

CG/Bkup

City Technological Colleges (CTC)

Kenneth Baker's original proposal was to re-introduce direct grants schools but with an emphasis on technology. It was an imaginative attempt to raise school standards.

As the proposals have been set on paper and refined they are turning out to be rather different.

First they have become primarily an inner city initiative to improve secondary schools in these areas. For example the prime sites for the new colleges, as listed, are:

- (a) the 8 areas chosen for the Inner City Initiative,
- (b) 10 other areas which rank high in the DoE's index of deprivation,
- (c) at least one location in a relatively less disadvantaged area.

Second although the initiative is an attempt to create so-called 'independent' schools the DES has a major voice in

- (a) the catchment area and pupil numbers of each school,
- (b) the imposition of a curriculum which is "unusually directive" (p. 9) and which applies to all schools,
- (c) the staffing of the schools - only teachers with "qualified teacher" status will be employed,

- (d) the determination of the grant, the details of which are left very open ended,
- (e) the aims and objectives of the school,
- (f) the admission arrangements,
- (g) the constitution of the governing body,
- (h) the "teaching approaches" which the school will be able to use.

Evaluation

Inner City Location

By setting up these schools in inner-city areas however, the dice are loaded against their success. We know that inner city areas have greatest problems with family breakdowns, vandalism, crime and discipline in the classroom. The location of these schools almost exclusively in inner city areas, makes no educational, financial or political sense. All it does is jeopardise their chance of success.

Direct funding and the DES

These schools bear little resemblance to the old direct-grant schools. Because the DES has acquired detailed control their effective independence is limited to the freedom to pay teachers more than Burnham. But DES controls the funding as well - hence this freedom is a chimera. If these proposals are implemented in their present form these schools will in practice be little different from existing inner city comprehensive schools: in practice the DES has acquired comparable power to LEAs over these new schools.

Business Funding of CTCs

CTCs success is dependent on private sector finance. This will only be forthcoming if

- (a) the schools are located in areas where business would like them to be,
- (b) where there are pupils of sufficient talent, and
- (c) where business controls the school rather than merely putting up the capital for them to be run by the DES

Recommendations

In order to ensure that CTCs attain high standards the proposals must be strengthened by three key changes:

- (a) first a majority of schools should be located outside inner city areas but that their catchment areas should extend to inner city areas,
- (b) the catchment area of each school should be extended over the greatest possible area to increase parental choice,
- (c) detailed DES supervision of schools should be reduced to a minimum: auditing annual accounts and arranging occasional visits by HMI.

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