

British education: history, organisation, issues

(England and Wales)

Peculiarities

- Late involvement of the state in educational provision
- Variation across the nations of the UK
- A high degree of decentralisation
- Duality: state and private provision; a strong and influential private sector
- Inextricably linked to the class structure

History

Before 1870:

- Upper- and middle class boys – private schooling (at home; local grammar schools, public schools)
- Working-class children: elementary schooling at parish schools, “ragged schools”; 1833 Factory Act: 2 hours of education a day for children aged 9 to 13
 - “the three Rs” (basic literacy and numeracy)
- Girls’ formal education – neglected; no access to university education; not awarded degrees until well into the 20th c.

“...being allowed to learn German was ALL the paid-for education I ever had. Two thousand pounds was spent on my brother’s...”

Mary Kingsley (1862-1900), ethnographer
and explorer of West Africa

Milestones of state educational provision: the 19th and early 20th century

- 1870 Elementary Education Act (Forster) + Elementary Education Acts 1880-1899

elementary schooling for the poorer classes: compulsory attendance for 5 to 10-year-olds (1880); free after 1891

- 1902 Education Act (Balfour) + 1918 Education Act (Fisher):
from “elementary” to primary and secondary education for all; an education ladder

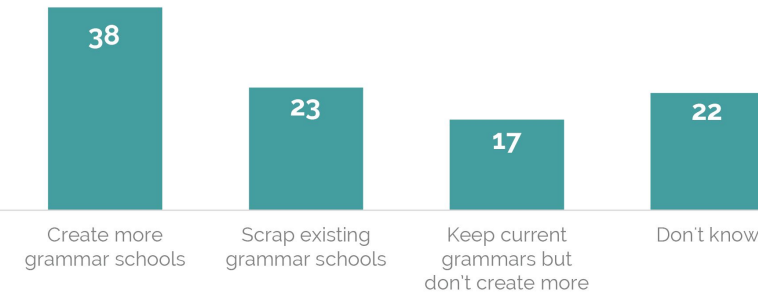
Still: “training in followership”, suited to the working classes, rather than citizenship and leadership training

Milestones of state educational provision: since WW II

- 1944 Education Act (Butler)
 - free compulsory education 5-15
 - the tripartite system of secondary education (11-15): grammar schools, secondary modern schools, secondary technical schools
 - the 11-plus exam
 - controversies
- 1965: **comprehensive schools** (today – over 90% of state schools)
- 1973 – school-leaving age raised to 16
- 1988 Education Reform Act
 - The National Curriculum: core and foundation subjects
 - Key educational stages; objectives, assessment (Standard Assessment Tests; GCSE – school-leaving examination)
 - League tables
 - City Technology Colleges
- Academies (Labour govt. 2000; Coalition govt. 2010) and free schools
- 2008: school-leaving age raised to 18 for those born after 1 September 1997 (came into effect 2015). Options between 16 and 18: full-time education at a sixth-form college (academic) or vocational school; apprenticeship; part time education plus work for 20 hours or more a week
- 2016-17: Theresa May's “grammar school revolution”

Should we create more grammar schools?

Thinking about grammar schools and schools that select pupils by ability, which of the following best reflects your views? %

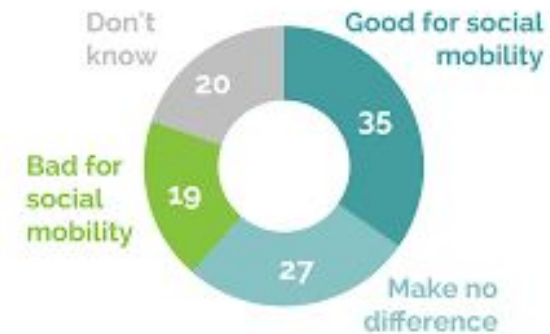


YouGov | yougov.com

August 11-12, 2016

Grammar schools and social mobility

Do you think grammar schools are good for social mobility? %



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Issues and areas of debate

- Quality: unfavourable comparisons with other countries; standards of assessment and grading (grades inflation); insufficient professional qualifications of school-leavers
- Social justice: equal opportunities in education; improving chances of social mobility through education
- Diversity and choice
- The curriculum (knowledge versus skills; range and priorities of subjects)
- Overburdening students with exams
- Academic versus vocational training

The “Education hierarchy” sketch (2011)



The private ('independent') school sector

- Fee-paying schools
- Not bound by the National Curriculum
- Currently cater for about 7 per cent of children of 4-18
- Different levels of excellence and prestige
- Still highly desirable but increasingly unaffordable for the middle class (e.g. – Eton charging £42,501 per year, in 2019)
- Intense competition from state schools, due to considerable improvement of state education standards

The institution of the public school

[For more detail read: François Bédarida, “Education and Class” – self-study text]

- The Great Seven: founded 14th-16th c. + lesser public schools
- The public school reform of the early 19th century; “Muscular Christianity”
- The public school ethos
- The role of the public school in the consolidation of the new Victorian elite and the preservation of its values
- Targeted by Labour in the 1960s
- Response: the “public school revolution” (modernised curriculum; more scholarships for poorer students – improved social inclusiveness; end to some archaic practices; many became co-educational; state-of-the art equipment and facilities; small classes; excellence of teaching staff)
- Public schools at present: for and against (at the seminar)

“Toffs and Toughs” (1937)

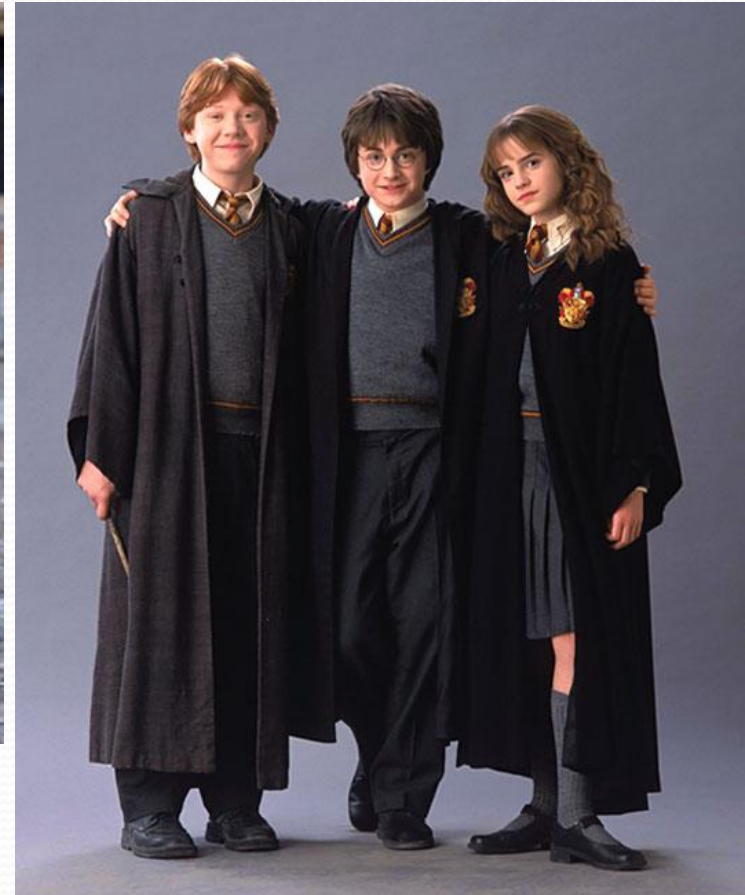
Students at Harrow and
working-class boys
before WW II



Pupils at Harrow school today



Today's Etonians ... and Hogwarts students



Backgrounds of business, political, media and public sector leaders, August 2014:

'Elitist Britain'

Educated at private schools

71% of senior judges

62% of senior armed forces officers

55% of top civil servants

36% of the Cabinet

43% of newspaper columnists

Source: Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission.



Also privately educated:

- half the House of Lords
- 53% of senior diplomats
- 33% of MPs
- 22% of the shadow cabinet
- 26% of BBC executives
- 35% of the England, Scotland and Wales rugby union teams
- 33% of the England cricket team

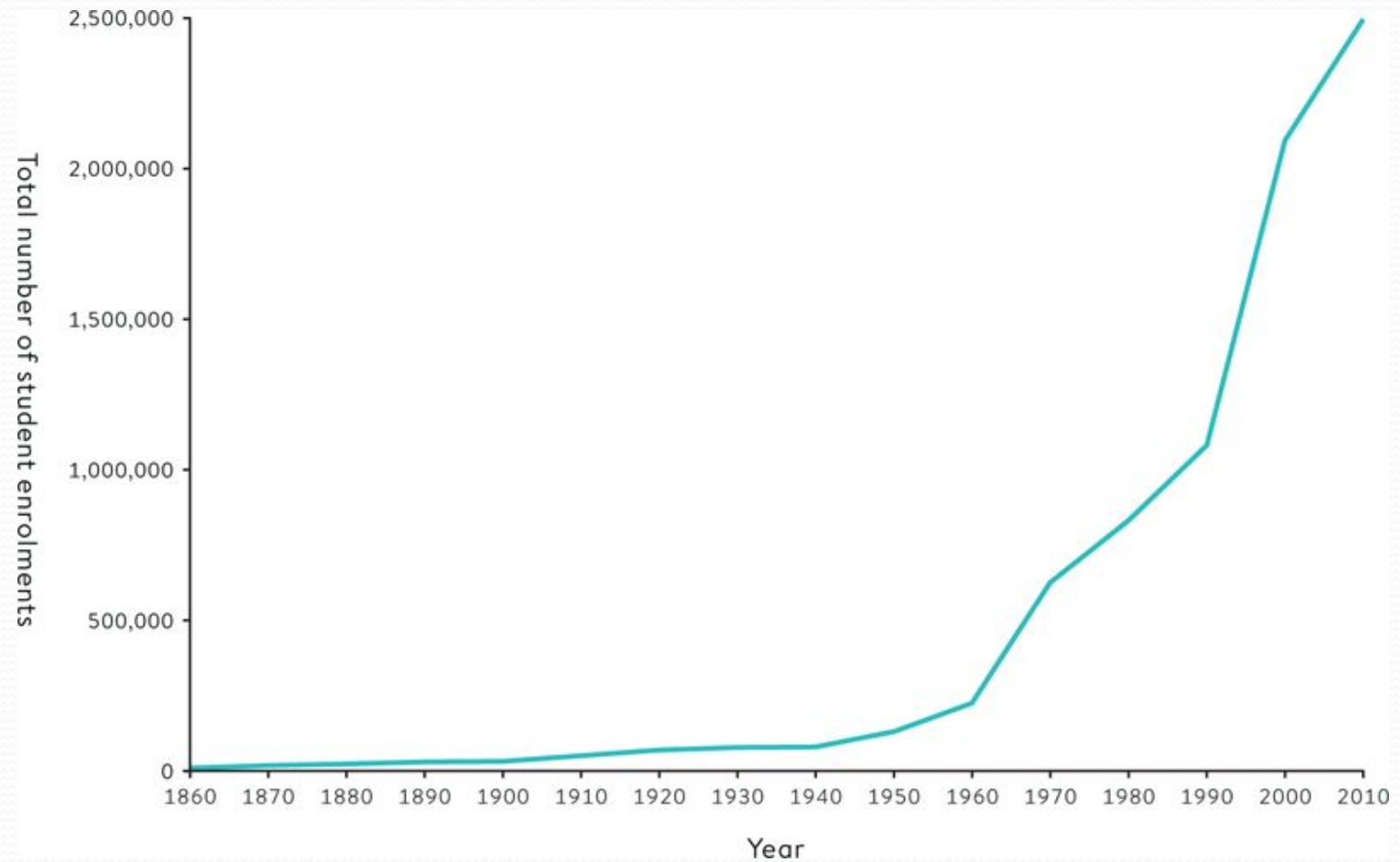
This compares with 7% of the UK population as a whole.

Higher education: types of universities

Today: about 100 universities in Britain; **all of them – state universities**

- **Ancient universities**: 7, founded before 11th-16th century (Oxford, Cambridge, St Andrews, Glasgow, Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Dublin)
- **19th-century universities**: Durham, London, Wales
- **Redbrick universities**: early 20th century (Birmingham, Liverpool, Leeds, Manchester, Sheffield, Bristol)
- **Plate glass universities**: the 1960s (e.g. University of East Anglia, Warwick, Lancaster, York, Kent)
- **“New universities”**: former polytechnics and post-1992 universities (e.g. Brighton, Bournemouth, Sheffield Hallam)
- **The Open University**: 1969 - the foremost distance learning institution in the UK

Higher education enrolments in the UK, 1860–2010

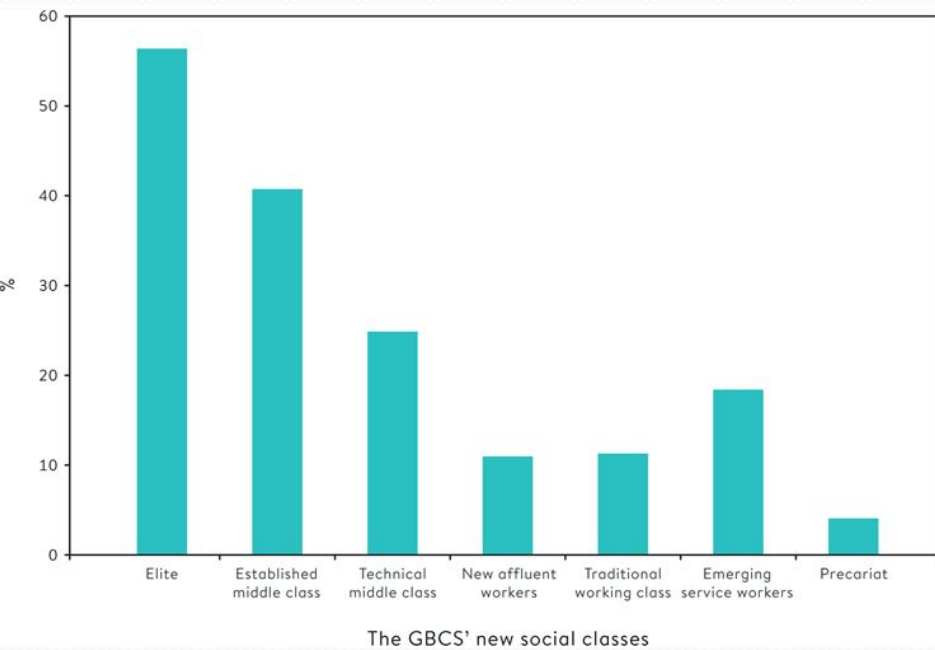


Lasting issues in higher education

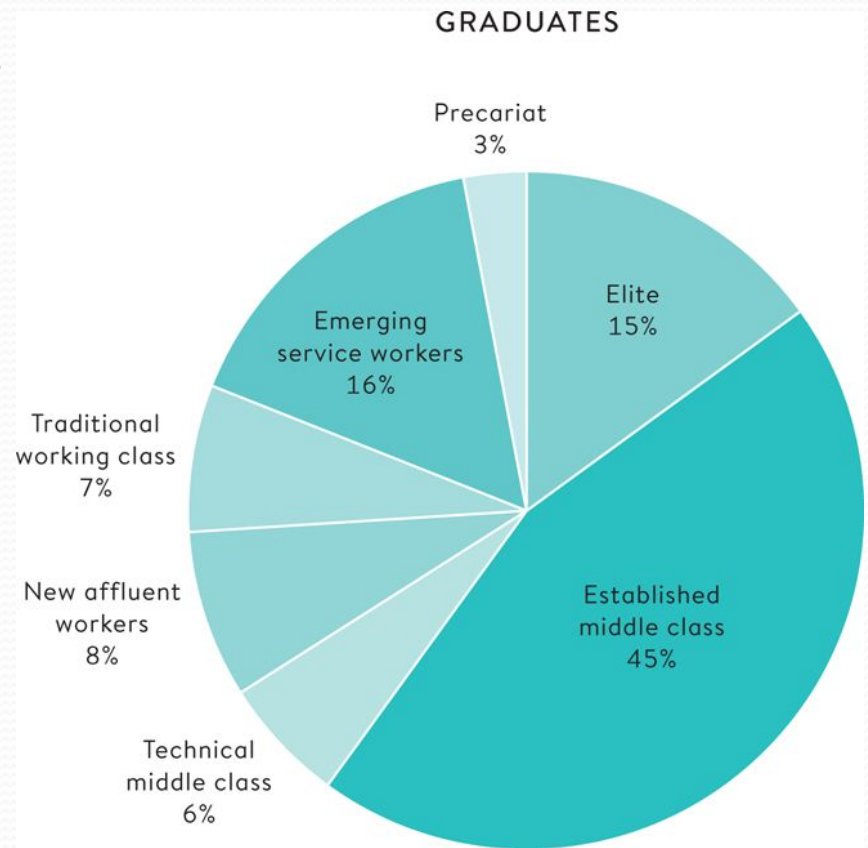
- Cultural bias towards the humanities; downgrading of the sciences and technology
- Elitism and social exclusion
 - 2009: the average percentage of students that from routine/manual occupational backgrounds at universities across the UK – 32.3%.
 - Oxford University: the lowest proportion of working-class students (11.5%)
 - Top people with Oxbridge degrees: 75% of senior judges, 59% of the Cabinet, 38% of the House of Lords, 33% of the shadow cabinet, 24% of MPs (vs. less than 1% of the whole population)

Education and social inequalities

Percentage of each social class who are graduates



Social class of graduates

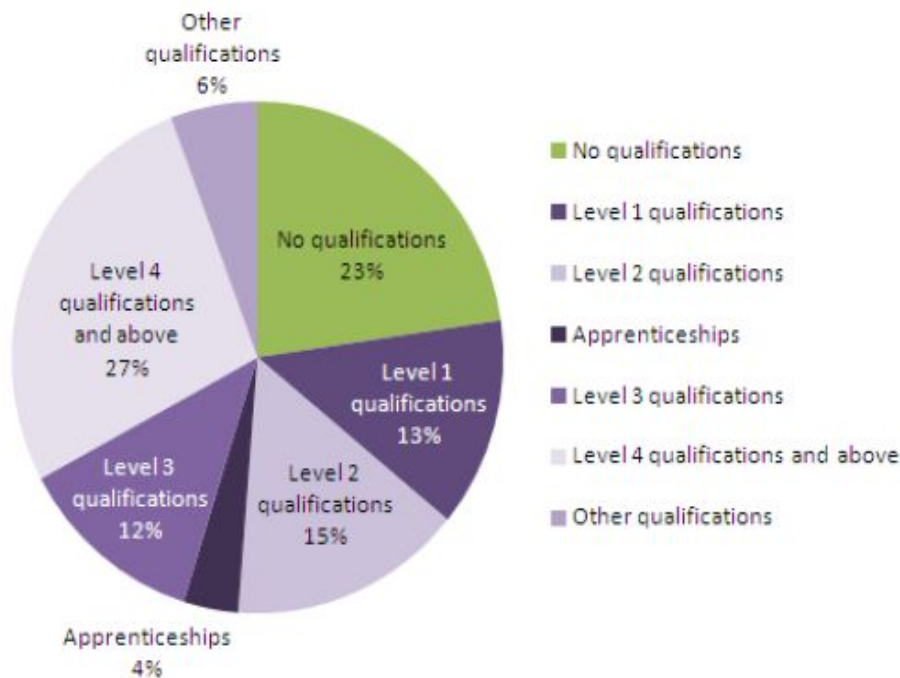


Education and the British political elite

Since Winston Churchill every British prime minister who went to university attended the same English institution, the University of Oxford, except Gordon Brown, who went to Edinburgh. Of fifty-five British prime ministers since Horace Walpole, more than a third, twenty, were products of the same English school, Eton.

Census 2011: Highest level of qualification

England and Wales, 2011, Usual residents aged 16 and above



Source: Census - Office for National Statistics

- No qualification: No formal qualifications (including respondents of 16+ who are still studying)
- Level 1: 1-4 GCSEs or equivalent qualifications
- Level 2: 5 GCSEs or equivalent qualifications
- Level 3: 2 or more A-levels or equivalent qualifications
- Level 4 or above: Bachelor's degree or equivalent, and higher qualifications
- Other qualifications: include foreign qualifications



THANK YOU!