party in favour of a fully comprehensive 'all-through' system, with the

proposal re-drafted to meet the demands of the NALT (Rao, 2002, pp. 105–106). This early act demonstrated the influence of NALT members to shape and amend Labour policy on education. In turn, this influenced the manifesto commitments that the party presented to the electorate.

At the 1955 election, Labour's manifesto specified that the intention was to: ' . . . remove from the primary schools the strain of the 11-plus examination' and that ' . . . Local Authorities will be asked to submit schemes for abolishing the examination and, to realise the fulfilment of the Education Act, 1944, we shall encourage comprehensive secondary schooling' (Labour Party, 1955). This reflected party policy, passed in three resolutions at its 1952 conference, in turn opposed continued selection at 11, criticised the continuation of a tripartite system that separated Grammar, Secondary Modern, and Technical Schools, and were criticised the premise of education funding cuts through the limiting of provision (Craig, 1982, pp. 187–188). However, little policy on comprehensive organisation was produced before the election beyond what was outlined in *Challenge to Britain*, which indicated Labour's stance going into the May 1955 General Election (Phillips, 2017, p. 58). This was a time when the party appeared to be undergoing serious internal strife, between the left-wing supporters of Aneurin Bevan and the Labour right that surrounded former Chancellor of the Exchequer Hugh Gaitskell (Donoughue and Jones, 1973, pp. 518–521). Labour was in flux, dealing with the realities of its 1951 defeat, and trying to develop policy to address post-war concerns during what its General Secretary, Phillips (2017, p. 54), later described as 'lean years in which personal squabbling increased'. Yet, party policy was slow to develop in the initial year or so after the election, due to Attlee's retirement and the subsequent leadership election. Once elected, Hugh Gaitskell and his supporters began another review of party policy to prepare for the next election manifesto.

Announced officially at the 1955 Conference, Labour's NEC announced a plan for ten policy documents that would be produced over the subsequent three years, one of which would be *Learning to Live* (Phillips, 2017, p. 67). As McCulloch (2016, pp. 229–230) has argued, this was a 'significant policy statement on education' on which 'very little has been written'. McCulloch makes a strong argument for the significance of Michael Stewart, as both the main 'mediator' of the Study group that developed *Learning to Live* and as Tony Crosland's predecessor as Education Secretary for the first four months after the October 1964 election. However, when drawing links between figures such as Stewart, Margaret Cole, and Hugh Gaitskell, McCulloch has argued that it relied more on their personal linkages forged decades earlier at Oxford University, than by their continued and sustained creative interactions as active, leading Fabian Society members since then (McCulloch, 2016, p. 235). Clearly Stewart was a significant figure, and the role of Mark Abrams and his polling data demonstrated Labour's commitment to new ways of understanding public

opinion, yet this narrowed focus ignores how networking organisations like the Fabian Society and the NALT involved a wider community of policymakers. These perspectives were clearly incorporated into discussions held by the Study Group on Education that was developing *Learning to Live*.

Many of the ideas in *Learning to Live* had been expressed in Fabian tracts, memoranda and research papers that were already in circulation. Fabian Tracts and papers published as part of the Fabian research series, consistently presented arguments both for and against comprehensive schooling in the 1940s-1960s (Armstrong and Young, 1964, pp. 1–3; Thompson, 1947, pp. 10–12, 1949, pp. 11–13, 1952, pp. 11–20). Although there still was some thinking along meritocratic lines in particular publications, and even a keen concern for the demise of grammar schools in some instances, Fabian publications during the 1950 did not deny the need to reform secondary education in order to enhance equity and equality (Downes and Flower, 1965, p. 1; Hughes, 1955, pp. 14–15; Thompson, 1952, p. 27; Vaizey, 1963, p. 6;). By the time that comprehensivisation was made part of the Labour Election Manifesto (1955), various Fabian writings had already expressed the need for local choice, and the importance of avoiding imposing a 'one size fits all' comprehensive system for all LEAs (Armstrong and Young, 1964; Hughes, 1955, pp. 17–19; Thompson, 1949). Balanced accounts of pros and cons of comprehensivisation, with an emphasis on the need to consider local concerns such as practical and financial circumstances, is perhaps not what might be considered intellectual 'blue sky thinking'. Instead, it is rather what contemporaneous political scientist Rose (1976, p. 175) has defined as 'political research'. In his words, they are more 'concerned with immediate events and their immediate implications … their foremost concern is the application of knowledge … a political researcher … consider[s] the action implications of his idea and whether or how it is acceptable to his party'. Nonetheless, considering the Fabians were expressly concerned with getting their thinking into policy, these links do certainly suggest that they were successful in this instance.

Furthermore, in his classic treatise the *Future of Socialism*, Fabian Tony Crosland (1956, p. 217) applied his new argument for a modernised socialism in favour of greater social equality. Reflecting wider trends in party policy, Crosland expressed his distaste for the tripartite system of education but was nevertheless reluctant to advocate a comprehensive plan for the entire country, similarly to other Fabians. As with the rest of the party, his criticism was often limited to specific elements of the current system, rather than the grammar school and continuation of private education. Crosland's famous expletive-laden exclamation about grammar schools only appeared after his death in 1977 (Crosland, 1982, p. 144). Surely, however, if any Fabian personified the dual role of public intellectual and policy entrepreneur during this period, it was Crosland. As much as Stewart, he demonstrated how the oft-disdained 'Fabian

element' were fundamental to Labour's adoption of policy ideas and frameworks that made 'comprehensivisation' a reality, not just an ambition.

Within the party study group, members of the NALT also played an important role. Both Alice Bacon and Norman Morris were study group members of the NALT. The latter's role as the society's Chairman demonstrated the involvement of this socialist society within party policymaking, and Morris's important role as a policy entrepreneur in the same way as future cabinet level figures like Stewart or Crosland (LPSG, 3 July 1957; McCulloch, 2016, p. 239). Through deliberations during the development of *Learning to Live*, what became apparent was the involvement of MPs who had formerly been professional teachers and remained active in the NALT, such as Michael Stewart, Alice Bacon, Fred Peart, and Peggy Herbison. Unlike many other areas of policymaking, these members had practical (if historic) experience of the subject under discussion. Furthermore, the inclusion of party leader Hugh Gaitskell as a member, and with deputy leader Jim Griffith in the chair, this did not solely make for an influential study group, but it also demonstrates the significance of education as a policy area within the party (LPSG, 27 March 1957). Likewise, Michael Stewart's significance was emphasised by the fact that he was a leading member of this study group, with Norman Morris later suggesting that he was instrumental in the compilation of its report, and of course Stewart's later appointment as Harold Wilson's first Education Secretary (LPSG, May 1957; McCulloch, 2016, p. 242). In his memoirs, Stewart directly linked his involvement in the study group with his later actions as Education Secretary, noting how his comprehensivisation policy was based on what 'I had helped to prepare some years before' (Stewart, 1980, p. 131). Evidently, Stewart's role as a long-time public intellectual and policy entrepreneur made him a key figure in the propagation and delivery of a Labour's comprehensive education policy.

Clearly, Stewart and his colleagues now influenced policymaking committees within the party as well as their respective socialist societies. The party also attempted to recruit leading figures from local government, educational studies, and even the economic historian (and author of Labour's 1922 statement *Secondary Education for all*) R.H. Tawney. Using their membership of more influential structures, these policy entrepreneurs were able to create more definitive party policy on comprehensivisation, based on the principle of no selection at 11, accessibility to courses at the appropriate level, and that, strategically, these changes could be made under existing education legislation (LPSG, 16 July 1957). As it developed *Learning to Live*, the study group also engaged with attempts to gauge wider opinion, from its work with pollster Mark Abrams, through to its use of posed questionnaires to garner the views of municipal Labour parties on potential policy changes. Evidence gleaned suggested the party needed to be wary of over-emphasising its changes, which might scare both parents and teachers alike (McCulloch, 2016, pp. 238–239;

LPSG, 8 October 1957). By 1959, party policy was carefully worded and non-committal to what a system would look like.

Notably, Labour's election manifesto of 1959 outlined what it was against, including slum schools, large class sizes, the 11-plus, private education, and elitist access to higher education, but never really defined what the party favoured (Labour Party, 1959). At this stage, the party merely advocated that 'grammar-school education will be open to all who can benefit by it', that the party did 'not intend to impose one uniform pattern of school', and that local authorities would 'decide how best to apply the comprehensive principle' (Labour Party, 1959). Further to this, Labour also produced the report *Signposts to the 60s* for its 1961 conference. This report continued to promote Labour's long-held criticisms of Conservative education policy in the 1950s, drawing on similar themes as the 1959 manifesto (Labour Party, 1961, pp. 22–25). However, it also engaged with themes of equality and social mobility that had been advocated by Tony Crosland in his *The Future of Socialism*. What requires further consideration is the extent to which these insider party policy entrepreneurs bridged the 'large gap' that often existed between party policy on education and that implemented in office (Salter and Tapper, 1994, p. 26). Only through understanding this can we truly appreciate the significance of networks created through Labour's affiliated socialist societies.

5. Ideas into Policy: Government Policymakers and the Realisation of Comprehensivisation

In an interview with Crosland in 1970, he acknowledged how existing schemes had impacted on the form that Circular 10/65 had taken. He suggested that due to the lack of consensus ' . . . on which type of organization was best on merit – "all-through" comprehensives, or the Leicestershire system, or what . . . ' that different options had been a necessity (Kogan, 1971, p. 188). Crosland also suggested that the thinking behind the six alternatives had predominantly been generated by officials from Her Majesty's Inspectorate (HMI), and that although the government had not undertaken any specific research on comprehensivisation prior to Circular 10/65 ' . . . we had a number of comprehensive systems that had been going for quite a considerable time – in London and Leicestershire and elsewhere' (Kogan, 1971, pp. 188–189). Notably, the different options for reorganisation that were outlined in Circular 10/65 had featured in a Fabian research publication by Armstrong and Young (1964) prior to the 1964 general election.

While there had been some attempts to evaluate comprehensive schooling prior to 1965, these studies were limited in scope due to the lack of wholly comprehensive schemes to investigate (Culcheth, 1963; National Union of Teachers, 1958; Pedley, 1954; Read-Collins, 1960; Simon, 1959). However, in addition to Armstrong and Young's evaluation, the Fabian Research Series also

featured other surveys and investigations into existing comprehensive schemes and systems during the 1940s and 1950s (Thompson, 1947, 1952). Considering there had been very few attempts to research and evaluate comprehensive schemes in England and Wales (something which had been pointed out by Fabian commentators as an urgent matter to be addresses), it is not unreasonable to argue that these publications by Fabians were some of the few sources of information for Party politicians and activists to draw upon when considering future policy (Hughes, 1955, p. 16; Thompson, 1949, p. 13).

However, when Crosland was interviewed in 1970, and was asked the question why no research had been undertaken prior to the creation of Circular 10/65, he replied:

> Well, this argument had a natural attraction for an ex-academic like myself. But as soon as I thought the thing through, I could see it was wrong. It implied that research could tell you what your objectives ought to be. But it can't. Our belief in comprehensive reorganization was a product of fundamental value-judgements about equity and equal opportunity and social division as well as about education. Research can help you to achieve your objectives … But research can't tell you whether you should go comprehensive or not … there was no conceivable case for holding up the circular for another three years until some further bit of research had been done (Kogan, 1971, p. 190).

This ideological standpoint does seem to correspond to Crosland's views as expressed in *The Future of Socialism*. Here he claimed that ' … the school system in Britain … [remained] … the most divisive, unjust and wasteful of all aspects of social inequality' (Crosland, 1956, p. 258). Nonetheless, even though Crosland supposedly vowed to destroy all grammar schools once in government, the reality of Circular 10/65 was that it requested rather than required LEAs to reorganise along comprehensive lines. This can be viewed as another indication of the supposed ambivalence within the party regarding the comprehensive question. However, the desirability of removing the 11-plus, but without imposing one definitive structure upon LEAs, had been reflected in Fabian publications prior to the issuing of Circular 10/65 (Armstrong and Young, 1964; Thompson, 1947, 1949). In many ways, Crosland's actions reflected the non-committal undertones that had long underpinned party policy.

By the 1960s, it was acknowledged both in wider Labour Party circles, as well as in Fabian publications, that public opinion was supportive of the abolition of the 11-plus examination, and both the public mood and developments in numerous LEAs suggested that the momentum was decidedly in favour of comprehensive schooling (Armstrong and Young, 1964; Boyle, 1972, pp. 32–33; Crook, 2002; Kerckhoff *et al*., 1996, pp. 22–23). In view of so many LEAs (ninety according to Boyle) already preparing plans for reorganisation along comprehensive lines prior to Circular 10/65, there was undoubtedly a feeling of positive momentum in favour of secondary school reform (Boyle, 1972, p. 32; Kogan,

1971, p. 78). Nonetheless, the cautious approach that had been reflected in Fabian publications throughout the 1950s and into the early 1960s also became the approach of the Labour Party once in power after the General Election in 1964.

6. Conclusion

This article has argued that, through redefining our definition of the public intellectual, to take in agents who might also be defined as policy entrepreneurs, scholars can glean new insights into the policymaking process that shaped the comprehensivisation of secondary education in England and Wales. By accepting the tenet that a public intellectual must be active, rather than passive, in the policymaking process we can consider party activists as being simultaneously public intellectuals and policy entrepreneurs. A number of influential Fabians, together with fellow travellers active in the NALT, formed influential groups of activists as well as thinkers in the policy area of education throughout the 1950s and 1960s. Ideas and views expressed in Fabian publications, as well as within the NALT discussions and advocacy from the 1950s and the early 1960s, were clearly reflected in actual policy by the time the Labour Party returned to power in 1964.

These ideas did not appear from the ether, they were suggested, shaped, advocated, and accepted before being refashioned to fit political circumstances. Fabian publications long-promoted the idea of reforming secondary education with the aim of providing a fairer education system, as well as advocating for local choice rather than a wholesale overhaul of the entire system, and offered policy solutions. Likewise, from their activities within party committees, NALT members advocated a 'comprehensive, non-selective education service'. This provides further context to the lead-up to Circular 10/65, and whether this was in fact a 'missed opportunity' (Lawton, 2005, p. 47). As discussed in this article, there were a range of views on comprehensivisation within the Labour Party at this time, however, it is suggested here that it is too simplistic to suggest that it was the appeasing of a range of different views that was the sole reason for the party's cautious approach to comprehensivisation. This was a deliberate policy choice.

An analysis of the activities undertaken by these public intellectuals in different forums demonstrates that party policy was slowly evolved through the advocacy of Fabian and NALT activists, acting as both public intellectuals and policy entrepreneurs, throughout the 1950s and into the 1960s. The different comprehensive options outlined in Circular 10/65 were founded on existing comprehensive schemes, many of which had previously been examined in Armstrong and Young's (1964) Fabian publication. These individuals were impactful because of their simultaneous, concurrent, and complimentary roles as party activists, public entrepreneurs, and public intellectuals. Both the Fabian Society and the NALT had influential memberships, especially in relation to the policy area of education. These associational groups had strong relationships

with party policymaking structures, and provided clear networks through which to champion their ideas and influence future government policy.

7. ORCID

Anna Olsson Rost http://orcid.org/0000-0002-7309-9721
Marc Collinson http://orcid.org/0000-0002-5884-5423

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Correspondence
Anna Olsson Rost
Faculty of Health and Education,
Manchester Metropolitan University,
Brooks Building, 53 Bonsall Street,
Hulme, Manchester M15 6GX, UK
Email: k.olsson.rost@mmu.ac.uk