CHAPTER 9. CREATING 'POLITICAL SPACE' FOR POLICY LEARNING IN 14-19 EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN ENGLAND

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Introduction

The publication of the *14-19 Education and Skills* White Paper (DfES 2005a) in February 2005 marked the end of a three-year period of intense public debate about the nature of 14-19 education and training in England. What began in 2002 as a conventional government-led consultation process around the Green Paper, *14-19: Extending opportunities, raising standards* (DfES 2002), ended in a bitter political and media battle about the abolition of GCSEs and A Levels. In between, there was a crisis around A Level marking; two high level resignations (a minister and the chief executive of a government agency); the meteoric rise to power of a young politician, David Miliband, associated with radical curriculum unification ideas; and the establishment of a high-profile independent Working Party on 14-19 Curriculum and Qualifications Reform, chaired by a former Chief Inspector, Mike Tomlinson, and involving thousands of young people, researchers, practitioners and policy makers in the discussion of a unified 14-19 diploma system (Working Group on 14-19 Reform 2004). Meanwhile, at local level, building on their past experience, local education authorities (LEAs), the newly formed local learning and skills councils (LLSCs), schools, colleges and work-based learning providers in many areas of the country began to develop Tomlinson-inspired unified 14-19 plans. Then, in February 2005, with the publication of the 14-19 White Paper, the Government rejected the central proposal of the Tomlinson Final Report – a unified diploma system - by announcing its decision to retain GCSEs and A Levels and to focus reform once again on changes to vocational qualifications through the development of new specialised Diplomas. This is a strategy that has been tried on a number of occasions in the past (e.g. the development of the Certificate of Pre-Vocational Education (CPVE), the Diploma of Vocational Education (DOVE) and General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs)), but has not managed to achieve successive

Administrations' aims of raising levels of participation and attainment to match or exceed those of competitor countries.

As this brief history of recent policy activity illustrates, 14-19 education and training in England constitutes a particularly difficult terrain for policy-making and, we will argue, for policy learning. While the media frenzy that followed the publication of the 14-19 White Paper has died down, the public debate about the aims, purposes, shape and organisation of the 14-19 phase rumbles on (Hayward *et al.* 2005) with no clear consensus between practitioners, policy-makers and researchers.

The difficulties of policy making in this area can partly be explained by the inherently complex nature of 14-19 education and training: it straddles compulsory and post-compulsory education, full-time learning and working life and involves a wide range of qualifications, different types of institutions and learning environments. Several different teams of civil servants and ministers within the DfES thus have a stake in 14-19 policy-making and the individual and combined effects of their actions ripple out across a wide area sometimes in a contradictory fashion. It is also a contested arena. While the concept of a 14-19 phase is relatively new in terms of official national policy discourse – it first received serious attention in the 2002 Green Paper *14-19: Extending opportunities, raising standards* (DfES 2002) - it has been part of wider educational professional discourse and lived experience since the introduction of the Technical and Vocational Education Initiative (TVEI) in the late 1980s. The vision of an inclusive and unified phase, originating in *A British Baccalaureate* (Finegold *et al.* 1990), but building on the professional experience of educating 14-19 year olds, gradually emerged and took hold throughout that decade, but existed alongside the reality of an increasingly divided triple-track post-16 national qualifications system (Hodgson and Spours 2003). These different unofficial and official visions for the development of the phase are manifest in the Tomlinson Final Report (Working Group on 14-19 Reform 2004), on the one hand, and the Government's 14-19 White Paper and its Implementation Plan (DfES 2005a, 2005b) on the other.

In this contested terrain, political considerations predominate in policy-making and the views of the education profession appear to be marginalised. The role of policy memory to reap the benefits of the long gestation period of professional thinking about 14-19

education and training seems to have made little impact on the higher levels of policy-making. The main risk is that the Government will pursue a strategy on vocational education that may not fully learn from past experience and failure. Moreover, because the policy process itself is being conducted within politically-determined timescales – witness the rush to develop all 14 specialised Diploma lines at Foundation, Intermediate and Advanced Level by 2010 (DfES 2005b) – policy makers appear unwilling to listen seriously to the problems raised by practitioners who will have to implement the reforms. This latter point has particular significance within the English system because of the tradition of bottom-up innovation in this area.

Taking these developments and issues as its context, this chapter attempts to develop an analytical framework to understand the nature of policy-making and issues of policy learning in 14-19 curriculum and qualifications reform in England. The framework, which comprises four inter-related dimensions – 'political eras'; 'the education state'; 'the policy process'; and 'political space' - is used in three ways. First, it is employed as an explanatory device for narrating 14-19 developments in England over the last twenty years. In attempting to make sense of this complex and contested landscape, we hope to develop an account that can be shared between policy-makers, practitioners and researchers. Second, the framework can be regarded as a set of tools to identify why and where problems of policy learning occur. Finally, we look at ways in which one of the dimensions - political space - might be developed to support the interaction of policy-makers, practitioners and researchers in a more deliberative (Hajer and Wagenaar 2003) policy-making process. We argue that this kind of policy-making, which has the potential to harness the different strengths and experiences of these three key actors, is more likely to lead to a climate in which policy learning can thrive and inform the policy process.

A changed policy landscape

Problems of policy-making and policy learning in 14-19 education and training have been affected not only by the specificities of this phase but also by seismic shifts in the general policy landscape. Education policy-making in England has changed dramatically since the 1944 Education Act with its relatively straightforward model of a tri-partite balance of power between national government, local education authorities

(LEAs) and education providers – each playing its own particular part in the translation of policy into practice (Ball 1997). Chapter 1 of this volume characterised this approach as demonstrating features of the 'rational' model of policy-making. Over the last fifty years, however, there has been a move towards a more complex and 'politicised' model of governance, resulting from a fundamental economic, political and ideological disturbance of post-war arrangements. This new model stems primarily from the policies associated with the 18 years of Conservative rule in the 1980s and 1990s, but many of its features have been honed under consecutive New Labour Administrations (Clarke *et al.* 2000, Phillips & Furlong 2001).

It is possible to identify at least five major inter-related changes in the policy-making process that date back to the mid-1970s but which have, arguably, continued or even accelerated during the period since New Labour came into power in 1997.

- The growth of 'arms length' agencies – the last twenty years have seen a growing role for quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations (quangos) or non-departmental public bodies (NDPBs) in policy-making and policy enactment. In the post-compulsory field examples include the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), OFSTED, the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI), the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) as well as the Adult Basic Skills Strategy Unit (ABSSU) and the Post-16 Teaching and Learning Standards Unit inside the Department for Education and Skills (DfES).

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- The quasi market in education and arms length steering mechanisms - New Labour, as part of a wider public sector modernisation agenda, has perpetuated a quasi-market in education (Du Gay 2000, Newman 2000) which aims to increase autonomy for individual education providers; to stimulate the introduction of new private providers and to encourage parents and learners to see themselves as consumers of public services (DfES 2005c). At the same time, marketisation has been accompanied by the use of powerful national steering mechanisms as a form of

accountability and to retain central political leverage in what could have become a much more devolved system (Hodgson et al. 2005).

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• A plethora of policy texts – the traditional texts of government (e.g. White Papers, Acts of Parliament and influential reports by government commissions) have been joined by a veritable flood of different types of policy documents from both central government and its agencies. There are 'next steps' documents, strategy documents, consultation documents, curriculum documents, guidance documents and so on. Moreover, lifelong learning policy documents are no longer simply the preserve of one government department – the Department for Trade and Industry, the Department for Work and Pensions, the Treasury and the Cabinet Office are increasingly involved alongside the DfES.

• Devolution and double devolution – devolution of powers to the Welsh Assembly and the Scottish Parliament in the latter part of the twentieth century means that the UK now has at least three types of education systems within it, each of which has somewhat different policy-making processes, with the potential for policy analysts to use the tool of 'home international' comparison (Raffe, 2005). At the same time, David Miliband, the Minister for Communities and Local Government, is arguing for a 'double devolution' from national government to local government and from local government to communities (Miliband 2006a).

• *Political centralisation and politicisation* (a theme extensively discussed in Chapter 1) – while the first four changes set out so far suggest that the policy landscape has become much more complex and unpredictable, the Government has developed new mechanisms to assert central political control. Under New Labour an army of political advisers has been drafted into key government departments with a major role for the Prime Minister's Policy Unit in ministerial and departmental policy-making.

The case for a new analytical framework for policy-making and policy learning

These five changes have resulted in a movement away from a rational/bureaucratic model of policy-making towards a new form of governance in England that Chapter 1 describes as a predominantly 'politicised' model. This shift has profound consequences for policy-making and policy learning and, we argue, requires a new analytical framework for understanding 14-19 education and training.

First, we have to be able to understand why there has been so much reform without much change. In our view, this demands a historical perspective on the policy process and the promotion of policy learning, so that mistakes from the past are not repeated. Our response is the first dimension of the framework - 'political eras' – informed by the concept of 'policy memory'. Second, increased powers for central government, on the one hand, and individual educational institutions, on the other, have hollowed out the role of local governance (LGA 2004), posing questions about the nature of the education state in the early 21st Century. Hence, we have the 'education state' as the second dimension of our framework to allow us to reflect on its role in policy learning. The third dimension - 'the policy process' - needs to be viewed within the dynamics of this reconfigured education state and has to be able to explain the increased complexity of policy-making and its implications for policy learning. Finally, we are interested in the possibilities of interventions in the policy process, which provide opportunities for policy learning. We, therefore, use the concept of 'political space' as the final tool within the analytical framework.

A framework of analysis for 14-19 education policy

The analytical policy framework we discuss here thus comprises four inter-related dimensions or tools – 'political eras, 'the education state', 'the policy process' and 'political space'. It builds on the work of Bowe, Ball & Gold (1992) by placing their concept of a policy triangle within an historical, political and state context (see Figure 1). Each of these tools is applied to 14-19 education and training policy and comments made on aspects of policy learning.

Figure 1: An analytical policy framework

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Political Eras

The Education State Structures

Influence

The Policy Process

Practice   Text Production

Political Space
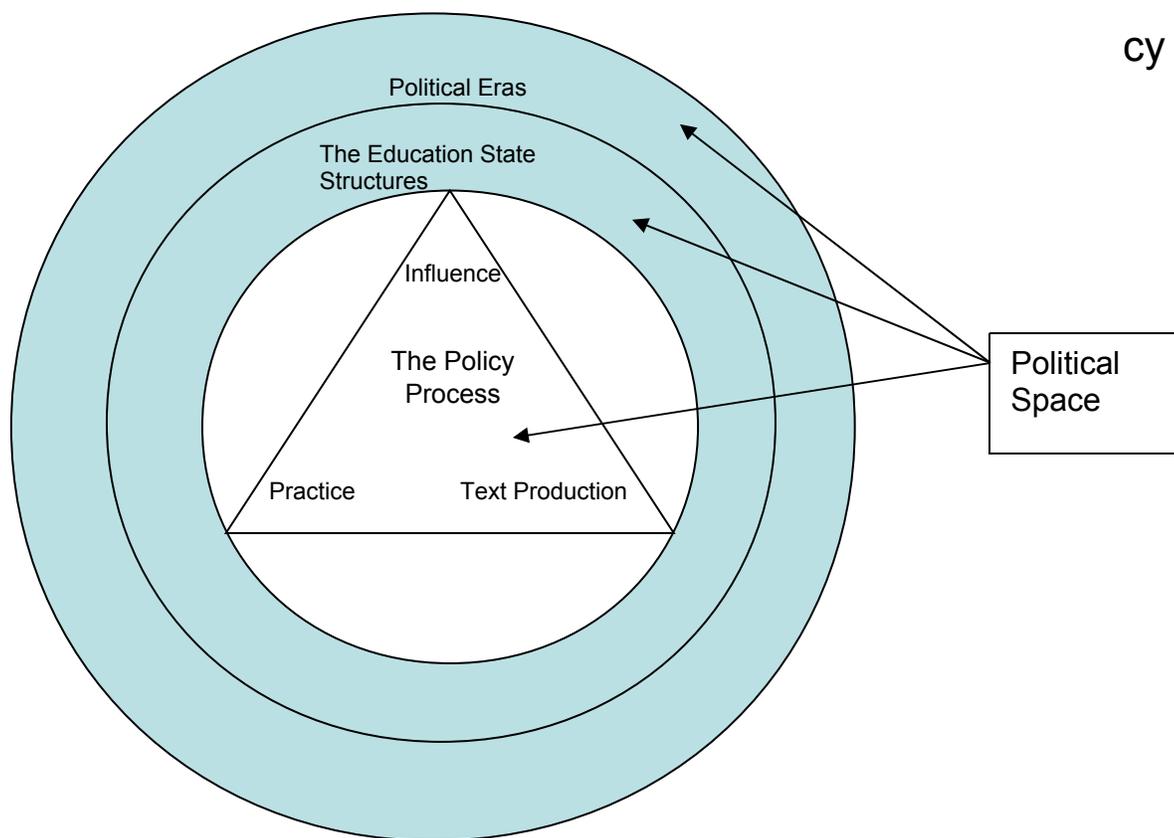
Dimension 1. Political eras

Policy analysts, when describing policy-makers' inability to learn from the past in relation to 14-19 reform, have commented on their tendency to suffer from 'policy amnesia' (Higham *et al.* 2002, Higham & Yeomans 2005). We would contend that this condition is caused by a short political cycle dominated by the politics of general elections and by the rapid turnover of ministerial teams and political advisers, which prevents the building of 'policy memory', together with the politicisation of education policy and particularly policies involving high-stakes examinations such as GCSEs and A Levels. Policy

amnesia is compounded by a lack of trust in the education profession with its 'grounded' memory of what has worked in particular contexts.

In recognition of the importance of policy memory and learning from the past, we have developed the term 'political era' to provide a historical and wider contextual analysis for interpreting policy-making trends and particular 'moments' in the education policy process. In its broadest sense a 'political era' might be defined as a fundamental shift in relationships between social classes, the state and markets and how people see themselves as citizens and consumers (Clarke and Newman 2004). In this chapter, where we are considering education policy and the 14-19 phase in particular, we use the term 'political era' as a period of politics and policy-making framed by three major factors - underlying societal shifts and historical trends which affects the 'shape' of the education and training system, dominant political ideology which affects the parameters for reform, and national and international education debates which either support or contest the dominant ideology. In terms of 14-19 education and training, we have argued elsewhere that the period from the mid-1980s to the present, despite changes in governments, broadly constitutes a single political era which has been dominated by three fundamental ideas - selective approaches to curriculum and qualifications policy, articulated through the academic/vocational divide; the belief in markets and institutional competition and labour market voluntarism (Hodgson and Spours 2004).

The concept of 'political era' can assist with an understanding of the 14-19 policy process and the issue of policy learning in a number of ways. First, it provides an explanation of reform without change or what Lumby and Foskett (this volume) refer to as 'adaptive behaviour', in which policy-makers try to correct a problem without exploring its roots. As part of adaptive behaviour, policy learning is about the selection of solutions within confined policy parameters that conform to the dominant ideology of the political era. Second, a political era may reflect what Steinberg and Johnson (2004) term the politics of 'passive revolution', in which the aim of limited reform is to head off the possibility of more radical change. Policy learning as part of passive revolution is a calculation designed to appropriate politically aspects of radical programmes while placing these within a conservative logic. This is essentially what the 14-19 White Paper did with the Tomlinson proposals. Third, the persistence of a political era may be aided by ideological reinvention. New Labour has rearticulated conservative ideas of new

public management through its public service 'modernisation' agenda (Newman 2000), leading to a common template for reform applied across different public services. This generalised approach to reform can easily result in policy dogma because of the belief, in this particular case, that the quasi-market approach to health reform can be creatively applied to education. Policy learning is thus focused narrowly on policy borrowing from other public service areas, rather than on learning from traditions within education itself, the latter being associated with old-style professionalism and anti-modernisation.

Attempts to extend a political era, either for ideological or more politically pragmatic reasons, leads to what we have termed the 'politicisation' of policy, in which solutions are selected according to the extent they support the dominant political project. At the same time, however, the internal dynamics of the political era also generate an alternative set of national and international debates and blueprints. In the case of 14-19 education and training, proposals emerged for a more unified and inclusive approach to expanding upper secondary education systems (Lasonen and Young 1998). In England, as we have seen, these ideas can be traced back to the publication of *A British Baccalaureate* (Finegold *et al.* 1990), together with many other unification proposals throughout the 1990s (Hodgson & Spours 2003). More recently, unification ideas moved to a more prominent position in national policy debates, culminating in the Tomlinson Final Report (Working Group on 14-19 Reform 2004). The unified concept of a 14-19 phase could be seen as a desire to bring to an end a political era of upper secondary education dominated by conservative market-led and divisive ideology and to open up a new and progressive era of system expansion based on inclusion and collaboration. However, this idea by itself, which has influenced the education profession, did not prove sufficiently politically strong to prevail in the politicised policy environment of a looming 2005 General Election.

Through an understanding of how both dominant and oppositional forces develop ideas, political strategies and policies, the concept of political era can highlight the conditions for the transition between one era and another and the reasons for political failure. Reflecting upon system reform over the last two decades, it is clear that a number of factors - socio-economic, political, cultural, curricular, organisational and labour market - have to be linked together to shift a system from one equilibrium to another (Finegold and Soskice 1988, Hodgson and Spours 2003). These more general shifts may also

provide conditions where political space can be afforded to radical ideas to be exchanged and adopted. The role of wider political shifts based on the convergence of a number of factors also provides a clue to current political log-jams in 14-19 reform. The Tomlinson proposals for curricular change did not prevail in 2005, not only on account of government electoral pragmatism, but also because they were not explicitly linked to a broader set of changes reflected in wider social attitudes towards education. However, the Tomlinson ideas are now firmly embedded in the policy memory of many researchers, policy-makers and practitioners and, in this sense, they still serve to contest the dominant ideas of the political era in post-14 education. Arguably, therefore, both the policy process associated with the Tomlinson reform agenda and the proposals contained within the Final Report potentially provide sources of policy learning in the future when political space is opened up for more radical change. The question is whether this professional consensus can broaden its appeal. It also depends on how far the Government is able to succeed with its strategies.

Dimension 2. The education state

The second dimension of the analytical framework is the 'education state' which can be seen both as a manifestation of a political era and as a reinforcing element within it. We see the education state comprising the whole range of national, regional and local structures and institutions, including the No. 10 Policy Unit, DfES, the regulatory and awarding bodies, inspectorates, funding bodies and public and private education providers. This definition, therefore, goes beyond purely governmental institutions and quangos and tries to capture the significant role of a set of major players within the contested landscape of education policy (Ball, 1990; Ozga 2000). Like Kogan (1975), we also include in our definition education pressure groups, such as professional associations, teacher unions and think-tanks, as well as the education media and key individuals, all of whom exercise different degrees of political power and influence at different points in the policy process.

The education state under New Labour shows considerable continuity with the Conservative education state. It is highly centralist and uses a growing number of political advisers; it has continued to create single quangos (e.g. the QCA, the Learning and Skills Council and now a unified inspectorate and quality improvement agency - QIA); it continues to use arms-length agencies and powerful steering and accountability

mechanisms to drive institutional behaviour; it has increased the private/public mix in education and the role of local governance has remained weak (Hodgson *et al.* 2005). There appear, however, to be two countervailing trends - devolution of power to Scotland and Wales (and possibly to the nine English regions in the longer term) and the concept of joined-up government (Cabinet Office 2000).

Reform-minded devolved governments (and this is certainly the case in terms of 14-19 education and training in Scotland and Wales) can increase pressure on England to reform and can be a source of policy learning. This is particularly the case in 14-19 education and training where significant developments are taking place in both Scotland and Wales that have similar aims to policies in England, but are different in substance and approach (see other chapters in this volume).

The move to joined-up government, which relies on different government agencies working together at the local level for the good of the learner (for example through the *Every Child Matters* (DfES, 2003a) agenda, may also exert a subtle pressure for reform of the education state through its reinforcement of the pivotal role for local government. Governance at the local level is important in terms of 14-19 policy and practice because it is at this level that collaboration takes place between education institutions to provide a range of learning opportunities and progression routes for learners (DfES 2005b). This type of governance and collaborative arrangement at the local level challenges both central government control and institutional autonomy. While local learning and skills councils have struggled to introduce an element of local planning into the 14-19 education market (Hodgson *et al*., 2005), there are some powerful historical and current examples of innovative initiatives and practices in 14-19 education and training at the local level in England which take forward the unified and inclusive Tomlinson principles, despite the difficult national policy climate (Hayward *et al.* 2005)

The significance of the education state for 14-19 policy analysis is that it offers a way of understanding the interplay of different levels of governance and how space for policy-making can be afforded to the different actors within it. Discussion within the Nuffield 14-19 Review has so far concluded that a more devolved education state, representing a better balance between national, regional, local and institutional decision-making (e.g. Stanton 2004), would provide a more favourable environment not only for a more

collaborative 14-19 phase, but also for the creation of a more deliberative and less mercurial or error-prone policy process which makes use of policy learning. There is a strong strand of rhetoric within government policy about seeking the right balance between national, regional and local levels of governance and promoting greater citizen empowerment (ODPM 2004, Miliband 2006b). However, it is not yet clear how far the government is prepared to go in strengthening the layer of governance at the level immediately above that of the institution because of an ideological commitment to greater provider competition (e.g. DfES 2005c). There is a distinct possibility that 'strategic partnerships' at the local level will attempt to join up initiatives and to win hearts and minds to a more collaborative agenda, but without regulatory teeth.

The layer above the institution is very important in terms of local policy learning in 14-19 education and training because of the space it provides for dialogue, deliberation and planning between local partners, sharing of local intelligence, translation of national policy and feeding messages back up to the regional and national levels. It is also at this level that professional memory may be able to exert some support for policy learning in terms of 'what works'. But the key issue will be one of power. The benefits of policy learning are diminished if, at the end of the day, local partners do not have the powers to enforce solutions and are not able to realise comprehensive change. Interestingly, David Miliband (2006a) cites good practice in local government concerning collective enforcement on environmental issues but not in education.

Dimension 3. The policy process
This third dimension of the analytical framework is an attempt to capture the dynamic and messy nature of policy-making from its inception to its implementation. It recognises that below the level of political and ideological intentions and within the education state, there are a complex set of actions and players that contribute to the policy process. This part of the analytical framework has to be able to accommodate and explain inequalities in the exercise of power, why crises occur, how new ideas enter the policy process and the existence of problems or opportunities with regards to policy learning.

This dimension of analysis is based upon the 'policy triangle' (Bowe *et al.* 1992), which describes three contexts within which education policy is formulated and enacted – the 'context of influence', the 'context of policy text production' and the 'context of practice'.

This triangle illustrates the dynamic, contested and cyclical nature of the policy process and the role of key players within it. Practitioners are seen as contributors to the policy process and there is a recognition that policy is not simply a transmission-belt from central government downwards. The model thus helps to explain why policies may be conceived in one way at the level of policy text production, for example, but be interpreted in another at the level of practice, and how both intended and unintended outcomes may occur. It also helps to explain how different parties in the policy-making process might have a privileged position at different points in the policy cycle. Practitioners, for example, are likely to have little power at the point where policies are conceived, but the balance of power may move strongly in their favour at the point where the policy is enacted and where they can either mould or subvert government intentions. Each corner of the policy triangle, but particularly the context of practice, offers potential for policy learning in 14-19 education and training.

Context of influence – ideas for a unified 14-19 curriculum and qualifications system had been building gradually during the 1990s and eventually broke surface in terms of official policy discussion through the Government's response to the 14-19 Green Paper (DfES 2003b). However, there was a split within the highest levels of government about how far to take curriculum and qualifications reform. Some ministers, David Miliband in particular, wanted a unified solution and took advantage of the 2002 A Level crisis to advocate this radical path. Others, even closer to the Prime Minister, kept a low profile during the deliberations of the Tomlinson Working Group and used the context of a looming General Election to impose a more divided solution. Policy minds now appear closed as government commits itself to implementation of the 14-19 White Paper. However, if there are problems with implementation, as we think is inevitable, a host of national bodies and sections of the Media will be eager to remind the Government that it did have another strategic option.

Context of text production – while the 14-19 White Paper and *The 14-19 Implementation Plan* are the dominant texts, the Tomlinson Final Report remains as an alternative text and a source of policy learning. Wiped from the DfES website, this text and responses from the profession and beyond can be found lodged on various sites across the Internet (e.g. http://education.guardian.co.uk/1419education). A key issue is whether there will

be a re-run of the debate that took place around the production of the Tomlinson Report in the proposed 2008 curriculum and qualifications review.

The context of practice – the Government is dependent on schools, colleges, work-based learning providers, local authorities and local LSCs to implement 14-19 reform. It is at this level that there is real potential for policy learning because there is a greater sense of openness - each of the parties has something to contribute, based on experience, and each has the need to learn. There is also an explicit acknowledgement by government that mutual learning should take place at the local level (DfES 2005b).

The ability to learn and to be able to respond effectively to learning from experience will, however, be affected by structural barriers. Radical ideas about strong area-wide measures to strengthen institutional collaboration at the local level could be thwarted by policy levers and drivers that incentivise institutional competition, while progressive ideas to develop more integrated learning programmes for all 14-19 year olds will mean challenging existing and new qualifications divisions. Effective policy learning, therefore, will require not only a recognition of what has worked at a local level, but also of what has not been allowed to work and why.

Dimension 4. Political space

The concept of 'political space' describes the opening up of opportunity for different stake-holders to influence the policy process. Political space can be realised in several ways – it can be created by the 'battle of ideas' over a period of time; it can result from spaces afforded in the reform process either intentionally (for example, by encouraging bottom up practitioner developments or from more open forms of consultation) or unintentionally (as the result of crises). Political space can also be reinforced by what we term 'tipping debates'[1].

Researchers and practitioners can both create political space and work within it. As we have seen, in the case of 14-19 curriculum and qualifications reform in England, researchers, professional associations and think-tanks worked together for more than a

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[1] The term 'tipping debates' is a reworking of 'tipping point', a concept popularised by Malcolm Gladwell (2002) to explain how ideas, products, messages and behaviours, facilitated by key types of communicators, can cross a threshold and achieve a critical mass. Tipping debates refer to areas of ideological contestation where fundamental debates (e.g. in the case of 14-19 education - on curriculum and qualifications, learning, skills, achievement and so on) can be tipped in different directions to gain professional and popular support.

decade to create a 'tipping debate' about the development of a flexible and unified 14+ curriculum and qualifications system. This long-term work, combined with the effects of the A Level crisis, created the political space for researchers and practitioners to work 'for policy' within the Tomlinson 14-19 Working Group and the professional and political groups aligned with it.   However, these same groups were not party to the deliberations on the proposals within the subsequent 14-19 White Paper, which was drafted by civil servants and political advisers.

Political space can, therefore, be opened up and closed down by government at any stage in the policy process. The 14-19 White Paper, with its political compromises, serves to remind the researcher and practitioner communities of the temporary nature of political space made recently available within the English system.   These 'closed/contested' or at the very least 'unstable/fluctuating' approaches to political space at the national level in England can be contrasted to policy-making in Wales.   In the latter country, considerable effort has been made by the Assembly Government to afford spaces to different groups through, for example, the establishment of a range of 'task and finish groups' as part of the development of the *Learning Pathways 14-19* reforms (WAG 2002; 2006).   There is a widespread recognition that policy-making in Wales is 'more open/consultative' than in England (e.g. Daugherty *et al.* 2000, Rees, 2003,) with a greater willingness to engage in evidence-based policy-making (Hodgson and Spours 2006), although there are problems with the ability of a relatively small policy-maker community to properly utilise research evidence (see this volume Chapter 1). It is our contention that providing more political space for researchers and practitioners to work alongside policy makers in a more shared policy-making process also opens up the door to more effective policy learning.

A more collective and deliberative policy process for effective policy learning

The principal reason for developing the four-dimensional framework for analysing 14-19 education policy is to enable researchers, practitioners and policy-makers themselves to assess when and how to engage in the policy process to bring about improvements to the education system and to the policy process itself.

Different points in the policy process offer varying balances of constraints and opportunities for intervention and contribution by different parties, from the most critical to the most practical. These may include challenging orthodoxies, creating political space, developing system thinking, working with policy memory, pointing out possible unintended policy outcomes, stimulating policy learning, developing strategy and undertaking evaluation to aid improvement. The issue is knowing when and how to act in the best interests of learners, teachers and wider society.

The framework suggests the need for several moves toward what Hajer & Wagenaar (2003) term a more 'deliberative' approach to policy-making, which would improve the climate of policy-making and the opportunities for policy learning. First, it recognises the importance of a more collective historical sense of post-14 education and training across the different communities and a shared appreciation of past successes and failures. Presently, there is a profoundly ahistorical approach to policy-making (Hencke and Leigh 2006), which serves to deny policy memory and valuable professional and researcher experience. Second, the framework argues for an opening up of the education state to create the structures and levels of decision-making for more participative policy-making and for policy learning. Third, and linked to this, is the need for a less politicised policy process, conducted at a slower pace than at present to provide space for policy learning and to produce a greater degree of consensus through dialogue. Fourth, the framework argues that we have to move from 'contested' to 'afforded' political space in which all three communities have a place at all points in the policy process and not just at the point of implementation when the big decisions have been made on narrow political grounds.

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