

**Post-16 curriculum provision in England: the emerging functional ‘triage’ serving  
Capital’s needs**

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## **Abstract**

*The post-16 examination field in England has changed radically over the past decade. The previously hegemonic A-Level has been joined by the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme, Cambridge Pre-U, AQA Baccalaureate, and the Government's own Diploma's. This has been attacked as a 'cluttered' field and an unnecessary duplication of resources with critics identifying the need to revamp A-Levels or introduce another unitary award. However, an alternative viewpoint can be offered, seeing the 'crowded' field as reflecting the complex needs of Capital. As well as further stratifying schooling along class lines, the government gets to reduce school expenditure without compromising England's international competitiveness. The economic down-turn offers an opportunity for 'selling' a multi-tiered curriculum model as an urgent one, limiting opposition and resistance, whilst also creating a differentiated field for Capital to intervene in, and profit from. It becomes a convenient model for solving the current crisis of Capital accumulation and offers a means for legitimizing the movement towards educating children to serve Capital; we are told that the world is getting 'flatter' and resources must be immediately re-allocated (a form of educational triage) in favour of highly skilled (and better motivated) children. What appears is a broad spectrum separating the elite global worker (the 'knowledge worker') from the mass of 'knowledgeable workers', many of whom will form the large surplus pool of 'economically inactive' workers.*

## Introduction

The current phase of the capitalist ‘project’ in Britain, crudely identified as ‘Capitalism 3.0’ (Kaletsky, 2010), ‘Neo-liberalism 3.0 (Hendrikse and Sidaway, 2008), ‘Capitalism 3.1’ (Mokyr, 2009), and the ‘cancer stage’ (McMurtry, 1998), has involved the re-structuring of education within a neo-liberal (economic) agenda, epitomized by competition and the introduction of quasi-market forces, and enforced by a strong state (the neo-conservative political agenda) as epitomized by league tables and national testing. This phase, or ‘epoch’ (Callinicos, 2005), of capitalism was neatly summarized within the Thatcherite polity by Gamble’s (1988) book *The Free Economy and the Strong State*.

A by-product of this project is an increasing stratification in England both within and between schools. Education reform in that country, especially since the major *Education Reform Act 1988*, has sought to create a system that emphasizes parental choice and competition between schools, whilst creating a number of quasi-markets in educational services (Whitty and Power, 2000). As revealed by Whitty, Power and Halpin (1998), the introduction of ‘parental choice’ in England has created a greater hierarchical categorization of schools; in 2010 there were at least 12 types of school to choose from (at [www.direct.go.uk](http://www.direct.go.uk)). At one extreme can be identified an elite set of ‘global private schools’ (forming membership of the ‘G20’ grouping of schools, instigated in 2006 by Wellington College).

At the same time, the workforce has also become more stratified. An elite set of ‘global worker’ can now be visibly identified. A ‘new worker elite’ has emerged (Richman, 1994), within the digital age and the term ‘new power elite’ has been used (Bard and Sonderqvist, 2002) to describe the rise of the ‘netocracy’, forming the new business and government elite. Alongside this, the existence of an ‘underclass’, once given little scholarly attention in terms of work activity (Jordan and Redley, 1994), has been identified in Britain (e.g. Murray, 2001). One researcher (Byrne, 1995) had argued that the increase in socio-spatial differentiation in northern England had not created an ‘underclass’ as such, but had instead built up an ‘industrial reserve army’ of workers. Britain in early 2011 had almost one quarter of the labour force deemed ‘economically inactive’. Many of them are termed ‘discouraged workers’ (not seeking work in the current economic climate), and many are young (under 24 years). In several cities (e.g.

Liverpool, Nottingham) one third of youth were recorded unemployed in early 2011. Many have *never* worked. The ‘global auction’ (Brown, Lauder and Ashton, 2011) ensures that many youngsters leave school with little hope of a good income or job prospects.

Not surprisingly, it has become normal to identify a growing polarization within the workforce. It is predicted the future workforce will contain an elite grouping of ‘knowledge workers’, and a mass of ‘knowledgeable workers’ (Farrell and Fenwick, 2007). The ‘knowledge worker’ has long been described (Harrigan and Dalmia, 1991) as the ‘last bastion of competitive advantage’. There has, since 1975, been a growing gap between the high-paid ‘lovely’ jobs and the low-paid ‘lousy’ ones (Goos and Manning, 2007). Angell (2007) had identified a polarization between the ‘winners’ and ‘losers’ in the Information Age. Research carried out by *Future Foundation* for Friends Provident, the British pensions and insurance group, and published in February 2010 (Friends Provident, 2010), focused on the workforce in 2020, speculating on a growing polarization between the ‘elite’ and the ‘excluded’. The former grouping will comprise a relatively small number of well-educated workers whilst the latter groupings will possess few skills and poor job-prospects. Presumably, they will form the bulk of the ‘economically inactive’. This report also speculated that the number of immigrant workers in Britain will drop dramatically by 2020, putting pressure on the government to equip domestic workers with replacement skills.

This paper explores how this polarization, between a ‘new worker elite’, comprised of highly-skilled ‘knowledge workers’, and at the other of the spectrum, a massed pool of lower-skilled workers, is being formed in England at tertiary schooling level. The post-16 examination field in England now involves a multitude of different (and unequal) academic options and examination pathways. The partial break-down of the previously hegemonic Advanced Level (A-Level) has created a multitude of curricula for schools to offer, ranging from relatively basic vocational-academic qualifications to elite bilingual international qualifications. Avis (2008), also writing in this journal, identifies this at a post-compulsory level as a process of ‘individualisation’.

From a distance, this appears ‘messy’ and ‘crowded’, but looking at the bigger picture one can see that an examination field is rapidly emerging for polarizing the future workforce in England

according to their potential level of surplus value and their required skills-base. As noted by McMurtry (1999) when discussing the ‘pathologization of the market model’, the ‘free market’ of parental choice is actually a delusion; what we actually have is a system rigged to favour business and the ‘global market’. The economic down-turn and the urgent *need* for reducing government spending are adding to the delusion; there is, so we are told, an urgency to differentiate on educational expenditure.

This paper builds on the framework by Dave Hill (2004a, and 2006) which identified a (deliberate) discriminatory three-tier model of schooling. The masses get to receive a relatively ‘cheap’ tertiary education (especially if they are likely to become ‘economically inactive’, or the ‘excluded’) whilst the future ‘new worker elite’, and their middle-management counterparts, are deserving of a higher share of public funding as they are likely to add more to England’s productivity and competitiveness. Ruth Rikowski (2003) noted that Value is the ‘lifeblood of capitalism’, and ‘knowledge’ is the key to extracting it. Within this framework, the Geneva-registered International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Programme (IBDP), for ages 16-19, can be identified as a major force for educating the ‘new worker elite’. The model that emerges, a highly functional form of educational prioritizing, or *triage*, will be explored later but first the curricula field in England needs revealing.

## **The curricula field in England**

### **A ‘crowded’ field**

The A-Level, introduced in 1951, and substantially revamped in 2000, remains the most popular post-16 curriculum ‘route’ in England but has been joined by a multitude of others, forming a visibly highly ‘tiered’ system. The 1962-instigated IBDP, one of three programmes within the IB ‘international education continuum’ has grown much over the past few years and in early 2011 involved just over 220 globally-branded and authorized ‘IB World Schools’ in England (note: there are 25,000 schools in England). The pace of growth there can be put into context by considering that in 2004 there were only 70 such schools. In fact, there are really three ‘levels’ of IBDP. An exclusive bilingual diploma is awarded to students who undertake two languages at mother-tongue level whilst an ‘ordinary’ one is awarded if the student undertakes a second

language at beginner level. A large number of students do not undertake the full Diploma (involving six subjects plus an element of community service, ethics, and an Extended Essay) and do a set of (four or five) 'Certificates' instead.

In September 2008 the Cambridge Pre-U exam appeared, part-modeled on the IBDP, and is currently on offer in 300 schools. This also is a more complex programme than at first seen. The 'full' Pre-U Diploma involves a study of 'global perspectives' and an extended piece of research similar to the IBDP Extended Essay (the GPR). This 'wrapper' is a product in itself and could theoretically be used to supplement the IB Certificates. Furthermore, there are three levels of Pre-U certification (forming a nine-grade scale): Distinction, Merit, and Pass (the A-Level at Grade A also now has three levels). At the same time as the Pre-U appeared, the first schools began offering Diplomas (for 14-19 year olds), the preferred choice of the Gordon Brown-led administration. In 2010 there were ten Diplomas on offer and this was expected to rise to 17 subjects by 2011, including three 'academic' subjects among the largely 'vocational' base (the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government announced in June 2010 they will drop these).

Between 2002 and 2009 there existed an Advanced Extension Award, aimed at the top 10% of A-Level students. In September 2009 the AQA Baccalaureate (involving three A-Levels) started, involving about 100 schools. Alongside this, the IB in 2008 began piloting a new certificate; the International Baccalaureate Career-related Certificate (IBCC). The pilot, involving ten schools in eight countries including one in England (Windermere St. Anne's), successfully ended in 2011 and will be 'open' to offer in authorised IB schools around the world from 2012. It is not an alternative qualification as such but is intended to be 'wrapped' around an existing national vocational qualification (creating yet another curricula 'product'), and has already been heralded by the educational press in England (e.g. Shaw, 2008) as a possible alternative to the academic-vocational Diplomas. The BTEC First Diploma is a vocational qualification and is the equivalent of four GCSEs (General Certificate of Secondary Education) grades A\*-C (subjects available include Animal Care, and Vehicle Technology). In September 2010 the Education Minister announced plans for an 'English Baccalaureate' to appear, awarded to pupils who get five 'good' (a Grade C or above) GCSEs (in English, mathematics, a science, a modern or ancient

language and a humanities subject).

This has been openly attacked as a ‘crowded’ field. It was being reported several years ago (Mansell, 2006) that Edexcel, the second largest examination provider in England, was critical of the ‘fragmented’ emerging field. More recently, the High Master of St. Paul’s School in London, a leading English private Boys’ school, argued the field was a duplication of exams, resulting in a waste of scarce resources. It was argued that the Government ought to concentrate on reforming the A-Level, as a single coherent examination for 14-19 year olds, and as concluded in 2004 by the Government-initiated yet largely rejected ‘Tomlinson Report’, rather than introducing alternative options (Stephen, 2009). A review of the new Diplomas, written in 2007 by academics from the University of Oxford and the University of London’s Institute of Education, as part of the large-scale Nuffield Review of 14-19 Education and Training (in *Issues Paper 1*), argued that a ‘two-tier’ system was beginning to appear in England (see Hodgson, Keep, and Spours, 2007) between academic and vocational schooling. They called for a single English-style baccalaureate instead. In 2006 the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) had re-kindled the call for a ‘British Baccalaureate’, unifying academic and vocational qualifications, and replacing A-Level. The IPPR had first called for such a qualification in a 1990 report (Finegold et al, 1990).

### **A ‘functional’ field**

There exists the possibility for a radically alternative viewpoint. This is to view the ‘crowded’, ‘fragmented’ and ‘duplicated’ field as a hierarchical and differentiated one. It can even be viewed as being highly *functional* allowing young people to be educated to meet their potential skills-base. In particular, a complex and sophisticated system exists to differentiate students within the top academic range of ability. It is suggested that a new relationship exists between education and the needs of globalized business; we have witnessed a transition from an age of ‘massification’ towards ‘merchandization’ (Hirtt, 2004). This ‘need’ has commanded cross-party support in Britain over the past two decades. As noted by Brown and Lauder (1996), two contrasting national strategies have emerged in response to economic globalization. Both the neo-Fordist approach of the New Right and the post-Fordist approach of the modernizing left (e.g. New Labour) has shared a belief in the importance of ‘re-skilling’ Britain and investing in

education as a means of securing higher economic growth and development.

Therefore, when the outgoing British Prime Minister Tony Blair declared in January 2006 that each local authority (there are 150 LAs in England, including 33 in London) would be funded to have one IBDP school (at a cost of £2.5 million), this was not a duplication of funding but was actually an efficient allocation of resources. Not every child in each city will require the supposedly ‘critical thinking’, and bilingual competencies of an (relatively expensive) IBDP education, so why pay for each child to have this? Tony Blair, in the Foreword to the *Comprehensive Spending Review 1998* stated: ‘Our aim is to reallocate money to key priorities; to change policies so that money is well spent; to ensure that departments work better together to improve services; to weed out unnecessary or wasteful spending’ (The Stationary Office, 1998).

Capital requires only a small pool of highly skilled workers and therefore one IB school in each city (or in a USA context, each District) should suffice. This arguably partly explains why the IBDP, in areas of the world as diverse as Florida, England, Australia, Ecuador, and Nova Scotia, is being state-funded so that each ‘district’ will have a single school. On the other hand, the skills offered by the Diplomas require a much bigger pool of labour, especially if the level of immigrant workers is to reduce (as predicted). Capital also requires a large pool of administrators and middle-management, and so they can do the A-Level.

What we have here is a form of educational *triage* (or prioritizing, as put forward by Hill, 2006); different layers of future workers each receiving the skills base required by Capital, and Business. In this sense, we can identify a complex multi-tiered examination system emerging, not a simplistic two-tier (i.e. academic-vocational) one as envisaged by the *Nuffield Review*. The role of an educational *triage* has been identified before, but in different schooling settings. The Chicago public school system has a three-tiered model (Hess, 1986), and the existence of three Labour outcome ‘tracks’ have been explored by Hollenbeck (1992). The term ‘rationing’ has been used (Booher-Jennings, 2006) in respect to an educational *triage*.

The examination system in England is not only being polarized between state and private schooling, but is being ‘tiered’ so that children at different types of schools, or even within the



same school, can receive a different type of education, in accordance to their potential future input to the economy. The masses can receive a basic schooling experience (or ‘ration’) equipping them with basic numeracy and literacy skills (learning just in English), or at most a basic knowledge of a vocational education and second language, the middle-tier can be offered one that equips them for supervision and middle-management, whilst the upper-tier can receive an expensive internationally recognized education that allows them to function on a ‘global stage’. Now we can begin to see the spectrum appearing between the elite ‘knowledge workers’ and the mass of ‘knowledgeable workers’. Moreover, an interesting distinction begins to appear between the ‘national citizen’ and the more elite ‘global citizen’.

A stratified and hierarchical set of examinations ensures that each strand of Labour is trained to serve different sectors of business. Each ‘pool’ of Labour needs to be a different size- a useful tool for reducing average costs, and allocating scarce resources. The concept of a single examination ‘pathway’ (e.g. A-Level) is not an attractive one to Capital, who requires an increasingly diversified workforce, with differing sets of skills and attributes. At the same time, Capital presumably does not want a large pool of critical (or potentially radical) thinkers, which again limits an intellectually demanding education (e.g. Pre-U and IBDP) to the minority.

### **The need in England for a *triage***

As recently noted by Beckman *et al.* (2010: 311), young people have become increasingly treated as ‘human capital’ in need of training for work rather than a broad-based critical pedagogy. At the same time, there is a general consensus that the existing system replicates and perpetuates unequal distribution of capital (Weiston-Serdan, 2010: 396). Such a system requires *justification*. There are several ways that the neo-liberal agenda to prioritize educational resources is being *legitimized*; a large (and growing) section of Britain’s labour force is non-productive (especially with regard to youth), the employed are becoming less productive and less competitive, yet at the same time the British governing ‘coalition’ wishes to slash education spending. This poses a major contradiction for Capital (especially the global giant companies) that will now be explored.

### **An ‘unproductive’ labour force**

A major rationale behind the reallocation and prioritizing of resources, within the educational

*triage* model, is that a large proportion of England's labour force is deemed to be 'unproductive', or 'under-productive'. National Statistics released 19<sup>th</sup> January 2011 (at [www.statistics.gov.uk](http://www.statistics.gov.uk)) showed the number of people employed in Britain (and aged between 16 and 64) stood at 29.09 million. Of these, 21.16m are working full-time and 7.93m are part-time. However, the number of economically inactive people rose by 89,000 over last quarter of 2010, to reach 9.37m people. In other words, only just over half of Britain's work-force of almost 40m people was in full-time employment in early 2011. The Conservatives, in Opposition, had revealed that two million people of working-age in Britain had never worked and three million had not worked since 1997 (see Prince, 2009). One commentator (Conway, 2009) has even estimated that the *real* level of unemployment in Britain is almost 5.7 million (or 15% of the workforce). Furthermore, the number of working-age people in so-called 'workless households' (households where no-one over 16 years of age works) jumped by 500,000 to 4.8 million in the year to June 2009. The 'workless household' rate increased by 1.1 per cent to 16.9 per cent, the highest since 1999. In the North East of England the figure was 23 percent. On top of this, white working-class boys are becoming an educational 'underclass'. Just six per cent of white boys eligible for free school meals went to university in 2007 compared to 26 per cent of working class young men from ethnic minority backgrounds (see Paton, 2008a).

The youth (aged between 15 and 24) have been disproportionately hard-hit by the current economic downturn. This is a global phenomenon. The International Labour Organization's (ILO) report *Global Employment Trends for Youth 2010* showed that of some 620 million economically active youth, a record-high 81 million were unemployed at end of 2009 (ILO, 2010). Unemployment among Britain's 16 to 24 year-olds was at a record high of 19.4% (943,000 young people) at the end of 2010. It was being reported in January 2011 that 600,000 young people in Britain had never worked since leaving school. The Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) reported that some 10% of British graduates in 2009 were unemployed, up from 8% the year before and the highest figure for seven years. Of the 220,000 students who had graduated in 2008, only 52% had found full-time paid employment within six months (HESA, 2009).

### **The need to reduce spending**

A current key aim of the neo-liberal agenda is to reduce government spending. The global recession since 2007 has substantially added to the claims for lower state spending. Beginning with Greece in December 2009, with a ten percent cut in overall government spending plans, a succession of countries (Spain, Portugal, Hungary, Ireland, and Britain) have announced savage austerity measures. Britain's new chancellor of the exchequer (i.e. Finance Minister), George Osborne, said a report from the supposedly independent Office for Budget Responsibility showed that economic growth would be lower than Labour had forecast in the weeks running up to the May 2010 General Election and that the 'black hole' in the public finances was bigger than anticipated. He immediately ordered spending cuts amounting to £6.2bn.

Here arguably lays a political excuse for what Naomi Klein refers to as 'shock capitalism'- what would otherwise be viewed as extreme measures rushed through to avert 'disaster'. The Institute for Fiscal Studies, Britain's leading think-tank on tax and spending, has said (see Elliott and Wintour, 2010) that an £85bn squeeze will be needed during the five years of the current parliament. The cuts look set to hit the poorest areas of England, reliant on public sector jobs, the hardest. One policy institute (The Centre for Cities) published an annual report titled *Cities Outlook 2011* stating cities such as Liverpool and Sunderland— heavily reliant on public sector employment with lower levels of skills in the workforce – will struggle to cope with the cuts. Liverpool, where 19.5 per cent of residents have no formal qualifications, is set to lose an estimated 2.3 per cent of jobs from the public sector by 2014-15. Education is already being hit by spending cuts in Britain, as elsewhere. It was reported in February 2009 that 36 states in the USA had cut education, or had proposed such cuts. In March 2010 the Board of Education in Kansas City voted to close 28 of the 61 schools (Reid, 2010). In December 2009, the British Business Secretary, Lord Mandelson, announced large cuts in university spending. This amounted to £518m being lopped off funding by 2011.

### **Declining productivity and competitiveness**

At the same time as propagating the *need* for reduced government spending, the notion of the 'world is flat', popularized by the New York journalist Thomas L. Friedman, implies the British labour force requires greater skills to compete with India, China, and other emerging (so-called 'G90') nations. The report *Convergence, Catch up and Overtaking: How the balance of world*

*economic power is shifting* (PwC, 2010) has further promoted the notion that the next decade will be characterised as the point at which the largest emerging economies catch up with and prepare to overtake the established leading economies. Yet, we are also being told that productivity in England is falling. Output per worker in Britain fell 0.2% in the third quarter of 2008, and was the first drop in productivity since 1989. A year later, the Bank of England was warning of job losses in 2010 due to the ‘squeeze on company profits as productivity falls faster than wages’ (Atkinson, 2009). Educational productivity has also apparently fallen. Figures released in 2005 by the Office for National Statistics showed how an annual rise of 2% in education inputs, including spending on teachers and school buildings, had led to an increase of only 1% in outputs. This amounted to a productivity change averaging -1% a year from 1995 to 2004. Britain’s level of competitiveness also appears to be falling. October 2009 saw China overtake Britain to become the second-largest producer of academic research in the world (Corbyn, 2009). *The Centre for Economics and Business Research* reported in 2009 that Britain, currently the seventh-largest economy in the world, will be overtaken by Brazil, Russia, India and Canada by the middle of the next decade. It was said that even Australia could by-pass Britain in 2020. McRae (2010) predicts the world in 2020 will be divided into three distinguishable parts, led by East Asia, followed by Europe, and then North America.

As Rikowski (2001) has noted, the needs of Business are essentially labour-power needs. A number of business leaders have directly attacked education standards in England. In October 2009 the Chief Executive of Tesco PLC (Sir Terry Leahy) attacked the ‘woefully low’ literacy skills of children, arguing the government was ‘failing’ his company (Allen, 2009). In October 2009 the boss of BT (Sir Michael Rake) called on the Government to scrap A-Level and replace it with the IBDP. The *Annual Review 2010* of these two publically limited companies reveal they together employ well over half a million workers (not all in England, of course): Tesco employ 472,000 and BT employ 128,100 (including 88,200 full-time equivalents). Therefore, when we refer to the needs of Capital (Business) it is the needs of multinational corporations (i.e. global capital) that are most connected in England with educational developments. Capital does not exist as a homogenous unit with a single concerns and it is the big global giants that seem to be heading the educational and examination agenda in England. Another rationale emerging for prioritizing resources in England comes from *The Vital Six Percent Report* from the National

Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts (NESTA) which concluded that: ‘A small minority of high-growth businesses hold the key to job creation and wider prosperity. NESTA showed that the 6 per cent of UK businesses with the highest growth rates generated half of the new jobs created by existing businesses between 2002 and 2008 (NESTA, 2009: 3). The implication of this finding is that the children who will work in these businesses (largely creative innovation companies) should receive greater attention in schooling.

### **The dilemma for Capital**

This introduces a major contradiction and dilemma for Capital, especially concerning the needs of the global giant companies and high-growth creativity businesses. On the one hand, the neo-liberal desire is to reduce education spending, yet on the other hand it also wishes to increase skills investment, and overall productivity. The education system is a major contributor for increasing the skills-base of developed economies (Brown and lauder, 1991) but how can this be done within a scenario of falling investment in education and training? A further contradiction is the requirement that all teenagers in England stay in education or training to the age of 17 by 2013, and 18 by 2015 (as stated in Queen’s Speech November 2007). This contradiction is conveniently solved by differentiating education (as argued by Hirtt, 2004). Not every worker needs the same form of curriculum provision. Some can have a relatively cheap education, equipping them with basic literacy and vocational training skills (making them ‘knowledgeable’), while those who will provide the highest surplus value, the ‘Knowledge Workers’, can have an expensive one (say, the IBDP), supposedly equipping them with bilingual, intercultural understanding skills. A pragmatic educational *triage* emerges.

Put bluntly, not every child is of equal value to Capital; different children are worthy of a different share of the tax-payer ‘pie’. Why should every child get an expensive education when many do not even enter employment or training after leaving school, or even after graduating from Higher Education? Money that could be spent on a child who remains unemployed or economically inactive could instead be spent on one who will use their skills to increase capital accumulation; Raduntz (2006) states that education is currently being exploited as a crisis management strategy for Capital. This will help to improve England’s productivity rate whilst at the same time reducing overall government expenditure on education. The key is to identify

where the most potentially ‘productive’ children are located, and then allocate more resources to them. This process of reallocation (towards ‘outstanding’ schools in middle-class areas) has begun to happen in England and will be explored next.

## **The *triage* explored**

### **The lower tier**

Capital does not require a large pool of highly-educated and intelligent workers. In fact, the opposite is probably more desirable. As noted by Glen Rikowski (2003), Capital requires educated and flexible workers but does not want them exercising *fundamental critique*. An intellectual educational process threatens Capital both through the creation of possible resistance, and through the creation of a large pool of ‘higher-skilled’ workers, reducing the wages of the elite workforce. The reproduction of the Capitalist Class itself requires limited access to an elite education, forming a distinct ‘class-in-itself’. Therefore, what we have witnessed, certainly in England, has been the ‘dumbing down’ of education. This has even been identified at compulsory schooling level with regard to the GCSE where the number of pupils studying a new-style course in ICT (information and communication technology) had risen seven-fold in two years, and more children eligible for free school meals took media studies in 2009 than in the three main sciences. This situation was attacked by the head of Harrow School as ‘poor children’ being deceived into taking ‘worthless exams’ (Paton, 2010).

At a post-compulsory schooling level, Vocational A-Levels were introduced in 2000 (in tourism, IT, and business), to replace the Advanced GNVQ, and in 2003 a total of 32,246 students took this option. This option was dropped in 2004, and the remaining GNVQs were dropped in 2007. As stated earlier, the Diplomas which started in 2008 have already been attacked for ‘failing’ children, and been rated poorly in terms of ‘functional’ training. However, this is not surprising. The future workers undergoing this qualification route do not need a high level of ‘functioning’ training, aside from a basic education. In a sense they are not being ‘failed’ at all but are merely receiving the level of training deemed suitable by Capital. In this context it was very interesting to note that the main employers’ organization in England, the CBI, attacked the plans to introduce three ‘academic’ Diplomas in English, Science, and Maths. The *Financial Times* obtained information in January 2009, under freedom of information legislation, showing that the

Diplomas have not yet attracted the most ambitious pupils. Only one in six students taking the new Diplomas in 2008 had chosen the hardest version, equivalent to an A-level. Furthermore, the most popular Diploma is 'creative and media', described by some as the ultimate 'soft subject' (Lipsett, 2009). Moreover, the independent sector completely 'shunned' the Diplomas in 2008 (Curtis, 2008). The first five (in construction, media, engineering, information technology and society, health and development) have already been criticized by Ofsted as 'disappointing' in terms of the functional skills, in English and Maths, being delivered (Curtis, 2009). Very few students took up the Diplomas. Only 12,000 14 to 19-year-olds were involved in the first 'batch' of students even though initial publicity had suggested 50,000. The numbers of students opting for it post-16 in 2010 were believed to amount to under 3,000.

As noted by Hill (2006), wherever there exists a market for education, there is also inequalities of gender and race provision. Ofsted noted the Diplomas (2009, p.11) showed a 'marked differences between the numbers of male and female students'. The numbers of female students on IT courses were low, and very low in engineering. Several of the construction and the built environment courses surveyed had recruited no female students at all, and numbers in the others were 'tiny'. Very few male students were following the society, health and development courses. With the exception of construction and built environment, numbers of students from minority ethnic heritage on most of the Diploma courses reflected the general population in the area.

The National Union of Teachers (NUT) voted at their 2007 Conference to oppose the introduction of the Diplomas arguing they would go hand-in-hand with new vocational Academies backed by businesses. The accusation made was that they would simply offer a source of cheap labour. A London teacher remarked that young people were being given just enough (of a cheap) education to perform one (cheap) job for the rest of their lives. Whilst the apprentices of old offered a high-paid, skilled job, which only a limited amount of people could do, the new Diplomas seemingly offer instead a larger pool of lower-skilled workers competing for the same (low-paid) jobs. Many will become 'discouraged' from seeking work and help form instead the convenient surplus pool of 'economically inactive' workers that can be called upon by Capital during an upturn in the Business Cycle.

### **The middle tier**

The complex area of the middle-tier of the educational *triage* model is beginning to take shape in England within the context of the latest period of neo-liberal educational policy-making, undertaken by a newly created Conservative-Liberal Democratic ‘coalition’ (formed by the two parties in May 2010 after a General Election that produced no overall electoral ‘winner’). Within three weeks of this administration coming to ‘power’, an education act (the Academies Bill) was outlined in the Queen’s Speech, enabling all schools in England to apply to become an Academy (independent state-funded schools, often charity-status or operated by businesses, free of local political control). For the first wave of applications, the key provision will be that the school is currently rated ‘outstanding’ by Ofsted inspections. A report in June 2010 showed this was 11 percent of schools in England, equal to around 2,500 schools, whilst a further 42 percent were classified as being ‘good’. Whilst only 9 percent were ‘inadequate’ this still means that almost half of all schools in England are ‘not good’ revealing that a two-tier model of educational provision already exists, largely separating urban (inner city) from rural (Ofsted, 2010).

*The Academies Act 2010*, passed in July 2010, allows for all primary and special schools (in England) to apply to become an Academy in their own right for the first time. These new independent state schools will continue to be funded at a comparable level to maintained schools but will also get their share of the central funding that their Local Authority used to spend on their behalf (equal to 10 percent of annual budget). They will have freedom to allocate this funding in a way that focuses on the needs of their own pupils. Thus, a secondary school with an annual budget of £5 million will receive an extra £500,000 if they were to ‘opt out’ of Local control (and move under Whitehall ‘control’ - another aspect of the ‘free market and the strong state’ paradigm), although it appears many will get less, perhaps 7 percent (see Hurst and Sugden, 2010). Within weeks of the announcement, it was reported (Sugden, 2010) that 1,000 ‘outstanding’ schools had applied for Academy status (about 40 percent of the available amount), but only 200 had ‘signed up’ by early 2011 (Vasager, 2011a).

A second, more pre-expected, area of educational reform within the *Academies Act 2010* was the call for the creation of Swedish-style/ US Charter-style ‘free schools’. This will theoretically allow charities and parents to operate independent state-funded schools although in practice it



will probably involve for-profit companies who can manage the economies of scale necessary to keep costs low (eg. Edison, Cognita, GEMS). It is likely parents will bring in these firms to run the schools and in return the companies will get a 'management fee'. In January 2011 it was revealed by the Government that 249 applications had been received and eight 'free schools' had been granted approval (Vasager, 2011b).

One key argument against the plans for more independent state schools is that competition between schools to attract pupils, assumed since the *Education Reform Act 1988* to be the driver of higher standards, merely diverts resources from one school to another, creating a hierarchy in the (state-funded) system that inhibits overall progress by demoralising those at the bottom. The proposal to allow schools rated as 'outstanding' by Ofsted to become Academies will intensify this process. These schools, predominantly middle class in intake and locality, will as stated already be allowed to spend the 7-10 percent of funding currently retained by the LA for support services that are most likely to be needed by poorer children. What we have here, within the educational *triage* model, is actually another efficient reallocation of scarce resources, away from children in 'failing' schools towards those in 'outstanding' schools.

Many of the schools being offered a 'fast-track' to Academy status are indeed the most socially exclusive. There are, for instance, 40 schools judged 'outstanding' in Leeds, northern England, including 34 primaries, three secondaries and three special schools. Information taken by this author from Electoral Ward Data (available at website [leeds.gov.uk](http://leeds.gov.uk)) on three indicators (unemployment rate, council benefits take-up rate, and deprivation) in mid-2004 revealed that all three secondary schools served comparatively well-off areas of Leeds. An analysis by *The Observer* newspaper (see Asthan et al, 2010) found that secondary schools judged as 'outstanding' by Ofsted are taking 40 percent fewer poor pupils than the national average. The analysis looked at the number of pupils eligible for free school meals, an accepted indicator of deprivation, and found an average of 9.4 percent in 'outstanding' secondary schools, compared with 15.4 percent across England. In a school of average size that translates to 92 pupils from low-income families instead of the more usual 150.

At a post-compulsory schooling level, the vast majority of students in England still do the A-

Level. This examination has changed dramatically over the past few decades, to reach a point where almost all students pass (at a rate of 97.5% in 2009) and a large number (25.5% in 2009) get an A-grade, whilst a significant number (12% in 2009) achieve 'top' grades - three grade As. This has created a distinct tier of the *triatge*; a pool of workers with similar qualifications, obtained at roughly the same level of achievement, and undertaking the same university courses. They can never seek high wages as there is always an abundant supply. At the same time they will face much job competition, face huge debts upon graduation, and so should be highly motivated, and more productive. In December 2010 Parliament voted to allow universities in England to charge tuition fees amounting to £9,000 per year to be paid as a loan and repaid back upon Graduation with interest, for a maximum of 30 years. A White Paper outlining the exact plan is due sometime in 2011.

A large number of successful A-Level students were reported in 2009 to be moving straight into Industry, by-passing Higher Education. There are three possible reasons for this. They did not wish to be saddled with the (current average £23,000) debt incurred by university graduates (which looks set to rise considerably). Secondly, they did not wish to enter the job market in 2011-2012 at the same time as the large 2009 cohort. Thirdly, they thought a university degree was not worth the effort. Research released by the Higher Education Career Services Unit (HECSU) in November 2009 showed that graduate unemployment had increased 44% in 12 months. It was reported that almost 8% of students who left university in summer 2008 were still out of work in January 2009. The last time levels of graduate joblessness were so high was in 1995-96 (Williams, 2009).

What we can see here is that government policy, coupled with the economic downturn, has provided a useful pool of well-educated yet cheap and well-motivated labour for employers'. At the same time, an over-supply of university graduates has created a glut on the market, reducing wages. It was reported (Sugden, 2009) that British supermarket giant Sainsbury has introduced a national trainee scheme for 18-year-olds with three A-levels to become department managers after 12 months on the job, with a starting salary of £17,500. Wages in 2009 were certainly falling; the average weekly pay for private sector workers in Britain was £59.10, down 5.8% in a year. Workers took home £463.50 a week in February 2009, down from £502 in 2008. May 2009

saw average wages fall in England, for the first time in 45 years. At the same time, unemployment hit a 13-year high.

### **The upper tier**

This part of the *trriage* has discretely most definitely begun to take shape in England. University of Cambridge International Examinations (CIE), which developed the Pre-U, has never revealed a full list of the schools that have taken it up but we do know that 35 of the 50 schools that introduced the Cambridge Pre-U in 2008 were independent, and included major names such as Charterhouse, Rugby, Winchester and Eton. Among the 15 state schools offering the exam in 2008, the majority were grammar schools. Only two comprehensives were part of the first batch, which led to an immediate questioning of elitism (Abrams, 2008).

The IBDP is making rapid headway into elite schooling in England. In 2004, just 6% of the prestigious Headmasters' and Headmistresses' Conference (HMC: a grouping of 250 leading private schools, mainly in Britain) offered the IBDP. The first such school, Sevenoaks, had offered the IB in 1978 yet the others were slow to follow. However, a report in September 2007 revealed that the number of HMC schools offering the IBDP had risen to 12% (Marley, 2007). By late-2009 this had risen another 5% (to involve 17% or 35 schools). Put another way, more than one in six of the 'IB World Schools' in Britain in late-2009 was a HMC member, and the number is expected to double by 2012 (Ross, 2009). One third of England's prestigious 'Eton Group' is IB schools (correct as of January 2011) as are six of the 16 member 'Haileybury Group', plus four members of the 'Rugby Group'. Several of England's top scoring examination result schools are now 'IB World Schools' e.g. Sevenoaks, Oakham, North London Collegiate Girls', and King's College Wimbledon. Together, these four accounted for almost half of the top grades awarded in the May 2008 IBDP examination (the maximum 45 points is awarded to only about 60 students per year). In December 2008, Wellington College announced a plan to ballot parents over dropping the GCSE for the IB MYP.

Conversely, the number of children in state schools in England studying the IBDP dropped sharply in 2008, leading to the fear of another form of 'two-tier' system being openly discussed (Clark, 2009). The total number taking the IBDP that year was almost 2,500 -- a 40% rise in just

two years. But numbers taking the qualification at comprehensives fell 11%. Figures released in May 2009 showed that 1,313 pupils at independent schools took the IB in 2008 - up from 922 in 2006. In comprehensives, the figure was 452 - up on 2006 but down from 510 in 2007 (Clark, 2009). The perception that the IBDP is an elite curriculum is held by many educators. The NUT, expressed fears (Curtis, 2002) that A-Level might be dropped and replaced by 'an elite qualification for entrance to elite universities introduced to satisfy the selfish arrogance of a small minority of schools'. The UCU have denounced the IB programmes as 'elitist and divisive' (UCU, 2006).

This line of criticism is a global one. The role of the IB as a force for 'positional competition' and 'economic advantage' is often commented upon (e.g. Brown, 2000; Lowe, 2000). More recently, it has been asserted (Lauder, 2007) that the initial idealism of the IB has been overtaken by social and class interests associated with globalization. What has also been openly discussed (Doherty, Mu, and Shield, 2009) is how IB graduates in Australia are utilizing their capacity to cross national borders (this is termed 'border artistry'), and how the IB offers them a competitive edge with which to strategically pursue economic and cultural capital. Sen (200: 12) claimed the IB is a 'socially elitist educational programme' that 'absorbs enormous resources' and is thus not appropriate for many lesser developed countries.

The ex-Chair of the IB Board of Governors, Monique Seefried, delivered at the International School of Geneva. Seefried (2008) asserted that the IB was well placed to tackle three aspects of globalization: diversity, complexity, and inequality. The issue of 'complexity' is being dealt with by producing critical-thinking children who can search out and assess information, and are less inclined to seek quick solutions. Seefried stated that the education of the future must not simply focus on acquiring knowledge but also on developing 'understanding and technical skills to enable the effective analysis of information in assessing and solving complex problems'. In other words, the Knowledge Worker needs to be more than 'knowledgeable'; they also require problem-solving competency.

A wealth of material forwards the view that the future 'new global worker' will require a certain mindset and predispositions. Howard Gardner's (2009) 'five minds for the future' consists of a

series of inter-connected cognitive abilities, and this notion has attracted the attention of the IB (both as a philosophical and marketing tool). Gardner's earlier work had referred to 'multiple intelligences', and 'frames of mind'. This featured in a presentation by the IB Academic Director in 2008 (see Fabian, 2008) and was an instrumental concept behind the formation of the 10-point *IB Learner Profile*, which first appeared in public in April 2006. The concept of a 'mindset' for success has also been propagated by Carol Dweck's (2007) work on the psychology of success, and Daniel Coyle's (2010) writings on the 'talent code'. Moreover, Mark Gerzon (2010) has argued the world requires a new breed of 'global citizens' with a global mindset.

### **The *trriage* beyond tertiary level**

It is worth speculating further. A next step might be to create a broader set of educational 'routes' for children (i.e. future workers) to follow, beyond the age of 14 or 16. The entire schooling process in England could be stratified and made hierarchical, or 'triated'. In June 2008, Lord Adonis, at that time a schools minister, called for a significant rise in the number of 'through schools', those catering on a single premise for pupils aged five to 19 (Paton, 2008b). This model of school makes it easier to instill the educational *trriage*. Each school could offer a different 'route', for different sets of future worker. For instance, a 'through school' could do the IB 'continuum'; the PYP, the MYP, and the IBDP. This is currently on offer at just two schools in England and only 150 others worldwide. This could become the 'higher skilled, critical thinking' route, on offer to a limited pool of children in each city, providing a base of bilingual workers trained to solve complex problems and work internationally. They may even work abroad; forming the future 'transnational capitalist' class. Alternatively, a much larger and lower-skilled 'route' might be offered; involving the National Curriculum, GCSE, and the Diploma. The 'middle-skilled' route, the 'road to Tesco middle-management', might entail the National Curriculum, GCSE, and A-Level.

The current curriculum 'market' in England is so varied in fact that considerable flexibility exists for a 'through school'. In 2006 two secondary schools in Bristol began piloting a new curriculum (called 'Enquiring Minds' and led by education innovator, Futurelab, in partnership with Microsoft) where (gifted and talented) students focus on their own lives, supposedly to try to

make learning more relevant. Two hundred schools in England already offer in the middle-years the Opening Minds ‘competency curriculum’, designed by the Royal Society of Arts (RSA). In 2010 *Fieldwork Educational Services* introduced an international middle-years curriculum (the IMYC) to complement its primary one, the IPC (offered in 700 state schools in England, alongside the National Curriculum). Thus, two quasi-international education routes exist; IPC, MYP, Pre-U, or IPC, IMYC, IGCSE, IBDP. One can envisage some leading private schools offering such a route; Wellington College in September 2009 began offering the MYP. Or they might offer another similar route; IPC, MYP, IBDP. Many ‘international schools’ overseas already offer such a ‘product’. Some ‘international schools’ also offer the IPC, along with IGCSE, and IBDP. The point to observe here is that there exists in 2011 a multitude of ways in England that the curriculum from K-12 can be stratified, especially in private (and ‘free’ independent state) schools.

## **Conclusions**

### **The needs of Capital**

This paper started by discussing the emerging ‘crowded’ curricula field in England at post-16 level of schooling and how this can be viewed differently. A *functional* curricula model emerges within the framework that Capital has at least three major emerging needs in England. Firstly, Capital requires a stratified labour force, in particular there is a need to create a (small) elite pool of Knowledge Workers, skilled and competent to work on a global stage. At the same time a large pool of Knowledgeable Workers is required to manage and service Capital. Secondly, Capital requires greater competitiveness, investment and productivity. This contradicts with the neo-liberal desire to reduce government spending and is conveniently resolved by prioritizing resource allocation. The aim is for *all* children in England to attend school until 18, a reduced amount of money can only be spread further by prioritizing spending. Money can be taken from ‘failing’ schools and given to ‘outstanding’ ones. Only a small group of children need to undertake an expensive IB education. In this context, the ‘crowded’ curriculum field in England allows not only for different children receiving a different education but also at a different cost. This has been identified (Hill, 2006) as the Capitalist Plan *for* Education; creating a labour force, and consumer, fit to serve the needs of Capital.

Thirdly, there exists a need for Capital to profit from education. A highly stratified and differentiated curriculum ‘field’ helps introduce competition to the market and encourages Business to profit directly from educational provision. This has been identified as the Capitalist Plan *in* Education (as articulated by Hill, 2006). There is little incentive for business (edu-business) to operate in a field selling the same product so a differentiated market is more attractive. The IBDP, for instance, has already attracted the attention of for-profit operators such as GEMS (Global Educational Management Systems), headed by the hugely ambitious Indian-born Dubai-based entrepreneur (edupreneur) Sunny Varkey. This grouping already operates 100 schools globally, including several in England, and has a vision of running 5,000 schools for-profit by 2020 (see the interview with Woodward, 2005). GEMS is developing (experimenting?) with a three-tier ‘airline’ system of schooling in Dubai. The cheapest (termed ‘mid-market’ schools) offer the Indian Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) curriculum, aimed at the large Indian diaspora in Dubai (fees averaging \$3,000). The ‘mid-market plus’ schools offer A-Level and American Advanced Placements (\$15,000). At the top end are the few ‘premium’ schools offering in the main the IBDP (\$24,000). Varkey is hopeful in the future of operating this ‘no-frills airline’ model for profit in England (see interview with Cassidy, 2004).

### **The changing needs**

The needs of Capital in 2011 are complex and ‘messy’, hence the ‘cluttered’ curricula field emerging in England. What is also becoming obvious in that country is that being intelligent (or ‘clever’) is not in itself enough to guarantee an appeal to Capital. There is seemingly also a need to obtain an ‘attitude’. The notion of workers requiring the right ‘frames of mind’ is prevalent in Howard Gardner’s work and is well applied with regard to the ‘new global elite’ who are deemed by Capital to require certain pre-dispositions. However, the notion can be applied to lower-skilled ‘Knowledgeable Workers’ also. Consider the Diploma in ‘Hospitality’; ‘Theme A’ introduces students to ‘The hospitality industry’. Official documentation (*The Learning and Skills Improvement Service*, 2009: 6) states that: ‘This theme introduces learners to the fundamentals of the sector, as well as the range, variety and relevance of the industry to the UK economy. It captures the pervasive nature of the industry and the *excitement* which comes from working within it’ (my italics). Therefore, when the bosses of Tesco and BT were lamenting the academic standards of England’s school-leavers they were also questioning their attitude; Tesco

needs workers who are not only numerate and literate but view the retail industry as valuable and ‘exciting’.

This notion may help to explain, certainly in England, the growth of a youth ‘underclass’, living in households where no-one works and they themselves may never work; they lack not only the necessary skills but maybe also the right ‘frame of mind’. In April 2006, the CBI, published *Shaping Up For the Future*. This reported how Capital wants basic skills in numeracy, literacy and specialist skills in science and technology, and also highlighted eight ‘employability skills’ that are needed. It was stated (CBI, 2006: 13) that ‘Young people also need to have *the right attitude* towards work- motivated, enthusiastic and willing to learn’ (my italics). The concern in England over ‘employability skills’ is not new. As far back as 1983, there was talk of a skills ‘crisis’ (Gleeson, 1983: 3) and the failure of the curriculum ‘to meet the changing industrial needs of society’.

Thus, the notion of an educational *triage* is not historically a new concept but what has arguably changed is that the needs of Capital have become more complex thus requiring a greater degree of stratification of the workforce, within a problematic context of falling productivity and reduced government spending. A new body of elite ‘global workers’, expressing a new form of cosmopolitanism (Gunesch, 2004, is now deemed of a necessity in England whilst even the lower-skilled workers will require a greater degree of skill, competency plus *the right attitude*. At the same time, there is a need within a neo-liberal agenda to reduce government spending and reallocate resources to each according to their value. The elite ‘Knowledge Worker’ is deemed worthy of a higher-cost and higher-value education, and the ‘crowded’ curricula field in England allows for a *functional triaging* of resources.

### **The need for urgency**

The economic downturn in England has generated a crisis of Capital accumulation. Labour costs thus must be reduced, the Government’s education budget must be cut, and at the same time England needs to compete on a leveling (skills) ‘playing field’ with China and India. What’s more, we are told this is an *urgent* need, limiting critical discussion, and ultimately resistance. The world is rapidly becoming *flat* and action must be taken fast. There is, apparently, no



alternative to the stratification and prioritization of schooling at post-16 level. In this context, we are witnessing the *naturalization of capital* (Hill, 2006), and capitalist policy making is formulated to meet the needs of today; the ‘Eternal Now’ (Fisher, 2009). Much concern was raised about the ‘rush’ and ‘undemocratic’ fast-tracking of the Academies Bill, pushed through Parliament (by an unelected ‘coalition’) using anti-terror legislation allowing for less scrutiny (Vaughan and Marley, 2010).

Hill (2004b) has identified a major paradigm shift in the educational debate in Britain, moving away from a focus on ‘standards’ and ‘performance’, towards a broader emphasis on the direction and purpose of education. The question ‘what is education meant to achieve?’ has seemingly become the main focus of concern. Positively viewed, this could be seen as an opportunity to critically reassess the purpose of schooling (Allen and Ainley, 2010). Space does seemingly exist for an open debate. However, the major paradigm shift has been towards *urgently* linking education with the issue of skills and ‘competencies’ i.e. the needs of Capital, rather than a broader and longer-term discussion about the needs of Society. The debate has given way to the bigger, and seemingly more immediate, concern of how the ‘2020 Generation’ will compete. The ‘crowded’ curriculum model emerging in England involves not only a prioritization of resources but is being created with haste. It is thus a *triage* in two senses; resources are being allocated according to priority, and also in terms of what needs immediate action.

### **The *triage* and class formation**

Class inequality is not a theoretical construct but has an objective structural basis in the capitalist mode of production (Skeggs, 1991). In terms of curriculum provision in England, this process is already happening. At one extreme, the ‘new worker elite’, the Knowledge Workers, gets to receive a higher-value education, helping form the new ‘power elite’, and the future ‘political class’ (nicely exemplified by the current British Government cabinet members, of whom 67 percent attended elite private schools). In terms of 16-19 curricula offerings, they will get to do the IBDP, or the Cambridge Pre-U, within the confines of elite private schools, the Grammar Schools, or top-performing state schools. A middle area, a second tier consisting of the future managerial class, gets to receive another form of education firmly rooted in the traditional

Advanced Level (A-Level) system. This tier already seemingly gets an ‘outstanding’ education in their predominantly middle-class areas. From now on, within the Academy/ Free School paradigm of independent state-funded (and partly for-profit) schooling they will get a higher share of the education budget. At the lower end, the ‘failing’ schools, largely in multi-cultural inner city areas, and those other schools left under control of the democratically-elected Local Authorities, will get to receive a lower share of state-funding and the children, many of who will go on to become unemployed or economically inactive, get to receive a basic vocational/ quasi-academic education consisting largely of the Brown-era Diplomas.

This model of hierarchical education has been identified as a form of educational *triage*, and is even by some as a deliberate ‘plan’. Only a relatively small pool of elite multi-lingual and critical-thinking ‘Knowledge Workers’ is needed, but Capital requires a large pool of intermediate workers. At the other extreme, Capital requires a larger pool of relatively under-educated yet skilled and motivated workers, knowledgeable in basic skills in numeracy and literacy, and perhaps possessing other useful attributes and ‘attitudes’.

England has been developing a divided school system in line with its class structure since the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. In 1864 the Schools Inquiry Commission, under the chairmanship of Lord Taunton, was appointed to inquire into the education in secondary schools. In 1868 the Commission recommended the establishment of a tiered national system of secondary schooling. The *first-grade schools* with a leaving age of 18 or 19 would provide a ‘liberal education’, including Latin and Greek, to prepare upper and upper-middle class boys for the universities and the older professions. The *second-grade schools* with a leaving age of 16 or 17 would prepare middle class boys for the army, the newer professions and departments of the Civil Service whilst the *third-grade schools* with a leaving age of 14 or 15 would teach the elements of French and Latin to lower middle class boys, who would become ‘small tenant farmers, small tradesmen, and superior artisans’ (Gillard, 2011). This model of schooling, allowing for different children to get a different level of schooling according to their class base is often termed *tripartism* (e.g. Gleeson, 1983). However, other commentators have identified a much more complex and hierarchical model of schooling; Chitty (2004) shows the *Education Act 1944* produced a six-tier model. The point to observe is that England has always had a differentiated schooling system.

What has become more noticeable is that the elite are now gaining accesses to an ‘international education’ (above and beyond a ‘liberal education’) equipping them better for working within a global context.

### **The need for further elaboration**

There is much in this paper that requires further discussion and thought. The ‘crowded’ curricula field at post-16 level is worthy of much further sociological study as it does seem to reveal much about the emerging class structure in England. It has been recently noted in this journal (Kennedy and Power, 2010: 223) that: ‘Despite generally being neglected in sociological research, the study of elite schooling provides valuable insights into how educational exclusion operates.’ The Cambridge Pre-U, for instance, although still in its infancy, is already beginning to look distinctly ‘middle-class’ with a core base consisting of good-performing state schools and elite private schools disillusioned with A-Level. The IBDP has also attracted a large base of elite HMC-member schools in England, whilst the IB is preparing a framework for networking that might in the near future facilitate class consciousness among the disparate ‘IB Learner’ (Bunnell, 2010). The Gordon Brown-era Diplomas on the other hand have been completely shunned by private schooling.

Of course, this is a very crude analysis, and the needs of Capital remain in the main an ‘enigma’ (Harvey, 2010). What requires further articulation is the extent to which the ‘crowded’ curriculum field in England is linked to evolving forms of capitalism. A stratified curriculum model is attractive to entrepreneurs and conducive to profit making as the evolving GEMS ‘airline’ model in Dubai shows; the IBDP can be used to extract fees ten times higher than a local curriculum. The role of philanthropists is also currently being propagated (as a means to legitimize inequality and wealth) and the term ‘philanthrocapitalism’ has emerged as capitalism adapts itself (Bishop and Green, 2008). One book advocates ‘creative capitalism’ as ‘the possibility of expanding capitalism into new areas and using it to solve problems that previously were assigned to charity or government’ (Kinsley, 2010: 1). This new found sense of ‘purpose’ and direction was predicted a decade ago in the context of France as the ‘new spirit of capitalism’ (Boltanski and Chiapello, 1999). The role of for-profit edubusiness (e.g. GEMS, Cognita, Edison, and the Swedish company Kunskapsskolan) and the associated edupreneurs

(e.g. Sunny Varkey, Chris Woodhead, Chris Whittle, and Peje Emilsson) has yet to undergo any major analysis in Britain even though at some point (Capitalism 4.0?) the signal might be given for these companies to make a profit in England; many of the ‘free-schools’ in Sweden already have this opportunity. The role of through-schooling and the future expansion of the *triage* model into primary schooling is one that will also need further analysis.

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