

Chapter 1

14–19 education: the high-stakes battlefield

Introduction

In a radio programme the ornithologist Bill Oddie recounted how he once saw a fox from his kitchen window and in great excitement shouted to his teenage daughter to come and look. She hurried to respond to the urgent shouts, looked out of the window and coolly asked her father, ‘And this affects me how?’ Writing a volume of this sort, there is a sort of parallel situation; the authors are convinced of the timeliness and excitement of the subject but recognize that potential readers will be equally cool in calculating the relevance of the content to them. We wish to argue and to convince that the focus of this volume, the education of 14–19-year-olds, is a phase of education which demands greater attention from a whole range of stakeholders and that the case for such attention is urgent and compelling. The incident also has a second relevance, in that it reflects strongly the perspective of the young person involved. In this volume too, we wish to attempt to understand how 14–19 education and training are viewed and experienced by young people themselves.

Until recently, secondary education was conceived as comprising compulsory and post-compulsory elements as distinct components, or sometimes as two age groups, 11–16 and 16–19 year olds. The idea of learners aged 14–19 forming a discrete classification has only relatively recently come into the policy and practice domains, with the first White Paper focused on this group, *Learning to Compete* (DfEE, 1997a). Education is a constantly shifting kaleidoscope, with different parts of the system and different priorities remaining on the periphery or coming into sharper focus over time. This book is founded on the belief that the myriad pieces which constitute the experience and outcomes of learning have shifted. A new pattern named ‘14–19 education’ has emerged as a focal point and will remain a stable and influential priority for some time

4 14–19 Education: Policy, Leadership and Learning

to come. This book hopes to illuminate policy and practice for all those involved in devising policy, preparing educators and supporting the development of young people in this age group.

Look now!

The conviction that the time is ripe to take an in-depth look at 14–19 education is one of the drivers of this volume. During the 1980s and 1990s dissatisfaction with the outcomes of education was broadly shaped by the twin criticisms that young people were not being adequately prepared in their knowledge, skills and attitudes for the world of work and that standards of achievement generally were slipping (Pring, 1990). Dissatisfaction with both outputs (qualifications achieved, value-added) and outcomes (number entering employment or further education [FE]) (Chapman and Adams, 1998) has continued, fuelled by international comparisons, particularly of the number of young people failing to achieve minimum qualifications at 16 and the percentage remaining in education after 16. However, a number of factors, including changes in the demographic profile of society, global demands for higher skill levels in the workforce, flows of migrants and the disproportionate experience of poverty by children in the 3.8 million living in low-income households (Palmer et al., 2003), have increased the emphasis on education as the key for social and economic success. The changes have also compelled a more sophisticated analysis of education and the causes of perceived failures. Governments have been forced to accept that the roots of divisions and underachievement within education cannot be explained purely by blaming schools (McLean, 1995). Rather, the process of social reproduction, the ways in which those who have power and resources retain them, has become much more the target for change. There has been a sort of intensification of concern, an urgency to tackle the persistent educational underclass (OECD, 1992). In response, policy changes and initiatives have sought to reform every part of education, but 14–19 is at the heart, the nucleus of intense expectation.

The second driver of this volume is the belief that the 14–19 phase of education is not only distinctive but in some ways unique and therefore requires a dedicated perspective. We argue that it is a particularly critical fulcrum in the educational process, where learners are distinctive, where the expectations of government, young people, families and employers,

amongst others, are funnelled and competing, and that, as a consequence, 14–19 education is a battlefield where high-stakes competition between individuals and groups results in contradiction, contest, and confusion.

The distinctive phase

Learners

The 14–19 phase of education is distinctive in a number of ways. First, the nature of learners is unlike those in other phases. As learners enter their adolescent years, they are, in legislation, compelled to remain in school. In practice young people exercise choice in absenting themselves through truanting. They may also exhibit behaviour which results in their exclusion by others. In 2001/02 there were 33,040 unauthorized absences from secondary schools. The national average of 1.1 per cent conceals variation where in some cities the absence rate is over 10 per cent (DfES, 2003a). In the same year there were 7,740 permanent exclusions from secondary schools (DfES, 2003b). Statistics are not collected in colleges in the same form of unauthorized absences, but the *Annual Report* of Her Majesty's Inspectorate commenting on post-compulsory education notes that: 'The attendance rate at all lessons observed by inspectors was 78%. In sixth form colleges it was 85%, and in general further education and tertiary colleges 76%. All these figures are unsatisfactory' (OFSTED, 2003, p. 1). Overall, the figures provide evidence of a large number of young people who are temporarily or permanently outside the 14–19 education system.

Fourteen to nineteen-year-olds feel a strong sense of their growing adulthood and wish their voice to be heard. De Pear (1997) researched the attitudes of excluded and disaffected young people and found that the perceived absence of adults listening to them was a factor in the physical or psychological opting out of such learners. There is also a growing demand for 'respect' and much evidence that many learners believe teachers do not offer it (Bentley, 1998; Blatchford, 1996). The generation gap between teachers and learners, not such a problem lower down the system, comes into sharp focus (Bentley, 1998). Though the rate of maturation obviously varies amongst individuals, within the 14–19 age range young people increasingly see themselves as adults with

6 14–19 Education: Policy, Leadership and Learning

a right to be heard and to exercise control over their lives and their learning. Bentley (1998, p. 80) summarizes the dilemma that in the latter part of secondary schooling, 'there is a growing disjunction between the *power* of adults and institutions and their *authority*' (original emphasis).

Awareness of the world beyond school or college also grows. The earlier connection in learners' minds between doing well at school and getting a good job strengthens (Blatchford, 1996). Contact with employment increases as part-time work is a growing element in learners' lives. Recent studies indicate that 42 per cent of 14-year-olds are in paid employment, rising to 80 per cent of 18–19-year-olds (Hodgson and Spours, 2001). The work is not necessarily confined to the weekend but is also undertaken during the school week. Such work is not a sort of hobby or minor adjunct but an essential part of young people's self-identity (Hughes, 1999; Lucas and Lammont, 1998). The need not just for financial security, but for sufficient funds to enjoy life are essential for a sense of success. However, striving for such personal success is within the context of increasing polarity within society between the haves and the have nots (Palmer et al., 2003).

A picture emerges of young people increasingly wishing to control their lives, to receive respect from other adults, to make choices according to their own preferences and not necessarily to be confined by school parameters. They may choose to spend time in paid work as a priority and they may choose not to come into school at all. Many young people have already faced life choices, changes, demands and difficulties which exceed those experienced by many adults. But this is only a partial picture. There is also evidence of the lack of experience of young people, their vulnerability in needing adult approval, and their fear, as well as relish, of adulthood. De Pear's (1997) study showed disaffected young people not only wishing their voice to be heard, but also needing affection, needing a sense of acceptance. Lumby et al.'s (2003a) study of young people in London schools presents evidence of the degree to which young people are manipulated by adults in schools, colleges and their families to support a range of expectations and vested interests. Lumby and Briggs (2002) also discovered that young people combined a strongly felt wish for independence with a fear of situations where they had too much freedom, too much responsibility. They wanted 'cushioned adulthood' (ibid., p. 61). Thus, neither the pedagogy evolved in relation to children nor the androgogy which reflects the learning style of adults may be adequate to the needs of the 14–19 age group who are neither fully children nor fully adult. In this

sense the 14–19 age group is unique and presents the first contradiction. How can young people be offered the independence and choice they increasingly demand, and yet be protected from the ill effects of such independence which they themselves fear as well as desire?

Government

The sources of government expectations lie with a plethora of beliefs, assumptions, fears and aspirations. At a European level, the 1992 meeting of Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Education Ministers wished education to develop skills to support employment, but also personal and social skills such as 'curiosity, independence and leadership, ability to co-operate, tolerance, industriousness, and problem solving under conditions of uncertainty' (OECD, 1992, p. 104). Within the UK, this desire to meet both economic and social aims has been explicit in Labour's 'Third Way' orientation, seeing education as powering both social justice and an internationally competitive economy. The two, of course, are not independent of each other, the stability of the economy and of society being mutually reinforcing.

McLean (1995) highlights the reason why upper secondary education is of particular interest to governments in offering opportunities to engineer society and the economy through a differentiated curriculum in a way which is not possible lower down the system. Younger children follow a largely undifferentiated curriculum to achieve foundation skills and knowledge:

After 10 to 14 years of education, the range of attainment of 16 year-olds is too great for them to be taught to one standard. Particular gifts of all young people, specialised as well as of a general kind, need to be developed ... Artistic, physical, manual as well as particular intellectual talents need space to flower. Yet general education to basic levels needs to be maintained by all. (McLean, 1995, p. 147)

McLean places the alteration at 16, but the choice of GCSE options suggests the point of change as earlier, at 14. Differentiating what is taught much more than for 5–13-year-olds, opens up the prospect of manipulating the curriculum to achieve government aims. It is an invitation to experiment which has proved irresistible for some decades. In particular, successive governments have grappled with the ambivalent aims of pro-

8 14–19 Education: Policy, Leadership and Learning

viding success for all and also a classification system for the benefit of higher education (HE), employers and wider society.

Classification takes priority as 14–19 education is shaped above all by assessment (Bowring-Carr and West-Burnham, 1997; Lumby 2001a). Foucault (1977) analyses examination systems as providing surveillance and punishment, ensuring a restricted entry to the elite and penalties for the remainder. This has certainly been the experience of 14–19-year-olds with half of 16-year-olds failing to achieve the target five or more A*–C at GCSE in 2001/02 (DfES, 2003c), and high rates of both failure and dropout in A levels and GNVQs by 19 (Audit Commission/OFSTED, 1993; OFSTED, 2003). McLean (1995, p. 142) contrasts the approaches of the Soviet Union, in attempting to ensure achievement by all of a minimum standard by a system of sanctions against parents and students, the USA which provides a ‘comprehensive curriculum of academic, vocational, social adjustment and recreational subjects’ taught in a style which encourages articulate and confident students, and the European approach which sets minimum standards and then lets the majority fail to reach them.

In the UK the subject content of the curriculum has not changed very much since the start of the twentieth century (Pring, 1990). Adjustments in education have been largely driven for decades by the repeated ritualistic expression of concern about A levels, their narrowness and academic orientation, followed by, until recently, a refusal to change them. In essence, reform has mainly comprised a series of initiatives to sort young people onto ‘tracks’ and then provide discrete solutions – Youth Opportunities, Youth Training Programme, Modern Apprenticeships and so on, which largely have not touched the mainstream 14–19 curriculum (see Chapter 2).

Fourteen to nineteen is also of particular interest to government in that it crosses the point of ‘massification’ of the system (Hodgson and Spours, 2003). If skill levels are to be raised in the whole population, persuasion to stay on after the compulsory phase must be laid prior to 16 and the offering post-16 must be sufficiently attractive. In this way, it could be argued that success in national aims to secure an appropriate workforce hinges on success in the 14–19 phase.

The potential contradiction in both the existing arrangements and in aims for the future is evident. How can 14–19 education provide an experience of success for the whole population while simultaneously differentiating people according to levels of ability and skills predilection? This is the second contradiction.

Families

The perspective of families differs from those of governments. The overwhelming concern for middle-class families is not success for all, but success for their own children. The aim is to maintain or increase social and cultural capital. The impetus is intense and anything that threatens or impedes is resisted (Ball, 2003). For working-class families education presents more complicated choices, as young people and their families use education as a route to another class, or as a means of confirming their identity within their family's current class and culture (Reay, 2001a). Families are then 'the motor of inequality' (Ball, 2003, p. 4). As McLean (1995) points out, even in Japan where enrolment in schools is strictly by ability, and strategies such as moving residence, for example, will not gain entry, rich parents still have resource to crammer schools to offer an edge to their children. Globally, the curriculum is designed from the perspective of the dominant class and is therefore unlikely to be subject to change which will threaten that dominance. In the UK the long history of middle-class resistance to changing A levels is an obvious example (Hodgson and Spours, 2003). There is little that can be done to circumvent the rich and powerful from securing advantage for their children.

Young people themselves are complicit in maintaining class division. When interviewing young people as to their choice of programme and place of study post-16, Lumby and Briggs (2002) found repeated reference to status and prestige as highly desirable commodities. Young people themselves were instrumental in primarily seeing education as the means to secure long-term advantage in terms of jobs and income. They had bought into credentialism and were anxious to secure qualifications which would act as currency for entry to the highest status institutions. In this way, they were curators of class divisions as enacted through the different status accorded to different education programmes and institutions. For some, far from wishing to erode differential prestige, buying into or opting out of the hierarchy of prestige is an essential source of their self-esteem and 'street cred' with others (Lumby et al., 2003b) enacted through choosing to study wherever is 'fashionable'. Fosskett et al. (2003, p. 6) explore the idea of 'fashionability' which: 'in this context is seen as the primacy of particular choices on the basis of their perceived acceptability to specific social groups, where that primacy is based on subjective judgements of value rather than, necessarily, objective measures of value'. The flow towards the perceived greatest prestige

10 14–19 Education: Policy, Leadership and Learning

and status are thus embedded in cultures which aim for or avoid particular locations for study or training.

Fourteen to nineteen is therefore the phase where staying in or moving class is most crucially negotiated. The examinations at 16 and 18 each act not just as gateways to further study/training, to employment or to becoming subject to the curt term 'NEET' (not in education, employment or training), but also to a position in relation to others. If the resulting position is not as hoped, the consequences may be lifelong. Although it is possible to recover lost opportunities by returning to study in later life, for many, the 14–19 phase is an irrecoverable rite of passage where success or failure impacts on life chances in a profound way. It is a high-stakes conflict area, between individuals, classes, families and government.

Employers

Much of the change suggested by government is justified in terms of the need to supply a highly skilled workforce and to eradicate 'skills shortage'. However, the analysis of the current and future availability of appropriate employees and possible responses to the perceived situation are highly contested. Some argue that the mooted relationship between the skills level of the workforce and economic success is not proven (Keep, 1999; Wolf, 2002). The extent and nature of the 'skills shortage' is also disputed (Steedman, 2002). Nevertheless, employers themselves, or rather those that speak for them, have persisted in expressing dissatisfaction with the preparedness of young people for employment in their knowledge, skills and attitudes (CBI, 2002a; 2002b). The 14–19 phase is of great interest as the interface between education and employment. However, the perspective of employers is somewhat different from government, families and young people themselves. Despite their criticism of the existing system, UK employers have not invested in education to the extent of some other European countries (McLean, 1995) and have preferred to leave the government to provide the necessary outlay. The captive audience of 14–19-year-olds is perceived as a simpler and cheaper way of training the workforce than training or retraining adults, where the costs must be borne by employers and/or the individual him/herself, and also avoids having to take responsibility for the deficiencies or otherwise of the workforce.

While the government persists in using qualifications as the driver of change, adjusting what is studied and how it is assessed, employers are less

interested in this tactic. First, Steedman suggests that ‘a scan of job advertisements in Britain reveals an almost total absence of reference to qualifications’ (2002, p. 25). Secondly, concerns as expressed by the CBI (2002a) reflect irritation with persistent change. Their stated need is for certification of basic skills, differentiation between vocational and academic qualifications, and a grading system which is sufficiently discriminating to allow finely tuned selection of employees. The lack of coherence in such requirements has been noted, as has the fact that there is no such thing as ‘employers’: ‘The needs and concerns of big and small, manufacturing and finance, local, national and multinational, and traditional, service and high-tech businesses are not the same. Industrialists, or those who speak for them, do not necessarily speak with one voice’ (Ball, 1999, p. 61).

There is, consequently, a range of opinion and demands. However, the focus tightens and expectation heightens at that first moment of interface between the world of school and the world of work, the 14–19 period. If all is not as they wish, it is here that employers will feel it most strongly. The needs of the economy cannot be matched by the rate of change in education (Keep, 1999). Nevertheless, the 14–19 phase is perceived as the pressure point for shorter-term outputs to meet the requirements of the economy, despite the fact that there are arguments in the literature that such outcomes can never be achieved. Here therefore is a third contradiction.

Higher education

The government has set a target for 50 per cent of all 19-year-olds to enter higher education by 2010. Consequently universities and other organizations offering higher education could be seen as one of the largest ‘consumers’ of 14–19 education. Increasingly, the path to higher education is seen as the primary indicator of success with all other paths a second best alternative. Consequently, higher education holds much power as the gatekeeper to economic success and prestige for individuals and their families (Lumby et al., 2003a). The power converts to influence, as schools, colleges and individuals all strive to achieve what higher education sees as currency for entry. The universities, particularly, have a stranglehold on the currency of qualifications. Reforms in content and accreditation in 14–19 education have remained peripheral if higher education does not value the results. For example, young people under-

12 14–19 Education: Policy, Leadership and Learning

taking key skills found little interest in universities in the resulting qualifications (Lumby and Briggs, 2002). Many were forced to undertake key skills accreditation against their wishes in order for their school or college to secure funding, only to find that the resulting qualifications were not valued. Advanced Level Certificate in Education, by contrast, has retained its currency, despite decades of dissatisfaction with the qualification, because higher education demands it. If higher education does not agree to change in the curriculum and accreditation system, then change is impeded and, generally, higher education does not agree. Higher education's control of the system ensures that 14–19 education is shaped primarily for the half of young people who are intended for higher education, not the half who are not.

The 14–19 phase

In summary, expectations for the 14–19 phase are more specific than in earlier phases. Young people, government, parents and employers, and other stakeholders such as higher education all have very particular outcomes they wish from this phase of education and, therefore, there are a greater range of more explicit and contradictory requirements. The increased desire from a range of players to impose what they feel will meet their requirements clashes head-on with the burgeoning desire for self-direction from young people. Fourteen to nineteen-year-olds see themselves as adults with a right to make their own decisions whilst at the same time other stakeholders are anxious to impose a structure and activities that will meet their own expectations, not necessarily those of young people.

Consequently, 14–19 is a battlefield where education meets the outside world. It is the interface point where the realities of having to deal with the need to get a job and take a place in society come much more closely into contact with education and, because of this, it seems a last-ditch opportunity to engineer people to meet requirements. Young people are to some degree a captive audience and relatively powerless and inexperienced to resist. It is therefore, at the last gasp of the compulsory phase, a final opportunity for the exercise of power.

It may be that given the environment described, 14–19 will remain a 'cannot do' rather than a 'can do' phase. The expectations of each group of stakeholders may be impossible to meet. For example, Keep (1999) has

argued that it is impossible to fulfil the diverse needs of the amorphous group called 'employers'. The aims of government may be equally problematic. As an example, much of the current movement in policy and practice is to challenge the low esteem in which vocational education and training is held, despite the fact that across most cultures the lower status of vocational education is deeply embedded in the culture of the family (King, 1993), and as Wolf (2002) argues, with good reason, as vocational training/qualifications leads generally to lower levels of income. Changing such deeply embedded beliefs may not be feasible in the short to medium term, and perhaps even long term. Families wish for success for their children in the teeth of a system designed in part to distinguish success and failure. For each group in its own right, disappointment is likely. When the contradiction between the aims of the various groups is added as a further layer, the 14–19 phase is inevitably going to be perceived as failing in the eyes of various groups. The way forward, therefore, may be not to attempt to reform the system to reach impossible targets but to reconsider expectations. The Education Ministers of the OECD recognized this over a decade ago (OECD, 1992), though the impact of this recognition on policy is not yet apparent.

For decades, despite the rhetoric, nothing radical has been attempted. The changes which have been implemented have often not worked as intended, and/or have not achieved what was expected (Keep, 1999). In its analysis of the issues that need to be addressed by 14–19 reform, the Tomlinson Committee (Working Group on 14–19 Reform, 2003) identified seven symptoms of weakness in the current arrangements for education and training within this age group – high drop-out rates; low achievement; the uncertain currency of some qualifications; lack of breadth of study; low personal rewards associated with some vocational qualification achievements; high levels of illiteracy and innumeracy amongst adults; and the widespread perception amongst employers and higher education that young people lack key generic skills and attributes needed for employment or higher level study. Existing patterns of inequality have persisted as governments tinker with the supply side, but the demand side remains untouched (Lumby and Wilson, 2003). Gains have been made in raising the level of achievement but, nevertheless, a sense of failure remains. There are structural, cultural and curriculum issues which remain unresolved. The disparity of status between different routes, different qualifications, different types of education and training provider remains intact. Even for those who succeed in terms of achieving high-status qualifications, there

14 14–19 Education: Policy, Leadership and Learning

is a sense that something important has been lost. The ‘successful’ young person is in ‘pursuit of credentials in the construction of the marketable self’ (Furman and Shields, 2003, p. 21). While there is no suggestion that pursuing a course which assures employment and economic security is anything but sensible, if that is the primary aim of education, it suggests an impoverished system, focused narrowly, which cuckoo-like, has displaced other aims to do with nurturing the moral, cultural and spiritual dimensions. Preparation for employment (for those that can achieve it) takes primacy over preparation for living.

These issues are played out in the structural divisions within the system. Although the new discourse is on 14–19 education, it is clear that deeply embedded divisions between pre- and post-16 persist. Physically the system is divided, with more young people in colleges post-16 than remain in schools (see Chapter 6) and a further proportion attending work-based training. Funding pre- and post-16 is controlled by different bodies and disbursed in different ways. Merely labelling the experience of young people ‘14–19 education’ has no effect on the system’s coherence or effectiveness. Much, much more will be needed.

Aims of the volume

We have argued that the distinctive characteristics of the 14–19 phase are

- intensity
- contradiction
- conflict
- confusion

and that, because of these characteristics, the phase is in some sense doomed to remain perceived as failing unless a fresh look is taken at what it is to achieve and for whom. The already high stakes have recently been ratcheted up further by government plans for more radical change. The White Paper (DFEE, 1997a) followed by the government review of 14–19 education led by Tomlinson signalled a period of more fundamental change than has been the case for some decades. This volume is therefore timely in considering in detail the policy and practice of education and training for 14–19-year-olds.

The book focuses on this age group in England, as policy and practice in both Wales and Scotland differ, and will have the following primary aims:

1. To explore the social, economic, political and educational context within which 14–19 education and training has evolved and is evolving.
2. To provide an overview of the principle issues in 14–19 education and training, reflecting the differing perspectives of key players such as the government, young people, schools, colleges and the labour market.
3. To map the policy changes which have affected 14–19 education and training in the latter half of the twentieth century and particularly the 1990s to date.
4. To analyse teaching and learning and curriculum developments in 14–19 education and training since the 1980s to date.
5. To outline some policy alternatives for the future development of 14–19 education and training and their possible implications.
6. To illuminate the implications for developing practice within schools, colleges and support services.

In order to meet each of these aims the book is structured first to explore the context since 1979 with the advent of the Thatcher government, outlining both the structural and curriculum changes that have taken place. The second part focuses on the learning experience, investigating how teaching, qualifications and assessment have changed, and how this relates to the perceived embedded divide between vocational and academic tracks. The third part offers ideas on the implications for those structures and activities which support the phase, partnership, resources and leadership of education and training. The final chapter explores what the future might look like, or rather what possible futures there might be for our 14–19-year-olds. The hope is that the volume will provide knowledge and support reflection for those who are working with this age group, but that it will also stimulate policy-makers. At the European level, the inflation and dissonance in the expectations of education and training has been recognized as a significant barrier to progress. At the local UK level, a number of factors including the levelling of rise in achievement and participation (Hodgson and Spours, 2003), the debacle of the Curriculum 2000 examination fiasco in 2002, the growing nervousness about shortages of skilled craftspeople, have all signalled the need for more fundamental reform.

Government policy embraces a rhetoric of inclusion, learner-centredness and breadth in education. Whatever the intention, the effect of

16 14–19 Education: Policy, Leadership and Learning

government policy over the last two decades has been somewhat different, to turn 'young people into commodities which are much sought after by the various providers' (Unwin, 2002, p. 19). Correspondence theory suggests that schools mirror the workplace (Butterfield, 1998). The exclusion or marginalization of some learners may reflect the evolution of core and peripheral workers (Handy, 1994). Just as parts of the population will find themselves picking up jobs on the margins, temporary, ill paid and undervalued, so learners in schools are commodities which show a division into central and peripheral.

Ritual is the means by which society deals with emotions and events which may be unpleasant, unacceptable or inexplicable. Long-standing patterns of language and actions are used to deflect, conceal or channel what cannot be openly displayed or allowed unfettered expression. The debate about 14–19 education has something of the nature of ritual. Systems are ordered under the chant of 'learner-centred' while carefully considering the needs of a whole range of stakeholders other than individual learners. Ritual is designed to ameliorate feelings. In the case of 14–19 education, discussing meeting learners' needs makes everyone feel better, even while they pursue interests which relate to their individual or organizational interests. Future generations of 14–19-year-olds deserve more and demand greater clarity about aims and how they are to be achieved in an arena where vested interests exert powerful distorting forces. It is hoped that this volume will contribute to negotiating the minefield of 14–19 education by exploring further the contradiction, conflict and confusion at this period of potential radical change, and by asking readers to take a reality check on the education of 14–19-year-olds.