Partnership not Paternalism

A Personal Vision of the Future of Independent/State School Partnerships

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Preface

This paper is an important contribution to the debate on the future of independent/ state school partnerships from two highly respected headteachers. Never before to our knowledge have two heads from either side of the divide collaborated in this way. Many conclusions are provisional and have been put forward to stimulate further discussion and debate.

Only six percent of pupils attend private schools, and the number is not rising, but the private sector has a disproportionate impact on our schooling system. New partnerships could be crucial to increasing social mobility and rebuilding social cohesion.

As well as posing challenges to policymakers, we hope that the paper will provide a useful mechanism for all schools to reflect and build on current practice.

IPPR is grateful to both authors for giving up their time and thoughts for this paper. The editor would also like to thank Veronica Oakeshott for editorial support. However, the views expressed in this paper are those of the authors alone.

IPPR welcomes comments about this paper. For further information about our education research, visit our website at www.ippr.org.

Joe Hallgarten

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Antony Edkins
Anthony Seldon
Chapter One: Two Heads, Two Systems, One Partnership

We have very different experiences of education in our own lives, and very different experiences as teachers. But we both believe that partnership is the only intelligent way forward to bridge the divide, which is still growing, between state and independent school sectors.

The Damage of Retaining the Status Quo

No other developed country has such a gulf between two systems of education. The divide is deeply damaging in a variety of ways, social, pastoral and academic.

- Social cohesion is affected adversely by the divide, which perpetuates the existence of the entrenched British class system.
- Poor children generally receive an inferior education while the better-off, whose parents can afford independent school fees, receive a privileged education. It is the children who are most in need of the kind of privileged education enjoyed currently by the few who are least likely to receive it.
- Exam grades are improving more rapidly at independent schools than in state schools. In 2002, grades of GCSE candidates at independent schools improved at three times the rate of grades of pupils in the state sector (*The Times* 31.8.02). 22.4 per cent of pupils in independent schools received an A* grade up from 21.6 per cent in 2001 (compared to the national average of 5 per cent in 2002, up from 4.9 per cent in 2001) (*ISCis, 2002 News, 2*).
- The learning experience differs because class-sizes are so different. In January 2001, the teacher:pupil ratio in state secondary schools was 17.1:1, whereas in independent senior schools it was 9.9:1. The graph below reveals the group divide in the 1990s (*The Times Educational Supplement, 30.03.01* and *Seldon, 2001, 6*).

How teacher:pupil ratios have varied in the private and public sectors

![Graph](image-url)
• The quality and range of extra-curricular activities in independent senior schools far outstrips what is generally available in state schools. The difference in provision of culture, sport and outward bound activities is unacceptable for a country aiming to provide equality of opportunity and common entitlements for all its young.
• Independent education disproportionately helps access to ‘top’ universities, as the work of the Sutton Trust research shows. It analysed access to the top 13 universities from statistics published by the Higher Education Funding Council. In summary the analysis showed that:
  - Children from independent schools account for 7 per cent of the school population and for 39 per cent of the entry to top universities.
  - Children from less affluent social classes account for 50 per cent of the school population and only 13 per cent of entry to top universities and children who live in poor areas account for 33 per cent of the population but only 6 per cent of top university entry.
  - The chance of getting into one of the top 13 universities is approximately 25 times greater if you come from an independent school than from a lower social class or live in a poor area.
  - Figures for the top five universities show an even more exaggerated pattern of admissions in favour of independent schools, with 4600 entries from independent schools or almost half of the 9,600 total entry and only 980 from less affluent social classes and 450 from poor areas.  

**Bridging the Divide**

No government has found the way to narrow, still less bridge the divide. Conservative governments have generally ignored the problem. During the last Conservative Government, the widening gap was convenient to publicise the superior performance of the independent over the state sector. Labour governments traditionally have made threatening noises when out of power about abolishing or handicapping independent schools. Once in office, other priorities took over, and Labour let independent schools continue undisturbed.

The Tories introduced the government assisted places scheme in 1981, designed to provide educational opportunities in independent schools for able children from non-privileged backgrounds. In practice the scheme, abolished by Labour in 1997, did little to raise education opportunities for the least advantaged, and nothing to bridge the divide between both sectors of education. Indeed, the scheme exacerbated tensions between both sectors, and left state schools feeling that they were not good enough to educate the brightest children. The main beneficiaries were the predominantly middle-class children, blessed with parents adept at form filling, while disproportionately low numbers of the least advantaged children joined the scheme *(Adonis and Pollard, 1999,48-9)*. Government did not close the loopholes that allowed middle class parents to abuse the system, and many independent schools were only too happy to remain quiet. Now that they are giving out their own bursary funds to less-privileged children, they are far more scrupulous.

The most effective response to addressing the divide has been that of the Labour government since 1997, which produced its plan of partnership. There have been two main partnership schemes.

**The Independent/State School Partnerships (ISSP)** initiative was set up in November 1997 by the then Minister for School Standards, Stephen Byers. The aim of the scheme is to

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promote collaborative working between the independent and state school sectors, to raise standards and enhance educational opportunities for all pupils, as well as to break down the barriers between the sectors.

The scheme has run for five years, overseen by the Independent State-School Partnership (ISSP) advisory group. A total fund of £600,000 was made available for partnerships in the first year 1998-1999. This included £250,000 from the Sutton Trust. 47 pilot projects were funded, involving 130 schools and 11,000 pupils.

£1 million of DfEE funding was announced in October 1998 for the second tranche of funding, 1999-2001. The Sutton Trust pledged an additional £200,000 over two years. This total was later increased to £1.6 million and supported 28 one-year projects in 1999-2000 and 28 two-year projects in 1999-2001. Projects covered all curricular areas and regions of England. Almost 200 schools and over 19,000 pupils were involved (12,000 from the state and 7,000 from independent schools). Partnerships ranged in size from two partners to more than ten partners, including Local Education Authorities, Further and Higher Education Institutions and businesses. £777,000 was made available in 2001-2002 to fund a total of 34 projects. A total of £778,000 was made available in 2002-2003 to fund 32 projects.

Much activity has thus taken place. But to put the sums into perspective, only some £4 million has been spent on the five years of partnership since 1997, which has barely scraped the surface of what can be achieved. The first evaluation report by the Leeds University School of Education notes this, ‘The global sum being spent on the ISSP scheme [is] modest in the context of national expenditure’ (First Evaluation Report, Appendix 3). The £4m in total is in fact less than the annual budget of a large comprehensive school.

The Sutton Trust has some claim to be the originator of partnership. Peter Lampl came up with the idea of funding schemes to help develop talented non-privileged children, and worked on this initially with King Edward School in Birmingham and Dulwich College in 1997. The DfEE then took up the scheme. At first, The Trust part-funded the DfES scheme directly, but since 2001, it has been funding partnership schemes which the government was to fund and which accorded more closely with the Sutton Trust’s interests, especially the gifted and talented.

In 2002, the National College of School Leadership launched its own scheme of ‘networked learning communities’ which gave money initially to 42 partnerships of state and independent schools. The focus was placed on using ICT as the mode of communication between schools within the partnership. It plans further projects to come on stream in 2003.

We want to see a considerable extension of partnership, with both government and private finance to support it, and we also want far more teeth to be used to coerce schools into forming partnerships with each other. We are encouraged by the powers to facilitate innovation, and the encouragement to form federations in the Education Act of 2002. But we do not believe the government is going nearly far enough, not least financially, to realise the potential for partnership.

Our Separate Experiences

We have reached this conclusion separately, looking at the problem at opposite ends of the telescope. Antony Edkins has spent his life in state schools, most recently as deputy head and now head of Falmer High School in Brighton. Falmer has received an Ofsted grade 7 rating
for the socio-economic standing of its local community. Over 40 per cent of its students are on free school meals and the average family income is about £11,000 per year. It has the highest number of ‘looked after’ children in any electoral ward in the country. Literacy and numeracy levels are 25 per cent below the national average. There are low levels of inter-personal skills as measured by crime statistics and domestic violence, and there is an ever-increasing problem with anti social behaviour of the young, including an increase in violent attacks, alcohol-related problems and drugs.

Anthony Seldon taught in a state school during his teaching practice, and on two occasions in his career tried and failed to get jobs in the state sector. He taught at three independent schools before becoming Head of Brighton College in 1997. He is one of many independent school heads who is embarrassed by the educational divide, and who would like to see concerted government action to ensure that both sectors work more closely together. Brighton College, while geographically close to its two partner schools in the east end of the City of Brighton, is at the opposite end of the social scale to Falmer and East Brighton College of Media Arts (COMART). While it is less socially exclusive than ‘grand’ public schools like Eton and Winchester, its fees, nevertheless, at £11,000 for day pupils and £16,000 for boarders, clearly put it beyond the reach of most parents.

The Brighton Partnership

Our joint project began in September 2000. The three school partners were Falmer High School, COMART and Brighton College, and we were joined by the Local Education Authority, the Education Action Zone and the Institute of Education at the University of Sussex. Roedean School was also increasingly involved with the partnership. We deliberately set out to look at a broad range of possible partnership activities, not the least because we wanted to try to discover what might be learnt in general about the possibilities and blind alleys of partnership.

The partnership thus included a local history project with year 7, a media arts project with year 10, an ICT/Technology project with year 9 and joint adventure activities including team-building activities such as sailing on the sea. Once relationships between the schools started to develop, and suspicions were laid on one side, a whole variety of other forms of sharing came to the fore, which had not been in the initial project proposal, including sharing of teachers, facilities and good practice. The success of the project owed much to the enthusiasm of the heads involved, and we were lucky to have Dr Jill Clough at COMART and then Patricia Metham at Roedean joining our consortium, both of whom shared our vision. We frequently met together and we all concur that goodwill from the top is the sine qua non for effective partnership.

Falmer received an excellent Ofsted report in 2001 which praised the partnership scheme. The report said of partnership students that they were the ‘most well behaved and non-aggressive and co-operative group facilitators had worked with’, and it expressed ‘delight in a programme that breaks down stereotypical views’. Falmer students observed that independent students are ‘maybe like us’. Girl prefects benefited in many ways from the joint ventures arranged with Roedean School. Falmer has improved its performance since the partnership scheme began in 2000. One cannot of course prove a direct causal link, but it is nevertheless noteworthy that since partnership began, the school has benefited from improved GCSE results and improved attendance, which is now well above 90 per cent overall, and an average of 96 per cent for partnership students. In terms of standards, Falmer’s improvements have exceeded the national trend. GCSE results up from 19 per cent 5A*-C grades (2000) to 31 per cent (2002), with A*-G grades up from 88 per cent (2000) to 100 per cent (2002).
The Reasons for the Gulf

The heart of the gulf between both educational sectors is of course financial. Over double the amount is spent on each child in the independent sector compared to the state sector. Extra cash buys not only more resources, but also more teachers. This disparity translates into the difference in class size: in 2001, the average size of state secondary classes was 22.2, compared to 10.6 in independent schools (Seldon, 2001, 5-6). The Centre for Economic Policy Research at University College, London found in 2002 that reducing class size in state schools increased the likelihood that pupils would want to stay on at school beyond sixteen. Dr Christian Dustmann concluded that reducing class sizes in state schools towards the far lower levels in independent schools would have significant educational effects (The Times, 2.9.02).

One obvious solution would thus be for state schools to receive the same levels of funding as the independent schools enjoy (via their parents’ fees). But it would require the annual education budget of £25 billion to more than double to match the funding in independent schools. Even then, independent schools would still have the advantage with their well-endowed plant and grounds and from a better socialised and motivated pupil body. And could the extra 30,000 teachers be found for the state schools?

Another solution would be to abolish independent schools. In many ways this would be the ideal move, because it would force everyone, gifted and ordinary, rich or poor, to be educated in the same school system. But it would prove financially reckless, legally and politically impossible, as well as morally highly questionable to deny the opportunity for parents to pay for their children’s education.

One is thus left with the best solution being to see both sectors working closely together. It is the prescription that we both support. But what benefits does partnership mean? We turn to this subject in the next chapter.
Chapter Two: The Objectives of Partnership

Partnership is not going suddenly to transform the relationship between state and independent schools. Nor will it lead to sudden and dramatic improvements in the performance of state schools and the lives of its students. It is nevertheless a very important tool in addressing the bi-polar system which has endured for too long. Taken in conjunction with the current improvements in state sector performance and the expenditure increases announced in 2002, partnership is bringing a wide variety of benefits. It would be a mistake to look for only quantifiable improvements. Much of the purpose of partnership is social and to do with the quality of life and education experience enjoyed by state school children. These facets are essentially not measurable.

It would also be foolish not to admit that the benefits will be greater for state schools. Even highly successful state schools have little money and have to reach out to their parent bodies for investment. But the gains need not be one-sided.

- Partnership activities expose independent school children to a far wider social and cultural range of child. State school children will meet children from generally very different backgrounds. Children will bring their own preconceptions to meetings with those from the other sector. These preconceptions will be moderated and advised as a result of the exposure. If the country is to become more cohesive, then it is essential that the existing divides in our society are addressed. For fifty years, governments have been talking about building a more meritocratic society. Partnership is a potent force helping to create such a society. As John Mellors of Loughborough (independent) Grammar School writes of their academic subject-based partnership with Woodbrook Vale High School (state): ‘Our project, we feel, has started a process of breaking down the barrier between the two communities – a benefit which is not measurable, but which is every bit as important as the perceived benefits which are observable in the classroom’ (Papers, Brighton Partnership Conference, 2002, no. 11).

- Students and indeed teachers in the state sector can have their aspirations and expectations raised by sensitively conducted partnership exercises. Pupils at Falmer High School in Brighton engaged in our partnership scheme have had their eyes opened and their expectations raised through encounters with their independent school co-partners. Pupils at Heymann Primary School in Nottingham, who were in a Mathematics partnership with Nottingham High School (independent), benefited similarly; as their Head noted ‘There has been a level of energy, fluidity and excitement amongst our pupils, which has led to a deeper engagement with tasks presented’ (Papers, Brighton Partnership Conference, 2002, no. 2).

- Partnership can be used to raise attainment. Teachers can go in to other schools to give specialist sessions, or pupils can cross in to other schools for masterclasses. For example, the Durham project initially involved senior school teachers coming in to primary schools to teach French. After a year of government funding, Barclays and then CfBT agreed to fund the project (Report, Brighton Partnership Conference, 2002, no.15).

- Partnership can provide challenge and enrichment for teachers. It provides the opportunity for exchange of ideas, fresh perspectives and new and stimulating relationships. They can gain fresh information about academic work and pastoral systems. Governors, too, have much to learn and gain.
• Students who might be unable to study a GCSE, an AS or an A level subject at their own school or college might be able to learn the subject at another college or school within the partnership.

• Partnership can reduce social divides by encouraging children and, indeed, adults to meet and to exchange ideas. A parent at Southbank International School in North London said of the partnership with Jack Taylor Special School, ‘I think this relationship is invaluable for what it teaches our children – compassion, understanding, tolerance and respect for all people; that, underneath, we are basically all the same’ (Report, Brighton Partnership Conference, 2002, no. 5).

Partnership can thus enhance learning opportunities for children to be exposed to new teachers, new methods, and to meet other children who might have different and higher expectations, and indeed better working practices than their own. But partnership can also be very challenging and difficult to bring off. The obstacles are the subject of the next chapter.
Chapter Three: The Problems with Partnership

There can be no disguising that partnership between the state and independent sector is difficult. Indeed, the obstacles can be so great as to deter all attempts at making partnership work. What are those obstacles?

- **Teacher resistance and suspicion from the state sector side** Independent schools are not generally popular with state school teachers; they see some of the best children creamed off into the elite independent sector and they can resent the facilities, benefits and the success of their independent school colleagues. It is true that many state school teachers might envy those working in the independent sector but few in practice make the crossover (Smithers and Robinson: 2000a, 2000b, 2001). The potential is always there, however, for the independent sector to ‘cream off staff from the maintained sector’, an eventuality that has lain in part behind the drive to increase pay in state schools (Smithers and Robinson, 2000, 55). It is rare for state school teachers to even visit independent schools while some fear this will be patronised if they do so. There is thus not much incentive without a funded partnership scheme for state school teachers to want to engage in bridge-building.

- **Resistance from independent schools** There are fewer objections from the independent school teachers to the idea of partnership though there is a common apprehension that they will be thought poorly of by their state school colleagues. Some feel awkward in the presence of state school staff. Heads in independent schools can worry that parents who are paying fees might resent their money being spent on state school children with no immediate benefit to their own children. No parent has ever expressed such thoughts to Anthony Seldon, but some Heads have received such parental concerns.

- **Lack of positive support from the local education authority** Councils can resent the very idea of a partnership and be unenthusiastic about proposals for partnership within their authority. An unsympathetic Director of Education can doom partnership.

- **Lack of support from heads on either side of the education divide** Few heads will have partnership high on their priorities. Heads have to prioritise their scarce time (and money). They can become despondent at the prospect of filling in forms to apply for partnership funding which might never appear.

- **Independent schools having the wrong attitude to partnership** The grant-awarding body was very sensitive to the fact that some senior independent schools were undoubtedly been motivated to form partnerships because of the cynical desire to market themselves with feeder primary schools. They have thus, for example, proposed academic master classes or sports tournaments to this end. Most of such projects were weeded out, and funding rejected. While not in itself a bad reason for partnership, it nevertheless does not improve relations with local senior state schools (nor other independent schools) who see the best children being enticed away from them.

- **Time** If partnership is to work well, it requires an enormous commitment of time from staff and indeed pupils involved. Staff teaching in both sectors complain rightly that they are over-stretched, not the least with bureaucracy. Partnership activities often require teachers to be away during the school day, which means costs and inconvenience with cover, or after the school day. Independent school teachers often have extra curricular activities to run after school and boarding duties in the evening. Weekend activities cause similar problems.
Partnership can lead to disillusionment among state school teachers Not all realise quite how comfortable the lives are of their colleagues on the other side of the divide (where the teachers also benefit from longer holidays and often better pay and conditions). Many state school teachers have never stepped inside an independent school. When they do so, these jealousies could be inflamed. Worst, it can encourage more to apply for jobs in the independent sector and it might even discourage independent school teachers from moving the other way.

Incompatible ages of children in schools While some independent schools, particularly in cities, break at 11, many independent schools break at 13, when children leave prep schools for senior or public schools. While year 6 is a comparatively fallow time in prep schools and thus a good time for partnership, it is the busy final year in primary schools. The first two years of state secondary school, years 7 and 8, correspond with the time that prep school children are intently concentrating on ‘Common Entrance’ to senior independent schools. Despite the new added rigours of AS level, year 12 is traditionally a good time in independent schools for pupils to be engaged in extra-mural activity, but most students in the state sector are in sixth form colleges which have not shown themselves notably enthusiastic about partnership, for reasons which are as yet unclear.

Administration connected with partnership can deter activity Schools will have different procedures that will need to be harmonised. Health and Safety implications can be tiresome and can lead to further bureaucracy and anxieties for teachers at a time when they are all becoming increasingly aware of the hazards of taking pupils out of school. The first evaluation report highlighted the need for a (paid) co-ordinator, especially in larger projects (First Evaluation Report, 1999, Appendix C).

Competition between schools We are not thinking here of competition between both sectors but within each sector. Independent schools and state schools, which are situated in close physical proximity, can often be rivals for pupils and the relationships between these schools can be strained and, hence, not conducive to the partnership.

Distance This a major handicap, as the second evaluation report noted, unless ICT can be used as a compensation (Second Evaluation Report, 2001, Main Findings). In rural areas, schools can be ten or more miles from each other which can create considerable logistical problems for partnership activities. Traffic in towns and cities creates further difficulties in making partnership activities viable and effective.

Cost Even where schools have acquired partnership funding, there are often extra costs involved (which the schools might have underestimated on the application bid for fear of appearing wasteful and being unsuccessful). If there is no partnership funding, money has to be found from tight budgets for most but not all partnership activities. In an ideal world, schools should perhaps come up with their own funding for partnership as they are indeed receiving benefits. But the educational reality is that without financial incentives, hard-pressed heads will find they give discretionary funds to other hard-pressed areas. As the first ISSP evaluation report argued, ‘The experience of partnerships outside the scheme shows that lack of funding severely restricts the scope of projects. Lack of funding also hinders most forms of development and expansion’ (First Evaluation Report, 1999, Appendix C). The Second Evaluation Report in 2001 further noted that external business partners might help provided some of the group funds, core central funding is necessary if they are to ‘develop further’ (Second Evaluation Report, 2001, Main Findings).

Unequal numbers of state and independent schools Ninety three per cent of the country’s children are educated in the state sector and only seven per cent in the independent sector. This imbalance immediately creates problems because there are not enough independent school children to match those in state schools.
• **Inclusiveness**  One of the greatest obstacles to partnerships being effective is the difficulty of involving more than a fraction of a school’s population in partnership activity. Regardless of the partnership activity, in practice only a few pupils will often be involved. It might be possible to cascade the experience throughout the school by pupils talking about their experiences, in assembly for example, but the practical impact on the wider school population is bound to be limited. Equally, through the government’s ‘Excellence in Cities’ initiative, on which £70m has been spent, not more than 70 per cent of pupils in the targeted schools are affected.

• **Lack of a clear policy framework**  Schools respond best to very clear stimuli. Although it has been obvious since its first term that the Labour government is keen on encouraging partnership, in practice the sums that it has thrown at it are remarkably small, amounting in total to little more than the budget of one large comprehensive. If the government indeed believes in partnership so much, then it would surely have thrown more money at it, particularly as so much money has gone into other areas of education. Schools have been inundated with ‘initiatives’ since 1997. Even though a ‘Permanent Forum’ was set up in October 2002 to oversee partnership, given the paltry sums being committed by government to partnership, questions are bound to be asked whether partnership is just another initiative that will come and go. Heads, governors and LEAs thus receive mixed messages about whether partnership is something that is a real government priority or a palliative to show that it is ‘doing something’ about the independent school problem.

• **Disproportionality in giving**  Although partnership is always intended to benefit both sectors, in practice it is often the case that it is the independent school which is predominantly the giver, and the state school which is the predominantly receiver. Independent senior schools have much more money; they have better resources, more playing fields, larger numbers of minibuses, and more teachers available. It is hard, therefore, to avoid the impression that it is the case of the rich giving to the poor. Benefits for the state schools are far more obvious, and this issue of proportionality needs to be thoroughly addressed.

• **Difficulties in quantifying benefits**  It is in practice very hard to show quantitative benefits from partnership. In an academic partnership activity, say joint mathematics classes, the results of the state school pupils involved might be better than that of their peers, but to what extent were the good results because of the extra lessons? It is easier to point to qualitative benefits of partnership, say shared experiences of teachers, and positive comments from pupils about how suspicions have been worn away by the experience of shared activities. It is even, on occasion, possible to show increased performance in exams and in other demonstrable ways. But, in practice, it is often the intangible qualitative benefits which are to the fore in partnerships, as the *Building Bridges* and the Leeds evaluation reports accepted. If the value of partnerships were to be assessed on quantifiable data alone, then partnerships would never succeed.

So much for the benefits and problems of partnership. What form might partnerships take in practice? Are some kinds of partnership more successful than others? We now turn to this subject in the next chapter.
Chapter Four: Varieties of Partnership

Some one hundred and eighty partnerships have been formed under Labour government since 1997. They have been pioneering exercises and have achieved much. They have generally been limited in scope and ambition and have mainly been concerned with academic activities. We believe that, valuable though these exercises have been, we are only at the very beginning of what could be achieved through ‘partnership’.

Types of Relationship

- **Two school partnerships** This is the most simple model where a single state school forms a partnership with a single independent school.

- **Multi school partnerships** In theory, the numbers of schools involved in the partnership could be almost limitless but in practice cohesion can be lost if the partnership consists of more than six or seven schools.

- **Federation** Here a number of schools form a ‘federation’, from the state and independent sectors, as encouraged in the Education Act 2002. Federation can either be loose, or all-embracing, where, for example, pupils in the federation switch schools to attend federation schools with a particular specialism, for instance technology, music or sport.

- **Partnership with LEAs** Here the independent schools can work closely with state schools within an LEA, and be integrated into the educational development plan, as occurs in Oxfordshire and Wakefield. The partnership extends to co-operation in teacher training, in gifted and talented, arts and sports programmes.

- **Non-school partners** Schools in a partnership might form partnership relations with business, voluntary bodies, universities, or indeed other external bodies.

- **Takeover** This possibility was much discussed in the media in 2000 and 2001. The proposals were always rather vague but centred around private companies or private schools taking over state schools or starting up new state schools of their own. In practice, it is naïve to imagine that a private school could take over and run a state school and it is presumptuous to believe that there is much that the independent school could offer. The managers of independent schools find that running their own schools is as much, if not more, than they can comfortably handle.

  So the future we believe lies with partnerships rather than takeovers.

Modes of Partnership

- **Physical exchanges** Here teachers or pupils from one school go to another school or schools in the partnership.

- **Virtual exchanges** Here schools in the partnership relate to each other via internet. This is the favoured mode of partnership of the new National College for School Leadership.

- **Single versus multi-strand partnerships** Some partnerships concentrate on a single area of raising attainment in Maths to Year 6, others have several facets. The Second Evaluation Report noted that ‘multi-strand’ partnerships have the benefit of continuing with successful but dropping unsuccessful aspects (*Second Evaluation Report, 2001, Main Findings*).
• **Visits out** Here students from two or more schools in the partnership join together to engage in activity beyond the walls of the schools themselves. One such activity is participation in the Model United Nations exercise, which can bring together pupils from as many as fifty different schools and colleges. A good example occurred in Brighton Town Hall on 27th September, 2002, which benefited from the extensive involvement of the local council and local businesses.

• **Visitors in** Here the greater pulling power and larger numbers of the schools in the partnership attract visitors to talk or perform.

• **Pupil mentoring** Older pupils, typically sixth formers or ‘gap students’ from overseas, can mentor or guide younger pupils in other schools with modern language practice, learning instruments or even (health and safety permitting) help in the coaching of sport. The mentors would be drawn from both state and independent schools. Sixth form pupils from Eastbourne College (independent) have engaged in French conversation with Year 8 pupils at Ringmer Community College. The older pupils have improved their communication skills; younger pupils have had their interest and aspiration in French speaking raised (*Papers, Brighton Partnership Conference, 2002, no. 4*).

### Parties Involved in Partnership

Partnership can involve a wide range of parties.

- **Students** can meet and engage in activities together.
- **Teachers** can share ideas and good practice with each other.
- **Support staff** have rarely been involved in partnerships to date beyond some administrative and financial staff.
- **Headteachers** are the figures within schools who already get out most often and meet more people. While it is valuable in partnership for heads to meet, they will be much involved in cross fertilisation anyway. But heads are vital as facilitators of and champions for partnership.
- **Governors** have scarcely been involved in partnership schemes. This is a pity, because individual governors, governing bodies as a whole, have much to learn and gain from meeting together, not the least because the task of managing state and independent schools is so different. The involvement of governors was in fact one of the *Building Bridges* recommendations.

### Range of Activities

The possibilities of sharing are extensive, and not always obvious.

- **Academic** Teachers can meet in person or in cyber space to share best practice. Teachers can swap schools for a day, week or even term. They can team teach, teach alone or simply observe. Particular specialists or enthusiasts in either sector can give master classes or lectures in schools in the other sector. Academic departments can hold joint meetings or training sessions across sectors. Joint interview sessions can take place helping students prepare for university and Oxbridge as happens in the partnership between Bishop Stopford School, Kettering and the independent school, Uppingham.
Two girls’ schools, Watford Grammar School and Haberdashers’ Aske’s, ran a successful project over two years in which selected Lower Sixth girls worked together to study Key Skills (Papers, Brighton Partnership Conference, 2002, no. 3).

- **Cultural**  Schools can join in joint musical, drama or dance productions. Joint trips can be made, or touring drama companies can visit the partnership, hold a workshop and then put on a production. Joint literary magazines can be written. Artists can visit and joint trips made to galleries. Special exhibitions can be held and tour around partnership schools.

- **Sporting**  Indicatively, state and independent schools rarely play each other in regular sport fixtures. Independent secondary schools often have extensive sports fields, sports halls and equipment. Independent schools often have bevies of qualified and highly able sports coaches. Many of these would be willing and happy to run specialist sessions and competitions to assist the sports staff in the state schools. In hardly any other area is the gulf in provision so wide between both sectors as in sport.

- **Pastoral**  Pupils from schools in both sectors rarely meet. Yet they will meet in higher education and in the work place. The very act of pupils joining together in common activities is powerfully helpful in breaking down stereotypes and helping facilitate social skills. Joint courses in leadership can be a very good way of helping prepare students for the demands of being prefects in state and independent schools. State schools are often far more multicultural than independent schools, which could learn much about different cultures and religions as well as about how to provide good multicultural education.

- **Extra Mural**  Schools can combine to offer language teaching in the communities, and support for different ethnic communities. Combined overseas trips can take place, cultural sport or leisure, such as joint ski trips e.g. Nottingham High School, Nottingham Girls’ High School, Bluecoat School (comprehensive) combined trip to Italy as an exchange with two Italian schools, one for Art and one for Classics and Art. The combined cadet force is an active part of many independent but few state schools. Yet it gives all pupils a chance to develop self reliance, work in teams and cope with the outdoors. These CCF activities could easily be extended to include more state school pupils. The Duke of Edinburgh award scheme and other outward bound activities also provide very good platforms for partnership activity.

It is important that the full breadth of possible partnership activity, as described above, should be embraced by schools. It also important that partnership extends beyond the purely academic theatre, not the least because discrepancy in provision is so vast in the other areas also.
Chapter Five: Policy Proposals

The first few years of partnership have been valuable but they have been exploratory and very limited in extent. Partnership has been a convenient and an exceedingly cheap device for government to show that it was doing something about independent schools and their relationship with the state sector. But it was half-hearted at best and the whole scheme now needs to be given a significant boost.

Proposals

1. Charitable status for independent schools should be dependent on on-going partnership work. The report by the strategy unit of the Cabinet Office in September 2002 went some way towards this end in making independent schools open up their facilities to state schools if they are to retain their automatic charities status (Cabinet Office 2002). But legislation needs to be introduced to take it further. If independent schools were forced to join partnerships, then they would do so, and the withdrawal of charitable status would be a potent method of coercing them to do so. Because there are far fewer independent schools than state schools in the country, then if partnership is to be effective, all independent schools (as long as they are of proven standing) must be induced to join. One way of ‘showing’ that such partnership activity is for independent schools is to employ a full-time co-ordinator for every fifty staff in the school. Smaller schools, with less than fifty staff, would have to pay a proportion of a co-ordinator salary, and the figure would be shared with a number of other smaller schools. The job of the co-ordinator would be to facilitate partnership activity.

2. Inspection by Ofsted or by the Independent Schools Inspection Service (ISI), should treat partnership as a mandatory activity. If school inspections all evaluated partnership, it would be another good way of encouraging schools to form partnerships, of ensuring that these partnerships ran effectively, and also of ensuring that they were regularly monitored. The way has been shown with the inspection framework for specialist schools: only if they meet the requirements to share practice with other schools and share resources with the local community will this specialist status be allowed to continue.

3. All teachers should be required to spend their first three years after gaining their teaching qualification teaching in state schools. This would repay the state for the investment in teachers’ education; it would give many teachers invaluable experience by working in the state sector, which would then make them far more open to, and knowledgeable about, working in partnerships if they decided to join the independent sector after three years later in their career. Many teachers who might have intended initially to join the independent sector might choose to stay within the maintained sector.

4. Teacher exchanges. It should be mandatory for every teacher at every level to undertake a teacher exchange with an opposite number from the other sector once every seven years. This would provide outstanding in-service training for teachers from both sectors. Everyone from the youngest teachers to senior heads should take part in exchanges, which should last between one week and one term. It would revitalise teachers and provide a whole range of experiences to rejuvenate and stimulate the teacher.

5. Government funding for partnership needs to be dramatically increased. It should cover the cost of co-ordinating and administrating the partnership schemes, as the Leeds University evaluation report noted. Depending on the size of the state school, these sums need not
be large. Some £5,000 - £10,000 a year would normally suffice. Again, both the 1999 and 2001 evaluation reports said that money is vital if the excellent start made with partnership is to grow.

6. The private sector and charitable bodies should be given far more incentives to take part in partnership schemes.

7. The government should give reciprocal benefits to the independent sector e.g. access for independent school teachers for the New Opportunity Fund to fund ICT training and access to bursaries under the Government’s Professional Bursary Scheme. As Ed Gould, chairman of HMC has said, about the future of partnership, ‘enhancing trust is not helped by examples of the disparity of treatment between teachers in independent schools and those in maintained schools’ (Gould, 2002: 9). At present, the independent sector, with some justification, feel excluded from benefits afforded to their state school colleagues.

Objections to the Proposals

1. Labour might find it politically too awkward to put the squeeze on independent schools by denying them charitable status if they do not engage in partnership. It will also prove administratively difficult to decide whether or not a partnership is in place and whether it is still current. But these obstacles can be overcome.

2. Ofsted and ISI inspectors already have more to oversee than have available, and inspecting partnership would be one extra burden too many. But inspectors already look at community involvement and partnership would just be a refinement of that aspect of their work.

3. Knowing that they would have to spend their first three years of teaching in a state school might deter some from entering the profession. There are certainly significant numbers who join the independent sector without any qualification direct from other employment. These people can often make excellent teachers. A way would have to be found of incorporating such people in to this scheme, perhaps by insisting they undertake PGCEs while in independent schools, or subsequently have to work for a spell in the maintained sector.

4. Teacher exchanges would meet enormous teacher and no doubt union resistance, and it would also be administratively difficult to bring off effectively, not the least with the state sector having some 90 per cent of the teachers, and only 10 per cent of the teacher body in independent schools. It would have to be sold to teachers in schools that the benefits would outweigh the drawbacks.

5. Costs. However, with the recent increases in the education budget, the Government could easily find the £100 million or so it would need to fund the scheme properly.

6. Problem of co-ercing schools into partnership. ‘Forced marriages’ can be highly problematic! However, they exist throughout the education system, and are sustainable, as long as the financial incentives and support are forthcoming.
Conclusion

There are real difficulties to be overcome with the greater degree of partnership that we advocate. But we believe that it is essential to drive partnership ahead in the ways as a matter of urgency. The government’s 2002 Education Act and funding plans considerably underplay both the need for partnership, and the multi-faceted benefits to children and schools in both sectors. There is no alternative to partnership unless we are to see an increasingly polarised country continue to be underpinned by our increasingly polarised education system.

Gordon Brown, in 2002, has pledged large new sums for the state sector. The problem is that independent schools are increasing their expenditure at an even quicker rate. State schools will never catch up and partnership, which blends and blurs the divide, is the only way forward.

The government now has an opportunity to change the bi-polar status quo in education which has endured for a hundred and more years. The Prime Minister spoke in his October 2002 speech to the Labour Party conference of his work for ‘partnership not paternalism’ in the post-comprehensive era (Blair 2002). The sums required for partnership to take off fully are not large. A properly supported and energised partnership scheme could go down yet as the most important initiative of the government’s whole domestic policy agenda since 1997.

References

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About the Authors

Antony Edkins, believed to be the youngest state secondary head in the country at the age of 32, was charged with the challenge of using a leadership team approach to turn around a South Coast failing comprehensive, that serves an area of significant socio economic deprivation. Since being removed from Special Measures, Falmer High School has made excellent progress. By September 2001, a full Ofsted Inspection declared Falmer High School to be an effective and improving school with excellent leadership. A key feature of Ofsted's findings focussed on the high quality of the Independent State School Partnership with Roedean School and Brighton College.

Antony Seldon has been Headmaster of Brighton College since September 1997, which is Sussex's largest independent school with 1,400 pupils. After gaining an MA at Worcester College, Oxford, and a PhD at the London School of Economics, he qualified as a teacher at King's College, London. He also has an MBA. His first teaching appointment was at Whitgift School in Croydon in 1983, where he was Head of Politics and in 1989 he returned to his old school, Tonbridge, and became Head of History and General Studies. In 1993, he was appointed Deputy Headmaster and, ultimately, Acting Headmaster of St Dunstan's College. As a leading authority on contemporary history, Dr Seldon appears frequently on radio and writes for several national newspapers, and has written or edited over 20 books. He also founded, with Peter Hennessy, the Institute of Contemporary British History.

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