Comprehensive Schools:

Past, Present and Future

Alan Weeks

Methuen London

Contents

List of tables and graphs Acknowledgements		x
		xi
1	WHY COMPREHENSIVE REORGANIZATION?	1
	Politics and practicalities	1
	Ideology	5
	The persistence of elitism	7
	Better selection procedures	9
	Social engineering	11
2	POLICY FROM WESTMINSTER, 1965-85	13
	Circular 10/65	13
	Policy, 1965–70	19
	Policy, 1970–4	21
	Policy, 1974–9	22
	Policy, 1979–85	25
	The role of the DES in secondary reorganization	27
3	LOCAL AND INTEREST GROUP POLICIES	29
	Local authority initiative and resistance	29
	Power balances in the local education authorities	37
	Teacher unions	39
	Parents	40
	Voluntary bodies	42
	Governors of schools	43
	Comprehensive school pressure groups	43

viii COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOLS

4	THE PACE OF REORGANIZATION	4 5
5	PATTERNS OF REORGANIZATION	50
	Overall patterns, 1965–85	50
	Middle schools	53
	Separate sixth-form provision	56
	Tiered schools	62
	Conclusions	65
6	THE MERITOCRATIC SCHOOL	66
	The meritocratic ideal type	66
	Comparing meritocratic comprehensive schools and	
	grammar schools	68
	The examination statistics war	74
7	POSSIBLE REASONS FOR MERITOCRATIC SUCCESS/FAILURE	82
	Introduction	82
	Inside schools	83
	Mixed-ability grouping and gifted pupils	83
	Vocational education	90
	Sixth forms	94
	Equal opportunities for girls	96
	Disruption in schools	98
	Teacher quality	101
	Outside schools	102
	Intakes to schools	102
	The size of comprehensive schools	108
	Limited examination reforms	112
	Environmental disadvantage	113
	Lack of public finance	115
	New inequalities for schools	119
8	THE EGALITARIAN SCHOOL	12 3
	Introduction	123
	The community school	124
	Evidence of the existence of egalitarian schools	127
	The caring school	129
	Mixed-ability grouping, flexible teaching methods and a	
	common curriculum	145

	Positive discrimination for pupils with special educational	
	needs	150
	Multi-ethnic programmes	152
	Democracy in schools	155
9	A BLEAK FUTURE? CUTS, FALLING ROLLS AND	
	ALIENATION	160
	Financial contraction	160
	Falling rolls	163
	Alienation	167
10	A BRIGHTER FUTURE? RECONCILIATION IN	
	COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOLS	17 1
	Opportunity, potential and culture	171
	School government and organization	181
	Curriculum	195
	Alienation – a way out	199
Bib	oliography	202
	Index	