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# Fabian Education Policy Group Newsletter

# Edition 5

# Summer 2024

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# WELCOME…

…colleagues old and new to this Summer 2024 Fabian Education Policy Group newsletter. Edition 5 gathers news and notices that we are sure you will find interesting and useful.

As well as our round up of recent activities, the 'dates for your diary' and highlights section gives a flavour of exciting events that are coming up in the remainder of 2024.

This newsletter also contains our regular reminders about how you can share your ideas- whether it's writing a short essay or a blog piece or producing something longer for our new Fabian Education Policy Group Review publication. We really do want to hear from you and can provide a platform for your work.

Here’s hoping you are having a great summer.

# 1. 2024 round up so far...

We held Zoom meetings in January, February, March, April and June.

In **January, Alan Bainbridge** set up a UK based discussion around HE challenges and opportunities.

**Joe Allen (N Ireland) f**rom Queens university, Belfast spoke first and explained that there were significant challenges in terms of international students at Queens integrating and needing support with academic writing, accommodation, childcare and finance. Issues around UK students needing higher entry requirements and their difficulties with accommodation costs were problematic.

**Ron Barnett ( England)** said there were ten major challenges that universities face: (i) a funding crisis; (ii) extortionate living costs for students - impossible to live on loans; (iii) regulation of free speech - Sussex has had major problems; (iv) dominance of skills and diminution of humanities; (v) chat box - there is no policy; (vi) life-long learning entitlement - no sense of direction; (vii) apprenticeship degrees - patchy implementation; (viii) university rankings - power of these now ebbing, but there is only a vague notion of what is the public good of H.E.; (ix) governance - questions being raised about e.g. undue hierarchies within boards; (x) wider 3rd millennium issues e.g. how universities are approaching UNESCO Sustainability Goals. The horizons of universities are shrinking, but there are some extraordinary innovations in forms of learning.

**Simon Holt (Scotland)** from QMU reported that H.E. exists on a much smaller scale in Scotland, dominated by Edinburgh. There is a stronger connection with government giving universities more clout. There are no fees for Scottish students. Government funding per head has stayed the same but costs are now higher. The social justice element in student funding has been a success story, but 1200 places have just been removed by government edict. Only 50% of H.E. institutions are currently in financial surplus, the rest in deficit. All are diversifying to maintain sustainability. Volatility in the international sphere and the impact of Brexit has led to a reduction in the flow of foreign students. There are now moves in the direction of online provision.

**Dyfrig Jones (Wales**) from Bangor University explained that Wales does not have the same freedom of control over fee-charging as elsewhere; there is only a slight discount in fees which is a bugbear for university management, amounting to a loss of £20m per annum nationwide. Wales has the same kind of problems as elsewhere but is free of many cultural pressures from the UK government Dyfrig explained that his own University of Bangor is facing financial ruin but is hanging on in the hope of a change of government. There is a strong push, backed by the Welsh government, for closer collaboration.

This was followed by an excellent discussion with the guest speakers.

**Lisa Vickerage-Goddard of FEPG** introduced a short discussion about the Government’s Consultation on Gender Questioning. She pointed out that under the Equality Act of 2010 sexual orientation and gender reassignment are protected areas. The EHRC states that schools must take steps to see that discrimination does not occur. Lisa mentioned cases of teachers refusing to address pupils by chosen gender. Current gender guidance generally not helpful making life difficult for transgender children.

In **February, Lord Simon Woolley, Principal of Homerton College** spoke to us. In a fascinating address he explained his college originated in Homerton, east London, 250 years ago as a college of dissenters, and it still has close connections with that area. hToday it maintains its dissenting and radical tradition. Simon explained that Martin Luther King once said that education is important, but without attention to character it is dangerous and only serves self-interest. Character is developed at Homerton by the culture of the institution - this is key. He works at Homerton first by attempting to create a culture where no one is above anyone else, trying to develop an eco-system of equality e.g. by personally working with and alongside the cooks and cleaners. Secondly, he intervenes in extra-curricular activities with change-making programmes related to ethics and values, aimed at helping students understand themselves and to arrive at the best ‘me’, and to understand systems, media and politics. Thirdly, emphasising the importance of sharing ideas with people you don’t agree with - bringing people together rather than dividing them. Simon explained that Education is about bringing people to a better understanding of themselves, and to believe they can make changes in society.

In **March ,** **FED** members: Jo Malone, Alistair Falk and Leila La’s spoke about proposals of the Foundation for Educational Development (FED) towards a new structure for the administration of education to decentralize the system (a detailed description of these proposals was circulated to all members before this meeting).  
  
Alistair said FED, established in 2019, began with the purpose of addressing the problem of the constant churn of education ministers, causing severe difficulties with long-term policymaking. A 10-year plan is essential, requiring a neutral space eco-system (i.e. cross-party) together with intelligent policymaking with a wide range of voices. Having built a set of proposals, FED’s work is now firmly linked to the electoral cycle focusing on the first year of a new government.  
  
Jo Malone said they had made a case for a long-term approach that was evidence-based using both lived experience and research. There was broad agreement that centralisation was dysfunctional. One of the suggested mechanisms was for a National Assembly for Education to bring a wide range of stakeholders together. However, their proposals were still in consultation mode and not set in stone.  
  
Alistair added that another important proposal was for a Chief Education Officer as an adviser to government - DfE is the only department of government that doesn’t have a chief officer.  
  
A lengthy discussion followed, including a short break-up into ‘rooms’, during which a variety of issues were raised

In **April Katie Eberstein**, Brighton and Hove Environmental officer and **Jonathan Cooper ex head teacher in Brighton explained Brighton's innovative Progressive Curriculum** Sustainability Entitlement Strategy 'Our City, Our World' to the group.

They reported that three Brighton M.P.s are involved in the project, and interest has been shown by DoE, UNESCO and University of Reading. Sustainability is a matter of extreme urgency. The 1.5% target for maximum temperature increase is not within reach and effects are beginning to be felt - e.g. droughts in the Amazon region, floods in UK combined with driest months on record. Essential to keep emissions as low as possible with a duty to the next generation. It was realised in 2019 that current efforts were not working, and a change of approach was needed.

They explained that sustainibility is a moral purpose and education is key, giving students the ability to make right choices and schools becoming sustainable institutions. There had previously been low expectations in this area with little or no rigorous work.

A survey of 7,000 teachers last year showed that many teachers wanted to promote values, well-being and sustainabilty. Other surveys show that young people feel insufficient is being done to promote sustainability, but they don't know how to get involved: only 4% of pupils know much about climate change, 95% thought it important and they were not optimistic about the future. 90% of parents and 97% of teachers thought it important.

The speakers explained their strategy is to work in schools within the existing curriculum and trying to embed key knowledge about sustainability into this. Schools might look at e.g. environmental charities and climate justice. For example, Working with a 'carbon calculator.' Their approach is led by connections with nature e.g. using the North and South Downs with planned opportunities for outdoor activity, for example, the University of Derby is helping with this. The aim is to empower children with hope for the future.

Katie and Jonathan reported to us that 90% of our schools are now involved with everyone drawn in - not only teachers but everyone who works in the school, cleaners and admin. staff. There is a thorough training programme with a leader in each school to roll it out to others.

In **May,** **Mike Blamires and FEPG’ Marilyn Leask who work in the Cooperative schools’ network spoke about the concept of Cooperative school systems**.

Mike Blamires explained that principles of collaboration, co-operation and community engagement have been overlooked within the current Academy system, especially where Multi-Academy Trusts have grown in order to increase the amount of money they control. This can result in them imposing values, ethos and culture on an individual academy school that does not necessarily reflect the values, ethos and culture of the community the school or academy should be serving. Increasingly the influence and control exerted by a MAT on its academies to standardise uniform, curriculum, pedagogy and staff training results in a disconnect between an academy and its community.

The proposals presented by Mike and Marilyn reverse the trend of academies which are out of touch with their communities and local educational networks. Communities should be empowered to directly and democratically have a say in the running of their schools and have some influence on its values, pedagogy and curriculum. These proposals seek to transfer power and control of education in a co-operative way to communities through local delegation of funding and management of education as a community entitlement and resource. Reorganising academy chains into co-operative community school networks involves fostering collaboration, cooperation, shared values, and community involvement. By doing so, we can create a more inclusive and effective education system in the UK that has the confidence of local communities. Mike explained that by implementing these recommendations for cooperation, the education system can make a significant contribution to addressing the need for a fair economy based on more co-operatives, increased awareness and action on climate change thus creating a better future for all.

A collaborative, co-operative, community approach to education that will unchain our schools enabling them to meet enduring and emerging challenges.

In **June, Alan Parker with FEPG Vice chair Deb Outhwaite** who are members of “**The New Visions for Education Group**", spoke about change in education and specifically the role of structures (based on Alan’s recent paper *Stronger Partnerships, simple structures, developing a case for structural reform.*) Alan talked of the costs of the current fragmentation of structures and two historic divergent educational philosophies- a planned centrally driven system and a market driven competitive system. This has resulted in:

* Higher overhead costs (& less cash to the front line) than 1980s ​
* Wasteful duplication, proliferation of capital & revenue funding streams ​
* Corrosive Unfairness between schools in:​
* Funding ​
* Levels of autonomy ​
* Regulation ​
* Inequalities for parents and children in:​
* Access ​
* Quality and resources. ​
* Admissions arrangements ​
* Different ownership & governance structures​
* Lack of transparency ​
* Uneven routes to accountability​
* Costs of legal transition & ‘re-brokering’ of academies ​
* Inequitable and inefficient school place planning mechanisms​

Alan suggested the following structures delivered over time with minimal change to the existing landscape would greatly benefit the cohesiveness of the system.

* Central Government: legislate for unified statutory framework​.
* Middle tier – statutory functions between the centre and schools​
* Statutory body (local /combined / regional authority) for area functions including: ​
* Oversight of admissions, ​
* Place planning.​
* SEN. ​
* Transport & other community functions​.
* A charitable support body for all schools. Equivalent to MATs or VA Foundations but with (some flexibility within) a defined range of functions ​
* Governing bodies, constituted via regulations allowing necessary flexibility (e.g. federations.) Powers of GB:​
* General oversight of the management of the school​
* Appoint Headteacher​
* Exercise employer functions.​
* Determine admissions policy *[N.B. not the Admissions Authority]* ​
* The “Headteacher” a “statutory post”​

**Discussion around teacher education.**

There was a very interesting discussion on current challenges and best practices in ITE led by Committee members. Following the meeting a blog post was developed by **Brian Hudson and Deborah Outhwaite** entitled ‘**Addressing the crisis in the professional education and development of teachers in England**.’ It begins as follows:

The commitment of the new government in its [manifesto](https://labour.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Change-Labour-Party-Manifesto-2024-large-print.pdf) to introduce a new entitlement for teachers to continuing professional development is to be welcomed. Likewise, is its commitment to the importance of an early career framework for beginning teachers. However, the pledge to simply “update the Early Career Framework” and to “maintaining its grounding in evidence” does not go far enough. A full review of the underlying principles and the associated evidence base is necessary in order to address the current crisis in the professional education and development of teachers as encapsulated in *[Teacher Education in Crisis: The State, the Market and the Universities in England](https://www.bloomsbury.com/uk/9781350399662/)* by Viv Ellis and colleagues.

You can read the full text here by following this link: [Addressing the crisis in the professional education and development of teachers in England: Brian Hudson and Deborah Outhwaite. – Fabians Education Policy Group UK (edublogs.org)](https://fabians4education.edublogs.org/2024/08/27/addressing-the-crisis-in-the-professional-education-and-development-of-teachers-in-england-brian-hudson-and-deborah-outhwaite/)

**In July** our article entitled ‘**A crucial Start’** exploring our ideas for a reshaping of education **was published in the Fabian Review**. This article was based on our submission to the Labour Party policy forum entitled ‘**Labour’s preparation for government- Establishing commissions, maximising impact during the first hundred days and beyond’ which can be found on our website.**

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# 2. Dates for your diary 2024/2025

NB: All Zoom meeting are 7.00pm-9.00pm.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Monday 23rd September, 2024 | Zoom | Sammy Wright |
| Monday 28th October,2024 | Zoom | Sir David Bell |
| Tuesday 19th November,2024 | House of Commons seminar | Aims and Values- with Mick Walters and panel. |
| Monday 25th November,2024 | Zoom | NEU President – Daniel Kabede. |
| December, 2024 | No Meeting |  |
| Monday January 27th, 2025 | Zoom |  |
| Monday February 24th, 2025 | Zoom |  |
| Monday March 31st, 2025 | Zoom |  |
| Monday April 28th 2025 | Zoom |  |
| Monday May 19th, 2025 | Zoom |  |
| Monday June 23rd | Zoom |  |
| Monday 7th July | Committee AGM. |  |
| Monday 29th September 2025. | Zoom |  |
| Monday 27th October, 2025 | Zoom |  |
| Tuesday 11th November | House of Commons Seminar |  |
| Monday 24th November 2025, |  |  |

**3: Highlights for the rest of 2024**

**Monday, 23rd September 2024, 7pm:** Our first Zoom meeting after the summer break features Sammy Wright whose book *Exam nation: Why our obsession with grades fails Everyone- and a better way to think about school*’ has recently been published. Sammy was a member of the Social Mobility Commission for three years and his is a critical voice.

Sammy’s book is getting a great deal of coverage with recent reviews by Melissa Benn in the Financial times and a different take by Michael Gove in the Times on Saturday.

A book cover with a white background

Description automatically generated

**Monday 28th October 2024**: **Sir David Bell KCB DL**: currently Vice chancellor and chief executive of Sunderland University. Sir David has recently been working with Bridget Phillipson on Early Years reform. In this talk he will be focusing on his extensive lifetime experience in education with a presentation entitled ‘Four *decades of educational reform: the good, the bad, and the ugly.’*

**Monday 25th November: Daniel Kabede. NEU President.**

Daniel will be presenting some of the ideas of the NEU’s Manifesto for Education.

[A manifesto for education | National Education Union (neu.org.uk)](https://neu.org.uk/campaigns/manifesto-education)

**Tuesday 19th November - Aims and Values in Education (House of Commons**) **6.00pm-8.00pm.**

In this open public seminar at the House of Commons in the autumn **Mick Walters** (and a panel to be announced later )will discuss the importance of Aims and Values in Education.

# 4. Our new Cartoon series

One of our members has been producing cartoons that illustrate key issues that we want promoting in Education. These have had considerable traction and impact.

They are being released on Twitter/X from our [Fabians' Education Policy Group (@EduFabians) / X](https://x.com/EduFabians) handle so when you see them, please retweet if you can

We have posted cartoons that focus on:

.

We will also be posting them on our website and other social media in due course. Many thanks to our colleague for creating them.

# ‪the title is: Imagine opportunities for all . Three people are talking. One says: So many have missed out on education. What might the new govt. do? They have to deal with 140,000 children out of school. The country also needs an educated population who have life long opportunities to learn and change career. ‪another replies: Well we need more teachers and an interesting curriculum. Plus for catch up, imagine if there was a “National Open School” in England like the Open University but for school and FE qualifications*.‬ ‪ a third says: Australia has provided distance education for rural people for more than 70 years & they have a virtual FE college so anyone can get qualifications. ‬ If there was the will to do this in England ways could be found. Coordinating existing LA Virtual Schools and private provision would be a start.

# Image

# The Image is three teachers sitting around a table talking. The title of the cartoon is: What are your top 2 hopes for a new government…? One person says: Bringing the best brains together to find solutions to the teacher shortage… A rebranded inspection and advice service: sharing best practice nationally... Another person says: Celebrating teachers’ great education practice with awards to leading teachers and schools… Harnessing modern technologies to support ITT & CPD… Creating a “National Open School” to complement the Open University giving access to qualifications for all… A third person says: An interesting, creative and challenging curriculum developing the critical thinking skills and knowledge essential for citizens in a democracy… Creating an education system based on a consensual approach and best evidence rather than ideology…

# 5. Opportunities to write for us:

Please submit longer articles or reviews of books to for our new Review or Blogs (for our website.) We look forward to reading them. The opportunities are:

# A: Our new FEPG Review. To be published twice each year beginning in January 2025

Each edition of the Review will be made up of a brief editorial, a newsletter, articles (normally four to six) and book reviews (normally two).

**Articles**

Articles published in the FEPG Review will explore and present ideas and issues relevant to and emerging from policy analyses, philosophically based reflection and/or empirical research.

Articles should be of between 1000 and 6000 words, double spaced and include the title of the contribution, the name(s) of the author(s) and the name to be used for correspondence together with an email address. Each article should be accompanied by an abstract of 100 words, and a short note of the biographical details of the author(s).

The material submitted to the Review will typically be longer than blogs or book reviews. There will be a greater depth to the ideas and issues explored than may be seen in blogs and book reviews.

Articles will be published as soon after submission as is reasonably possible with the intention that material will be grouped into volumes (twice each year).

**Book Reviews**

Reviews of books relevant to the aims and scope of FEPG publishing are welcomed. The word ‘book ’is to be interpreted generously, including, for example, conference proceedings, reports from NGOs, charities and other bodies. If a reviewer wishes to discuss whether a book would be regarded as relevant or to submit a review, please contact the relevant person (see below for contacts). Reviews may be generated in a variety of ways. Reviewers may already have a copy of the book and, following the guidelines, should simply submit the review by email attachment. Or reviewers may wish to suggest a book should be requested from a publisher and sent to them for review. Or the book reviews editor may contact individuals to suggest a review of a particular publication. Reviews will be welcomed from members of FEPG and others. A reviewer should clearly summarize and comment on the material being reviewed. The usual total length of a book review is 400-600 words. This includes the text of the review, bibliographical information, name and contact details of the reviewer. Pieces longer than 600 words may be submitted as a contribution to the FEPG blog or Review (see guidelines for those opportunities elsewhere in this document).

Each book review should be presented as follows:

Title of Publication, Author or Editor Name/s (ed./eds) (Year), Edition number if not

first, publisher, number of pages, ISBN, h/bk or p/bk, price.

Name and email address of reviewer (and, if appropriate, ORCID identifier)

The review of 400-600 words, written in Word.

If necessary, a final list of references, titled ‘References’.

**B: Blogs https://fabians4education.edublogs.org/ (published separately from the Review online at our website)**

There are two opportunities to blog.

1: Our general blog where authors explore an issue which they feel strongly about or their own personal experiences. These are typically 500-800 words. They have no referencing and are accessible to our membership and to a wider audience.

2: Our current special series ‘Educational Priorities for a Progressive government’. This series links in with FEPG member Tony Breslin’s #Top of the Class blog on his Transform Education and Breslin Public Policy sites. Here specifically we welcome material that is:

A. Accessible to non-educationalists, relatively jargon-free and not overly referenced ‘prac-ademic’ rather than ‘academic’ - academically credible and rigorous but practically accessible.

B. Relatively short, fresh and snappy, typically in the range 350-500 words.

C. Published under a title that is a call to action that begins with something like ‘Introduce X...; Develop Y; Replace Z...

D: Comfortably under the title ‘progressive’ and in line with the values of the publishing organisation (i.e., FEPG and the wider Fabian community in our case but deliberately proposed for any government claiming a ‘progressive’ orientation, rather than just an explicitly Labour one).

E: (Therefore) not constrained by any party line or by policy proposals already in the public domain from the Labour Party or any other organisation.

F: Relaxed in terms of potentially ‘conflicting’ tensions between different posts as, collectively, these constitute a menu of policy options not an internally cohesive ‘manifesto’.

**Referencing**

Please note, it will not always be necessary to include references (especially for blog entries and book reviews) but, if appropriate, please conform to Harvard style (full guidance provided by one university is available https://subjectguides.york.ac.uk/referencing-style-guides/harvard). This would mean providing name(s) and date(s) within the text, e.g., (Smith 1999, 27) and a final list of references. Whilst aiming for presentation that is fully professional, we aim to keep things simple. If material has been previously published it is accepted that a full re-write of references would not be necessary. Two examples of our referencing style are shown below. An example of a reference for a book for the final list of references is:

Peck, J. and Coyle, M. (2005). The student’s guide to writing. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

An example of a reference to a journal article is:

Selman, P. (2012). The global decline of intercountry adoption: what lies ahead? Social Policy and Society, 11(03), 381-397. Available at: doi:10.1017/S1474746412000085

**Submission process**

Please contact the person shown below as appropriate:

*Christopher Harris (chrisharris55@hotmail.co.uk*): overarching matters relevant to publishing policy and practice; articles and newsletter items for the FEPG Review; the FEPG blog. Please copy in our two deputy editors: *Brian Hudson* [*brianghudson@gmail.com*](mailto:brianghudson@gmail.com) *and Valerie Bossman-Quarshie-* [*Brownsuggs@hotmail.co.uk*](mailto:Brownsuggs@hotmail.co.uk) *when emailing Christopher.*

*Ian Davies (ian.davies@york.ac.uk):* book reviews to be included in the FEPG Review

# 6. What's new on our blog, social media pages and at the website

**Blog**: There’ve been some new pieces published at the blog since our last newsletter, the most recent being a piece on Addressing the crisis in the professional education and development of teachers in England by Brian Hudson and Deb Outhwaite, ‘Making our schools inclusive’ by Mel Ainscow and ‘Researching secondary school performance measures’ by Ian Widdows.

**X(Twitter):** Follow us @EduFabians. We're adding new followers all the time so please don't forget to retweet our posts to spread the word about us.

Our website www.fabianeducation.com remains the go-to source of information for all things relating to the FEPG. If you haven't already done so, please sign up for the 'Members' Area' of the site, where you will find documents like minutes of previous meetings.

All the best and see you soon!

The FEPG Organising Committee

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Chair | Brian Matthews |
| Vice-Chair | Deb Outhwaite |
| Publications and Media | Chris Harris |
| Communications | Marilyn Leask |
| Secretary | Alba Moreillo |
| Treasurer | Valerie Bossman-Quarshie |
| External liaison/ guest bookings | Brian Hudson |
| General responsibilities | Sarah Younie, Alan Bainbridge, Rebecca Smith. Ian Davies, Norman Rimmell (Minutes) |
| Twitter handle | @EduFabians |
| Blog address | <http://fabians4education.edublogs.org/> |
| Website address | [www.fabianeducation.com](https://www.fabianeducation.com) |
| E-mail | [FabiansEducation@gmail.com](mailto:FabiansEducation@gmail.com) |