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### **Pioneering comprehensive schooling. The politics of education: reform and response on Anglesey circa 1935-1974**

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# **Pioneering Comprehensive Schooling.**

**The Politics of Education: Reform and response on  
Anglesey circa 1935-1974**

A PhD Thesis submitted to Bangor University

19 January 2016

By Kerstin Anna Sofia Olsson Rost

## Summary

This thesis examines the development of Anglesey's pioneering scheme of comprehensive education between 1935 and 1974. It scrutinises the contributing factors that permitted Anglesey to become the first local authority to introduce a fully comprehensive system of secondary education in 1953. The political process behind educational developments is analysed, with particular focus on the relationship between local and central government.

Due to the island's prominent role as a pioneer of comprehensive schooling, this local case study is also positioned within the wider educational context of the time. The broadly chronological approach of the study shows the Local Education Authority's (LEA) early support of multilateralism, and its successful resistance to the desires of the Board of Education (BoE) throughout the 1930s and into the 1940s. The implementation of the pioneering scheme in 1953 demonstrated continuity rather than change. It is emphasised that the exceptional circumstances which existed on Anglesey was the predominant reason why such an experimental scheme was allowed to go ahead.

The early introduction of a comprehensive system guaranteed Anglesey a prominent place within the broader educational debate during the 1950s and 1960s. The thesis evaluates the significant interest and scrutiny the education system engendered, and the interrelationship between local developments and the wider educational debate. This work reveals how issues were emerging in Anglesey's comprehensive schools during the latter half of the 1960s and the early 1970s. It analyses how Anglesey's comprehensive scheme was becoming a cause for concern locally, at the very time that central government expressed its official support for comprehensive schools. Paradoxically, the LEA's reservations also coincided with Anglesey's case being used in the national press to justify and strengthen comprehensive reform, showing the discrepancy between the focus of the national debate and the reality of comprehensive schooling in Britain at this time.

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## Abbreviations

Anglesey Association of Assistant Teachers in Secondary Schools	AAAT
Board of Education	BoE
Certificate of Secondary Education	CSE
Development Committee	DC
Diocesan Education Committee	DEC
Federation of Education Committees	FEC
General Certificate of Education	GCE
Her Majesty's Inspectorate	HMI
Local Education Authority	LEA
London County Council	LCC
Ministry of Education	MoE
National Union of Teachers	NUT
Ordinary Level Qualification	O-level
Post-War Development of Education Sub Committee	PWDESC
Rural District Council	RDC
Trades Union Congress	TUC
Undeb Cenedlaethol Athrawon Cymru (The National Association of the Teachers of Wales)	UCAC
Urban District Council	UDC

# Introduction

The history of education has primarily focused on national trends and developments in educational provision and reform. Scholarship has often been dominated by an analysis of activities undertaken by central government, big educational reforms, emerging policies and pioneering consultative reports. Educational developments have predominantly been viewed from a party political perspective and particular interest has been paid to the Labour Party's attempts at reform.<sup>1</sup> This national perspective on the political history of education offers an understanding of one aspect of educational politics, but its dominance has generated an over-simplified narrative where developments and decision-making at the local level often is absent. Even when LEAs have been scrutinised more thoroughly, the role of party political allegiance and ideology have tended to take centre stage, despite the fact that many local authorities were dominated by independent councillors during the 1950s and 1960s. By exploring how, and why, Anglesey became a pioneer of comprehensive schooling in the 1960s, this study takes a fresh historiographical approach, by examining both local *and* national agencies as promoters of educational reform.

The choice of Anglesey as a case study for this thesis is due to its unique role in pioneering the first fully comprehensive education system in England and Wales (1953). Furthermore, Anglesey

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<sup>1</sup> There are a host of works charting the major educational reforms of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. See, for example, G. McCulloch, 'Secondary education' in R. Aldrich (ed.), *A Century of Education* (London, 2002), pp.31-53; M. Kogan, *The Politics of Educational Change*; R. Lowe, *Education in the Post-War Years: A Social History* (London, 1988); B. Simon, *The state and educational change : essays in the history of education and pedagogy* (London, 1994); B. Simon, *The politics of educational reform, 1920-1940* (London, 1974); M. Barber, *The making of the 1944 Education Act* (London, 1994); L. Andrews, *The Education Act, 1918* (London, 1976); R. Phillips and J. Furlong (eds.), *Education, reform, and the state : twenty-five years of politics, policy, and practice* (London, 2001); R. Barker, *Education and Politics 1900-1951: A study of the Labour Party* (Oxford, 1972) and G. O'Hara, *Governing Post-War Britain The Paradoxes of Progress, 1951-1973* (Basingstoke, 2012), pp. 159-194. Specific books on the Labour Party and education include titles such as: D. Lawton, *Education and Labour Party Ideologies 1900-2001 and Beyond* (Oxon, 2005); B. Simon, *Education and the labour movement, 1870-1920* (London, 1965); Barker, *Education and politics, 1900-1951*; G. Walford (ed.), *Education and the Labour government : an evaluation of two terms* (London, 2006); R. Lowe, *Labour and education : some early twentieth century studies* (Leicester, 1981); M. Parkinson, *The Labour Party and the organization of secondary education, 1918-1965* (London, 1970). The literature on the Conservative party and education is less developed, and exists of a few titles such as C. Knight, *The Making of Tory Education Policy in Post War Britain 1950-1986* (Lewes, 1990); D. Lawton, *The Tory mind on education, 1979-94* (London, 1994); D. Callaghan, *Conservative Party Education Policies, 1976-1979: The Influence of Politics and Personality* (Sussex, 2005); C. Pierson, 'The New Governance of Education: The Conservatives and Education 1988-1997', *Oxford Review of Education*, 54:1 (1998), pp. 131-142.

remained the sole practical example of a fully comprehensive system up until the mid-1960s, when comprehensive schooling was gradually introduced by a rapidly increasing numbers of LEAs.<sup>2</sup> The unique position of the LEA in this respect has also resulted in a wealth of source material related to the comprehensivisation process. These records include local government records, correspondence by head teachers and educationists, school records, and analysis in contemporary books, journals and newspapers.<sup>3</sup> This evidence provides a fuller understanding of the developments on Anglesey, and enhances our understanding of the process of reform during this period. Furthermore, histories of comprehensive schooling and education have rarely considered developments *within* schools, but have rather focused exclusively on political decisions taken outside by central, and occasionally, local government. However, this does not present a fair representation of developments in comprehensive schools since head teachers retained control of curricula throughout this period. It was not until the 1970s that serious discussions about a centralised curriculum emerged. These issues had become more pressing due to the concern over progressive teaching methods in comprehensive schools and their potential effects on pupils. In the late 1960s the ‘Black Papers’ vociferously raised fears relating to comprehensive schools, progressive teaching methods and ‘misplaced ideologies’ in state schools.<sup>4</sup> The first ‘Black Paper’ provided a forum for those who were

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<sup>2</sup> The Isle of Man’s autonomy had allowed it to implement its own policy, since it was outside the influence of the Ministry of Education. Due to its exceptional independent status, however, it was not strictly considered part of England and Wales. This, then, left Anglesey the first and only pioneer of a fully comprehensive system under the controls of the Ministry of Education. For more on the education on the Isle of Man see, for example, B. Simon, *Education and the Social Order, 1940-1990* (London, 1991), pp. 109-110, 169, 173; H., Bird, *An Island That Led – The History of Manx Education (Volume 1)* (Port St.Mary, 1995) and R. H., Kinvig, *The Isle of Man A social, cultural and political history* (Liverpool, 1975), pp. 162-163.

<sup>3</sup> A few examples of these are head teachers reports from each of the schools. There is also the correspondence between Trevor Lovett (the head teacher at Holyhead) and Robin Pedley (educationist and comprehensive school supporter who published widely on the issue of comprehensive schooling during the 1950s and 1960s). Brian Simon’s papers include references to Holyhead comprehensive school in particular, and *The Guardian*, *The Times* and *The Daily Mail* all used Anglesey as an example in articles on comprehensive schooling during the 1960s. Education journals such as *The Schoolmaster*, *The Teacher in Wales* and *Education* also paid attention to Anglesey’s scheme and it was used as an example in books published on the issue too, for example, Pedley’s publications *Comprehensive Education, a New Approach* (1956) and *Inside the Comprehensive School* (1958).

<sup>4</sup> The first of the ‘Black Papers’ was published in 1969 by C. B. Cox and A. E. Dyson. They used their already existing periodical *Critical Survey* (aimed at teachers of English) to publish a special issue to discuss progressive teaching methods, serious problems in comprehensive schools, and other issues related to higher education. The first ‘Black Paper’ was followed up by another four publications during the 1970s. For more on the ‘Black



critical of progressive teaching methods and 'egalitarian' thinking in schools and universities. Many of the contributors to the first 'Black Paper' felt that these trends posed serious threats to children's education and academic progress, and its publication instigated a more coherent resistance among those critical of the erosion of 'the traditional high standards of English education...'. Whilst Cox maintained that he took a moderate stance on these issues, many other contributors to the 'Black Papers' were seen as extreme in their criticism of comprehensive schools.<sup>5</sup> James Callaghan's Ruskin Speech in 1976 was a response to the 'Black Papers' and the criticisms raised of accountability, effectiveness of teaching, and the relevance of curricula in comprehensive schools.<sup>6</sup> While the speech generated a 'Great Debate' on education and whether curricula should be centrally controlled, schools and their head teachers retained control of the 'secret garden of the curriculum' up until the 1988 Education Act.<sup>7</sup> However, by analysing the role of newly established

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Papers' see, for example, D. Sandbrook, *White Heat* (London, 2006), pp. 555-556 and C. B. Cox and A. E. Dyson (eds.), *The Black Papers on Education* (London, 1971).

<sup>5</sup> In his autobiography Cox detailed the thinking behind the publishing of the 'Black Papers', also labelling himself as a 'moderate' and as a strong supporter of state schooling. However, he viewed 'misplaced ideologies, particularly the egalitarian ethos' as a serious threat to state education, C. B. Cox, *Memoirs of a Life in Education: The Great Betrayal* (London, 1992), p. 3.

<sup>6</sup> James Callaghan (Prime Minister 1976-79) used a speech at the Ruskin College in Oxford (18 October 1976) to comment on education, and more significantly on practices in schools and curricula. Callaghan expressed concerns over the failure in schools to produce a well-educated workforce, claiming that representatives from industry believed that 'new recruits from the schools sometimes do not have the basic tools to do the job'. Furthermore, he acknowledged the 'unease felt by parents and others about the new informal methods of teaching...'. Although Callaghan was careful not to officially endorse intervention by central government in school curricula he did point out that: '[I]t is not my intention to become enmeshed in such problems as whether there should be a basic curriculum with universal standards - although I am inclined to think there should be...[and that there existed a]...strong case for the so-called 'core curriculum' of basic knowledge...', J. Callaghan, Speech: 'A rational debate based on the facts', 18 October 1976, online edn, <http://www.educationengland.org.uk/documents/speeches/1976ruskin.html> (accessed 23 November 2015). The 'Great Debate on Education' followed to the speech in the political as well as public spheres see, for example, Lawton, *Education and Labour Party Ideologies*, pp. 91-92; R. Phillips, 'Education, the state and the politics of reform: the historical context, 1976-2001', in R. Phillips and J. Furlong (eds.), *Education, Reform and the State Twenty-Five Years of Politics, Policy and Practice* (London, 2001), pp. 12-27.

<sup>7</sup> For more on developments related to school curricula see, for example, 'From secret garden to experimental jungle' in *TES*, 3 October 2003; D. Lawton and C. Chitty (eds.), *The National Curriculum* (London, 1988); D. Lawton, 'What is worth learning?' in R. Pring and G. Walford (eds.), *Affirming the Comprehensive Ideal* (London, 1997), pp. 99-108 and S. Tomlinson, 'A Comprehensive Curriculum 14-19', in R. Pring and G. Walford (eds.), *Affirming the Comprehensive Ideal* (London, 1997), pp. 109-118. Sir David Eccles (Education Secretary 1954-57 and 1959-62) first referred to the 'secret garden of the curriculum' in the debate on the Crowther Report (published in 1959, debated in the House of Commons in March 1960) when he also claimed that he would 'make the Ministry's voice heard rather more often...and no doubt controversially', cited in D. Lawton, *Education and Labour Party Ideologies*, p. 65. Eccles believed that the educational debate needed to move away from school organisation, and for the Ministry to undertake more research and focus on the curriculum.

comprehensive schools and their curricula as part of the comprehensivisation process, this study will consider an aspect of educational reorganisation which has rarely been accounted for.<sup>8</sup>

This study of Anglesey will also go some way towards addressing a gap in the literature as far as developments in rural LEAs is concerned. By careful analysis of local developments, it will be possible to challenge some frequently held misconceptions relating to the development of comprehensive schooling. Moreover, the persistent myth of the Labour Party's significance in the comprehensivisation process, and the consequences of this misconstruction, will be explored and assessed. This study will therefore use the case study of Anglesey to show how, despite their prevalence to the contemporary educational debate in Britain, pioneering schemes have been largely neglected in existing scholarship.

## I

Traditional histories of comprehensive schooling have tended to begin with the 1944 Education Act, and the implementation of 'Secondary Education for All'.<sup>9</sup> However, this study traces the origins of Anglesey's comprehensive scheme back to the early 1930s. In the wake of the 1918 Education Act there had been a lack of further reform due to the difficult economic circumstances, and the

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Hence the establishment of the controversial and unpopular Curriculum Study Group in 1962 which generated hostile responses from LEAs and professional teachers' associations. In light of its unpopularity it was replaced by the more acceptable Schools Council for Curriculum and Examinations (Schools Council) by Sir Edward Boyle (Education Secretary, 1957-59 and 1962-64) in 1963. The Schools Council financed several curriculum projects, producing new curricular and pedagogical ideas, D. Lawton, *Education and Labour Party Ideologies*, p. 65.

<sup>8</sup> The vast majority of the relevant existing literature does not account for developments in schools as part of their assessment of the comprehensivisation process. The few exceptions consist of Benn and Simon's book: C. Benn and B. Simon, *Half Way There Report on the British Comprehensive School Reform Second Edition* (Harmondsworth, 1972) and Benn and Chitty's evaluation of comprehensive education in 1996: C. Benn and C. Chitty, *Thirty Years on Is Comprehensive Education Alive and Well or Struggling to Survive?* (London, 1996). However, both of these books were not primarily focused on the history of comprehensive schooling, but were rather evaluations of the contemporary situation of comprehensive education at the time.

<sup>9</sup> The policy document by the Education Advisory Committee of the Labour Party, edited by R.H. Tawney, was first published in 1922. It expressed the party's desire to extend secondary education for all children up to the age of sixteen. The idea was not, however, to establish one type of secondary schools for all children, but rather for '...all normal children, irrespective of the income, class, or occupation of their parents, may be transferred at the age of 11+...to one type or another of secondary school', R. H. Tawney (ed.), *Secondary Education for All: A Policy for Labour* (London, 1988), p. 7.

consequent austerity measures imposed by central government during the 1920s.<sup>10</sup> Educational reform was still actively discussed during the 1920s and into the 1930s, and it was felt that changes to the education system were becoming increasingly urgent. The most influential developments to emerge during this time were the publication of the Hadow Reports between 1923 and 1933. While these reports were only consultative, they visibly influenced the Board of Education's (BoE) thinking and policies during the 1930s. One of the most well-known of these reports was *The Education of the Adolescent* (1926).<sup>11</sup> This report, together with another on primary education (*The Primary School*, 1931), influenced developments in both primary and secondary education. Hadow made several bold suggestions. One of these was the proposition that the school leaving age should be extended by a year from the age of fourteen to fifteen. However, this suggestion was rejected by the BoE and was not implemented until 1947.<sup>12</sup> The recommendation to implement a stricter separation

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<sup>10</sup> In the aftermath of the First World War there were demands from all Departments for increases in spending. The post-war economic slump, and the consequent high unemployment figure meant that any tax rises were considered to be out of the question, affecting plans for educational reform. In August 1921 the government set up a committee (under the Chairmanship of Sir Eric Geddes) to examine financial estimates for 1922-23 and to advise on further austerity measures. It was suggested that savings of around £70 million be made, £18 million of which was to be recuperated from Education. After further deliberations, the government decided on overall cuts of £64 million, and for £6 million of this to come from the educational budget. Financial pressures in combination with opposition towards educational change therefore resulted in the virtual stagnation of educational reform by 1922 (the year of the fall of the Lloyd George coalition). For further analysis of the 1918 Education Act, see Andrews, *The Education Act, 1918*, pp. 33-41, 61-63, 69-76.

<sup>11</sup> The Hadow Report was commissioned during the inter-war period to examine '...issues affecting not only the educational system, but also the general social and industrial organisation of the country', BoE, *Report of the Consultative Committee on The Education of the Adolescent* (London, 1926), p. ii. Tawney's (a member of the Consultative Committee) and the Labour Party's sentiment, as expressed in *Secondary Education for All* (1922), were clearly visible in the Hadow Report which aimed to address the question of secondary education for the '...great mass of boys and girls', see Board of Education, *The Education of the Adolescent*, p. 36. The main feature of the Hadow Report was the recommendation that elementary education should no longer be provided in 'all-age' school, but that all children should transfer to a different school at the age of eleven. Post-eleven instruction would not, however, be provided in the same type of schools for all pupils. Those pupils who were not successful in the scholarship examination would transfer to Central Schools (still operating under the elementary code) where a more practical and vocational curriculum would be implemented, see Board of Education, *The Education of the Adolescent*.

<sup>12</sup> The raising of the school leaving age to fourteen was implemented in the wake of the Education Act of 1918. The raising of the school leaving age to fifteen was discussed and anticipated throughout the 1930s. Although legislated was passed in 1936, the implementation was delayed in 1939 due to the war, and was not realised until 1947. Both the Crowther Report (1959) and the Newsom Report (1963) recommended extending the leaving age to sixteen. The Conservative government agreed to the new school leaving age in 1964, but the Labour government postponed its implementation in 1968 and the new school leaving age (sixteen) was finally introduced in 1972. For a thorough analysis of the raising of the school leaving age in Britain and its consequences, see T. Woodin, G. McCulloch and S. Cowan, *Secondary Education and the Raising of the School-Leaving Age. Coming of Age?* (New York, 2013).

between primary and senior education in elementary schools (at the age of eleven) was deemed practicable, and during the 1930s LEAs were expected to make arrangements for such reform.<sup>13</sup>

Anglesey's response to the demand for 'Hadow reorganisation' along these lines was to produce a scheme for a multilateral education system as early as 1931.<sup>14</sup> The 1931 Development Plan, and subsequent plans submitted to the BoE in the wake of the rejection of this early multilateral proposal, were all highly influential for the scheme that was eventually approved by the Ministry in 1946.<sup>15</sup>

Anglesey's multilateralism highlights the necessity to comment on the definitions relating to secondary schools during this period. The term 'multilateral' was fairly well-established by the 1930s, and had been suggested as a viable solution for rural Wales as early as the 1920s.<sup>16</sup> The name 'multilateral school' was given to institutions that delivered different types of secondary education to varying 'types' of children within one single school (post-1944 'multilateral' most commonly referred to schools providing secondary modern, technical and grammar school education separately but within the same building). In reality, however, most schools of the multilateral kind were in fact *bilateral* since a majority of LEAs rarely offered technical education as an exclusive option.<sup>17</sup> Various names were used to describe these types of schools during the 1930s and 1940s, such as 'all-in', 'common' or 'unified' schools.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> For details on the Ministry of Education's (MoE) response to the Hadow Report and implications at the local level, see R. Moore, 'Hadow reorganization in a community setting: A. H. Whipple and the William Crane School in Nottingham, 1931-1938', *History of Education*, 30:4 (2001), pp. 379-399.

<sup>14</sup> This will be explored further in Chapter Two.

<sup>15</sup> For more on this see Chapter Three.

<sup>16</sup> The Spens Report (1938) emphasised that the evidence produced from Wales for the Hadow Report had suggested that it would be '...permissible to carry on in the same Secondary School building the two types of education...' (grammar school and central school education). The Spens Report also suggested that small grammar schools would be allowed to incorporate modern (or senior) schools, and that this might be '...specially applicable to the conditions in some Welsh areas', MoE Consultative Committee, *Report of the Consultative Committee on Secondary Education with special reference to grammar schools and technical high schools*, (London, 1938), pp. 344-346. See, for example, G. E. Jones, *Secondary Education in Wales 1934-1984* (Cardiff, 1984), p. 4; G. E. Jones and G. W. Roderick, *A History of Education in Wales* (Cardiff, 2003), p. 130 and G. E. Jones, *Controls and Conflicts in Welsh Secondary Education 1889-1944* (Cardiff, 1982), p. 193.

<sup>17</sup> A minority of LEAs made great efforts in order to provide technical education, but generally the provision was poor or completely lacking. In January 1949 over 3,000 secondary modern schools and 1,229 grammar schools had been established in England and Wales. Conversely, technical schools only numbered 310 and

Over time, the definition of a 'comprehensive school' proved both ambivalent and changeable. The Anglesey LEA referred to its new schools as 'multilateral' up until November 1947.<sup>19</sup> At this time there was a change in terminology, prompted by a central government circular (June 1947) where it was proposed that:

...a comprehensive school means one which is intended to cater for all the secondary education of all the children in a given area without an organisation into three sides.<sup>20</sup>

Since Anglesey's schools would not strictly be divided into 'three sides', but would nevertheless be providing secondary education to all age-appropriate children within each catchment area, the LEA henceforth described them as comprehensive. This might not have been perceived as a particularly radical move in 1947, and subsequently was not commented upon by the Ministry of Education (MoE) at that time. However, as the 1950s and 1960s progressed, comprehensive schooling became a highly politicised issue. During this period of educational change, Anglesey's schools were increasingly viewed by reformers as unsatisfactory examples of comprehensive education in practice. As a result of new ideas in regards to what the nature and purpose of comprehensive schools ought to be, Anglesey's institutions increasingly appeared to be falling short of expectations in the eyes of many observers. The renowned educationist, academic and comprehensive school supporter Brian Simon commented on Anglesey's case in a public lecture in 1977. He recalled his observations from a visit to Anglesey during the 1950s, and how he believed that the majority of the schools were guilty of entrenching differentiation between pupils rather than diminishing it.<sup>21</sup> Simon

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those that did exist were mainly situated in industrialised areas. Many of these were in old buildings (often former senior technical institutions) and in 1951 only three new technical schools had been built, Lowe, *Education in the Post-War Years*, p. 43. For more on the scarcity of technical schools, and also a more detailed analysis of technical education throughout the twentieth century, see M. Sanderson, *The Missing Stratum Technical School Education in England 1900-1990s* (London, 1994).

<sup>18</sup> Benn and Chitty commented on the lack of definition of comprehensive schooling and education, criticising the negative definition of comprehensive education. Specifically they emphasised the lack of definition as far as the nature of the system, its aims, objectives and practices were concerned, Benn and Chitty, *Thirty Years On Is Comprehensive Education Alive and Well or Struggling to Survive?*, p. 27.

<sup>19</sup> P[ost] W[ar] D[evelopment] of E[ducation] S[ub] C[ommittee], 'Minutes', 27 November 1947, Llangefni, P[ublic] R[ecords] O[ffice]: WA 1/39.

<sup>20</sup> M[inistry] o[f] E[ducation], 'Circular 144', 16 June 1947, London, T[he] [National] A[rchive]: ED 142/1.

<sup>21</sup> Brian Simon Papers, 'Conference Paper: *What Schools are for Retrospect and Prospect* to Lancashire County Council', 16 February 1977, London, Institute of Education University of London: Archives, SIM/1/18. Although

was not solely an active educational reformer during the 1950s, 1960s and beyond, but was also the most prominent writer on the history of the politics of secondary education. He had a particular interest in equal opportunities in secondary education, and as the Communist Party's spokesman on education during the 1950s and 1960s he was thoroughly engaged in the debates around educational selection, IQ-testing and comprehensive schooling.<sup>22</sup>

Additionally, some clarification of contemporary terms in relation to different types of schools, and their uses in this study, is also useful. The title 'County School' already existed prior to the 1944 Education Act. However, the Act insisted on the term being used for all LEA maintained primary and secondary schools. The Act also established that the term 'voluntary schools' should be used for institutions that were not maintained by the local authority.<sup>23</sup> The 'advanced instruction' provided in these institutions was not strictly considered 'secondary' education, but was an alternative for those senior elementary school pupils who had failed to attain places at the grammar school (and whose parents were unable to pay for the privilege of a secondary education). The 1918 Education Act had encouraged the establishment of Central Schools, and by the latter half of the 1920s there already

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the comprehensive nature of Anglesey's schools might have been contentious, this study will refer to the schools as multilateral during the period up until November 1947 and, in accordance with the official alteration of the terminology at the time, they will be referred to as comprehensive after that date.

<sup>22</sup> Brian Simon came from Manchester where his family had strong ties to educationists such as Tawney, and his mother Shena Simon (also a comprehensive schools supporter) was an active member on the Manchester Education Committee for fifty years. Simon had a long and distinguished academic career at the Department and School of Education at Leicester University between 1950 and 1980. He was the founder of the History of Education Society (1967) and was also the co-founder of the pro-comprehensive journal *Forum* in 1958 (together with Robin Pedley and Jack Walton). During his long career Simon, an outspoken Marxist and member of the Communist Party, encountered both strong opposition and support from educationists, politicians and teachers. For more on Brian Simon see, for example, *The Guardian*, 22 January 2002; D. Reeder, 'Obituary: Brian Simon: a tribute', *History of Education*, 31:4 (2002), pp. 307-310. For comments on Simon's work see, for example, P. Cunningham and J. Martin, 'Education and the social order: re-visioning the legacy of Brian Simon', *History of Education*, 33:5 (2004), pp. 497-504; D. Thom, 'Politics and the people: Brian Simon and the campaign against intelligence tests in British schools', *History of Education*, 33:5 (2004), pp. 515-529; M. Depaepe, 'It's a long way to...an international social history of education: in search of Brian Simon's legacy in today's educational historiography', *History of Education*, 33:5 (2004), pp. 531-544. Further insights into Simon's work as an educationist can be found in his autobiography, see, B. Simon, *A Life in Education* (London, 1998).

<sup>23</sup> Section II:9 of the Act established that: '[P]rimary and secondary schools maintained by a local education authority, not being nursery schools or special schools, shall, if established by a local education authority or by a former authority, be known as county schools and, if established otherwise than by such an authority, be known as voluntary schools', MoE, '1944 Education Act', London, TNA: ED 151. Apart from referring to secondary modern, technical and grammar schools, the study will also reference 'Central' or 'Senior' schools, contemporary labels for schools catering for elementary school pupils over the age of eleven.

existed both selective and non-selective Central Schools (particularly in urban areas). Part of the Hadow-reorganisation drive of the 1930s was the establishment of more Senior Schools in order to implement a clearer division between junior and senior elementary school pupils at the age of eleven.<sup>24</sup> The intention was to remove all-age elementary schools (often referred to as 'all-age' schools) in line with Hadow's recommendations. However, this proved to be a drawn-out process, particularly in Wales, and it had not been completed before the outbreak of the Second World War. During the conflict, educational reform tumbled down the political agenda, not to be revisited until the implementation of the 1944 Education Act in the aftermath of the war.<sup>25</sup>

Although significant support for multilateral schooling existed in parts of Wales, it was the model of the differentiated, or segregated, system of secondary education that emerged most prominently in the wake of the Second World War. The Hadow Report had supported the division between different types of secondary education, and while it was not officially implemented until after 1944, the tripartite system was persistently favoured throughout the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>26</sup> This kind of organisation was also on the whole supported in two further government reports: The Spens Report (1938) and the Norwood Report (1943).<sup>27</sup> In view of the general approval for this kind of educational thinking, and how it had already impacted on the existing education system of secondary education at the time, it was not unexpected that a majority of LEAs implemented some kind of segregated system in the wake of the 1944 Act. The potential alternative of establishing 'common schools' had been discussed during the late 1940s, and certain sections of the Labour Party expressed support for comprehensive schooling. However, many Labour activists supported the idea of a differentiated

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<sup>24</sup> Board of Education, *The Education of the Adolescent*, pp. 52-55.

<sup>25</sup> The creation of Central Schools generated debates in Wales due to both ideological and geographical issues. There was a concern that Central Schools would become second class institutions, and geographically many areas did not have sufficient numbers of pupils to transfer to separate schools. Therefore, the development of such schools was slow and even in the relatively populous area of Glamorgan, only nine central schools had opened by 1936, Jones and Roderick, *A History of Education in Wales*, p. 129. For more on these attitudes in Wales and Anglesey during this time, see Chapter Two.

<sup>26</sup> For more on this, see Introduction.

<sup>27</sup> See, for example, Lawton, *Education and Labour Party Ideologies*, p. 44 and McCulloch, 'Secondary education', pp. 37-40.

system, and there was no official party support for comprehensive reform until the mid-1950s.<sup>28</sup> Therefore, the differentiated systems of secondary education that developed during the 1950s did not attract significant contemporaneous opposition, and the tenet of different types of education for different 'types' of children (rooted in educational thinking from the 1920s and 1930s) was generally accepted at the time of implementation.<sup>29</sup> In order to allocate 'appropriate' secondary education to different types of children, psychometric testing became a significant aspect in the implementation of the new system and also had a role in legitimising it.<sup>30</sup> However, as the decade progressed, several studies revealed the weaknesses of psychometric testing.<sup>31</sup> Some MPs and LEAs also started to question the desirability as well as the reliability of the 11-plus examinations in allocating secondary school places.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> It was not unusual for Labour politicians to favour the idea of a meritocratic system, and individuals such as Ellen Wilkinson, David Hardman and George Tomlinson believed that a differentiated system of secondary education was the most efficient way to deliver 'Secondary Education for All'. Indeed many prominent Labour activists owed their own education to the grammar schools and often expressed their support for these institutions, Lowe, *Education in the Post War Years*, pp. 37, 41 and 42. The Fabian element of the Labour Party also expressed its opposition to comprehensive education. See Simon, *Education and the Social Order*, pp.155-156. There were certainly also ardent comprehensive supporters within the Labour Party. The National Association of Labour Teachers retained its belief in the common school, and other individuals such as Margaret Cole (member of the LCC) and W.G. Cove were consistent and vociferous in their support for comprehensive education see, for example, Lawton, *Education and Labour Party Ideologies*, p. 44; Lowe, *Education in the Post War Years*, p. 39 and Simon, *Education and the Social Order*, p. 105. The Labour Party's manifesto in 1955 specified that the intention was to: '...remove from the primary schools the strain of the 11-plus examination' and that '...Local Authorities will be asked to submit schemes for abolishing the examination and, to realise the fulfilment of the Education Act, 1944, we shall encourage comprehensive secondary schooling', Labour Party Manifesto, 1955 at <http://www.politicsresources.net/area/uk/man/lab55.htm>, accessed 2 September 2015.

<sup>29</sup> Simon refers to the development of this tenet in the '...economically and socially stagnant period of the inter-war years', Simon, *Education and the Social Order*, p. 158.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 157.

<sup>31</sup> See, for example, B. Simon, *Intelligence Testing and the Comprehensive School* (London, 1953); O. Banks, *Parity and Prestige in English Secondary Education A Study in Educational Sociology* (London, 1955); P. Vernon (ed.), *Secondary School Selection* (London, 1957); A. Yates and D. Pidgeon, *Admission to Grammar Schools* (London, 1957).

<sup>32</sup> Labour MPs in Leeds, Gaitskell being one of them, expressed their support for the abolition of the 11-plus examination during the 1950s, although the 11-plus was not abolished in Leeds until 1963. Alec Clegg, the Chief Education Officer in the West Riding (1945-74), questioned the reliability of the examination in the early 1950s, and as early as 1952 the West Riding experimented with allowing some secondary modern schools to enter pupils for GCE O-Level examinations in a limited range of subjects. Although political instabilities resulted in a lack of continued progress during the first half of the 1950s, the West Riding implemented another experimental scheme (the Thorne scheme) in 1955. The new arrangement allowed teacher assessments to replace the old tests in the hope of a more reliable selection process. A final example was Stewart Mason's (DoE for Leicestershire) memorandum to the County Council where the flaws of the 11-plus were clearly



## II

A significant consequence of the development of the 'tripartite' system, and the subsequent criticism of it, was a gradual change in public opinion against selection at the age of eleven. The segregated education system created an increased demand for grammar school places. The general perception by this time was that in order to succeed, children needed to attend a grammar school. This gradually increased public pressure for educational reform in order to allow more pupils the opportunity to acquire a 'grammar school education'. Despite the expressed desire of policy makers during the 1940s and 1950s to provide a system where the three different types of secondary education enjoyed 'parity of esteem', this proved impossible to achieve.<sup>33</sup> Technical schools suffered due to their perceived inferior status in relation to grammar schools, despite efforts to address this issue.<sup>34</sup> 'Secondary modern' schools had been designed to accommodate the majority of children in England and Wales, but were persistently considered of inherently lower status than other types of secondary schools. The fact that secondary modern schools were 'free' from the pressures of examinations reinforced the stigma already attached to these institutions as only tolerable for children with less hopeful prospects for the future.<sup>35</sup> These views and attitudes were the foundations upon which a process of change from within the modern schools grew during the late 1950s and early 1960s. It is hardly surprising if teachers, parents, and pupils in modern schools felt aggrieved by the fact that these schools were consigned to second rate facilities, opportunities and

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emphasised, A.C. Kerckhoff, K. Fogelman, D. Crook and D. Reeder, *Going Comprehensive in England and Wales A Study of Uneven Change* (London, 1996), pp. 87, 90, 118, 120 and 121.

<sup>33</sup> How far the 1944 Education Act and subsequent developments towards a tripartite system were actually aimed at achieving 'parity of esteem' is debateable. For an in-depth analysis of different kinds of thinking on tripartite education and 'parity of esteem', see G. McCulloch, *Educational Reconstruction: The 1944 Education Act and the Twenty-first Century* (Ilford, 1994), pp. 72-92.

<sup>34</sup> For example, the 'junior' in what had previously been Junior Technical Schools was removed to try and eliminate the idea that grammar schools were more senior than the technical schools, Sanderson, *The Missing Stratum Technical School Education in England*, p. 129.

<sup>35</sup> M. Holt, *Schools and curriculum change* (Maidenhead, 1980), p. 3.

status.<sup>36</sup> Demands for educational change grew stronger, and modern schools began to instigate external examinations for some of their pupils. Previously, such examinations had only been offered to grammar school pupils, but were now opening up further possibilities to those who had originally failed the 11-plus examination.<sup>37</sup> This resulted in modern schools increasingly being judged by the number of pupils they entered into General Certificate of Education (GCE) examinations, and by 1960, 22,000 secondary modern pupils sat these examinations.<sup>38</sup> David Eccles (Conservative Education Secretary 1954-57 and 1959-62) as well as the National Union of Teachers (NUT) were forced to accept the movement towards external examinations in secondary modern schools, regardless of their original opposition to it. Therefore, in 1960 the Minister published the Beloe Report which favoured a specific national examination for secondary modern pupils, rather than the multiple examinations that already existed.<sup>39</sup> Accordingly, the Certificate of Secondary Education (CSE) was introduced in 1965.<sup>40</sup> These changes to the secondary school system were motivated from 'below' and epitomised changes in attitudes among parents and teachers.

These attitudes are also indicative of how Circular 10/65, while significant in its 'request' by central government for LEAs to start planning for comprehensive reorganisation, was very much in line with public opinion which saw a majority of parents supporting the abolition of the 11-plus examination by the year 1959.<sup>41</sup> Grassroots' developments had clearly shown that public opinion was in favour of the abolition of the differentiated system, and the fact that so many pupils from secondary modern

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<sup>36</sup> Figures published by an NUT survey in 1963 clearly showed the poor provisions made in many secondary modern schools. For example, seventy per cent of such schools had no special needs teacher, ninety-three per cent were without a specialist engineering teacher and forty-five per cent were without a gymnasium. Referenced in O'Hara, *Governing Post-War Britain*, p. 160.

<sup>37</sup> Previously, sitting public examinations had been the privilege of grammar school pupils only. Yet, during this period an increasing number of secondary school pupils outside of the grammar schools started to sit external examinations, and by the start of the 1960s the number equated to approximately one quarter of the total secondary school population see, for example, R. A. Manzer, *Teachers and Politics The role of the National Union of Teachers in the making of national education policy in England and Wales since 1944* (Manchester, 1970), pp. 84 and 85 and D. H. Hargreaves, *The Challenge for the Comprehensive School Culture, Curriculum and Community* (London, 1982), p. 49.

<sup>38</sup> Lowe, *Education in the Post War Years*, p. 117.

<sup>39</sup> MoE, *Secondary School Examinations Other Than the G.C.E.* (London, 1960).

<sup>40</sup> Manzer, *Teachers and Politics The role of the National Union of Teachers* (Manchester, 1970), p. 89.

<sup>41</sup> Cited in O'Hara, *Governing Post-War Britain*, p. 162.

schools had been able to achieve satisfactory examination results further undermined the process of differentiating between pupils at the age of eleven. Additionally, in 1962, it was estimated that more than half (around fifty-five per cent) of LEAs were already planning to submit reorganisation plans by 1963.<sup>42</sup> The relatively liberal Conservative Minister of Education, Sir Edward Boyle (1957-59 and 1962-64), had in fact already initiated changes in order to enable comprehensive reform. He expressed his support for experimental comprehensive schemes during his time as Minister, and explored the possibility of making testing at age eleven more informal while also entertaining the idea of making the roles of grammar schools less rigid.<sup>43</sup>

The most well-known milestone in the history of comprehensive schooling was the issuing of Circular 10/65. This was the Labour government's first official policy in favour of comprehensive schooling, and it was issued by Anthony Crosland (Education Secretary, 1965-67) in the summer of 1965. However, although Circular 10/65 has often been viewed as the foundation of a system of comprehensive schooling in Britain, the comprehensivisation process was gradual and less dominated by the Labour Party than has often been acknowledged. The process was already partially underway, since LEAs such as Anglesey were already trialling different types of comprehensive schemes and, as has already been suggested, the Conservative governments of the 1950s had also been open to reform along not too dissimilar lines.

The decision to 'request', rather than 'require' local authorities to reorganise along comprehensive lines in Circular 10/65 has typically been of interest to historians, yet very few studies have

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<sup>42</sup> E. Boyle, 'The Politics of Secondary School Reorganization: Some Reflections', *Journal of Educational Administration and History*, 4:2 (1970), pp. 28-38.

<sup>43</sup> For comments on Boyle's 'liberal' views, see Knight, *The Making of Tory Education Policy*, p. 23. The Conservative government also passed a bill in 1964 which would allow the creation of middle schools (the preferred option of some LEAs that were considering comprehensive reorganisation plans). Boyle later referred this bill as his '...parting gift to the Ministry', and suggested that by 1963 he had '...no doubts that separate schools at eleven...would be increasingly on the way out', see Kogan, *The Politics of Educational Change*, pp.78 and 94. In an interview with *The Times* in 1965 Boyle also expressed his support for 'good' comprehensive schemes in appropriate areas. However, he still retained the well-established Conservative view that '...established schools of real excellence' should not be sacrificed through ill-considered comprehensive schemes such as those proposed in Liverpool and Manchester, see *The Times*, 8 April 1965. Boyle's predecessor Sir David Eccles had also expressed his support for limited experiments with comprehensive schemes ten years earlier, see *The Guardian*, 14 April 1955.

commented on the influence that pioneering LEAs had on this document.<sup>44</sup> Apart from a brief comment (published in 1989) on the six options set-out in this renowned circular, this important fact has rarely been acknowledged in existing scholarship.<sup>45</sup> Nevertheless, the formulation of Circular 10/65 was highly influenced by those comprehensive schemes already in existence in various LEAs. In an interview from 1970 Crosland recognised the impact that existing schemes had on the circular. He suggested that due to the lack of consensus ‘...on which type of organization was best on merit – ‘all-through’ comprehensives, or the Leicestershire system, or what...’ that different options had been a necessity.<sup>46</sup> Crosland also pointed out that the thinking behind the six alternatives had predominantly been generated by officials from Her Majesty’s Inspectorate (HMI), and that although the government had not undertaken any specific research on comprehensivisation prior to Circular 10/65 ‘...we had a number of comprehensive systems that had been going for quite a considerable time – in London and Leicestershire and elsewhere’.<sup>47</sup>

Even though the Labour Party was instrumental in providing both momentum and legitimacy for developments in comprehensive schooling for many LEAs, this study will demonstrate how Anglesey’s system was not altered whatsoever in the wake of the new governmental guidelines.

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<sup>44</sup> The fact that the circular merely ‘requested’ LEAs to reorganise has often been referred to, and by comprehensive supporters it has also been considered a case of a ‘lost opportunity’ for the Labour Party see, for example, Simon, *Education and the Social Order*, pp. 280-282; Lawton, *Education and Labour Party Ideologies*, pp. 69-72; M. Benn, *School Wars The Battles for Britain’s Education* (London, 2011), p. 51 and C. Chitty, *Understanding Schools and Schooling* (London, 2002), p. 17.

<sup>45</sup> In the late 1980s Fearn commented that: ‘Interestingly the Circular laid down national models for variants of the comprehensive school which were based very firmly on local schemes already formulated and frequently implemented, again emphasizing the vital importance of local initiatives’, see E. Fearn, ‘The Politics of Local Reorganization’ in R. Lowe (ed.), *The Changing Secondary School* (Lewes, 1989), p. 38. The significance of the West Riding’s middle-school model of comprehensive education has been analysed in D. Crook, ‘The middle school cometh’... and goeth: Alec Clegg and the rise and fall of the English middle school’, *Education 3-13: International Journal of Primary, Elementary and Early Years Education*, 36:2 (2008), pp. 117-125. However, the analysis of the pioneering scheme in Leicestershire in K. J. Donald, ‘The Reorganization of Secondary Education in Leicestershire, 1947-1984’, in R. Lowe (ed.), *The Changing Secondary School* (Lewes, 1989), pp. 20-35 did not comment on the role such pioneering schemes played in the formation of Circular 10/65, or its consequences.

<sup>46</sup> Cited in M. Kogan, *The Politics of Education Edward Boyle and Anthony Crosland in conversation with Maurice Kogan* (Harmondsworth, 1976), p. 188. Shirley Williams also emphasises the significant power LEAs possessed in relation to reorganisation in the wake of Circular 10/65 in her experience as a junior minister in Harold Wilson’s government. She stresses the importance of ‘goodwill’ among the LEAs when it came to realising comprehensive reorganisation, S. Williams, *Climbing the Bookshelves* (London, 2009), p. 170.

<sup>47</sup> Kogan, *The Politics of Education Edward Boyle and Anthony Crosland in conversation*, pp. 188-189.

From its origins the island's Development Plan had envisaged '11-18' schools with each individual institution incorporating a Sixth Form.<sup>48</sup> The Ministry considered this organisation compliant with the new circular, leaving Anglesey free to continue with its arrangements without any alterations.<sup>49</sup> Although a range of different schemes emerged in various LEAs in the wake of the new circular, the so called '11-18' or 'all-through' schools (like those already in existence on Anglesey) were most common.<sup>50</sup> Despite having previously received recurrent criticisms for being too large and impersonal, by the time of Circular 10/65, these schools were expressly favoured by central government.<sup>51</sup> However, the circular's six options allowed markedly diverse systems to develop in different areas, permitting a plethora of different comprehensive systems to emerge.<sup>52</sup> Therefore, it would be inappropriate to suggest that Circular 10/65 created one uniform comprehensive system for England and Wales. Apart from the wide variety of choices available to LEAs in 1965, the electoral success of the Conservative Party in 1970 saw Circular 10/65 withdrawn. Margaret Thatcher (Secretary of State for Education, 1970-74) replaced the old circular with a new document (Circular 10/70). Even though more comprehensive schools were approved during Thatcher's tenure as Minister than had ever been approved previously, the change of direction in accordance with

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<sup>48</sup> '11-18 Schools' were also often referred to as 'all-through' schools. They were comprehensive schools that catered for all pupils of secondary school age, and they also provided Sixth Form instruction.

<sup>49</sup> Sixth Form provision became a troublesome issue for Anglesey's schools, and by the time of Circular 10/65 other problems related to the island's '11-18' schools were also emerging. For more on this see Chapters Five.

<sup>50</sup> For more on the criticisms of this type of comprehensive schools see Chapter Four. Facts about the different types of systems and schools that had been created after Circular 10/65 were published in the *TES*, *TES*, 6 October 1967.

<sup>51</sup> MoE, 'Circular 10/65: The Organisation of Secondary Education' 12 July 1965, London, TNA: ED 147/827C.

<sup>52</sup> Apart from the '11-18' alternative there were other options: ii: A two tiered model where pupils transferred at eleven to a junior comprehensive school, and where all pupils transferred to the senior school at the age of thirteen or fourteen. Option iii: Where, similarly, all pupils transferred at eleven to the junior school, but at thirteen or fourteen some pupils moved to a senior school, while others remained in the junior school. Some of these schemes would offer external (GCE or CSE) examination courses, while other would not. Option iv: This was also a two tiered alternative where all pupils transferred to the junior comprehensive school at the age of eleven, but where pupils had a choice between transferring to a senior school at the age of thirteen or fourteen if they intended to stay in education 'well beyond' the statutory leaving age, or to attend a senior school for those pupils who were not expected to remain in education past the legislated leaving age. Option v: A comprehensive school for the ages of eleven to sixteen combined with a Sixth Form College for those over sixteen. Option vi: A system of middle schools which straddled the primary and secondary school age ranges. Pupils would attend middle school at either the age of eight or nine, and remain until reaching the age of twelve or thirteen. All pupils would then move onto a comprehensive school catering for pupils up to the age of eighteen, MoE, 'Circular 10/65: The Organisation of Secondary Education', 12 July 1965, London, TNA: ED 147/827C.

Circular 10/70 allowed LEAs to develop secondary education according to their own desires and away from the influence of central government.<sup>53</sup> This led to inconsistencies in both central government policy and the comprehensive schemes that developed during the 1960s and beyond. In the national press, Anglesey was held up as an example of successful comprehensive education in practice. However, this was a skewed portrayal of the actual lessons that were being learnt at the local level, where issues were being raised about how to successfully provide education for pupils of all abilities. Moreover, the preoccupation with the results among 'grammar school pupils' in early comprehensive schools overshadowed any difficulties pioneering local authorities were experiencing in terms of the provision for 'less academically gifted' pupils.

### III

There is a dearth of recent publications of studies on the general history of comprehensivisation, and the majority of available literature was written prior to 2000 by a handful of academics whose work has significantly influenced the field.<sup>54</sup> The broader history of comprehensivisation has not as yet gone beyond the policy-making process of central government and party politics. The power relationship between central government and LEAs has rarely been analysed in depth despite the fact that the education system in England and Wales was interdependently controlled and implemented by both local and central government. LEAs still exercised considerable control over

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<sup>53</sup> D. Rubinstein and B. Simon, *The Evolution of the Comprehensive School, 1926-1972* 2nd ed. (London, 1973), p. viii; D. Crook, 'Local Authorities and Comprehensivisation in England and Wales, 1944-1974', *Oxford Review of Education*, 28:2/3 (2002), pp. 247-260.

<sup>54</sup> Much of the broad history of educational politics in the twentieth century, including that of comprehensive schooling, was largely written during the 1970s, 1980s and into the 1990s. Brian Simon (sometimes in collaboration with other scholars) produced the most prominent historical accounts of the politics of education in modern Britain, including significant comments on the comprehensivisation process see, for example, Benn and Simon, *Half Way There*; Rubinstein and Simon, *The Evolution of the Comprehensive School*; B. Simon, *The politics of educational reform, 1920-1940*; Simon, *Education and the Social Order*; Simon, *The state and educational change*. Other histories covering educational developments during this period were, for example, Barker, *Education and Politics 1900-1951*; I. G. K. Fenwick, *The Comprehensive School 1944-1970: The politics of secondary school reorganization* (London, 1976); Kogan, *The Politics of Educational Change*; Lowe, *Education in the Post War Years*; Kerckhoff, Fogelman, Crook and Reeder, *Going Comprehensive in England and Wales*; Benn and Chitty, *Thirty Years on Is Comprehensive Education Alive and Well or Struggling to Survive?*.

school organisation as well as the curriculum throughout the period of study. This division and balance of power has attracted some interest in the existing historiography, but a majority of works merely pass comment on the power relationship rather than evaluate its cause and effect.<sup>55</sup> As far as the power-sharing within the educational sphere has been considered, the general consensus has been that the post-1944 period saw a gradual shift of powers away from local authorities while central government became more influential. The 1944 Education Act saw the BoE succeeded by the MoE, and subsequent developments have often been perceived as the burgeoning of central government's power over the educational sphere.<sup>56</sup> The 1944 Act stipulated that it was the official duty of the Minister to '...secure the effective execution by local authorities, under his control and direction, of the national policy for providing a varied and comprehensive educational service in every area'.<sup>57</sup> The Minister also had the right to oppose the actions of any LEA considered to be acting 'unreasonably'. However, the Ministry of Education was not regarded by politicians as being particularly prestigious. Although the Education Minister theoretically wielded significant power over educational matters, the post was not held in much esteem until the latter part of the 1960s.<sup>58</sup> Therefore, the supposition that the MoE exercised more direct power than its predecessor (BoE) is doubtful. Nonetheless, LEAs still retained significant influence over education.<sup>59</sup> Although it has been

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<sup>55</sup> Bogdanor has made a couple of contributions to the study of the balance of power in the British education system in the *Oxford Review of Education* during the 1970s, see V. Bogdanor, 'Education, Politics and the Reform of Local Government', *Oxford Review of Education*, 2:1 (1976), pp. 3-15 and V. Bogdanor, 'Power and Participation', *Oxford Review of Education*, 5:2 (1979), pp. 157-168. It is telling that these were written in response to the reorganisation of local authorities (1976 article) and in the wake of Callaghan's Ruskin Speech on a centralised curriculum and the subsequent 'Great Debate' on education. The role of the NUT in policy-making after 1944 has been analysed in Manzer, *Teachers and Politics The role of the National Union of Teachers*. General histories of education that pass comment on the shared controls of education include, for example, Benn and Chitty, *Thirty Years on Is Comprehensive Education Alive and Well or Struggling to Survive?*, p.4, Benn and Simon, *Half Way There*, p.26 and Barker, *Education and Politics 1900-1951*, p. 84.

<sup>56</sup> Fenwick, *The Comprehensive School 1944-1970* (London, 1976), pp. 6-7.

<sup>57</sup> Education Act, 1944, Part I, 1, (1).

<sup>58</sup> See, for example, M. Kogan, *The Politics of Educational Change* (Manchester, 1978), p. 11 and R. A. Manzer, *Teachers and Politics The role of the National Union of Teachers in the making of national education policy in England and Wales since 1944* (Manchester, 1970), pp. 4 and 5; N. Middleton, 'Lord Butler and the Education Act of 1944', *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 20:2 (1972), pp. 178-191

<sup>59</sup> For literature that emphasises the significance of this power-shift in the wake of 1944 see, for example, Fenwick, *The Comprehensive School 1944-1970*, pp. 6 and 7; Jones and Roderick have described the powers of the new Minister of Education as 'dictatorial', see Jones and Roderick, *A History of Education in Wales*, p. 154. Bogdanor, on the other hand, questioned the influence of the Minister compared to those Civil Servants who

generally acknowledged that comprehensivisation was highly dependent on developments in individual LEAs, the trend has nevertheless been to write the familiar top-down history where central policy-making and decisions have been the main focus.<sup>60</sup> The existing literature has tended to position developments in LEAs as mere sideshows of secondary importance to what has been portrayed as the leading events at a national level. This approach might have provided a less complex and more compelling narrative, but it has also generated an unbalanced portrayal of the comprehensivisation process as it unfolded.

The literature on the history of education in Wales for this period was primarily produced during the 1980s and 1990s, with some published into the early 2000s.<sup>61</sup> In an article published in 2013, Gareth Elwyn Jones emphasised the dearth of Welsh educational history, and pointed out that only one ‘historian of education’ was employed by a Department of Education in the whole of Wales.<sup>62</sup> While educational developments in Scotland are largely excluded altogether in wider scholarship,

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generally remained in the Department for a lot longer than Ministers, see Bogdanor, ‘Power and Participation’, p. 158. G. E. Jones has also emphasised the influence of civil servants on educational developments in Wales, G. E. Jones, ‘Policy-Making in Welsh Education: A Historical Perspective, 1889-1988’, pp. 50, 62.

<sup>60</sup> For examples of scholars’ acknowledgement of the leading role LEAs played see, for example, Crook, ‘Local Authorities and Comprehensivisation in England and Wales, 1944-1974’, pp. 247-260; Knight, *The Making of Tory Education Policy*, p. 14; Chitty, *Understanding Schools and Schooling*, p. 16. Brian Simon even referred to the movements of LEAs as the ‘break-out in Secondary Education’ and considered it a ‘Local Authority Surge’, see, Simon, *Education and the Social Order*, pp. 271-282.

<sup>61</sup> The most prominent historian of education in Wales has been Gareth Elwyn Jones (1939-2013), illustrated by his significant contributions to this field in Wales. Jones primarily wrote about education in Wales from a wide perspective. He often emphasised the detrimental effects that centrally imposed education reforms, designed to suit England, had on Wales. Jones did not publish anything specifically on comprehensive schooling in Wales, although he did publish articles on secondary education in Wales more generally. See, for example, Jones, *Controls and Conflicts in Welsh Secondary Education*; Jones, *Secondary Education in Wales 1934-1984*; G. E. Jones (ed.), *Education, Culture and Society Some Perspectives on the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Cardiff, 1991); G. E. Jones, ‘Policy and Power: one hundred years of Local Education Authorities in Wales’, *Oxford Review of Education*, 28,2/3 (2002), pp. 343-358; G. E. Jones, *The Education of a Nation* (Cardiff, 1997); Jones and Roderick, *A History of Education in Wales*; G. E. Jones, ‘From Intermediate to Comprehensive Education: A Personal View’, in W. G., Evans (ed), *Perspectives of a Century of Secondary Education in Wales, 1889-1989* (Aberystwyth, 1990), pp. 60-76.

<sup>62</sup> Jones’ article emphasised the dearth of education history in Wales, pointing out that ‘...decline in the study of education history has correlated with increased independence and sense of identity of the Welsh education system’. He believed that whilst devolution had allowed the emergence of distinctly Welsh educational policies, these developments had nevertheless coincided with a downturn in the interest of historians in this field of study. Jones pointed out that there had been a surge in studies concerned with the history of education in Wales during the 1960s, part of the wider up-swing of Welsh social and cultural history (although the vast majority of these studies focused on south Wales). However, by the 1990s this interest had largely disappeared and Jones’ contributions constituted the exceptions. For more on Jones’ discussion, see G. E. Jones, ‘Perspectives from the brink of extinction: the fate of the history of education study in Wales’, *History of Education*, 42:3 (2013), pp. 381-395.



developments in Wales have more often than not been discussed under the legislative label 'England and Wales'. Because Wales was officially considered part of 'England and Wales' until devolution in 1997, the wider scholarship has rarely acknowledged any explicit differences in its treatment of Wales as opposed to 'England and Wales'.<sup>63</sup> Nevertheless, the distinctiveness of Wales as far as educational matters were concerned was certainly recognised in various different ways during the period covered in this study. This was the case both in terms of how Welsh educational concerns were perceived and the treatment they received by central government. The 1944 Education Act was felt to be more controversial for educational powers in Wales than in England because of the fact that the Welsh education system had historically been allowed to develop separately to that in England. However, it was felt that with the introduction of the 1944 Education Act the individuality of the Welsh education system was infringed upon.<sup>64</sup> The 1889 Intermediate Education Act had allowed Wales to establish Intermediate Schools, and this had in turn made secondary education more accessible in Wales, enhancing opportunities for social mobility in comparison to England.<sup>65</sup> This distinctiveness was not solely due to the 1889 Intermediate Act since educational matters in Wales were regularly treated separately from those in England. The creation of the Welsh Department to the BoE in 1907 ensured that Welsh educational matters were at least considered

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<sup>63</sup> 'Wales and England' are referred to in some cases, even though this tends to be in direct relation to official statistics citing 'Wales and England' as the legislative unit exclusive of Scotland. 'Britain', the 'UK' or even 'England' is most commonly used, where Wales is implicit in these categories. For the use of 'Wales and England' see, for example, Manzer, *Teachers and Politics The role of the National Union of Teachers* and Simon, *Education and the Social Order*. For the use of 'Britain' and 'UK' see, for example, Benn, *School Wars* and Benn and Chitty, *Thirty Years on Is Comprehensive Education Alive and Well or Struggling to Survive?*. For examples of the use of 'England' see Parkinson, *The Labour Party and the Organization of Secondary Education 1918-1965* and Knight, *The Making of Tory Education Policy in Post War Britain 1950-1986* (Lewes, 1990).

<sup>64</sup> See, for example, Jones and Roderick, *A History of Education in Wales*, pp. 87 and 89 and D. G. Evans, *A History of Wales 1906 – 2000* (Cardiff, 2000), p. 248. Jones has even proposed that Wales and its education system were at this time developed with a view to serve the needs of England, and as a peripheral region had to fit into a system designed to serve the wider state. For Jones' comments on this see, for example, Jones, preface to *the Education of a Nation*, pp. ix-x; . Jones and Roderick, *A History of Education in Wales*, pp. 171 and 172.

<sup>65</sup> For comments on the unique Welsh system after 1889 and for superiority in terms of social mobility see, for example, Jones, 'Policy and Power: one hundred years of Local Education Authorities in Wales', p. 343; Jones and Roderick, *A History of Education in Wales*, p. 89 or K. O. Morgan, *Modern Wales: Politics, Places and People* (Cardiff, 1995), p. 204; in terms of grammar school entries see, for example, J. Simon, 'Report from South Wales', *Forum*, 1:2, (1959), p. 49. For general view of a superior system being threatened after 1944 see, for example, J. Davies, *A History of Wales* (London, 2007), p. 617.

independently from the BoE, even though the Department was expected to (and predominantly did) follow central government's directives despite relatively regular conflicts with the parent body.<sup>66</sup> It was also in 1907 that O. M. Edwards became Chief Inspector for schools in Wales and effectively used his position to encourage an exclusively 'Welsh curriculum' in schools which he hoped would strengthen the Welsh language and culture.<sup>67</sup> Therefore, a range of factors helped to reinforce the perception that education in Wales was separate from England, but there were also real differences in how Welsh education was administered and carried out. Central government reports often afforded Wales distinct treatment from England, regularly dedicating specific sections to education in Wales and its particular requirements.<sup>68</sup>

No exclusive history of comprehensivisation in Wales has been published to date, despite the fact that peculiarities to Wales generated calls for differentiated treatment in terms of the tripartite system that developed in the wake of the 1944 Education Act. This was partially due to the rural geography of large parts of Wales, but also because socio-economic, cultural and linguistic differences were considered to make large parts of Wales unsuitable for a differentiated system of secondary education. However, the Welsh Department was not willing to sanction multilateral

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<sup>66</sup> G. E. Jones commented on the relationship between the Welsh Department and its parent body that 'the Welsh Department might win a battle, but has not as of yet won a war', G. E. Jones, 'Policy-Making in Welsh Education: A Historical Perspective, 1889-1988', in R. Daugherty, R. Phillips and G. Rees (eds.), *Education Policy-Making in Wales: Explorations in Devolved Governance* (Cardiff, 2000), p. 50.

<sup>67</sup> O. M. Edwards was a renowned historian and writer as well as educationist, and a well-known proponent of the Welsh language and culture. For more on Edwards as Chief Inspector see, for example, Jones and Roderick, *A History of Education in Wales*, pp. 112 and 113 and H. Davies, *O. M. Edwards* (Cardiff, 1988), pp. 96-104. For a comprehensive biography of Edwards, H. Walford Davies, *Llythyrac Syr O.M. Edwards ac Elin Edwards 1887-1920* (Llandysul, 1991).

<sup>68</sup> The despised Inquiry into the State of Education, and subsequent report published in 1847 known as the 'Treachery of the Blue Books' exemplifies particular concern for Wales, as did the Aberdare Committee which reported on the 'grossly inadequate' secondary education available in Wales. That Committee Report was the foundation for the 1889 Intermediate Act. Wales' distinctiveness was also acknowledged in the separate Circular 170 for Wales in 1931 when free school places were being replaced by means tested 'special places'. The introduction of means tested special places in schools was met with great protests in Wales, even though ironically the changes had very little impact in the region due to the high levels of deprivation. Furthermore, in the 1956 White Paper on technical education Wales was dealt with separately, as was the case with the 1967 Gittins Report on the Welsh language and primary education in Wales. For more on this see, for example, Jones, 'From Intermediate to Comprehensive Education: A Personal View', pp. 76 and 87; Jones, *Controls and Conflicts in Welsh Secondary Education*, pp. 142-143; Morgan, *Modern Wales: Politics, Places and People*, p. 200; A. P. Butt, *The Welsh Question Nationalism in Welsh Politics 1945-1970* (Cardiff, 1975), pp. 59 and 60 and London, TNA: CAB/129/79/1.

solutions for all of rural Wales, as had been suggested by Undeb Cenedlaethol Athrawon Cymru (UCAC).<sup>69</sup> The result was instead a mixture of provision. Many Welsh local authorities preferred to implement tripartite or bipartite systems, while others were denied their requests for multilateral solutions despite the Welsh Department's declaration in favour of such experimental schemes on a case-to-case basis.<sup>70</sup> This resulted in a majority of LEAs implementing some type of differentiated system, rendering Anglesey's fully comprehensive scheme a solitary exception despite the original call for an alternative approach in rural Wales.

As the only example of a fully comprehensive scheme in England and Wales this study will show the extent of the interest paid to Anglesey's scheme during the 1950s and 1960s. Particular emphasis will be placed on the attention paid to Anglesey's LEA in the national press, but also among educationists, educational journals and the Labour Party.<sup>71</sup> It is revealing, however, that despite Anglesey's significant presence in the contemporary debate on comprehensive education, the

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<sup>69</sup> Both the Federation of Education Committees (FEC) and UCAC requested special considerations to be taken into account for the case of Wales after 1944 Education Act. The FEC advocated the tripartite system for most of Wales, with multilaterals in some rural parts. UCAC on the other hand desired multilaterals to be the rule, not the exception, in rural Wales see, for example, Jones, *Controls and Conflicts in Welsh Secondary Education*, pp. 182 and 183 and J. R., Webster, *School and Community in Rural Wales* (Aberystwyth, 1991), p. 45.

<sup>70</sup> Different examples of developments in the wake of the 1944 Act include those in St David's, where a multilateral school with one grammar stream and two secondary-modern streams was considered 'sound educationally' by the Welsh Department since government policies prescribed that students of the different types should be segregated, Jones, 'From Intermediate to Comprehensive Education: A Personal View', p. 70. Radnorshire, however, was not permitted to implement its Development Plan which proposed a completely multilateral system. It was only allowed one, effectively bilateral school, (technical education was rarely an option in the Welsh rural areas) due to concerns from the Welsh Department of the impact on 'grammar type' children, Jones, 'Policy and Power: one hundred years of Local Education Authorities in Wales', pp. 351-353. Swansea experienced a long and drawn-out process of deliberation with central government in their bid to implement a fully multilateral system. Out of Swansea's request, they were finally allowed to create sixteen secondary modern schools, one technical, four grammar, and two multilateral schools (one girls' school at Mynyddbach and a boys' school at Penlan), for more on this, see D. B. M. Evans, 'The dynamics of Labour Party politics in Swansea 1941-1964', unpublished PhD thesis, University of Wales, Bangor (2007).

<sup>71</sup> For examples of such interest in Anglesey's scheme and exposure in the national media see, for example, *The Guardian*, 23 October 1954; *Picture Post*, 4 December 1954; *The Guardian*, 28 January 1955; *The Observer*, 6 December 1964; *The Daily Mail*, 7 January 1965; *The Times*, 3 April 1965; *The Times*, 5 April 1965 and *The Times*, 9 April 1965. For contemporary articles on Anglesey's schools and its education system in educational journals see, for example, *TES*, 6 February 1953; *Education*, 8 October 1954; *Education*, 15 October 1954; *Education*, 22 October 1954; *TES*, 27 January 1956; *The Schoolmaster*, 17 October 1958; *Education*, 20 March 1959; *The Teacher in Wales*, November 1960; *The Teacher in Wales*, March 1961; *Teacher in Wales*, 16 June 1967 and *Teacher in Wales*, 30 June 1967. For interest paid to Anglesey's scheme by the Labour Party, T[revor] L[ovett's] P[ersonal] F[ile], Llangefni, AA: WA 18/53.

island's scheme is often either briefly commented upon or absent from the literature.<sup>72</sup> An illustrative example of this is Simon's *Education and the Social Order, 1940-1990*, a study that is a virtual history of comprehensivisation and yet refers to Anglesey but briefly:

...Multilateral schools, as we have seen, were officially acceptable in rural areas. Presumably under this category Anglesey, which had decided already before the war to go comprehensive when possible, made its move which was accepted<sup>73</sup>

Further references to Anglesey are also short: as one of the few determined rural authorities that were permitted to proceed with their comprehensive plans; and where the establishment of a comprehensive system had also warranted the subsequent abolition of the 11-plus examination.<sup>74</sup> Therefore, while Anglesey's system is mentioned sporadically, it is virtually without any analysis of its rationale, its pioneering role, or as to how prominently it featured as an example of comprehensive schooling during the 1950s and 1960s. In contrast, the London County Council (LCC) scheme attracted much more attention in Simon's history of the comprehensivisation process. In conjunction with the rather brief comments on pioneering schemes in rural areas, Simon refers to

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<sup>72</sup> Anglesey is not mentioned at all in, for example, Benn and Chitty, *Thirty Years on Is Comprehensive Education Alive and Well or Struggling to Survive?*; Jones, *The Education of a Nation* and Fenwick, *The Comprehensive School 1944-1970*. When Anglesey's case has been commented upon it is often briefly described as a practical solution in a rural area. For example, Fearn suggested that: 'If, as has often been stressed, comprehensive schools in rural areas such as Anglesey...were created for practical as much as for ideological reasons, subsequent cases, for example, in London and Coventry, definitely owed more to ideology', Fearn, 'The Politics of Local Reorganization', p. 37. However, while Fearn expressed some uncertainty as to the accuracy of such an evaluation of Anglesey's scheme, most references to the island's scheme assumed this to be the case see, for example, Benn, *School Wars*, p. 49; Kerckhoff, Fogelman, Crook and Reeder, *Going Comprehensive in England and Wales*, p. 19; Benn and Simon, *Half Way There*, pp. 44 and 45; Jones and Roderick, *A History of Education in Wales*, p. 148. Practicalities were again assumed to have been the sole rationale behind Anglesey's Development Plan by Rubinstein and Simon, although they provided more details of developments on Anglesey, Rubinstein and Simon, *The Evolution of the Comprehensive School*, pp. 46 and 47. The most detailed account of some of the developments on Anglesey during the 1940s and 1950s is provided in G. E. Jones, *Which Nation's Schools?* (Cardiff, 1990), pp. 107-109, 161-167. Jones acknowledged historical reasons for the island's multilateralism, and also evaluated the protests that emerged during the relocation of David Hughes School from Beaumaris to Menai Bridge.

<sup>73</sup> Simon, *Education and the Social Order*, p. 109.

<sup>74</sup> Simon, *Education and the Social Order*, pp. 130, 169, 173. Simon also mentions '...Anglesey's comprehensive system, now well established...', in reference to a survey undertaken by the journal *Forum* in the late 1950s, which suggested that Wales was leading the way in opposition to the tripartite system through its wide-spread support for comprehensive solutions, Simon, *Education and the Social Order*, p. 205.

London: 'And finally, of course, there was the case of London which published its massive, and path-breaking, London School Plan as early as 1947...'<sup>75</sup> It is also highlighted that:

of course, the London County Council – by far the biggest authority in the country which, as we have seen, began planning for this transition as early as 1935. The case of London is interesting. The ambitious London School Plan...finally received ministerial approval (in principle) on 17 February 1950.<sup>76</sup>

Arguably, Simon's opinion was that the majority of early pioneering schemes in LEAs such as Anglesey and the Isle of Man, were not politically motivated and were therefore, in his view, rather uninteresting. When discussing the 'embryo' comprehensive schools that had developed during the 1950s he pointed out that a majority of these had emerged in rural areas but that '...the exception here was, of course, London itself'.<sup>77</sup> London's scheme was impossible to realise until much later on, however, and it could never be considered to have been 'fully comprehensive' during the 1950s or the 1960s because of the coexistence of so called comprehensive schools and a host of selective schools. Nevertheless, Simon dedicated much more effort to analysing the developments in the capital than anywhere else. Similarly, due to its radical and political rationale (and undoubtedly also because of its size and importance compared to most other LEAs) the LCC plan has attracted more attention than any other pioneering scheme, not merely from Simon but also more widely. Even though most historic accounts of this period acknowledge rural pioneers, sometimes even highlight their role as the original comprehensive schemes in England and Wales, they provide very sparse insight into their rationale or potential significance in wider educational developments.<sup>78</sup> The lack of

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<sup>75</sup> Simon, *Education and the Social Order*, p. 110.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 130 and 131.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 170.

<sup>78</sup> Other examples of the rather scant treatment of rural pioneering schemes can be observed in Benn, *School Wars*, p. 37 where it is explained that: 'The first comprehensive opened in Anglesey, Wales, in the late 1940s, while most of the transformation towards a comprehensive system occurred in the 1960s and 1970s...' and on p. 49: 'Britain's first purpose-built comprehensive, in Anglesey, opened in 1949 although it owed its existence to practicality rather than politics; it was simply impossible to sustain a two- or three-tier structure in an outlying area'. The fact that Anglesey and the Isle of Man developed the first complete systems of comprehensive schooling is outlined in Rubinstein and Simon, *The evolution of the comprehensive school*, pp. 46-47. Where it is also suggested that such a system was supported on Anglesey both because of its long tradition of a common school, as well as the difficulties involved in implementing the Hadow reorganisation. Crook merely mentions Anglesey, saying that it '...was permitted to go fully comprehensive as a special case', and comments that the Ministry's acceptance of rural schemes was '...for reasons more to do with economics than with education', see Crook, 'Local Authorities and Comprehensivisation in England and Wales', p. 248.

interest in, and attention paid to, rural schemes makes the existing history of comprehensive schooling somewhat unbalanced. These early rural schemes have often been considered ‘not proper’ comprehensive systems, and have been written-off as practical solutions in rural areas and lacking in any political rationales – and therefore of less interest to those historians writing the political history of comprehensivisation. It is suggested here that this has generated an urbanised and Labour Party-centric scholarship. Therefore, this study will explore the limits of party political and central government influence on the comprehensivisation process, and will also challenge the perception of the Labour Party as the chief designer of the patch-work of comprehensive schooling which emerged in England and Wales during the 1960s and 1970s.

It is noteworthy that despite Anglesey having an influential Labour MP in Cledwyn Hughes for twenty-seven years (1951-78), he was not actively involved in educational developments either locally or at a national (Labour) level. Apart from responding to concerns involving the relocation of the school in Beaumaris, and enquiring about examination results for David Hughes School on receipt of letters from worried parents, Cledwyn Hughes involvement with education and schooling on Anglesey was minimal. This is also reflected in his constituency papers which are largely devoid of documentation related to educational concerns.<sup>79</sup> For a majority of Hughes’ time as Anglesey’s MP, his primary concern was that of the island’s economic and industrial prosperity rather than educational developments. He encouraged industrial development, the establishment of the Wylfa nuclear power station, and actively sought central government support for new factories on Anglesey.<sup>80</sup> While socio-economic concerns and educational opportunities were undoubtedly linked, Hughes’ involvement was decidedly on the side of the former. It has previously been suggested that:

This was a period...in which he [Hughes] was to act as an effective parliamentary link in the implementation of the pioneering plan to establish a network of

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<sup>79</sup> L[ord] C[ledwyn of] P[enrhos] P[apers], Aberystwyth, NLW: GB 0210 CLEDWYN. For references to the relocation of Beaumaris school, see LCPP, ‘Constituency correspondence and papers’, Aberystwyth, NLW: GB 0210 CLEDWYN D1.

<sup>80</sup> Price, *Lord Cledwyn of Penrhos*, pp. 22 and 23.

comprehensive schools in the county – paving the way for education authorities in England and Wales to follow Anglesey’s trail-blazing innovation.<sup>81</sup>

However, this thesis demonstrates that neither Hughes nor the Labour Party played significant roles in either the development or implementation of Anglesey’s comprehensive scheme. The plans had already been approved by the MoE by the time of Hughes’ electoral victory in 1951, the two secondary schools in Holyhead had officially merged into one comprehensive school in 1949, and the first section of Amlwch’s new comprehensive school was in use by the autumn term in 1950.

Although developments in LEAs, rural as well as urban, are rarely analysed as part of the broader historiography, there are published accounts of developments for specific case studies. There are no published accounts of the history of comprehensivisation on Anglesey, but a couple of scholarly dissertations from the 1970s and 1980s have examined some aspects of the developments in secondary education during this period.<sup>82</sup> In the late 1980s it was observed there existed a ‘...small, but gradually increasing, number of interesting case studies’ of local comprehensive reorganisation and it was also emphasised that ‘[T]here is a relative shortage of case studies of rural and semi-rural areas...as opposed to studies of urban areas...’<sup>83</sup> Today, this assessment remains largely accurate. A

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<sup>81</sup> Price, *Lord Cledwyn of Penrhos*, p. 22.

<sup>82</sup> In his MEd dissertation Arthur Williams used some correspondence and local government papers to examine developments on Anglesey between 1926 and 1952 (the period leading up to the introduction of the comprehensive system in 1953). Williams concluded that the LEA’s rationale for the scheme was ideological, but Williams did not explore the pre-existing conditions and exclusive circumstances on the island during the 1920s and 1930s. Williams was a former pupil at Llangefni School and was a teacher at David Hughes School during the 1960s and 1970s. Therefore, Williams approached the study as an MA student of Education and a keen local historian (rather than as an academic historical study). This means that the evidential support is sometimes less developed and not as rigorously referenced as would be expected in an MA dissertation in History, see O. A. Williams, ‘Towards Comprehensive Education, 1926-1953’, unpublished MEd dissertation, University of Wales, Bangor (1985). Williams’ personal attachment to educational developments on Anglesey were evident when he was interviewed as a contributor to this thesis. He expressed his admiration for Humphreys as the Director of Education on Anglesey, describing him (the father of one of Williams’ school friends) as a hero, see Author’s Interview, 12 April 2013. The dissertation about the developments at Holyhead School by John Rowlands was also conducted as an MA in Education. Rowlands was also a former teacher on the island, starting his teaching career at Holyhead (1950) and progressing to become the deputy Director of Education for Anglesey and then Gwynedd (1974). He returned to Holyhead School as its head teacher between 1976 and 1987, *Daily Post*, 5 November 2013. Rowland’s dissertation provides useful insights into the organisation and running of Holyhead School during the comprehensivisation process up until 1961, see J. Rowlands, ‘The Evolution and Development of an Early Comprehensive School - Holyhead County Secondary School up to 1961’, unpublished MEd dissertation, University of Wales, Bangor (1971).

<sup>83</sup> Fearn, ‘The Politics of Local Reorganization’, pp. 36-37.

number of local case studies have been explored by historians, some of which have had a particular focus on reorganisation, while others have studied developments in secondary education more broadly and during longer periods of time.<sup>84</sup>

Detailed comparative accounts of developments in different LEAs are still rare. However, there are a few exceptions where studies have compared and contrasted approaches and ideas of different LEAs.<sup>85</sup> Two of those key exceptions will be commented upon briefly here in order to illustrate how Anglesey's case can enhance the existing historiography, and also how it can start to address the gap in the existing literature. Firstly, David Crook in his 2002 article 'Local Authorities and Comprehensivisation in England and Wales, 1944-1974', set out to show how comprehensivisation was a 'grass roots initiative'. It also aimed to discuss '...some of the variables that influenced the type and timing of secondary reorganisation' in different LEAs.<sup>86</sup> Crook's findings suggested that early support for comprehensive education was to be found in large cities, such as Bristol, London and Manchester. Furthermore, he emphasised the significance of individual politicians and Education Officers in driving the comprehensivisation process and challenging 'old orthodoxies'.<sup>87</sup> While some

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<sup>84</sup> Published accounts of developments in particular LEAs include: P.H.J.H. Gosden and P.R. Sharp, *The Development of an Education Service The West Riding 1889-1974* (Oxford, 1978); I.G.K. Fenwick and A. J. Woodthorpe, 'The Reorganisation of Secondary education in Leeds: The Role of Committee Chairmen and Political Parties', *Aspects of Education*, 22 (1979), pp. 18-28; A.G. Geen, *Decision Making and Secondary Education A Case Study* (Cardiff, 1986); D.K. Jones, *The Reorganization of Secondary Education Leicestershire, 1947-1984* in R. Lowe (ed.), *The Changing Secondary School* (Lewes, 1989); Crook, 'The middle school cometh' ...and goeth: Alec Clegg and the rise and fall of the English middle school', pp. 117-125; S. Maclure, *A History of Education in London 1870-1990* (London, 1990).

<sup>85</sup> McCulloch provides a comparison between LEAs that introduced some form of the tripartite system between 1943-1950, see G. McCulloch, 'Local Education Authorities and the Organisation of Secondary Education, 1943-1950', *Oxford Review of Education*, 28:2/3 (2002), pp. 235-246.

<sup>86</sup> Crook, 'Local Authorities and Comprehensivisation in England and Wales, 1944-1974', p. 247.

<sup>87</sup> Crook's examples of cities expressing support for comprehensives included: Bristol, London and Manchester, clearly wholly different LEAs from Anglesey. Other LEAs Crook drew on to reach his conclusions were Leicestershire and the West Riding. Both these authorities might have been more rural in character than the above cities, however, they differed significantly from Anglesey both in terms of geographical size and population numbers. For example, in the West Riding the number of secondary school pupils for the year 1960-61 was 104,297 while the same statistic for Anglesey was 4,083 pupils (a difference of approximately 100,000 pupils) see, for example, Gosden and Sharp, *The Development of an Education Service*, p. 200; H[er] M[ajesty's] I[n]spectorate, 'Report: Amlwch, Beaumaris and Llangefni secondary schools', summer and autumn 1961, London, TNA: ED 216/27 and HMI, 'Report: Holyhead County Secondary School', 13-17 November 1961, Llangefni, AA: WA 4/22. Other examples included Stoke-On-Trent, Birmingham, Leeds, West Sussex and Northumberland, see Crook, 'Local Authorities and Comprehensivisation in England and Wales, 1944-1974', pp. 254 and 255.



of Crook's conclusions from the findings of his selected case studies might tentatively also apply to Anglesey, the article more significantly strengthens the argument for viewing Anglesey as a 'special case'.<sup>88</sup>

The study thus examines the exclusive circumstances that allowed Anglesey to 'go comprehensive' so early on. Furthermore, this study also brings into question the rationale of comparing different LEAs with a view to establishing common patterns in order to explain how and why comprehensive schemes emerged. Apart from Crook's article, this kind of comparative approach is also applied in the second example (*Going Comprehensive*).<sup>89</sup> That study also sought to find similarities between different LEAs in order to explain their commitment and attitudes towards comprehensivisation. The sample of case studies is largely the same in the two studies (Crook was also one of the contributors to *Going Comprehensive*), and the conclusions are similar. They both illustrate a persistence in viewing comprehensivisation as a consequence of a coherent 'comprehensive movement' predominantly initiated by urban Labour run LEAs. In actuality, the evidence suggests that there was not one such movement. This oversimplification is a recurring theme that both politicises and urbanises the history of comprehensivisation. This study will show how reflections on an early, rural, pioneer of comprehensive schooling can advance our understanding of the complexities of this process. It also emphasises the importance of acknowledging the pivotal role individual schools played in the comprehensivisation process once reorganised systems had actually been established. In a majority of cases the existing scholarship equates the implementation of comprehensive schooling with the introduction with comprehensive education, but these two features did not necessarily coincide. This study emphasises the importance of separating the development of comprehensive schooling from the emergence of a more comprehensive curriculum.<sup>90</sup> By

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<sup>88</sup> The case studies used for this article (some just mentioned briefly to illustrate specific examples) are: London, the West Riding, Bristol, Coventry, Stoke-On-Trent, West Sussex, Leicestershire and Manchester.

<sup>89</sup> See Kerckhoff, Fogelman, Crook and Reeder, *Going Comprehensive in England and Wales*.

<sup>90</sup> Benn and Chitty touched on the issue of defining comprehensive education as opposed to schooling, emphasising the 'negative definition' provided by the MoE in 1947 and again in the 1976 Education Act where '...no schools were to be entered by selection. They suggested that '...absent still was any positive definition about the nature of the system or any positive statement about the aims, objectives and practices of

incorporating developments within individual schools into the history of comprehensivisation on Anglesey it will be possible to further assess their 'comprehensive nature'. By exploring school organisation and curricula it is possible to comment on the 'comprehensiveness' of the education provided for Anglesey's pupils. Rather than assuming that the establishment of a system of comprehensive schools automatically resulted in the provision of comprehensive education, this study differentiates between the creation of comprehensive schools and the establishment of comprehensive curricula. An analysis of developments within the schools will therefore indicate whether Anglesey's scheme was solely one of comprehensive schooling, or whether it was also one of comprehensive education.

#### IV

The structure of this study is broadly chronological. Chapter One provides a socio-economic background to Anglesey during this period. It considers demographical changes and their impact on the island's secondary schools intake. In-migration affected pupil numbers as well as linguistic patterns. While the issue of the Welsh language became more prominent throughout the period, Anglesey's LEA remained reluctant to enforce Welsh-language policies in its schools until the late 1960s. This chapter also comments on the island's rural situation, providing some contextual insight into the way in which Anglesey's pioneering scheme was viewed at the time as well as in the subsequent scholarship. Poverty and prosperity is examined in order to demonstrate how socio-economic issues impacted on pupils' choices in education. It also highlights the challenges of Anglesey's newly formed comprehensive schools in providing suitable education for all the island's secondary school children.

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comprehensive education itself...it is still a system without any clear definition, officially or otherwise', Benn and Chitty, *Thirty Years on Is Comprehensive Education Alive and Well or Struggling to Survive?*, p. 27.

Chapter Two looks at the period 1935-44, exploring the period leading up to the Education Act of 1944 which finally allowed Anglesey to implement a multilateral system of secondary schools throughout the local authority. Despite the lack of progress in reforming the island's schools during the 1930s, this period was instrumental in preparing the ground for future developments in comprehensive schooling. It was during this period that Anglesey's LEA cemented its desire to implement a multilateral system of schools, and also when the blueprint for the future scheme was fashioned. The thesis emphasises that the stasis in educational reform during the 1930s, predominately due to the stalemate in negotiations between local and central government, was a significant enabler in the development of the future comprehensive scheme.

The Third Chapter starts in the wake of the Education Act of 1944 and ends in 1952 when Anglesey was set to implement its fully comprehensive system the following year. This chapter highlights the significance of local circumstances, rather than centrally directed policies, to explain why Anglesey was allowed to emerge as a pioneer of comprehensive schooling. The proposed scheme was presented to the MoE in the spring of 1946, relatively early on, and was subsequently informally accepted by the MoE in December the same year. The early submission and approval of Anglesey's plan was essential to its success, as was the practical, rather than ideological, nature of the scheme's rationale.

Chapter Four examines the years 1953-1963, the pivotal period when Anglesey's fully comprehensivised education system was implemented. The LEA had a diminishing role in shaping developments in the comprehensive schools during this time. Each head teacher was responsible for the organisation and curriculum in his school, and this resulted in a varied picture as far as the 'comprehensive nature' of these schools was concerned. This chapter therefore emphasises the difference between comprehensive schooling and comprehensive education, and suggests that the crucial powers of head teachers was the most significant influence on comprehensive education at this time and not, as is often alleged, policies imposed from the centre. The chapter also examines

the scrutiny that the island's education scheme was under due to its pioneering role. It is suggested that this was significant in how the island's scheme was perceived, and that the criticisms it received were misdirected in respect of the actual rationale of the education system.

Chapter Five starts in 1964, the year of Circular 10/65, and finishes in 1974 when Anglesey's local authority was incorporated into the larger administrative unit of Gwynedd. This was the period when central government expressed support for comprehensive schooling for the first time, and when more comprehensive schools were opened than ever before. Despite this change in policy from the centre, Anglesey's system remained unchanged. However, there were mounting concerns about the proficiency of the island's schools in providing appropriate education for pupils of all abilities, and for developing a suitable curricula for all four '11-18' comprehensive schools. Despite these issues Anglesey's system generated interest in the public debate on comprehensive education. The island's schools were used as examples of how to organise such institutions elsewhere. More significantly, it was early pioneers such as Anglesey that were referenced in the grammar school debate in order to provide evidence as to how the 'more gifted' pupils fared in a comprehensive setting.

# Chapter One

## Problems, opportunity and change in Anglesey: 1935-74

We are seeking ways in which the people of Anglesey may hope to lead fuller lives with less exposure to the chill winds which have marred so much of our history.<sup>1</sup>

Written accounts of Anglesey and its history have often described the island and its outlook as insular, and chiefly identifiable by its nonconformity and rural agricultural economy. The pre-eminence of independent representatives in local government has also been a defining political factor on Anglesey, as was the dominance of powerful landowners and subsequently of an influential nonconformist middle class elite. Developments in education on the island during the early twentieth century were greatly influenced by what was described as 'religious difficulty'. Denominational rivalries created tensions and debates concerning the funding and controls of schools, although such questions became less prominent as the century progressed. However, these issues were still the cause of debate on Anglesey during the 1930s and 1940s due to the prospect of voluntary schools losing their senior pupils to the newly created multilateral county schools.<sup>2</sup> First impressions of Anglesey as an inward-looking rural community might not suggest the county as an ideal candidate for early pioneering of a comprehensive education system. However, in 1953 Anglesey became the first LEA in England and Wales to implement a fully comprehensive system incorporating all of its secondary schools. In fact, socio-economic features such as the county's

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<sup>1</sup> Welsh Office, *Wales: The Way Ahead* (1967), p. vii.

<sup>2</sup> For more on the impact of sectarianism and denominational rivalry on education during the nineteenth century, see D. Pretty, *Two Centuries of Anglesey Schools* (Llangefni, 1977). For comments concerning the development of non-conformism and its impact on education and politics, and on the expansion of an Anglesey middle-class elite, see D. A., Pretty, *Anglesey The Concise History* (Cardiff, 2005), pp. 89-101, 105-106, 109. For further analysis of non-conformism and politics on Anglesey, see W. P. Griffith, *Power, Politics and County Government in Wales Anglesey 1780-1914* (Llangefni, 2006). For more on non-conformism and education on the island during the period 1780-74, see W. P. Griffith, *Power, Politics and County Government in Wales Anglesey 1780-1914* (Llangefni, 2006) pp. 346-365. For views on Anglesey's 'insular tendencies' see, for example, Pretty, *Two Centuries of Anglesey Schools*, pp. 11 and 12 and Welsh Council, *Unemployment in Wales: A Study* (1973), p.19 and 20. For details regarding the plans for reorganisation after 1944 and the loss of voluntary schools see, for example, Chapter Two; PWDESC, 'Minutes', 6 June 1945, Llangefni, AA: WA 1/39 and PWDESC, 'Letter' 13 April 1946, Llangefni, AA: WA 1/39.

sparse and scattered population, and the subsequent persistence of all-age schools on the island, meant that Anglesey emerged as a rather suitable candidate for an experimental comprehensive system. In accordance with the island's Development Plan the new comprehensive schools, all up and running by 1953, each served a designated catchment area. Because the schools would be providing education for pupils of all abilities, entrance examinations were no longer required and were subsequently abolished. In effect this rendered the island's schools comprehensive rather than multilateral because of the abolition of the 11-plus examination. The county had decided to pursue (but was promptly denied) a multilateral system of education as early as 1936, but it was the 1944 Education Act that provided the legal foundations for the Development Plan of four comprehensive schools in Holyhead, Llangefni, Amlwch and Beaumaris to go ahead.<sup>3</sup>

This chapter establishes the socio-economic context of Anglesey's secondary schools during the period 1935-74. The objective is to illustrate the local settings within which these schools operated, so as to evaluate the socio-economic situation that underpinned developments in the four schools which were situated in the island's main population centres: Amlwch, Beaumaris, Llangefni and Holyhead.<sup>4</sup> For instance, demographical changes had significant impact on the intake in the different schools. Large projects on the island such as the construction of the Wylfa nuclear power station (1963-67) and the aluminium smelter in Holyhead (Anglesey Aluminium, finished in 1971) attracted an external workforce, bringing new and often non-Welsh speaking families into the region.<sup>5</sup> Such demographical changes, and the long-term decline of Welsh speakers, meant that the future of the Welsh language and its role within schools attracted accumulative attention as it became a more politicised issue. Between 1961 and 1971 the absolute number of Welsh speakers in Wales as a whole declined from 656,002 to 542,425, a fall of 17.3 per cent. In the period 1971-81 the decline

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<sup>3</sup> A[n]glesey E[ducation] C[ommittee], 'Proposal for Educational Development in Anglesey', 1936, London, TNA: ED 16/827.

<sup>4</sup> See Map 1.

<sup>5</sup> The company in charge of the smelter was Rio-Zink British Insulated Callender Cables Holdings Ltd. The smelting works were popularly known as Anglesey Aluminium, and that title will be used here.

had halted somewhat, but still stood at 6.3 per cent.<sup>6</sup> Anglesey was no exception in this respect, seeing a decline from almost eighty per cent (79.8) of its population being able to speak Welsh in 1961 to 65.7 per cent in 1971 and a further decline to 61 per cent by 1981.<sup>7</sup> However, this study suggests that the Welsh language issue remained relatively peripheral on the agenda of Anglesey's LEA up until the dissolution of the local authority in 1974.

Even though Anglesey County Council might have dealt with economic and industrial concerns quite separately from those of education, this study emphasises how socio-economic factors impacted on developments in schools, and therefore highlights their significance when analysing educational changes. For example, pastoral care might have been higher on the agenda in schools in less affluent areas, while attendance was often a more urgent concern in rural regions where children had often been expected to help out at home at harvest time. However, socio-economics influenced schools and pupils' aspirations in a broader sense, which is why it is essential to analyse how factors such as employment opportunities, or the lack of such prospects, affected developments in Anglesey's schools.

In 1961 Her Majesty's Inspectorate (HMI) observed that, considering the lack of job opportunities and the high unemployment figures on Anglesey, a surprisingly small proportion of pupils stayed in education once they had reached the legal school leaving age.<sup>8</sup> It was assumed that this was due to the lack of provision of practical education - a justified argument - but it is also important to take commonplace attitudes and perceptions into account. A range of factors would have affected pupils' choices in terms of their future careers and education, and wider motivations such as familial influences and expectations were intrinsically linked to socio-economic factors. Apart from such influences close to home, broader developments in England and Wales also suggest that despite the

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<sup>6</sup> J. Atchinson and H. Carter, *A Geography of the Welsh Language* (Cardiff, 1994), p. 58.

<sup>7</sup> Census 1961 Wales (Including Monmouthshire) *Report on Welsh Speaking Population*, H[er] M[ajesty's] S[tationary] O[ffice] 1962, p. x; Welsh Office, *Digest of Welsh Statistics*, HMSO No. 20 (Cardiff, 1974) and Atchinson and Carter, *A Geography of the Welsh Language*, pp. 41, 50.

<sup>8</sup> HMI, 'Report by H.M. Inspectors on A Survey of Amlwch, Beaumaris and Llangefni Secondary Schools, Anglesey', 1961, Llangefni, AA: WA 4/21.

priorities of central government, practical and financial concerns impacted considerably on developments in schools. For example, despite governmental promotion of technical education and its importance to wider society throughout the period, advances in the provision of technical education was at best inconsistent. In January 1949 over 3,000 modern schools and 1,229 grammar schools had been established in England and Wales in the wake of the 1944 Education Act, while only 310 technical schools existed. These schools were often situated in old buildings of former senior technical institutions, and by the end of the 1940s only three new technical schools had actually been built.<sup>9</sup> An effective analysis of the slow progress of the provision of technical education, and the feeble promotion of these subjects within schools, requires reflection on practical and financial factors, issues related to the status of different subjects and socio-economic circumstances at the local level.<sup>10</sup> All these factors can be detected in the case of Anglesey, where the new comprehensive schools were essentially fashioned out of the old grammar schools. Consequently, both in Holyhead and Beaumaris the new comprehensive schools had to utilise the existing accommodation, where provision for practical and technical subjects was indeed scarce.<sup>11</sup> Additionally, throughout this period Anglesey's experimental schools were overwhelmingly evaluated by observers interested in determining whether the performance of the schools' 'grammar type' pupils had been affected by their attendance at a comprehensive school. The contemporary debate on education firmly put the focus on the 'academically gifted' pupils, and the priority for pioneering comprehensive schools became the need to demonstrate the successes of these pupils rather than to prioritise the more practical forms of education.<sup>12</sup> It is also important to take into consideration the implication of economic factors and demands from the local labour

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<sup>9</sup> See Lowe, *Education in the Post-War Years*, p. 43. For a more detailed analysis of the development of technical schools, see Sanderson, *The Missing Stratum Technical School Education in England*.

<sup>10</sup> For further analysis of the status of technical education see, for example, Jones, *Controls and Conflicts in Welsh Secondary Education*, p. 159; Benn and Chitty, *Thirty Years One Is Comprehensive Education Alive and Well or Struggling to Survive?*; Jones and Roderick, *A History of Education in Wales*, p. 94 and Sanderson, *The Missing Stratum Technical School Education in England*, p. 10.

<sup>11</sup> HMI, 'Report by H.M. Inspectors on A Survey of Amlwch, Beaumaris and Llangefni Secondary Schools, Anglesey', 1961, Llangefni, AA: WA 4/21 and HMI, 'Report: Holyhead County Secondary School', 13-17 November 1961, Llangefni, AA: WA 4/22.

<sup>12</sup> For more on this see Chapters Four and Five.



market. The hope of the Welsh Office to eliminate the 'chill winds' that had tarnished the lives of the people of Anglesey would prove to be a difficult task, and north-west Wales did not experience the same level of prosperity as many other British areas during the 1960s.<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless, changes to the local labour market did occur, and this had an impact on pupils' decisions as to whether to stay in education or go out to work. Many children opted for employment rather than education at an early age in order to enter locally available jobs. These opportunities were often unskilled and low paid and primarily considered 'women's jobs'.<sup>14</sup> The situation in the early 1970s was not an improving one, with 222 new entrants into employment in 1971 compared to 300 in 1965. However, while the number entering unskilled jobs remained fairly similar, the number of entrants into apprenticeship schemes in 1971 was half of that in 1965 and under sixty per cent of the figure for 1970. While the number of female apprentices remained fairly stable, it was still very low. Among those first entering the labour market in 1970, the highest number, of both male and female workers, went into unskilled occupations.<sup>15</sup> This suggests that opportunities for young people during this period suffered. By the end of the 1970s the situation had not improved and Anglesey's unemployment rate in August 1979 was 12.9 per cent, more than double the British average. It was generally accepted that the most able children were 'marked for export only' since there were not enough white-collar jobs in the immediate locality.<sup>16</sup> However, the economic and employment structures on the island during the 1960s and 1970s did not provide incentives to stay in school for those children deemed suitable for vocational education either. Therefore, it was not exclusively the lack of provision in schools which deterred pupils from continuing vocational courses after they had reached the legal

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<sup>13</sup> For a detailed analysis of economic and social developments in north-west Wales during the 1960s, see A. Edwards, *Labour's Crisis: Plaid Cymru, the Conservatives, and the Decline of the Labour Party in North-west Wales, 1960-74* (Cardiff, 2011), pp. 32-53.

<sup>14</sup> For more on the types of jobs women entered into in Wales and women's wages in Wales, D. Beddoe, *Out of the Shadows: A History Women in Twentieth Century Wales* (Cardiff, 2000), pp. 139-142. For comments on how 'low-paid, unskilled occupations with no career structure' tended to become 'women's jobs' and how much of women's work also tended to be temporary and part-time, see M. Pugh, *Women and the Women's Movement in Britain* (London, 2000), pp. 286 and 287.

<sup>15</sup> Welsh Council, *Unemployment in Wales: A Study* (1973), p.25.

<sup>16</sup> *The Guardian*, 6 December 1964. The local circumstances were described in *The Times*, 3 April 1965: 'The people may be insular in outlook, but they see the value of education and are prepared to pay for it. Education is rated higher than amenities like car parks or fancy street lighting. Most parents want their children to share in the rich pickings beyond the Welsh hills, for they realize that really good jobs near home are at a premium'.

school leaving age, but the local economic and industrial base also explains this trend. There were few incentives to train for semi-skilled or skilled jobs since such opportunities hardly existed in the local area. While there had been an up-swing in local job opportunities during the 1950s, by the 1970s employment possibilities for young people were again scarce.<sup>17</sup> Managerial or higher skilled occupations remained limited in an area where employment was predominantly provided by external businesses, attracted to the area by government subsidies and a largely unutilised female labour force prepared to work part-time hours for low wages. The situation has been described as one of exploitation similar to that in any other underdeveloped country.<sup>18</sup> While there were benefits to the island in the short-term, and during the prosperous period of manufacturing, the positive long-term impact was less certain. These local circumstances provide vital contextual aspects within which educational reforms on Anglesey need to be examined in order to understand their implementation, impact and outcomes.

## **Population and depopulation**

At the start of the period of study, depopulation was considered a real threat to rural Welsh communities.<sup>19</sup> Out-migration was not solely seen as a danger to traditional local communities and culture, but also as a cause for economic problems and issues with unemployment in these areas. Changes in population numbers posed a very different challenge as the period progressed and population figures started to rise on Anglesey and elsewhere in north Wales. In-migration, by primarily English-speakers, became viewed as a tangible threat to Welsh culture, heritage and language. Furthermore, in-migration often masked the continued out-migration of the economically active sections of rural communities. On Anglesey the social structure of the population was in flux

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<sup>17</sup> While the list of twenty 'leavers' from the Holyhead County School in 1936 only provided one job opportunity in the local area, the list in 1952 was very different where over half of the leavers were staying in the region (44 out of 77). The largest numbers becoming factory operatives (14, females only), shop assistants (12) or entering employment or apprenticeships in engineering (14), *The Magazine of the Holyhead County School*, July 1936, p.14 and *Yr Ynys*, December 1952, pp. 71-73.

<sup>18</sup> J. Lovering, *Gwynedd: A County in Crisis* (Harlech, 1983), p. 36.

<sup>19</sup> See Table 1 for changes in population figures.

with second home ownership on the rise, new housing erected for an emerging middle-class and the arrival of retired in-migrants and a largely itinerant labour force to work on the island's large projects in the 1960s.<sup>20</sup> These changes also impacted on demands on schools in a variety of ways. During the 1960s there was greater demand for bi-lingual or Welsh-medium teaching in secondary schools throughout Wales, but simultaneously traditionally Welsh-speaking areas received more monoglot English speakers than had previously been the case. The great increase in numbers of pupils also acutely affected secondary schools, finally leading to the opening of the fifth secondary school on Anglesey (actually envisaged in the original plans in the wake of 1944) at Bodedern in 1977.<sup>21</sup> This created a largely Welsh-medium school, even though it was officially bi-lingual. Its formation had a significant impact on the existing catchment areas, especially for the intake of the Holyhead secondary school.

Many areas in rural Wales had experienced de-population during the inter-war years and the depression, and Anglesey was no exception to this, and did not reach pre-depression figures until the early 1960s.

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<sup>20</sup> For details on such projects see, for example, HMSO, *Wales: the Way Ahead* (Cardiff, 1967), p. 116; Welsh Council, *Unemployment in Wales: A Study* (Cardiff, 1973) and J. Revell, *Regional Income Multipliers The Anglesey Study* (Bangor, 1974).

<sup>21</sup> The original plan submitted to (and approved by) the MoE encompassed five rather than four secondary schools. However, with the indefinite delay of the raising of the school leaving age the fifth school was not considered necessary until much later on. For the original plan, AEC, 'Development Plan Under Section 11 (1) of the Education Act, 1944' London, TNA: BD 7/1.

## Comparative changes in population in North West Wales 1921-71

Thousands

Table 1

	% change	1921	%	1931	%	1951	%	1961	%	1971
<b>Anglesey</b>	1.6	51.7	-5.3	49.0	9.0	50.7	2.1	51.7	15.6	59.8
<b>Caernarvon</b>	4.7	131.0	-7.8	120.9	4.4	124.1	-1.9	121.8	1.1	123.0
<b>Merioneth</b>	-1.0	45.1	-4.2	43.2	4.0	41.5	-7.6	38.3	-7.8	35.3
<b>Montgomery</b>	-3.5	51.3	-5.4	48.5	2.6	46.0	-4.0	44.2	2.4	43.1

SOURCE: Office of Population Censuses; Surveys, *Census 1981 Key Statistics for Local Authorities Great Britain* (London, 1984), p. 13; Gwynedd County Planning Department, *Gwynedd 1981 Census Information* (1981) Information Sheet 1 Population Change.

The population figures for Anglesey show that while the population declined between 1921 and 1951, by the early 1970s the numbers had recovered and even overtaken those of the 1920s. The 1961-1971 interlude saw the construction of the Wylfa power station (completed in 1967) and the Anglesey Aluminium smelter (completed in 1971) and consequently also saw a significant rise in the population in certain urban areas but not in others:<sup>22</sup>

<sup>22</sup> For further views on the effects of these large projects see, for example, HMSO, *Wales: the Way Ahead* (Cardiff, 1967), p. 116; Welsh Council, *Unemployment in Wales: A Study* (Cardiff, 1973) and Revell, *Regional Income Multipliers*.

## Increases in the population for Anglesey's Urban Districts 1951-81

Table 2

	1951	%	1961	%	1971	%	1981
<b>Amlwch</b>	2,700	7.5	2,902	26.9	3,682	0.5	3,700
<b>Beaumaris</b>	2,134	-8.1	1,962	7.1	2,102	2.4	2,152
<b>Holyhead</b>	10,563	-1.4	10,412	1.9	10,620	-1.8	10,427
<b>Llangefni</b>	2,225	44.1	3,206	23.2	3,951	8.0	4,269
<b>Menai Bridge</b>	1,864	25.3	2,335	11.9	2,612	17.9	3,079

Source: Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, Census 1971 England and Wales County Report Anglesey Part I (1973), p. 2; Gwynedd County Planning Department, *Gwynedd 1981 Census Information* (1981) Information Sheet 1 Population Change.

Between 1961 and 1971 all the urban districts in Anglesey saw an increase in population, with Amlwch and Llangefni showing the most significant rise of more than twenty per cent. The influx of labour, especially during the construction phase but also for the running of the power station at Cemaes is quite clearly reflected in the figures for Amlwch. Between 1960 and 1969 twenty-nine manufacturing plants were established on Anglesey, providing job opportunities especially in Llangefni where a new industrial estate was opened in April 1957 to attract new enterprise to the island.<sup>23</sup> Llangefni, as the administrative centre also provided employment opportunities within local government.

Compared to the other rural north westerly areas of Wales, the decrease in population on Anglesey during the inter-war years corresponded closely to the surrounding areas, with only Caernarvonshire recording a significantly greater decrease in its population. However, Anglesey's recovery after 1931 was considerably quicker than any of the other counties, and this trend continued throughout the

<sup>23</sup> For details on the number of manufacturing plants and industrial developments on Anglesey. See Revell, *Regional Income Multipliers*, pp. 35-37. The opening of Llangefni's new industrial estate was covered by *The Guardian*, 25 April 1957.

period. There were several factors which resulted in the significantly higher population rise in Anglesey compared to the neighbouring regions. Between 1964 and 1969 the population of the island grew by 8.5 per cent, of which the natural increase accounted for 2.9 per cent while net migration made up the remaining 5.6 per cent. In contrast, Caernarvonshire's total increase in population during this period was a mere 0.7 per cent where the natural increase was in fact a negative -0.7 per cent and net in-migration stood at 1.4 per cent.<sup>24</sup> While the big projects on the island, and the labourers they attracted, undoubtedly had an effect on population figures, other significant factors also played a part in this increase. Those areas that were growing in popularity among tourists and retirees impacted significantly on Anglesey's population figures at this time (as was also the case in many other parts of the north-west coast of Wales).<sup>25</sup> In fact, while the coastal areas (including Anglesey) had seen between a seven and nine per cent rise in the late 1960s, the remainder of north-west Wales had seen an increase of just one per cent.<sup>26</sup>

Curiously, some of Anglesey's urban districts, in contrast to those in other local regions, had a higher than average number of inhabitants between the ages of sixteen and forty-five. This was the case in several places on the island by the early 1980s, where a higher than average number of households contained two or three children.<sup>27</sup> Not unexpectedly, the areas with younger populations than the average were those where employment encouraged families of working age to settle down. For example, the population of Valley Air Base/Rhosneigr consisted of 52.1 per cent of inhabitants between the ages of sixteen and twenty-five in 1981, where the RAF station resulted in significant in-migration of people of working age.<sup>28</sup> Therefore, the large proportional increase in population on Anglesey from the 1960s was not solely due to retirees moving to the area (even though these kinds

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<sup>24</sup> Welsh Council, *An Economic Strategy for North West Wales* (Cardiff, 1971), p. 3.

<sup>25</sup> Atchinson and Carter, *A Geography of the Welsh Language*, p. 52.

<sup>26</sup> Welsh Council, *An Economic Strategy for North West Wales* (Cardiff, 1971), p. 3.

<sup>27</sup> Gwynedd County Planning Department, *Gwynedd 1981 Census Information* (1981) Information Sheet 11 Urban Areas.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

of issues attracted much attention at the time) but was also the result of the high percentage of inhabitants of childbearing age.

This increase in population during the 1960s and 1970s naturally also affected the island's schools. The increase of pupils was, however, a combination of a growing population and also a consequence of the raising of the school leaving age in 1972. In the early 1960s, and prior to the raising of the school leaving age to sixteen, the catchment areas had to be re-drawn to relieve the pressure on the island's secondary schools. The situation was particularly urgent in Llangefni, where the plans envisaged accommodating more pupils from the Llangefni catchment area in the newly built David Hughes School in Menai Bridge (due to open in 1962 although it did not actually open its doors until 1963).<sup>29</sup> The opening of Bodedern School in 1977 was also a response to the overcrowding at some of the islands' secondary schools. Overcrowding was, therefore, a recurring problem throughout the period for all the island's secondary schools, and the pressure on school accommodation did not start to ease until the second half of the 1970s. Overcrowding had been a contentious issue during the 1930s when the LEA was accused of admitting too many pupils to the island's secondary schools.<sup>30</sup> Despite the erection of newly built comprehensive schools in both Amlwch and Llangefni, the inadequacy of the accommodation of both these schools was emphasised by HMI in the early 1960s.<sup>31</sup> In 1961 the estimated square footage available for Holyhead's 1,365 pupils was 41,000 while the recommended area for a school with that number of pupils was 53,000. In practice this was an estimated shortage of twenty-four teaching classrooms.<sup>32</sup> By this time the plans for the remodelling of outdated school buildings in Holyhead were, however, quite advanced and scheduled to start in 1962.<sup>33</sup> The pressure on school accommodation only increased during the early 1970s with the raising of the school leaving age, although this time central government provided some relief

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<sup>29</sup> HMI, 'Report by H.M. Inspectors on A Survey of Amlwch, Beaumaris and Llangefni Secondary Schools, Anglesey', summer and autumn 1961, Llangefni, AA: WA 4/21.

<sup>30</sup> For more on this see Chapter Two.

<sup>31</sup> HMI, 'Report by H.M. Inspectors on A Survey of Amlwch, Beaumaris and Llangefni Secondary Schools, Anglesey', summer and autumn 1961, Llangefni, AA: WA 4/21.

<sup>32</sup> HMI, 'Report: Holyhead County Secondary School', 13-17 November 1961, Llangefni, AA: WA 4/22.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

through its provision of so called 'ROSLA extensions', construction of accommodation funded by central government to ensure sufficient accommodation was available when the leaving age was raised.<sup>34</sup>

While the composition of Anglesey's population might have been in flux, the creation of the new '11-18' comprehensive schools in the island's four main population centres also had an impact on local communities. Besides from providing substantial job opportunities, a grammar school traditionally afforded its town a certain status. The big debate at the time of the relocation of David Hughes School, and the resistance among some of Beaumaris' residents at the prospect of losing the old grammar school, demonstrates the strong feelings attached to such institutions. Rural communities were also affected by the transfer of senior pupils from the traditional "all-age" schools. Whereas it had previously only been grammar school children who had travelled to school, the new system meant that all senior pupils living outside the main population centres had to attend school away from their villages. In Llangefni the head teacher E. D. Davies pioneered a house system based on pupils' home villages, so as not to 'seduce children from their loyalties to their society...' since '[U]nless we can take this social dimension into consideration, this school might as well be in Liverpool'.<sup>35</sup> How far the concentration of Anglesey's youths in schools away from their villages contributed to the actual loss of community based activities and belonging is questionable. However, pupils' experiences in these large schools were undoubtedly very different from what they had previously been in local all-age schools. One single class in one of the comprehensive schools could contain more pupils than the whole of a local primary school that pupils might previously have attended. Depending on the streaming procedures at each school, pupils would enter classes and befriend children from wide-ranging areas away from their local villages. Ties with the local

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<sup>34</sup> ROSLA is a common abbreviation for the Raising of the School Leaving Age. For more on ROSLA, see Introduction. David Hughes School was provided with ROSLA extensions for an extra 170 pupils and in Amlwch ROSLA allocation was provided for an additional 150 places (although the accommodation for both schools was not ready until September 1974), AEC, 'School Building – Preliminary List (Design List 1974/75) Secondary School Projects', July 1973, London, TNA: ED 154/320.

<sup>35</sup> For more on the house system in Llangefni, see Chapter Four. For Davies' comments on the house system, see *The Observer*, 6 December 1964.



community were inevitably changing when pupils no longer attended local schools together with their peers.<sup>36</sup>

Demographical changes also accentuated the plight of the Welsh language, and even in its traditional heartland, the number of Welsh speakers was in decline.<sup>37</sup> However, the trend was one of inconsistent fluctuations, seeing significant reductions of Welsh speakers in individual coastal areas, while migration from rural regions in favour of the island's towns saw the number of Welsh speakers increase in population centres such as Amlwch and Llangefni.<sup>38</sup> By the latter half of the 1960s formal education had been acknowledged as one of the most efficient ways of safeguarding the Welsh language, and there was increasing pressure on Local Authorities as well as schools to extend Welsh-medium teaching. The Welsh Department and the Board of Education (BoE) had officially favoured Welsh-medium or bilingual education since 1914 but developments in secondary schools had been slow.<sup>39</sup> The issuing of the Gittins Report (1967) in combination with the passing of the Welsh Language Act in the same year put further pressure onto secondary schools to improve their Welsh-medium provision. Prior to 1967, Anglesey's LEA had paid little attention to the language question in its secondary schools, and in the early 1960s HMI emphasised the lack of a cohesive language policy

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<sup>36</sup> *The Times*, 5 April 1965.

<sup>37</sup> Census 1961 Wales (Including Monmouthshire) *Report on Welsh Speaking Population*, HMSO 1962, p. x; Welsh Office, *Digest of Welsh Statistics*, HMSO No. 20 (Cardiff, 1974) and Atchinson and Carter, *A Geography of the Welsh Language*, pp. 41 and 50.

<sup>38</sup> It is likely that towns such as Llangefni, Amlwch and Llanfairpwll saw such increases as a result of the rise in employment opportunities in these urban districts. Rural localities on the other hand, especially coastal communities, recorded a major reduction in the proportion of Welsh speakers between 1961 and 1971. Places such as Llanbadrig, Llanelian, Pentraeth, Llanddona and Llandegfan all showed a percentage reduction of over twenty per cent, see Atchinson and Carter, *A Geography of the Welsh Language*, pp. 52 and 55. Closer assessment also suggested that even within small coastal communities where there had been significant in-migration, areas were not uniformly affected, and that many communities were still as 'Welsh' as they had been for generations. Parishes such as Llanbadrig had experienced a fall in the number of Welsh speakers of 14.8 per cent due to in-migration - although it was mainly concentrated to Cemaes Bay. Llanallgo experienced an 11.8 per cent decrease in Welsh speakers because of in-migration particularly to Moelfre, and Llanfaelog only had 55.3 per cent Welsh speakers by 1971 due to in-migrants to Rhosneigr, *Welsh Nation*, 5 July 1974.

<sup>39</sup> W. G. Evans, 'The British State and Welsh-Language Education 1914-1991' in G. H. Jenkins and M. A. Williams (eds.), *Lets do our best for the ancient tongue' The Welsh Language in the Twentieth Century* (Cardiff, 2000), p. 343.

for the authority.<sup>40</sup> In the wake of the Gittins Report Anglesey established a Welsh language policy by the early 1970s, but the extent of Welsh-medium teaching was highly dependent on the individual circumstances within each school, as well as the willingness of head teachers to make alterations to the schools' curricula. The non-prescriptive and cautious approach by the LEA would change drastically after the creation of Gwynedd County Council on local government reorganization in 1974 which pulled together the old counties of Caernarvonshire, Anglesey and Merionethshire. The fairly well-established bilingual practices of Caernarvonshire were favoured and adopted county-wide ahead of the rather less progressive approaches of Anglesey or Merionethshire. This resulted in Anglesey adopting one of the most progressive language policies in Wales; aiming for English and Welsh to gain equal status within the educational sphere. The objective was to make all children bilingual irrespective of their first language. This was to be the policy in more Anglicised areas as well as regions with already high levels of Welsh speakers. In the secondary schools too, the Gwynedd language policy was noteworthy. All pupils were to study Welsh and English into the fifth year, and where possible sit external examinations in both languages.<sup>41</sup> Despite the lack of initiative by the Anglesey LEA, however, the Welsh language was used in Anglesey's schools. Primary schools regularly taught a range of subjects through the medium of Welsh (even though written material was often lacking). Although English continued to be considered the formal language of education in the secondary school, Welsh was often used by teachers informally in the class room.<sup>42</sup> However, the curriculum of the Holyhead School in the early 1950s is illustrative of the attitude that English, rather than Welsh, was the language of academic education. The forms assigned to those pupils considered 'less academically gifted' continued to learn Welsh into their third and fourth year, while Welsh ceased to be a compulsory part of the curriculum for the 'academic' forms after the second

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<sup>40</sup> HMI, 'Report by H.M. Inspectors on A Survey of Amlwch, Beaumaris and Llangefni Secondary Schools, Anglesey', summer and autumn 1961, Llangefni, AA: WA 4/21.

<sup>41</sup> Webster, *School and Community in Rural Wales*, pp. 201 - 202.

<sup>42</sup> The majority of interviewees confirmed that Welsh was spoken in the classroom, even though it was not the formal language used in the instruction of subjects. See author's interview with former pupil in Llangefni School (1950s) 12 April 2013; interview with former pupil in Amlwch School (1960s) 2 May 2013; former pupil in Llangefni School (1960s) 20 May 2013 and former pupil in Llangefni School (1950s) 23 May 2013.

year.<sup>43</sup> Furthermore, by the late 1960s there were several stories in the local press suggesting that secondary school teachers were attempting to ‘brainwash’ pupils in support of a nationalistic agenda, and these claims emerged both in Holyhead and Llangefni. Although there was never any firm evidence to support such claims, these instances are nevertheless indicative of the politicisation of this issue, and also suggests that the LEA’s apathy towards the language problem was at odds with more radical views among sections of the teaching staff.<sup>44</sup>

### **Poverty or Prosperity**

In order to assess poverty and prosperity on Anglesey during this period different factors such as housing, living conditions, health and sanitation are all useful indicators of the socio-economic situation. The relative prosperity of the late 1950s and the 1960s was reflected in north-west Wales as well as in Britain as whole. However, the region remained relatively disadvantaged throughout the period of study, with certain areas significantly more disadvantaged than others.

Poor living conditions, sanitation and ill-health were everyday occurrences for many of Anglesey’s inhabitants during the 1930s and 1940s. In the 1930s it was widely acknowledged that the quality of housing was a serious issue in Wales as a whole, and Anglesey was no exception. Despite its rural location, some of Anglesey’s population centres had experienced rapid growth in the nineteenth century and therefore, in terms of its housing stock, faced similar problems to more expansive urban areas elsewhere in Britain. Both Amlwch and Holyhead had developed rapidly in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: Amlwch because of its copper mines and Holyhead as a result of its location as a terminus for both the railway and post road, and its strategic position in relation to

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<sup>43</sup> An article by Lovett in the *TES* in 1953 included a chart of the curriculum for Holyhead School where Welsh was shown as an optional subject alongside French, German and Music for the ‘grammar type’ forms, *TES*, 6 February 1953.

<sup>44</sup> *Liverpool Daily Post*, 26 July 1968; *North Wales Chronicle*, 1 August 1968; *Liverpool Daily Post*, 3 September 1969; *Western Mail*, 28 August 1969 and *Western Mail*, 7 November 1969.

Ireland.<sup>45</sup> Therefore, both towns had experienced similar issues in terms of living conditions, where terraced houses had been built quickly, and considerations for quantity rather than quality were evident.<sup>46</sup> By the 1930s many of these houses were no longer considered fit for purpose and were labelled inadequate. However, even though local authorities were supposed to embark on slum clearances of such housing, progress was slow. At a meeting of the Welsh School of Social Service in 1936, local authorities in Wales were criticised for their inaction, especially in view of some of the very basic dwellings that existed in north Wales.<sup>47</sup> The fact that Anglesey and Caernarfon were also charged with being among the three worst areas of overcrowding in England and Wales during the mid-1930s put further pressure on these local authorities to act.<sup>48</sup>

In 1939, the Ministry of Health's inquiry had commented on housing in the urban districts of Anglesey:

Down these yards and narrow alleys, there is little air and no sun....Often the windows will not open, and were not built to open. The hearths and grates are

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<sup>45</sup> Copper ore had started to be mined on a large scale at Parys Mountain in Amlwch in 1768 and the consequent increases in population due to the draw of employment in the copper mine was significant. The town experienced the symptoms of any other boom town, with crowded and unsanitary housing, poverty and destitution for many of the labourers who moved to the area to look for work. Before the great population boom in Amlwch there were some two-hundred houses with a population of between eight-hundred and nine-hundred in the town, but by 1775 over a thousand people were employed in the mines. In 1801 the population was 4,977 (Cardiff's population in 1801 stood at 1,870) and it peaked at 6,285 in 1831. Housing was erected quickly to meet demand resulting in unsanitary conditions and badly constructed buildings. Houses were mostly one storey, small, thatched cottages averaging two rooms and measuring some fifteen feet by twelve feet, see J. Rowlands, 'A Study of some of the social and economic changes in the town and parish of Amlwch 1750-1850', unpublished MA dissertation, University of Wales, Bangor (1960), pp. 293, 314-316, 319, 321. Similarly, Holyhead had grown rapidly during the nineteenth century. Improved connections with Ireland were achieved by the construction of the Menai Bridge, a new road across the Island, and the Stanley Embankment (connecting Holy Island to the rest of Anglesey). The Menai Bridge was opened in January 1826. Improvements to the harbour in Holyhead were also undertaken and completed by the late 1820s. The decision to link the railway to Holyhead harbour in the 1840s (opened in 1848) resulted in further modernisation to the harbour (the breakwater took twenty-eight years to complete). Holyhead became another Anglesey boom town; with soaring population numbers during the nineteenth century from 2,132 in 1807 to over ten-thousand in 1901 see, for example, J. P. Merrigan and I. H. Collard, *Holyhead to Ireland Stena and its Welsh Heritage* (Stroud, 2010), pp. 19-23 and D. L. Hughes and D. M. Williams, *Holyhead: The Story of a Port* (Denbigh, 1967), pp. 72 and 73.

<sup>46</sup> Hughes and Williams, *Holyhead: The Story of a Port*, p. 87.

<sup>47</sup> H. D. Chalke, 'Public Health and Housing in Rural Wales' in *Public Health in Wales (The Welsh School of Social Service)*, Conference 10-13 August 1936.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 33-39.

broken, and there is a general appearance of abject poverty....Sometimes there is only one outside lavatory for the use of the occupants of several houses.<sup>49</sup>

The 'abject poverty' that had been noted on Anglesey during the late 1930s was at its very worst during the depression era. A combination of factors saw the situation improve throughout the 1940s, initiatives such as slum clearance and social housing during the 1950s and 1960s ensured that the situation did not revert back to the lows of the 1930s again.<sup>50</sup> As far as housing conditions were concerned the post-war period saw gradual improvements to living conditions on the island, even though the availability of new housing varied significantly depending on where and when new housing estates were being erected. By June 1952 Llangefni was one of the top three urban districts in Britain in terms of houses built per head of population, and Llangefni would also become one of the key areas of growth on the island throughout the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>51</sup> The trend, started in the 1950s and carried on into the 1960s (and to an extent into the 1970s), had been for local authorities to build council housing in order to address house shortages and replace dwellings that had been demolished as part of slum clearance schemes from the mid-1950s onwards. This resulted in a reduction of owner occupied houses as well as privately rented accommodation throughout the 1960s and 1970s. The slum clearance initiative, underway during the 1950s, saw some four per cent (24,202) of Wales' housing closed or demolished between 1957 and 1973.<sup>52</sup> The Housing Repairs and Rents Act, 1954 put further pressure on the Anglesey County Council to develop a comprehensive programme of building and clearance within a year of its passing. Anglesey's County Council, similarly to many other local authorities, had already urged both the Rural and Urban District Councils to produce plans for their housing programmes as early as December 1952.<sup>53</sup> However,

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<sup>49</sup> Ministry of Health, *Report of the Committee of Inquiry into the Anti-Tuberculosis Service in Wales and Monmouthshire* (London, 1939), p. 139.

<sup>50</sup> While the Second World War had made Welsh people in general more aware of the impact of world politics on their everyday lives, the impact of the war had been particularly noticeable in Holyhead. The war had resulted in a revival of fortunes in the town following the hardships during the depression in the 1930s, namely via the port, as well as the R.A.F. airfield at Valley. For further comment on the impact of the Second World War in Wales more generally, see Martin Johnes, *Wales since 1939* (Manchester, 2012). For details on Holyhead, see Hughes and Williams, *Holyhead The Story of a Port*, p. 167.

<sup>51</sup> *The Guardian*, 7 August 1952. (The other two districts were Corby and Bletchley).

<sup>52</sup> Welsh Council, *Housing in Wales* (1974), pp. 3 and 19.

<sup>53</sup> C[ounty] C[ouncil], 'Letter to the U[rban] D[istrict] C[ouncils] and R[ural] D[istrict] C[ouncils]', 18 December

despite ambitious schemes being prepared for all the districts, progress was inconsistent. Clearances and re-building was undertaken throughout the 1950s and 1960s in both rural and urban locations. For example, in Menai Bridge the Urban District Council was informed that thirty-two homes were considered 'unfit for habitation' in 1933, and had to be demolished. They were eventually replaced by sixty-six houses 'for working men'.<sup>54</sup> Holyhead's plans from January 1953 were very ambitious and encompassed the construction of 766 new homes.<sup>55</sup> However, as new developments came to a standstill the Holyhead District Council was accused of having the worst record for house building anywhere in England and Wales for the year 1953.<sup>56</sup> The housing programme in Holyhead was a great undertaking which could only be implemented gradually, and opposition to some projects as well as practical obstacles did not help matters.<sup>57</sup> The projection in 1955 was that 720 houses would have to be demolished in Holyhead in the following twenty-five years, and out of a housing stock of some three-thousand this was a substantial proportion. In spite of these difficulties and the slow progress, new housing estates such as South Stack Road and Morawelon replaced condemned housing that had previously been cleared.<sup>58</sup> Even though the regeneration of the housing stock in Holyhead might have been slower than desired, it nevertheless provided affordable housing and improved living conditions for a substantial number of people.

By the mid-1970s there had certainly been great advancements in terms of living conditions across the island. The increase in council housing during the 1950s and up to the 1970s had a significant impact, especially in the urban districts where council housing made up a higher than average

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1952, Llangefni, AA: WDAR/138.

<sup>54</sup> Areas in Menai Bridge where new housing was erected included Rhyd Menai, Brohyfryd, New Street, Bron Fedw and Well Street. For more on this, see A. Herbert, 'The Development of Local Government in Menai Bridge', unpublished MA dissertation, University of Wales, Bangor (1979), pp. 121 and 132.

<sup>55</sup> Holyhead UDC, 'Letter to the CC', 22 January 1953, Llangefni, AA: WDAR/138.

<sup>56</sup> Holyhead UDC, 'Minutes: Special Meeting of the Housing Committee', 21 December 1954, Llangefni, AA: WDAAG/29.

<sup>57</sup> Holyhead's biggest development, Turkey Shore Road (some 290 planned houses), met significant opposition because of its location, both due to its infringement on potential industrial developments and its unsuitability as a residential area, Holyhead UDC, 'Minutes: Special Meeting of the Housing Committee', 21 December 1954, Llangefni, AA: WDAAG/29.

<sup>58</sup> Hughes and Williams, *Holyhead: The Story of a Port*, p. 179.

proportion of the housing stock.<sup>59</sup> The amenities that were available in the homes of Anglesey were illustrative of improvements gained in the 1950s and 1960s. While only around a third of households were supplied with piped water in 1943 the situation had drastically improved by 1971 when eighty-nine per cent of Anglesey's households in the urban districts had inside flush WCs and ninety-two per cent had a hot water supply.<sup>60</sup> Nonetheless, in 1971 thirteen per cent of Amlwch's households still had no piped hot water, and fourteen per cent were still only served by an outside toilet in both Amlwch and Holyhead.<sup>61</sup> However, houses provided by the local authority had done much to improve the situation where all council housing in the districts were provided with flush WCs and 99.4 per cent had a supply of hot water, compared to an average of 79.3 per cent in privately rented accommodation.<sup>62</sup> Housing initiatives also impacted on educational planning, since plans for new housing estates often helped inform LEA projections of future pupil numbers and consequent needs for school provision. For example, housing development was prominently used to try and strengthen both sides' cases in the dispute which arose during the relocation of David Hughes School in the latter half of the 1950s. The Beaumaris Borough Council, in its defence for retaining the school in Beaumaris as opposed to moving it away from the town to the LEA's preferred site in Menai Bridge, tried to use projected house building figures as an indicator for the expected demand for school places in the future. The LEA did the same, but their figures supported the claim that Menai Bridge was the most practical location for the newly erected school due to a projected 206 houses (1946-59) compared to Beaumaris' 169.<sup>63</sup> The investigation into the matter by the Ministry of Education (MoE) evaluated both sides' claims and came to the conclusion that although the demand for

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<sup>59</sup> In 1971 council housing accounted for sixty-four per cent of the housing stock in Llangefni, thirty-nine per cent in Holyhead, thirty-six per cent in Amlwch and thirty-three per cent in Beaumaris, D. J. P. Barker, J. A. Morris, S. J. Simmonds and R. H. P. Oliver, 'Appendicitis epidemic following introduction of piped water to Anglesey' *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*, 42 (1988), pp. 144-148.

<sup>60</sup> Barker, Morris, Simmonds and Oliver, 'Appendicitis epidemic following introduction of piped water to Anglesey', pp. 144-148.

<sup>61</sup> Census Report 1971, Part III (London, 1971), pp. 2-5.

<sup>62</sup> Census Report 1971, Part III (London, 1971), pp. 2-5.

<sup>63</sup> See, for example, MoE, 'Letter from the Town Clerk to the Beaumaris Town Council to the Welsh Department', 6 June 1955, London, TNA: ED 216/34 and MoE, 'Letter from the LEA to the Welsh Department', 4 July 1955, London, TNA: ED 216/34.

housing in Beaumaris outstripped the supply, according to the Council's plans, more housing was likely to be built in Menai Bridge than in Beaumaris. Subsequently, the new David Hughes School was to be situated on a site in Menai Bridge rather than Beaumaris, despite the latter's historic links to the old grammar school.<sup>64</sup>

Advances in hygiene and sanitation on Anglesey, similarly to many other rural Welsh regions, had been slow but improved gradually. The correlation between poverty and tuberculosis mortality rates might seem obvious, but it was observed in the 1930s that the illness also frequently resulted in a loss of earnings for already poverty-stricken families, often causing enforced moves to even less sanitary accommodation.<sup>65</sup> The *Report of the Committee of Inquiry into the anti-tuberculosis service in Wales and Monmouthshire* (1939) clearly showed the relative deprivation of north-west Wales. A published list of mortality rates between 1930 and 1936 for tuberculosis sufferers in all counties and county boroughs in England and Wales was a clear indication of this. The seven counties with the highest death rates were exclusively in Wales, and the three highest were all in north-west Wales: Caernarvonshire followed by Merionethshire and Anglesey. Furthermore, there were 'hot spots' of significantly higher mortality rates, including in Holyhead.<sup>66</sup> Another indication of the rates of deprivation on Anglesey was its high infant mortality rates. Aneurin Bevan's observation in 1948 that '[T]here are some absolutely shocking homes in Anglesey...where mothers should not be asked to have babies' appear well-founded considering the high mortality rates among the island's newborns.<sup>67</sup> Anglesey recorded fifty-five mortalities per thousand live births in 1951 compared to thirty-six in Wales as a whole, and thirty in England and Wales combined.<sup>68</sup> This reflected the persistent issues with housing conditions as well as poor sanitation, nutrition, health and health provision in the county, especially in certain areas such as Amlwch and Menai Bridge where infant mortality

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<sup>64</sup> For more on this, see Chapter Four.

<sup>65</sup> H. D. Chalke, 'Public Health and Housing in Rural Wales', p. 38.

<sup>66</sup> Ministry of Health, *Report of the Committee of Inquiry into the Anti-Tuberculosis Service in Wales and Monmouthshire* (London, 1939), pp. 24-27.

<sup>67</sup> *The Guardian*, 12 July 1948.

<sup>68</sup> HMSC, *Registrar General's Statistical Review of England and Wales, 1951* (London, 1951), p. 62.



rates were particularly high.<sup>69</sup> Again, these indicators reveal the area's relative disadvantage compared with developments elsewhere, and even though the situation by the 1970s had improved significantly the area was less affluent than most other regions in Britain overall. In December 1973 Kingsland (an area of 110 dwellings in Holyhead) was declared a 'General Improvement Area', which indicated that living conditions in this part of Holyhead were still inadequate during the early 1970s.<sup>70</sup> Also, by the 1960s, council housing and newly established estates often developed negative reputations, and were often ill-served in terms of facilities and transport as well as situated in remote or isolated areas. These factors led to stigmas attached to living in local authority dwellings which sometimes rendered them hard to let.<sup>71</sup>

Investment in building also extended to school accommodation and there were considerable improvements to school buildings and facilities during this period. The report by the Ministry of Health (1939) commented fairly extensively, albeit in very general terms, on the conditions in Welsh schools and the unhealthy environment these provided for children. Even though expenditure on education in Wales had increased significantly by the late 1930s, many schools still provided unsanitary and unhealthy conditions. Numerous buildings, especially in rural and remote areas, were still heated by fire places which rendered them cold and damp. During the late 1930s some children would still be required to walk significant distances to and from school, and in wet weather were forced to sit through the day in wet clothing due to the lack of drying facilities. The pail system (essentially a 'bucket latrine') was still used in many schools where running water was unavailable.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> HMSC, *Registrar General's Statistical Review of England and Wales, 1951* (London, 1951), p. 62.

<sup>70</sup> Although the absolute as well as proportionate numbers were low, the number of unfit dwellings in Anglesey in 1972 still showed that certain housing was still inadequate. In the Valley Rural District two per cent of dwellings were still unfit, while Llangefni, Menai Bridge, Aethwy and Twrcelyn all ranged between 1.1 and 1.3 per cent, *Welsh Council, Housing in Wales* (1974), pp. 75 and 82.

<sup>71</sup> For general comment on development in local authority housing see, for example, C. G. Pooley, *Local Authority Housing origins and development* (London, 1996), pp. 23 and 25. For insight into the contemporary debate see, for example, *The Guardian*, 10 February 1966; *The Guardian*, 15 June 1963; *The Guardian*, 5 November 1965; *The Times*, 11 December 1965; *The Times*, 3 February 1967 and *The Times*, 28 August 1973.

<sup>72</sup> Ministry of Health, *Report of the Committee of Inquiry into the Anti-Tuberculosis Service in Wales and Monmouthshire* (London, 1939), pp. 193, 195 and 196.

In Anglesey the issue of water provision was of great concern in the immediate post-war period when new canteens were being constructed for provision of school meals.<sup>73</sup>

On the whole, conditions in schools were greatly improved throughout the period. Newly erected buildings served the comprehensive schools in Amlwch (officially opened in 1953) and Llangefni (1953), and the inadequate school buildings in Beaumaris were finally replaced by a new comprehensive school in Menai Bridge in 1963.<sup>74</sup> Only Holyhead retained its original secondary school buildings throughout the period, although significant alterations were made from the mid-1960s and into the 1970s.<sup>75</sup> Anglesey's secondary schools were inspected in 1961, and despite significant investment the facilities were described as 'deficient in many ways'.<sup>76</sup> However, the issues raised were very different, and of a much less alarming nature than those highlighted in the late 1930s. In 1961 particular concern was expressed about the quality of school library facilities, because it was felt that there was not enough time for leisurely browsing and guidance from the Librarian.<sup>77</sup> Meanwhile, the Holyhead secondary school facilities, according to the Inspectorate, 'may be briefly described as daunting'.<sup>78</sup> Problems with the provision of physical education as well as science laboratories were emphasised, and the two dining areas were said to merely fulfil their elementary functions, and that their 'bleak, joyless, congestedness...[was]...a daily exercise in stoicism'.<sup>79</sup> As bleak as these observations were, the criticisms were of a very different kind from those raised in the 1930s when there were real concerns about pupils' health and welfare as a result of the poor conditions in unsanitary buildings. While the conditions within which children were educated on the island had improved significantly, there were still issues related to the provision of

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<sup>73</sup> In 1953 the schools in Llanddona, Llaeugrad, Tynyngogl were getting additional rainwater storages, while new wells were being sunk to benefit schools such as Llandrygarn and Llanallgo, CC, 'Minutes: Milk and Meals Sub-Committee', 2 April 1943, Llangefni, AA: WA 1/54.

<sup>74</sup> For more on the developments of the schools in Llangefni and Amlwch, see Chapter Three. For more on the remodelling programme at the school in Holyhead see Chapter Five.

<sup>75</sup> For more on this see Chapter Five.

<sup>76</sup> HMI, 'Report by H.M. Inspectors on A Survey of Amlwch, Beaumaris and Llangefni Secondary Schools, Anglesey', summer and autumn 1961, Llangefni, AA: WA 4/21.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> HMI, 'Report: Holyhead County Secondary School', 13-17 November 1961, Llangefni, AA: WA 4/22.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

education and the available school facilities which were gradually being addressed during the 1960s and 1970s. School accommodation and facilities would also prove highly significant as far as the 'comprehensive nature' of the different schools were concerned. This was particularly pertinent in Holyhead and Beaumaris where the grammar school buildings were retained, and when it came to housing the new intake of 'less gifted' pupils, they were often placed in existing older buildings where the accommodation was less than satisfactory.<sup>80</sup>

## Employment and Unemployment

Poor housing and sanitary conditions may have been indicators of poverty, but the most considerable influence on the population of Anglesey's prosperity were employment opportunities. The period 1935-74 saw substantial changes in employment patterns as well as in the make-up of the labour market. Much of the period, in Wales as well as Anglesey, was dominated by issues of unemployment and attempts to address these concerns. The peak of unemployment in Wales during the twentieth century was in August 1932 when the dismal average figure stood at 40 per cent.<sup>81</sup> The depression hit Anglesey particularly hard due to the lack of industrial enterprises capable of absorbing the unemployed on the island. Holyhead was particularly vulnerable due to its dependence on trade with Ireland, and the difficulties in trading in the immediate wake of Irish independence. The town had also experienced a particularly difficult time during the loss of mail shipping in the 1920s.<sup>82</sup> Unemployment in Holyhead reached 47.7 per cent in December 1937, and during the years of the depression in the 1930s 'the Institute' was set up to fill the days of workless

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<sup>80</sup>HMI, 'Report: Holyhead County Secondary School', 13-17 November 1961, Llangefni, AA: WA 4/22. For more on the impact of school accommodation on the comprehensive nature of the schools, see Chapter Four.

<sup>81</sup> 'The Digest of Welsh Historical Statistics 1700-1974' online edn, <http://new.wales.gov.uk/topics/statistics/publications/dwhs1700-1974/?lang=en> (accessed 26 June 2013)

<sup>82</sup> Irish independence in 1922 resulted in restrictions, custom barriers and consequently a fall in trade. Furthermore, the Dublin Steam Packet Company stopped its use of Holyhead port and in 1923 the merger of the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway Company with the London and North Western Railway Company saw one of the Railway's ships transferred to Barrow. These combined changes significantly affected job opportunities in the town, Hughes and Williams, *Holyhead: The Story of a Port*, pp. 163 and 169.

men, and several soup kitchens were also set up in the town.<sup>83</sup> Post-depression unemployment rates in Wales were also consistently higher than the UK average, and the uncertainties related to unemployment that had plagued workers during the depression would continue to cause concern.<sup>84</sup>

The vigorous industrial activity of the war-years was reflected in north Wales, but advances in Caernarvonshire and Anglesey had still been relatively slow. The inaccessibility of north-west Wales had previously rendered it a less attractive alternative for industrial development, but as the war progressed the threat of area bombings of industrial sites attracted war-time industries to north-west Wales due to its remoteness.<sup>85</sup> War-time had resulted in significant employment opportunities for both men and women on Anglesey, as across the whole of Britain. The efforts of the Anglesey War Agricultural Executive Committee resulted in increased agricultural employment as well.<sup>86</sup> Farmers generated reasonable incomes during the war since costs were stable and prices were controlled by the government at a slightly higher rate than they had been during the 1930s. It was, however, difficult for farmers to attract labourers due to the long hours and poor pay. The new labour force therefore mainly existed of children and women brought in to assist with the war effort. As a result of continued food shortages during the immediate aftermath of war, children continued to work during harvest time. Child labourers were not to be employed for more than thirty hours a week and received a minimum wage of 8d an hour. Women employed through the Land Army were paid a low wage of £1.12 per week at the start of the war but this sum had more than doubled by the end of the conflict.<sup>87</sup> The fact that wages were rising throughout the war-years often resulted in farmers employing casual labour rather than permanent workers to avoid higher costs.<sup>88</sup>

Employment even during the war was therefore patchy and uncertain and very much a product of

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<sup>83</sup> See, for example, Hughes and Williams, *Holyhead: The Story of a Port*, p. 162 and Pretty, *Anglesey The Concise History*, pp. 132 and 133.

<sup>84</sup> P. Wilding (Child Poverty Action Group), *Poverty: The Facts in Wales Poverty Pamphlet 29* (London, 1977), p. 6.

<sup>85</sup> See, G. Jones, *Anglesey at War* (Stroud, 2012).

<sup>86</sup> R. C. Chambers Jones, *Anglesey and Gwynedd the War Years 1939-45* (Wrexham, 2008), p. 97.

<sup>87</sup> For figures on children's wages, see Chambers Jones, *Anglesey and Gwynedd The War Years*, pp. 95-110. For comments on women's wages during the war, see Jones, *Anglesey at War*, p. 89.

<sup>88</sup> Chambers Jones, *Anglesey and Gwynedd The War Years*, pp. 95-110.

exceptional circumstances, and by 1951 the number of both male and female agricultural workers had fallen below the figure for 1931.<sup>89</sup> This meant that despite the boost for the farming sector during the war, agriculture was experiencing a long-term decline which had a great impact on rural areas such as Anglesey. In Wales, agriculture had employed 102,371 men in 1911, but these numbers were in constant retreat, and by 1931 the figure was 92,510 and declined yet again to 45,130 by 1971.<sup>90</sup> The make-up of the work force on the island was shifting, and the table below reveals how employment in manufacturing and service industries were expanding while agricultural occupation was contracting.

### Percentage of workforce according to employment sector in Wales and Anglesey, 1931-71

Table 3

		<b>1951</b>	<b>1961</b>	<b>1971</b>
<b>Agriculture</b>	Wales	3.6	2.4	2.9
	<b>Anglesey</b>	<b>23.1</b>	<b>15.7</b>	<b>9.0</b>
<b>Manufacturing</b>	Wales	31.5	31.5	33.7
	<b>Anglesey</b>	<b>11.1</b>	<b>12.8</b>	<b>19.4</b>
<b>Services</b>	Wales	40.8	44.6	49.0
	<b>Anglesey</b>	<b>21.6</b>	<b>60.6</b>	<b>57.7</b>
<b>Extractive</b>	Wales	15.1	11.1	5.2
	<b>Anglesey</b>	<b>1.0</b>	<b>0.2</b>	<b>0.2</b>
<b>Construction</b>	Wales	1.9	2.1	2.0
	<b>Anglesey</b>	<b>5.7</b>	<b>7.5</b>	<b>10.3</b>
<b>Other</b>	Wales	1.9	2.1	2.0
	<b>Anglesey</b>	<b>5.7</b>	<b>7.5</b>	<b>10.3</b>

SOURCES: 'The Digest of Welsh Historical Statistics 1700-1974' online edn, <http://new.wales.gov.uk/topics/statistics/publications/dwhs1700-1974/?lang=en> (accessed 26 June 2013); Welsh Office, *Digest of Welsh Statistics* (Cardiff, 1954), pp. 203-23; Welsh Office, *Digest of Welsh Statistics* (Cardiff, 1962), pp. 25-28; Welsh Office, *Digest of Welsh Statistics* (Cardiff, 1979), pp. 71; Welsh Office, *Digest of Welsh Statistics* (Cardiff, 1988), p. 73.

<sup>89</sup> The Digest of Welsh Historical Statistics 1700-1974' online edn, <http://new.wales.gov.uk/topics/statistics/publications/dwhs1700-1974/?lang=en> (accessed 26 June 2013)

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

The transition from a war-time economy caused considerable apprehension at the end of the war, expectations being that employment levels would not be maintained during peacetime. The troubled years of the 1930s were often used as a caution to the public, a reminder of the potential difficulties likely to arise once a peacetime economy was reinstated. Union officials and the Labour Party had already been considering post-war plans for north Wales in 1942 in an attempt to try and avoid the potentially devastating unemployment rates that had been experienced during the depression.<sup>91</sup> The report to the North Wales Labour Parties Federation predicted more extensive governmental intervention in business, and although there would be an inevitable move away from traditional industry, it was believed that governmental intervention would ensure restrictions on pit and quarry closures. It was also emphasised that the development of transport and communication links for the region would be vital for any industrial development, and also for tourism, which was highlighted, albeit with a certain reluctance, as an important sector of advancement in north Wales.<sup>92</sup> Many of these expectations were later proven accurate. It was indeed the case that the planned economy of the 1940s and 1950s would change how north-west Wales was both perceived and dealt with by central government, and education was part of this wider picture.

The most significant trend in Welsh employment as a whole in the period between 1950 and the 1970s was the decline in the old traditional extractive industries combined with the growth of manufacturing and the continued expansion of the service sector. Anglesey had not been as reliant on traditional mining and quarrying industries to the extent of many other Welsh areas, but there had instead been a more significant dependence on agriculture. Nonetheless, by the early 1970s this variance had decreased: while employment in agriculture on Anglesey had been more than three times as high as that in the rest of Wales in 1930, it had been reduced to double the average Welsh

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<sup>91</sup> H. T. Edwards, 'Memorandum submitted to the North Wales Labour Parties Federation: Post-War Industrial Re-construction...covering the Six North Wales Counties', March 1942, Caernarfon, Caernarfon Record Office - G[wynedd] A[rchives] S[ervice]: XM/1194/7.

<sup>92</sup> H. T. Edwards, 'Memorandum submitted to the North Wales Labour Parties Federation: Post-War Industrial Re-construction...covering the Six North Wales Counties', March 1942, Caernarfon, Caernarfon Record Office - G[wynedd] A[rchives] S[ervice]: XM/1194/7.

figure in 1971. Anglesey's farms had traditionally been smaller than the average Welsh farms, but small-scale agriculture was becoming less profitable, forcing farmers to make changes to their livelihoods. The 1967 Agriculture Act encouraged the amalgamation of holdings to establish larger and more profitable units. This certainly had an impact on the character of many farming areas where communities had previously consisted of numerous families, as they came to only comprise of a couple of households.<sup>93</sup> The number of holdings in Anglesey had drastically decreased from 3,837 in 1944 to 2,352 in 1969<sup>94</sup> and between 1959 and 1971 the number of those employed in agriculture fell by some fifty-four per cent.<sup>95</sup>

It is clear that the nature of the labour market on Anglesey changed considerably during this period. Anglesey County Council discussed post-war developments at a meeting in Holyhead in February 1945, and one of the key concerns was the desire to retain war-time industry on the island.<sup>96</sup> There were some successes in keeping sections of the newly acquired industry on Anglesey. In 1939 Saunders-Roe (an engineering company converting American flying-boats) had been moved from the Isle of Wight due the risk of bombing, and was relocated to Beaumaris where the aeroplanes were produced as part of the war effort. Many employees stayed with the company in the move to Anglesey, however, it also generated work for the local population and continued to do so after the war. In April 1946 Saunders-Roe employed 350 people and by 1948 it had 974 workers, making it one of the biggest employers on the island by the late 1940s.<sup>97</sup> The A. C. Wells Company, originally from London, also retained its factory (Progress Works) in Kingsland in Holyhead after the war ended. Its war-time production of precision parts for aircraft was turned into the manufacturing of

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<sup>93</sup> H. J. R. Henderson, 'Present Farming Patterns', in D. Thomas (ed.), *Wales A New Study* (Newton Abbot, 1977), pp. 125, 129, 130 and 131.

<sup>94</sup> Revell, *Regional Income Multipliers*, p. 32

<sup>95</sup> Welsh Council, *Unemployment in Wales: A Study* (1973), p.3.

<sup>96</sup> G. Jones, *Anglesey at War*, p. 148. The war years had seen north Wales benefit greatly from the relocation of war time industry, and Anglesey was no exception from this. For further comments on industrial developments in north Wales during the war and the immediate post-war period, see A. Edwards, *Labour's Crisis*, pp. 17 and 18.

<sup>97</sup>A. Edwards, *Labour's Crisis*, pp. 97 and 98, 156.

clocks and watches, and later plastic components and toys.<sup>98</sup> Despite anxieties expressed concerning Wales' prospects for the post-war era, war-time developments generally impacted positively on post-war employment. Manufacturing industries that had been relocated to Welsh areas during the war provided new incentives for industrial enterprises to establish their business in north-west Wales. The existence of an experienced workforce, buildings and facilities all contributed to making the region more attractive to industrial enterprise. No single occupation had replaced agriculture as the main employer on the island, but manufacturing and services, as well as professional and technical occupations had all increased by the early 1970s. Despite the large projects of the late 1960s, and the employment they generated, the largest single employment sector in 1971 was the service sector which employed nearly fifty-eight per cent of the total workforce in Anglesey, while manufacturing accounted for 19.4 per cent and agriculture for nine per cent.<sup>99</sup>

However, post-war economic developments in Wales were generally dependent on governmental intervention, and it was generally felt that regional planning would bring prosperity to north-west Wales.<sup>100</sup> Initially, the Distribution of Industry Act (1945) included parts of Wales, namely large sections of south Wales and the Wrexham area, but did not encompass north-west Wales. Rural districts were not prioritised in the creation of the original Development Areas, which were mainly based on the old Special Areas, created in the 1930s.<sup>101</sup> The fact that Anglesey was a rural district meant that it did not benefit from governmental intervention as an original Developmental Area due to the low 'absolute' number of unemployed in towns such as Holyhead. However, while unemployment figures - the absolute numbers - in Holyhead may have been dwarfed by those in

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<sup>98</sup> A. Edwards, *Labour's Crisis*, pp. 153 and 154.

<sup>99</sup> 'The Digest of Welsh Historical Statistics 1700-1974' online edn, <http://new.wales.gov.uk/topics/statistics/publications/dwhs1700-1974/?lang=en> (accessed 26 June 2013); Welsh Office, *Digest of Welsh Statistics* (Cardiff, 1954), pp. 203-23; Welsh Office, *Digest of Welsh Statistics* (Cardiff, 1962), pp. 25-28; Welsh Office, *Digest of Welsh Statistics* (Cardiff, 1979), pp. 71; Welsh Office, *Digest of Welsh Statistics* (Cardiff, 1988), p. 73.

<sup>100</sup> See, for example, G. Humphrys, 'Industrial Wales', in D. Thomas (ed.), *Wales A New Study* (Newton Abbot, 1977), p. 162 and Lovering, *Gwynedd: A County in Crisis*, pp. 41 and 42, 46.

<sup>101</sup> HC Deb 21 March 1945, vol 409, cols 821-949.



major cities, the proportional figure was nonetheless high.<sup>102</sup> It was not until the introduction of the Local Employment Act of 1960 that Anglesey became a Development District and was one of twelve Welsh areas that remained continuously on the list of Development Districts between 1961 and 1965.<sup>103</sup> In March 1960, just before the introduction of the Local Employment Act in April, the unemployment figure for Anglesey of 10.8 per cent was the second highest of all the Development Districts in England, Scotland and Wales.<sup>104</sup> The average unemployment rate in Anglesey between 1961 and 1965 was 10.5 per cent and was only exceeded by three other Welsh Development districts; Caernarfon, Llanelli and the Rhondda. However, the Development Districts in Wales, in contrast to those in Scotland and England, showed a net decline of nine per cent of insured workers between 1961 and 1965, most likely due to out-migration from these areas. During the period of increased unemployment in Britain as a whole during the mid-1960s, the unemployment rate in Wales went down from 4.2 per cent in 1961 to four per cent in 1965.<sup>105</sup> The creation of a Secretary of State for Wales after the Labour election victory in 1964 was described as a sign of the government's commitment to the interests of Wales, and by August 1966 the vast majority of Wales (excepting sections of the south-, and north-east) had become one single Development Area. The 1960s definitely saw changes to industry and economic structures in Anglesey and elsewhere in north-west Wales, and there were positive attempts to plan and organise economic expansion for

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<sup>102</sup> Lovering, *Gwynedd: A County in Crisis*, p. 33.

<sup>103</sup>The Local Employment Act in 1960s was an extension of the already existing tactic that had developed post-1945 of a regional approach to tackling unemployment. The Act's key provisions were: to direct industry away from congested areas to regions with high unemployment; to build factories in Development Districts to lease or sell to businesses and to provide loans and grants for initial costs in setting up enterprise in the Development Districts and also building grants. The 1963 extension to the Act also provided grants for ten per cent of the cost of plant and machinery acquisition and installation. Land for this purpose could be acquired by the Board of Trade either by agreement or compulsorily and would allow for any business (but not solely for community amenities) desiring to establish itself in a Development Area. The other Welsh Development Districts that continued to remain on the list between 1961 and 1965 were recorded as: Ammanford, Blaenau Ffestiniog, Caernarvon, Llanelli, Merthyr Tydfil, Milford Haven, Pwllheli, Rhondda, Rhyl, Tonyrefail and Ystalyfera, cited in W. H. Miernyk, 'Experience under the British Local Employment Acts of 1960 and 1963', *Industrial and Labour Relations Review*, 20:1 (1966), p. 39. For more on the Act, see W. H. Miernyk, 'Experience under the British Local Employment Acts of 1960 and 1963', *Industrial and Labour Relations Review*, 20:1 (1966), pp. 34, 39, 36 and G. Ganz, 'Local Employment Act, 1960', *The Modern Law Review*, 23:5 (1960), pp. 540-544.

<sup>104</sup> HC Deb 04 May 1960, vol 622 cc79W. (Rothesay in Scotland was the only district with a higher proportion of total unemployment at 11.7 per cent).

<sup>105</sup> Miernyk, 'Experience under the British Local Employment Acts of 1960 and 1963', pp. 39, 34, 36.

the region. In July 1967 Cledwyn Hughes, Anglesey's M.P. and Secretary of State for Wales at that time, presented the White Paper *Wales: The Way Ahead*. The aim of the paper was to provide an overall picture of the economic, social and cultural conditions in Wales, and to deliver the basis for economic planning for the region.<sup>106</sup> Even though industrial enterprise in rural Wales employed less than eight per cent of the total number of Wales' industrial labour force, this type of employment was still of significant economic importance to local areas.<sup>107</sup> The Welsh Council published *An Economic Strategy for North West Wales* in 1971 where particular problems of the region were examined, and Llangefni and Holyhead were highlighted as growth points (Amlwch was added later to the County Councils' Structure Plan in 1974, finally approved by the Secretary of State for Wales in 1977). The serious nature of the issue of unemployment in Anglesey had also been recognised in the Welsh Council report *Unemployment in Wales: A Study of Unemployment in Three areas* (1973), where unemployment in Anglesey, Wrexham and Swansea was examined.<sup>108</sup>

Undoubtedly, government intervention had an impact on the development of industrial employment on Anglesey. From 1964 up until the early 1970s at least ten manufacturing firms were established on the island, and Anglesey was also awarded some large projects during the 1960s. For example, the application for the Wylfa nuclear power station was approved by the Minister of Power in 1961, and was believed to have created around three-thousand jobs during its construction, and eventually provided employment for between four and five hundred permanent staff once established.<sup>109</sup> The completion of the power station virtually coincided with the beginning of the

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<sup>106</sup> HC Deb 30 November 1967, vol 755, cols 674-783. For further analysis of economic planning initiatives for north-west Wales after 1945, see Edwards, *Labour's Crisis* and Lovering, *Gwynedd: A County in Crisis*.

<sup>107</sup> Humphrys, 'Industrial Wales', p. 162. Also, the debate of the White Paper on Wales: *The Way Ahead* (1967) in the House of Commons revealed differences in opinion as to how significant and successful government intervention in industry had been in north-west Wales. While Hughes highlighted the projected job losses on Anglesey once the construction of the Wylfa nuclear power station was completed, he nevertheless expressed faith in the benefits from government intervention in general. Others, such as the MP for Aldershot (Sir Eric Errington) questioned both the severity of unemployment in north-west Wales and the benefits to be had from large projects (such as Wylfa) compared to smaller industries, HC Deb 30 November 1967, vol 755, cols 674-783.

<sup>108</sup> J. Alden and P. Vining, 'Employment problems and prospects facing Anglesey', *Cambria a Welsh Geographical Review*, 8:1 (1981), pp. 14-15.

<sup>109</sup> *The Guardian*, 1 January 1962.

construction of the Anglesey Aluminium smelter at Penrhos (outside Holyhead).<sup>110</sup> The £45 million smelter plant was expected to generate work for between seven and eight-hundred employees as well as two thousand temporary construction posts during the building phase.<sup>111</sup> However, in 1967 the Secretary of State for Wales acknowledged the problematic nature of temporary employment, such as the civil engineering work during the erection of Wylfa, and the residual lack of sustainable industrial occupation in areas such as Anglesey.<sup>112</sup> In fact, the construction firms in charge of the work at both Wylfa and Anglesey Aluminium employed a lot of itinerant labour, resulting in these projects only having limited effects on local unemployment. While the number of waged labourers increased in Anglesey during the 1960s from around 10,900 in the summer of 1959 to approximately 16,400 in the summer of 1970, the relative number of those unemployed went down.<sup>113</sup> However, in actuality the absolute number of unemployed in the county remained fairly static, and unemployment numbers only seemed to decrease due to in-migration of itinerant labour during the construction period. The peak in unemployment in Anglesey in 1972 would suggest that workers remained on the island after the civil engineering works had finished, possibly due to the stagnant economic situation in Britain at large and the consequent dearth of employment opportunities generally.<sup>114</sup> The lack of job opportunities in Anglesey that arose in 1970 and 1971 was not exclusively due to the completion of the large Wylfa project as well as the completion of the

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<sup>110</sup> Revell, *Regional Income Multipliers*, p. 85. The establishment of the aluminium works in Holyhead was only achieved after lengthy discussions and debates. The National Farmers Union (and the Farmers' Union Wales) questioned the impact of emissions on the countryside, and launched its opposition against the plans in 1967, see *Liverpool Daily Post*, 3 November 1967 and *Liverpool Daily Post*, 10 November 1967. Letters in the local press also reflected concerns of the plant's impact on the locality, the extent of employment provided to local people and questioned whether '...industrial employment outweigh all other considerations?', see *Holyhead & Anglesey Mail*, 3 November 1967. While the Holyhead UDC had already agreed to the aluminium plant, representatives from the County Council visited another of the company's plants in Virginia, USA and reported back in November 1967. The Valley Rural District Council was uncertain about the project, and an Anglesey Residents' Association was formed - inviting anyone opposed to the project to become members, see *Holyhead & Anglesey Mail*, 10 November 1967. The County Council, after having deferred a decision, finally agreed to the project in December 1967, see *Liverpool Daily Post*, 15 November 1967; *Liverpool Daily Post*, 16 November 1967; *Holyhead and Anglesey Mail*, 17 November 1967, *Holyhead and Anglesey Mail*, 24 November 1967; *Holyhead and Anglesey Mail*, 12 December 1967 and *Liverpool Daily Post*, 15 December 1967.

<sup>111</sup> *The Guardian*, 25 July 1968 and *Holyhead & Anglesey Mail*, 3 November 1967.

<sup>112</sup> HMSO, *Wales: the Way Ahead* (Cardiff, 1967), p. 116.

<sup>113</sup> Welsh Council, *Unemployment in Wales: A Study* (Cardiff, 1973), p.3.

<sup>114</sup> Revell, *Regional Income Multipliers*, p. 85.

aluminium smelter. During that period other schemes also reached completion, such as the container terminal in Holyhead, the re-building of the Britannia Bridge following a fire, a DTI factory in Amlwch and a £625,000 housing scheme in Holyhead.<sup>115</sup> Consequently male unemployment rose significantly more than female unemployment due to the loss of occupation in construction.

The trend of increasing male unemployment was advanced further due to the nature of the new manufacturing firms that were being established on the island. Factories such as Progress Works (clocks, toys and later plastic goods) and Messrs Jones and Park's clothes manufacturing provided employment that was perceived as women's work. The female labour force was paid forty per cent less than men, and positions were often unskilled and without much opportunity for training or developing new skills. Because the demand within these new industries was largely for low paid, flexible and unskilled labour, this part of the work force (in contrast to the skilled labour required for Wylfa and the smelter) was locally recruited and predominantly female.<sup>116</sup> In the relatively short period between December 1970 and December 1971 the total male unemployment in Anglesey rose by around five-hundred persons. The largest increase was among unskilled workers (156), while 133 were in engineering and constructional crafts, and another 104 were skilled men and labourers from the building trade. However, between 1966 and 1971 there had been a net increase in the number of people in employment on Anglesey of over five-hundred; indicating a loss of some four-hundred 'male jobs' and an increase of 900 'female jobs'.<sup>117</sup> The number of working women (married women especially) grew greatly in the 1960s and 1970s, especially in the urban areas where many families were still underprivileged and where women had to help provide for the family.<sup>118</sup>

The Welsh Council's report in 1973 also commented on certain peculiarities on Anglesey regarding 'voluntary unemployment'. The case of Anglesey was used to demonstrate the situation in rural areas, and it was suggested that temporary employment in the agricultural and tourism sectors was

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<sup>115</sup> Lovering, *Gwynedd: A County in Crisis*, pp. 28, 50 and 51.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>117</sup> Welsh Council, *Unemployment in Wales: A Study* (1973), pp. 3 and 23.

<sup>118</sup> Lovering, *Gwynedd: A County in Crisis*, pp. 52 and 58.

relatively readily available in such regions, but yet unemployment remained high and positions vacant. Furthermore, it was proposed that the incentives to find employment in rural areas were less convincing than elsewhere. It was believed that strong ties to the local community discouraged people from searching for employment elsewhere. Also, work undertaken locally was generally poorly paid, resulting in only marginal differences in income between employment and unemployment. The lack of remuneration incentives due to these low wages, in combination with difficulties in transportation, also made travelling to work less viable in such regions. Other peculiarities to Anglesey were also emphasised, such as the supposition that the local population perceived factory work as 'alien', and they were therefore unlikely to seek such employment.<sup>119</sup> The idea that voluntary unemployment was a significant factor in the rapid rise of joblessness during the early 1970s was however rejected. Nevertheless, these comments stress significant aspects of how Anglesey was perceived. It illustrates how its rural situation was believed to be associated with specific peculiarities of its inhabitants and the island's circumstances, and this was reflected in how Anglesey's proposals for its new education system was viewed and consequently responded to by central government.<sup>120</sup> The reasons why Anglesey was allowed to implement its scheme for secondary education, when many other LEAs were not permitted to do so, were multifaceted. However, part of the basis for the MoE decision to allow Anglesey to implement its system of secondary education was the perception that rural Welsh areas had legitimate, and practical, reasons to implement comprehensive schemes.

In employment terms, the overall trend on Anglesey had been a move away from agricultural labour to construction, manufacturing and services. The construction as well as tourism sectors were notoriously susceptible to downturns in business cycles, seasonal fluctuations and seasonal unemployment with loose connections between employer and employee. With the increases in car ownership, tourism was a growing source of employment in the county but many workers were

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<sup>119</sup> Welsh Council, *Unemployment in Wales: A Study* (1973), pp. 19 and 20.

<sup>120</sup> For more on this, see Chapter Three.

brought in by external businesses and any available vacancies were unskilled and seasonal. Significant sections of the labour market on Anglesey were therefore periodic and insecure, making local employment patchy and uncertain. The significance of seasonal employment can be gauged from observing the difference in the figures for January and July in 1970 where the rate of unemployment was 7.8 per cent and 5.3 per cent respectively.<sup>121</sup> Uncertainties within the labour market and the shift in demand undoubtedly had an impact on educational provision as well. HMI's reports from 1961 highlighted the poor opportunities for those pupils described as 'less academic' due to the lack of facilities for practical subjects such as metalwork, needlework and woodwork.<sup>122</sup> The inspectors also commented on the unexpectedly low number of pupils who remained in school after the age of fifteen, particularly in view of the relatively high incidence of unemployment. The report put this fact down to the lack of provision of practical education for the less academic pupils, discouraging them from extending their time in school.<sup>123</sup> While educational provision might be partially responsible for the low numbers of pupils extending their education beyond the school leaving age, the opportunities within the local area would also have played a part in the aspirations of pupils. It was generally accepted that academic pupils were for 'export only' since white collar opportunities were still relatively rare in the local area during the 1960s.<sup>124</sup> However, for those pupils with less academic ambitions, the incentives to remain in school beyond the official leaving age were questionable. The local labour market, particularly for girls and women, did not require workers with education beyond the statutory limits. It is therefore unsurprising that many pupils left school at the statutory leaving age unless they were planning to continue their academic studies in higher education.

Changes to employment opportunities and socio-economic structures, as discussed above, inevitably set the parameters for the everyday running and organisation of the island's secondary schools. The

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<sup>121</sup> Welsh Council, *An Economic Strategy for North West Wales* (Cardiff, 1971), p. 12.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> HMI, 'Report by H.M. Inspectors on A Survey of Amlwch, Beaumaris and Llangefni Secondary Schools, Anglesey', summer and autumn 1961, Llangefni, AA: WA 4/21.

<sup>124</sup> *The Guardian*, 6 December 1964.

establishment of four comprehensive schools that would cater for all the island's children of secondary school age resulted in new challenges for head teachers and teachers, many of whom had previously taught in the grammar schools that had now been converted into comprehensive institutions. The schools were forced to adapt to the changes involved with the introduction of comprehensive intakes, and also to implement new practices in order to address subsequent issues of size, a mixed ability intake and increasing demands on pastoral care. The implementation of a house system in Holyhead, including a new system for dealing with pupils' social issues and welfare needs, illustrates such developments. The remodelling of the premises in Holyhead during the late 1960s allowed the erection of eight house blocks (each individual block containing cloak, toilet and dining facilities). The new buildings provided the opportunity to trial a novel house system, and by September 1970 the system was fully in place and the facilities in use.<sup>125</sup> The newly devised system had primarily been established in order to enhance the pastoral care within the school. It was hoped that Heads and Deputy Heads of Departments' roles would become more prominent and allow a more 'intense' contact between pupils and staff, and also encourage pupils' participation in extra-curricular activities. It was expected that house staff would undertake interviews with parents, liaise with outside agencies and deal with disciplinary matters. Essentially, the new system was set up to provide a more prominent structure for dealing with pupils' welfare in a more conscious and well-organised manner. The new arrangements saw increased time and effort spent on pastoral care. Teachers who were employed as heads of houses found that the non-teaching time allocated to dealing with these new responsibilities was inadequate. However, the head teacher considered the situation a 'case of being penalised by success' since it indicated that pupils were taking advantage of the new arrangements.<sup>126</sup> Concerted and organised efforts in the area of pastoral care, as well as further consideration of disciplinary issues within the school, was a relatively new development in Holyhead. In 1971 the head teacher (D. M. Lloyd) observed that:

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<sup>125</sup> H[eadmaster's] R[eports], 'Lloyd: Holyhead', 30 June 1970, Llangefni, AA: WA 1/73 and HR, 'Lloyd: Holyhead', 29 September 1970, Llangefni, AA: WA 1/73.

<sup>126</sup> HR, 'Lloyd: Holyhead', 24 November 1970, Llangefni, AA: WA 1/73.

The schools appears to have more than its fair share of problems arising from home conditions, and we are concerned with the effect on children of the growing neurosis of society, its permissiveness, its broken marriages and apparent disregard for those civilizing standards which give some stability to individuals and communities. At the same time as problems of discipline increase, there appear to be fewer and fewer sanctions available to schools to contain the situation, let alone to cure.<sup>127</sup>

There were bound to be pupils with social problems in a comprehensive school the size of that in Holyhead, especially considering the relatively high occurrence of social deprivation within sections of the catchment area. The most prominent problem was understood to be truancy, and misdemeanours related to non-attendance, recorded as: 'loitering in public toilets, pilfering, abusive conduct, wandering out of the locality with taxi or lorry drivers, consorting with doubtful associates in caravans or houses where there is no supervision'.<sup>128</sup> It was evidently felt that pastoral care, especially in a school with over 1,300 pupils, was becoming a more urgent matter. Similar issues had also been raised in Llangefni, where the new head teacher (G. Morgan) observed at a prize giving day in 1968 that '[I]t is a tragedy that so many parents take a negative outlook to this and other schools'.<sup>129</sup> He was referring to significant instances of truancy, and the lack of enforcement among parents as to their children's attendance at school. While such issues in relation to large comprehensive schools had been discussed and commented upon previously, it was not until the early 1970s that a more formal approach to tackling these problems was adopted in Anglesey's schools.<sup>130</sup> Lloyd's impassioned comments on society's neurosis and the dwindling sanctions available to schools to combat ill-discipline were perhaps to be anticipated. In the context of the national debates surrounding the 'Black Papers', progressive teaching methods, and discipline in schools during the late 1960s and the early 1970s, such reservations were commonplace.<sup>131</sup> The head teacher also remarked that ill-discipline in schools was not a specific problem in Holyhead, but was in fact a national trend. Lloyd emphasised the feeling among teachers that their sanctions had little support from the general public or outside agencies, which society was often 'quick to criticise'.

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<sup>127</sup> HR, 'Lloyd: Holyhead', 23 November 1971, Llangefni, AA: WA 1/73.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> *Holyhead & Anglesey Mail*, 12 July 1968 and *North Wales Chronicle*, 18 July 1968.

<sup>130</sup> For more on this, see Chapter Four.

<sup>131</sup> For more on this, see Introduction.



Considerable attention was paid to issues of behaviour and discipline in the press and the public debate, and focus on these concerns can also be observed at the local level where attempts were made to respond to matters of ill-discipline and poor behaviour.<sup>132</sup> For example, the house system in Holyhead had been implemented roughly a year prior to more general changes being brought in by Anglesey County Council to the administration of social services. It was hoped that the new Department of Social Services and its extended remit would be useful to the school in its need to consult and coordinate its pastoral care with outside agencies.<sup>133</sup> In view of these changes the school had decided to set up a Case Committee to meet regularly to focus on those pupils with the most serious problems. Apart from the senior staff of the school, the Committee would exist of representatives from the Director of Social Services Staff, the NSPCC and the Probation Service.<sup>134</sup> These development did not merely signal internal changes at Holyhead School to try to address issues of ill-discipline, but also the more general trend of schools becoming a significant link in the chain of social and welfare services provided for pupils in need of help.

While former grammar school intakes had been fairly socially homogenous, the comprehensive intake by the early 1970s was much less so. Social deprivation was nowhere near the kind of levels experienced during the 1930s, but affluence on Anglesey remained relatively patchy and for sections of the population still lagged behind much of the rest of England and Wales. An argument which had

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<sup>132</sup> Press coverage of disciplinary matters in schools included items suggesting the abolition of corporal punishment see, for example, *The Times*, 20 December 1967; *The Times*, 12 October 1970 and *The Times*, 29 December 1973. BBC2 also broadcast 'Platform: Spare the Rod – Spoil Society? – will the abolition of the cane lead to a breakdown of school discipline?' on 27 February 1973. The Association of School Masters were vociferous defenders of teachers' rights to discipline pupils see, for example, *The Guardian*, 30 May 1973 and *The Guardian*, 31 October 1974. Demands for further powers for teachers, parents and pupils were also seen as a threat to school discipline in the early 1970s see, for example, *The Guardian*, 21 November 1972 and *The Guardian*, 3 July 1973. The Schools Action Union was reportedly formed and led by two Sixth Form pupils in London in 1969, and was made up of school pupils who seemingly supported a left-wing agenda for education. It attracted the attention of MI5 as a result of its advocacy of further pupil participation in schools, as well as for its demand for the abolition of school uniforms, the cane, and detentions, see *The Guardian*, 1 January 2003 and *The Guardian*, 5 January 2003. The union's call for its members to demonstrate in London in May 1972 also generated press coverage, see *The Times*, 17 May 1972. More general concerns regarding school discipline were also expressed in the national press see, for example, *The Times*, 31 December 1969; *The Times*, 25 March 1972; *The Guardian*, 17 May 1972 and *The Guardian*, 25 March 1974.

<sup>133</sup> HR, 'Lloyd: Holyhead', 23 November 1971, Llangefni, AA: WA 1/73.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

often been used to explain the emergence of the comprehensive system on Anglesey had been that no class-system existed on the island. The deputy Director's bold claim in 1964 that '...We have no nobility here...we're all peasants' was hyperbole and most probably said in aid of providing a good quotation, but the sentiment was not unknown.<sup>135</sup> D. Jones-Davies (Director of Education, 1960-64) commented in 1962 that

Welsh society has, in the past, to a marked extent been remarkably free from class snobbery, and although there are signs that this happy state of affairs is somewhat on the wane, it is one which evokes considerable support, emotional and political, among members of Welsh Local Authorities.<sup>136</sup>

The fact that Welsh society had traditionally been perceived as less affected by 'class snobbery' might still have evoked 'considerable support' and emotion, and the idea that Anglesey remained a society where 'we're all peasants' offered a powerful symbolic image. This kind of portrayal of the island's socio-economic background was common when the comprehensive system was discussed in newspapers and journal articles. Descriptions such as 'more or less homogenous community' and a society 'without strongly marked class divisions' were often applied to Anglesey during the 1950s.<sup>137</sup> However, these characteristics were rather less evident by the 1960s and 1970s. While the island might previously have been a largely agricultural society, the situation had definitively altered. The Director referred to this traditional society as having constituted a 'happy state of affairs', but admitted that it was, however, 'on the wane'.<sup>138</sup> Furthermore, he proposed that:

One of the problems of the secondary modern school had always been the heavy weighting among the school population of pupils whose background is more likely to lead to behaviour problems and lack of interest in cultural pursuits...opposition to the present secondary schools in Anglesey comes in the main from professional men and the higher grades of clerical and similar workers, who are disturbed to find their children members of a school community where the number of children with similar backgrounds to their own is proportionately rather low.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> *The Observer*, 6 December 1964.

<sup>136</sup> See D. Jones-Davies, 'Secondary Organization in Anglesey', *Education* (23 February 1962), p. 366.

<sup>137</sup> "'Secondary Education for all" has a new meaning in Anglesey's Comprehensive Schools', *The Schoolmaster*, 3 July 1953, pp. 19-27 and 'The Organization of Secondary Schools: 8. Anglesey', *Education*, 20 March 1959, pp. 583-589.

<sup>138</sup> "'Secondary Education for all" has a new meaning in Anglesey's Comprehensive Schools', *The Schoolmaster*, 3 July 1953, pp. 19-27 and 'The Organization of Secondary Schools: 8. Anglesey', *Education*, 20 March 1959, pp. 583-589.

<sup>139</sup> See D. Jones-Davies, 'Secondary Organization in Anglesey', *Education* (23 February 1962), p. 366.

Although the Director suggested that the proportion of 'professional men' on Anglesey was still relatively low, the socio-economic composition of the island's residents had changed and diversified, with the biggest changes affecting employment in agriculture and services. In 1971, over half of the island's working population were in fact employed in the services industries, while manufacturing provided employment for about a fifth of workers, and agriculture just under ten percent.<sup>140</sup> The Director's observation that 'professional men' felt threatened by their children entering into a school community 'where the number of children with similar backgrounds to their own is proportionately rather low' might have been a question of perception rather than reality. Whether a wholly accurate assessment or not, the raising of the school leaving age in 1972 saw an increase in the number of pupils continuing their education but who would previously have left school at the age of fifteen. This also resulted in higher numbers of 'less academically gifted pupils' remaining in school for longer. This presented further challenges to comprehensive schools, both in terms of providing appropriate education for this group of teenagers, and also ensuring that all pupils remained engaged and active members of school communities. Such changes also presented a more socially mixed intake among the older pupils in the schools, which demanded new approaches in order to respond effectively to these new challenges.

By the 1970s there had been great changes to housing, schooling and social patterns throughout England and Wales, but Anglesey still remained a relatively underprivileged region, as did many other Welsh areas. Even during periods where unemployment had decreased, low wages and uncertain working hours meant that employment opportunities on the island remained uncertain. Anglesey continued to be a relatively underprivileged area compared to many other regions in England and Wales.<sup>141</sup> Socio-economic changes brought prosperity to certain sections of society and

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<sup>140</sup> See Table 3

<sup>141</sup> Despite regional planning and regardless of central government's emphasis on the improvements that had been made, north-west Wales was still affected by high unemployment during the 1970s. It also had the worst housing and paid some of the lowest wages in Britain, Lovering, *Gwynedd: A County in Crisis*, p. 58.

to particular areas of north-west Wales. However, inequalities remained and whilst poverty was more prominent in urban centres, 'pools' of deprivation also affected some villages.<sup>142</sup> In the early 1970s a growing number of people in north-west Wales had two cars; however, over sixty-four per cent of households in north east Holyhead, south Caernarfon and east Llandudno did not own a car at all. While one household in twenty in Gwynedd was over-crowded, eighteen per cent of houses in Anglesey had over seven rooms (an indication of affluence).<sup>143</sup> Therefore, certain sections of the population on the island saw a growth in prosperity, while others remained relatively deprived, and Anglesey's secondary schools had to cater for children from considerably diverse social backgrounds. Even though government intervention brought big projects and industrial enterprise to the island, local job opportunities were often temporary, low-skilled and low-paid. Changes to the socio-economic structures on the island resulted in a need for schools to adapt their internal organisation to address social and disciplinary issues among pupils.

This overview of the socio-economic situation on Anglesey during the period 1935-74 provides useful historical context in order to effectively analyse educational changes and developments on the island during this period. While the perception of Anglesey often had been that of a rather idyllic rural location, the actual situation was much more nuanced than this one-dimensional image infers.<sup>144</sup> Anglesey, as was the case in many other parts of Wales, was significantly affected by economic interventions and investments by central government. This stimulated both demographic and economic changes, and subsequently had an impact on the education system as well as on the day-to-day running of the island's schools. This chapter has demonstrated that with shifting economic patterns and changes to the labour market, opportunities for the island's children were also changing. 'Less academically gifted' pupils continued to leave school early rather than pursuing

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<sup>142</sup> For comments on these trends see, for example, *New Society*, 6 December 1979, p. 553; *New Society*, February 1980, pp. 331-333 and Revell, *Regional Income Multipliers* and Lovering, *Gwynedd: A County in Crisis*, pp. 57-59.

<sup>143</sup> Lovering, *Gwynedd: A County in Crisis*, p. 58.

<sup>144</sup> For further comments on the reporting about Anglesey and the emphasis on its rurality, see Chapters Four and Five.

technical or vocational subjects.<sup>145</sup> The increase in employment in manufacturing, particularly for girls and women, ensured that a practical education beyond the school leaving age was fairly irrelevant. Local job opportunities did not require further education of this kind since they were predominately low skilled and low paid.

There was a continual increase in the island's population during this period, and population figures rose particularly quickly during the 1960s. Overcrowding of the island's schools became a recurring problem, and the inadequate accommodation of the secondary schools was also a long-standing issue. Occasionally, national educational policies put greater demands on school provisions, such as the demand for Hadow reform during the 1930s and the raising of the school leaving age in 1972. However, parallel with the socio-economic changes that occurred throughout this period, Anglesey's LEA also contributed to altering the established situation by introducing its new comprehensive scheme in 1953. These pioneering schools were controversial not solely due to their comprehensive nature, but also because of the size of these schools. Even though grammar school pupils had often had to travel to school before comprehensivisation, the necessity to take *all* children away from their local villages in order to attend one of the '11-18' comprehensive schools also constituted a social shift.<sup>146</sup> However, whilst concerns were raised about large comprehensive schools, the key issues which emerged during the 1960s and early 1970s was the uneconomic nature of the island's schools. Despite the increasing demands on school accommodation throughout the period, the six or seven-form entry schools (Holyhead was bigger and alternated between eight and nine-form entry depending on the intake each year) rendered the teaching of the Six Form inefficient and created difficulties in the organisation of curricula.<sup>147</sup> Furthermore, whilst the 'comprehensiveness' of these schools has often been questioned by educationists and historians, there can be no doubt that these

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<sup>145</sup> In 1961 HMI observed that: '[A] distressing feature of the county as a whole is the comparatively high incidence of unemployment, and bearing this fact in mind, the number of pupils who remain at school beyond the age of 15 is not as high as might be expected...', HMI, 'Report: Amlwch, Beaumaris and Llangefni secondary schools', summer and autumn 1961, London, TNA: ED 216/27.

<sup>146</sup> For further discussion of the controversy about comprehensive school sizes, see Chapter Four.

<sup>147</sup> For further comments on the sizes of '11-18' schools, see Chapters Four and Five.

newly created institutions put novel demands on both teachers and head teachers. The intake of each secondary school had broadened, and this presented new challenges for schools regarding how they would provide both a suitable education, and adequate pastoral support for all their pupils.

Finally, the fact that Anglesey was a rural community with a thinly scattered population meant that central government considered the island a suitable candidate for experimentation with comprehensive education. Practical considerations meant that rural Wales was already perceived as a suitable region for multilateral experiments, making Anglesey a fitting candidate for educational developments along these lines. Also, at the local government level the traditional concentration of political power within an elite group of independent councillors largely remained during the earlier part of the period. This ensured that many decisions on educational reform during the 1930s and 1940s could be decided upon and implemented largely without any extensive consultations with teaching professionals or parents. In 1968 Anglesey was still the only local authority in Wales without serving teachers as co-opted members on the Education Committee, a situation which would have been virtually impossible in most other LEAs by the late 1960s.<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> *Liverpool Daily Post*, 17 June 1968.

## Chapter Two

### Decisions, deliberations and delays: 1935-44

We are on the threshold of great and rapid advance in our system of education. It behoves us all to keep our ears and eyes wide open for these changes so as to take advantage of them.<sup>1</sup>

During the 1930s, local authorities were under increasing pressure to expand and improve educational provision. However, while central government reform set the parameters for educational change, LEAs were in control of submitting distinctive plans that they considered suitable for their particular area. LEAs had gradually been required to accommodate increasing numbers of children in their schools during the first half of the twentieth century. By the early 1930s LEAs were expected to pursue reorganisation along Hadow lines throughout England and Wales.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, the school leaving age had first been increased to fourteen in the 1918 Education Act and in 1936 it was decided that it would rise again to fifteen by 1939.<sup>3</sup> Particular difficulties relating to the reorganisation of secondary education in Wales had been duly acknowledged by the BoE, and in 1920 the Departmental Committee on the Organisation of Secondary Education in Wales had reported back to the BoE. It highlighted the widespread rejection of Central Schools (or Senior Schools) in many Welsh areas.<sup>4</sup> It was noted that such resistance in Wales was primarily a consequence of the desire to provide compulsory *secondary* (rather than central) education, free of charge, for all children up to the age of sixteen.<sup>5</sup> The virtually legendary reputation of the Welsh

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<sup>1</sup> *Holyhead and Anglesey Mail*, 7 February 1936.

<sup>2</sup> For more on the Hadow Reports, see Introduction.

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, G. E. Sherington, 'The 1918 Education Act: Origins, Aims and Development', *British Journal of Educational Studies* (1976), 24:1, pp. 66-85; S. Cowan, G. McCulloch and T. Woodin, 'From HORSAs to ROSLA blocks: the school leaving age and the school building programme in England, 1943-1972', *History of Education* (2012), 41:3, pp. 361-380 and B. Simon, 'The 1944 Education Act: A Conservative measure?', *History of Education* (1986), 15:1, p. 32.

<sup>4</sup> Board of Education, *Report of the Departmental Committee on the Organisation of Secondary Education in Wales* (London, 1920).

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* Central Schools had been established after the Education Act of 1918 since the Act allowed LEAs to provide 'more advanced' instruction to older or more academically gifted pupils from elementary schools in Central Schools or classes. Central Schools grew in number, and by the 1930s central government was insisting

people's apparent passion for education fed into the wider debate on secondary education during the 1930s, and it was generally acknowledged that LEAs in Wales (at least in rural Wales) might be dealt with differently from the majority of English LEAs.<sup>6</sup>

While the head teacher in Holyhead expressed his enthusiasm for the anticipated 'great and rapid advance' of Anglesey's education system in 1936, the 1930s and early 1940s actually saw very limited change to the island's educational structures.<sup>7</sup> However, rather than viewing this period as one of educational stalemate, or as a period 'in waiting' in the run up to the 1944 Education Act, this chapter suggests that decisions and discussions in the period 1935-44 were pivotal for the future nature and shape of educational developments on Anglesey. The 1944 Education Act stipulated that LEAs were now liable to provide 'secondary education for all', and the new legislation received multifarious responses from different local authorities.<sup>8</sup> This chapter will demonstrate how Anglesey's response to the above Act, despite having often been described as pioneering, did not constitute novel educational thinking on the behalf of the LEA. On the contrary, Anglesey's Development Plan in the wake of the 1944 Education Act constituted continuity rather than change, and allowed the LEA to implement reorganisational plans which had been developed during the early 1930s. This chapter shows how developments in the period 1935-44 decidedly influenced the comprehensive scheme which was implemented in the early 1950s. The new scheme was a realisation of the LEA's earlier vision of reorganisation along multilateral lines. Furthermore, plans for the practical implementation of a reorganised system had largely been devised during this earlier

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on LEAs establishing Central Schools for senior elementary school pupils. These schools would run alongside grammar schools, so differentiating between different types of post-elementary education.

<sup>6</sup> For more on this, see Introduction.

<sup>7</sup> *Holyhead and Anglesey Mail*, 7 February 1936.

<sup>8</sup> For developments in Leeds, see Fenwick and Woodthorpe, 'The Reorganisation of Secondary Education in Leeds: The Role of Committee Chairmen and Political Parties', pp. 18-28. For a general overview of actions within LEAs (specifically those favouring the tripartite system in the wake of the 1944 Education Act), see McCulloch, 'Local Education Authorities and the Organisation of Secondary Education, 1943-1950', pp. 235-246. For more on post-1944 responses in specific LEAs (ten case studies including, for example, London, Coventry, Bristol, Leicestershire, West Sussex and Glamorgan), see Kerckhoff, Fogelman, Crook and Reeder, *Going Comprehensive in England and Wales*. For more on Leicestershire, see K. J. Donald, 'The Reorganization of Secondary Education in Leicestershire, 1947-1984' in R. Lowe (ed.), *The Changing Secondary School* (Lewes, 1989), pp. 20-35. For an overview of Welsh responses, see Jones and Roderick, *A History of Education in Wales*, pp. 145-149.



period and significantly influenced the shape of Anglesey's education system in the wake of the 1944 Education Act.

### **The LEA's vision for reorganisation**

Anglesey's original multilateral reorganisation plan was developed in the wake of the Hadow Report (1926), and this plan (1931) was highly influential on the multilateral scheme officially submitted to the BoE in 1936. Both the 1931 and the 1936 plans can be regarded as typical rural 'Welsh' responses to the reorganisation issue, particularly due to their insistent rejection of Central Schools and emphasis on the difficulties of educational reorganisation in such a thinly populated area as Anglesey.<sup>9</sup> Secondary education in Wales had in fact been considered on its own merits by central government prior to 1936, and governmental reports had regularly regarded Wales' case separately from that of England.<sup>10</sup> The reason why differential treatment had been considered appropriate for Wales can be explained and understood in the context of her educational history. This was exemplified in public addresses by the island's education officials, as well as in the internal correspondence of Anglesey's local government. In a speech on secondary education in Wales in 1935, Oliver Stanley (President of the BoE) emphasised how education had become a 'battle ground for political theorists'.<sup>11</sup> However, he also pointed out that, despite the political ambiguity educational reorganisation seemed to generate, Wales was nonetheless '...a land which had never thought it right or fashionable to decry the value and advantages of education'.<sup>12</sup> He also emphasised that Wales had demonstrated a constant desire for 'higher and higher education',

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<sup>9</sup> AEC, 'Proposal for Reorganisation', 2 July 1931, Llangefni, AA: WA 4/18 and MoE, 'Proposal for Educational Development in Anglesey', 17 September 1936, London, TNA: ED 16/827.

<sup>10</sup> For more on this, see Introduction.

<sup>11</sup> *Holyhead and Anglesey Mail*, 4 October 1935.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

something Stanley attributed to the 1889 Intermediate Education Act.<sup>13</sup> He stressed that ‘the Welsh people’ believed the state should care for elementary as well as secondary education, and that this ‘zeal’ for secondary education had never diminished in Wales.<sup>14</sup> These perceptions of Welsh attitudes towards education, and the tendency to view Wales’ history as a cause to treat education in Wales differently from England, were commonplace during this period and beyond. Such sentiments were noticeable during the 1930s when the Welsh people’s ‘passion for education’ and their belief in the importance of a good education were often referred to. The historic context of educational developments in Wales was still referenced in the national press during the 1960s when the origins and development of comprehensive education on Anglesey were being analysed.<sup>15</sup> Casual remarks, such as those made in the *Holyhead and Anglesey Mail* in 1936 declaring that ‘the Welsh race had had a great passion for education for generations,’ formed part of the myth surrounding the Welsh people and education.<sup>16</sup> However, the significance of this alleged dedication to the virtues of an academic education constituted more than mere musings about the past. There was a widespread belief that the 1889 Intermediate Act had set Welsh educational developments on a separate path to that of England, allowing a higher proportion of pupils in Wales to benefit from free secondary education significantly earlier than children in England.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> For Stanley’s speech on secondary education in Wales, see *Holyhead and Anglesey Mail*, 4 October, 1935. For more on the Intermediate Education Act (1889) and how it has been viewed by historians, see Introduction.

<sup>14</sup> *Holyhead and Anglesey Mail*, 4 October 1935.

<sup>15</sup> See, for example, *The Times*, 3 April 1965 where it was stated that: ‘There is the traditional passion of Welsh parents for the education of their children...[and]...they [local people] see the value of education and are prepared to pay for it’. In *The Observer*, 6 December 1964 the ‘Welsh love of education for its own sake’ was referred to.

<sup>16</sup> *Holyhead and Anglesey Mail*, 7 February 1936.

<sup>17</sup> The Aberdare Committee (1880) was a government-appointed committee. Originally instigated by the University College of Wales in Aberystwyth (and supported by Welsh Liberal MPs) the committee was ‘to inquire into the state of...education in Wales’, cited in Jones and Roderick, *A History of Education in Wales*, p. 87. In terms of secondary education the committee reported (1881) that secondary education was ‘grossly inadequate’ and recommended a system of ‘intermediate’ secondary schools to be introduced throughout Wales. It was the Aberdare Committee’s report which provided the foundations for the 1889 Intermediate Education Act (one of the first pieces of legislation of modern times to apply to Wales alone) which established a system of publicly funded secondary schools in Wales thirteen years before such developments were happening in England. The idea was that these Intermediate Schools would improve technical education in Wales. However, with academic education being held in much higher regard many Intermediate Schools

This sentiment also influenced the rhetoric of those in charge of educational developments on Anglesey at this time. E. O. Humphreys, who had become Anglesey's Director of Education in 1935, commented in 1936 that '[W]e in Wales...have democratic ideals in education...' and '[I]f we believe in Secondary education for all, let us say so'.<sup>18</sup> Humphreys' statement emphasised the distinction of the Welsh belief, compared to the sentiment held in England, that secondary education should be available to all. He also expressed his conviction that supporters of such reforms should speak out. The comment on the specific Welsh 'democratic ideals in education' indicates the ideological rhetoric with which educational reform on Anglesey was actually discussed and developed during this period. Sir Ben Bowen Thomas (Permanent Secretary to the Welsh Department of the MoE, 1945-63) who knew Humphreys well, described the Director as 'a man of strong views', who:

...blamed the loss of initiative in Welsh education on the iron hand of the English connection....He had a sense of mission deriving from a belief that Welsh education in the earlier days had enjoyed greater freedom and that so-called "national policy" had been allowed to sap the vigour and strength of local responsibility. To him, widespread interest in education was a fact of life in Wales. It had always been so, and this justified its development at its own pace and in its own way.<sup>19</sup>

Bowen's assessment of Humphreys' views further reinforces the proposition that local decision-makers were able to utilise the Welsh narrative to construct a case for an alternative approach to educational reform in Wales. It also indicates Humphreys' negative attitude towards the 'iron hand' of the English connection, and the belief that reforms imposed nationally had caused adverse effects on both the freedom of Welsh education and the powers of local authorities. Developments during the 1930s and 1940s would also show how these attitudes informed the LEA's actions in practice with its adherence to its own policies despite the disapproval of the BoE.

The 1918 Education Act had encouraged the establishment of Central Schools and in 1920 the BoE published a report on reorganisational developments in secondary education in the wake of the Act.

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evolved into institutions more similar to grammar schools than anything else, see Jones and Roderick, *A History of Education in Wales*, pp. 86 and 87, 93-95.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> B. Bowen Thomas, 'E. O. Humphreys – the man who created comprehensives', *Education*, (1975), p. 658.

The report noted that the establishment of Central Schools in Wales was often met with suspicion. It was observed that this was largely because the creation of such institutions was seen as ‘an attempt to satisfy certain sections of the community with something short of the best’.<sup>20</sup> It was also observed that while opposition to Central Schools came predominantly from Welsh industrial areas, where Labour representatives were predisposed to these views, it also existed in other parts of Wales. It was acknowledged that similar attitudes were discernible in rural Wales where the practical difficulties associated with the projected establishment of Central Schools were ‘felt more strongly’.<sup>21</sup> This shows that while resistance in rural Wales towards the creation of separate secondary schools for different ‘types’ of pupils was partially founded on the suspicion that the quality of education in Central Schools would be second rate, practical issues were also prominent factors. Tangible problems relating to educational reorganisation in rural Wales had been formally acknowledged in the Hadow Report, where it was emphasised that such changes presented particular problems in extensive parts of Wales due to its rurality.<sup>22</sup> Although central government favoured moves towards a differentiated secondary school system during the 1930s, the practicality of such a system in rural areas was nonetheless doubtful from the outset. The desirability of such school organisation in specific areas of Wales had been questioned by the Labour Party, the Trades Union Congress (TUC), the NUT and by the Permanent Secretary of the Welsh Department (Percy Watkins, 1925-1933) alike, making the case for alternative solutions in areas such as Anglesey seem reasonable, if not inevitable.<sup>23</sup> Watkins later emphasised his belief that one of the key

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<sup>20</sup> Board of Education, *Report of the Departmental Committee on the Organisation of Secondary Education in Wales* (London, 1920), p. 61.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 60.

<sup>22</sup> In thinly populated areas with scattered inhabitants the prospect of pupils travelling to attend a particular ‘type’ of schools was impractical. In some areas there were not be enough pupils to support a Central School at all, and even in the relatively populous area of Glamorgan, only nine Central Schools had opened by 1936, Jones and Roderick, *A History of Education in Wales*, p. 129. It was therefore generally accepted that rural Wales would need an alternative solution to reorganisation. See, for example, J. A. Davies, *Education in a Welsh Rural County 1970-1973* (Cardiff, 1973), p. 176; Jones, *Controls and Conflicts in Welsh Secondary Education 1889-1944*, p. 164; Jones, ‘Policy and Power: one hundred years of Local Education Authorities in Wales’, *Oxford Review of Education*, p. 350 and Jones, *Secondary Education in Wales 1934-1984*, p. 4.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.* Watkins believed that because of socio-economic factors, the Welsh education system should be approached differently from that in England. He felt that the solution for the majority of Wales should be local secondary schools catering for all children of the appropriate age (in other words the kind of schools which

responsibilities of the Welsh Department was to 'see that full recognition was always given to the special characteristics of Wales', and his support for multilateral schools in Wales was one way of accommodating such 'special characteristics'.<sup>24</sup> It was in the wake of these discussions and debates that Anglesey's Education Committee submitted its proposal, a response to the projected rising of the school leaving age in 1939, to the BoE in 1936.<sup>25</sup> The proposal in 1936 was, however, not the first multilateral scheme to have been suggested for Anglesey. In the wake of the Hadow Report's recommendations in 1926 for the separation of primary and secondary education, the draft report submitted by Anglesey's Education Committee to the BoE in 1931 emphasised the drawbacks of Central Schools in rural areas. The only satisfactory solution for the island would therefore be to allow all children entry into secondary schools, and for these schools to be adapted to 'meet the needs of all pupils over 11 years of age'.<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, it was emphasised that the Departmental Committee which had reported to Hadow on the education system in Wales, had made special reference to rural areas and recommended that it should be 'permissible to carry on in the same Secondary School the two types of education'.<sup>27</sup> This does not only demonstrate how the idea of creating multilateral secondary schools in rural Wales was generally widely acknowledged during this period, but furthermore indicates how a multilateral system had already been considered the most practical option for Anglesey as early as 1931.

By the time of the submission of the 1936 Development Plan the LEA had employed Humphreys as its new Director of Education, and although he was an avid supporter of multilateral schooling, the

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would later be referred to as multi- or bilateral schools). He even envisaged a common curriculum for all children during the first two years of their secondary education, and furthermore suggested that all post-elementary schooling in Wales should be provided for free (at least for the first two years spent in secondary education), see Jones and Roderick, *A History of Education in Wales*, pp. 130 and 131.

<sup>24</sup> P. Watkins, *A Welshman Remembers* (Cardiff, 1944), p. 139.

<sup>25</sup> Central government decided in 1936 that the school leaving age would rise to fifteen in 1939, and LEAs were consequently required to formulate reorganisation plans in anticipation of the increased intake that these changes would involve. See, for example, Simon, 'The 1944 Education Act: A Conservative measure?', p.32 and Cowan, McCulloch and Woodin, 'From HORSAs huts to ROSLA blocks: the school leaving age and the school building programme in England, 1943–1972', pp. 361–380.

<sup>26</sup> Sub-Committee Reorganisation of Schools, 1929-30, 'Minutes', 15 January 1930, Llangefni, AA: WA 1/42.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

foundations for such a proposition for Anglesey already existed.<sup>28</sup> Humphreys expressed his admiration for the LEA for having 'stood firm' in its belief in the multilateral system in the wake of the Hadow Report and articulated his respect for the Development Committee's report in 1931 and its values.<sup>29</sup> Although Humphreys became the key figure in future deliberations with the Welsh Department, and therefore also viewed as the main driving force behind the island's obstinate reluctance to reorganise along BoE lines during the 1930s, he was not a lone instigator of multilateral education on Anglesey. The Education Committee was already committed to the idea of multilateral education by 1935. By their appointment of a multilateral supporter such as Humphreys (a rather well-known local educationist at the Normal College in Bangor), they undoubtedly intended to employ a Director of Education who would continue their established strategy.<sup>30</sup> Studies that have looked to analyse why certain LEAs pushed for multilateral or comprehensive Development Plans in the wake of the 1944 Education Act have often emphasised the significant role individual Education Officers played in such developments.<sup>31</sup> Humphreys' appointment in 1935 was certainly instrumental in as far as his role as the key negotiator with the BoE was concerned. The appointment of the new Director coincided with the beginning of the LEA's drawn-out wrangling with the BoE in respect of the Hadow reorganisation during the 1930s. He also continued to be the leading figure in the communication with the Ministry throughout the planning period of the 1940s and finally during the implementation of the new education system in the early 1950s.<sup>32</sup> However, rather than creating a wholly new scheme, Humphreys joined an LEA already committed to multilateralism and even inherited a pre-existing multilateral scheme of education.

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<sup>28</sup> B. Bowen Thomas, 'E. O. Humphreys – the man who created comprehensives', *Education*, (1975).

<sup>29</sup> *Holyhead and Anglesey Mail*, 7 February 1936.

<sup>30</sup> The Normal College was the independent teacher training centre established in Bangor in 1858. The college became part of University of Wales, Bangor in 1996.

<sup>31</sup> For more on this see, for example, Crook, 'Local Authorities and Comprehensivisation in England and Wales, 1944-1974', pp. 247-260; Kerckhoff, Fogelman, Crook and Reeder, *Going Comprehensive in England and Wales*, pp. 167-169; I.G.K. Fenwick and A. J. Woodthorpe, 'The Reorganisation of Secondary education in Leeds: The Role of Committee Chairmen and Political Parties', *Aspects of Education*, 22 (1979), pp. 18-28; Fearn, 'The Politics of Local Reorganization', pp. 40 and 41 and K. J. Donald, 'The Reorganization of Secondary Education in Leicestershire, 1947-1984' in R. Lowe (ed.), *The Changing Secondary School* (Lewes, 1989), pp. 20-35.

<sup>32</sup> For more on the negotiation with the Ministry and the eventual implementation of the new systems, see Chapters Three and Four.

The 1936 Development Plan plainly stated its intent in terms of the provision of secondary education on the island:

The Committee is definitely of the opinion that the development of Post Primary Education in Anglesey should be based on the principle of Multilateral Secondary Schools...<sup>33</sup>

The LEA's case for the introduction of a multilateral system, as put forward to the BoE, was primarily centred on practicalities. Multilateral schools would allow the LEA to provide different 'types' of secondary education within one school building, hence addressing the issue of providing appropriate education to senior pupils in such a sparsely populated area. It was also felt that a system of Central Schools would be 'impracticable except at Holyhead' both due to the island's low population figures and the fact that the relative number of pupils entering secondary schools was already high.<sup>34</sup> In this respect, the 1936 Development Plan echoed sentiments that had been expressed by the LEA five years earlier in its 1931 report. The multilateral case was also made on economic grounds, with the suggestion that the demands for the education of adolescents contained in the Hadow Report could be fulfilled through a multilateral scheme 'without unnecessary duplication of equipment'.<sup>35</sup> It also pointed out that with the introduction of the multilateral system 'the need for expenditure on new Technical, Central, and Non-Selective Central Schools no longer remains', indicating that there might also be some financial benefits to a multilateral scheme.<sup>36</sup> Apart from these two brief comments however, potential economic benefits connected with multilateralism were not specifically addressed in the Development Plan. Indeed, the consensus from the Welsh Department was that such a scheme would, if anything, be more expensive than a differentiated system.<sup>37</sup> There were, however, some further attempts by the Director to recommend the scheme on financial grounds. Humphreys emphasised the expense of senior pupils travelling to Central Schools, and the fact that

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<sup>33</sup> MoE, 'Proposal for Educational Development in Anglesey', 17 September 1936, London, TNA: ED 16/827.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid. It was considered feasible to maintain a Central School in Holyhead since the town's population was large enough (recorded as 10,700 in the 1931 Census), see HMSO, *Census of England and Wales 1931: Counties of Anglesey and Caernarvon, pt. I* (London, 1933). The fact that a Central School already existed in Holyhead since 1934 undoubtedly also impacted on the LEA's stance on this issue.

<sup>35</sup> MoE, 'Proposal for Educational Development in Anglesey', 17 September 1936, London, TNA: ED 16/827.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> BoE, 'Interview Memorandum', 17 November 1936, London, TNA: ED 35/6804.

the BoE grant would only pay forty per cent of such costs for Central School pupils compared to fifty per cent for pupils travelling to Grammar Schools.<sup>38</sup> By this time Sir Wynn Wheldon was the Permanent Secretary to the Welsh Department (1933-45) and as he had pointed out, the discrepancy in grants paid towards secondary and elementary education was soon to be balanced out to the same fifty per cent allowance.<sup>39</sup> Therefore, the already rather scant economic arguments in favour of the scheme were not particularly convincing. This was perhaps why the scheme was promoted much more noticeably on practical grounds rather than on a strictly economic basis. The general consensus in the historiography to date has been that Anglesey's scheme was set up to address practical issues, and to make educational provision more economically viable.<sup>40</sup> However, while practical considerations were undoubtedly influential in the decision to promote multilateralism, the economic benefits were questionable and did not feature largely in the LEA's case when promoting its policy. This indicates that while practical and economic considerations were partially behind the scheme, other factors were also important to the LEA in its decision to continue to defend its policy.

In practice, the scheme suggested a completely new secondary school for 300 pupils to be built in Amlwch 'as soon as possible,' and extensions to be added to the remaining three secondary schools.<sup>41</sup> While these alterations to the secondary schools might not seem exceedingly ambitious, the prospective growth in intake would nevertheless affect a significant number of existing elementary schools which were set to lose their senior scholars in the reorganisation. The secondary school in Amlwch was allocated fifteen contributory schools, Beaumaris thirteen and Llangefni eighteen. In Holyhead the plan was for all senior pupils to either attend the existing grammar school

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<sup>38</sup> BoE, 'Interview Memorandum', 17 November 1936, London, TNA: ED 35/6804.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> For a full account of the existing literature and how it has viewed the rationale behind Anglesey's multilateralism, see Introduction.

<sup>41</sup> For Beaumaris and Holyhead the extensions had already been approved by the Education Committee and submitted to the BoE, while the plans for Llangefni were to be 'clarified after the erection of the Amlwch Secondary School', AEC, 'Proposal for Educational Development in Anglesey', 17 September 1936, London, TNA: ED 16/827.



or St. Cybi Central School. Out of the seven voluntary schools on the island, five were expected to transfer their senior pupils from their own institutions to appropriate county schools. However, the Education Committee stressed that rural elementary schools would not be 'decapitated' and that the plan would not include the removal of *all* senior pupils to the new multilateral schools. In fact, the 1936 proposal suggested that 1,641 senior pupils would attend multilateral secondary schools by September 1941 while 1,090 would still be in attendance in all-age elementary schools.<sup>42</sup> Therefore, the objective was not to provide education for all senior pupils in the multilateral schools. These institutions would only provide education for those pupils who would 'benefit' from such provision. The plan stated that '...children who fail to show evidence of capacity to benefit by the education provided in the Multi-lateral Secondary Schools shall be left in SENIOR CLASSES'.<sup>43</sup> Thus, despite the fact that the multilateral schools would expressly provide '...Practical, Technical and Academic Education to Senior Children' on the island, some forty per cent of pupils were still considered unable to benefit from either an academic or practical secondary education as provided in the multilateral schools.<sup>44</sup> Those pupils who were not intended for an education in the new schools would therefore complete their schooling in the existing elementary schools. Not surprisingly in view of the Hadow Report's recommendations, the Welsh Department was not convinced by the idea of such high numbers of senior pupils continuing their education in elementary schools, and questioned whether Anglesey's scheme would benefit those pupils who were destined to remain in the elementary schools.<sup>45</sup> In defence of its plans, the Education Committee emphasised the importance of these rural schools as:

...centres of culture in a rural community. These children [attending elementary rather than secondary schools] can be given posts of responsibility in their native environment, and will be trained to become useful citizens in the community with which they are familiar.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> AEC, 'Proposal for Educational Development in Anglesey', 17 September 1936, London, TNA: ED 16/827.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> BoE, 'Interview Memorandum', 17 November 1936, London, TNA: ED 35/6804.

<sup>46</sup> AEC, 'Proposal for Educational Development in Anglesey', 17 September 1936, London, TNA: ED 16/827.

This might have been an indication of the LEA's concern for local 'all-age' schools and the significance of their roles within rural communities, an issue which was also raised later in relation to the impact of comprehensive schools on rural communities.<sup>47</sup> However, the exclusion of two fifth of pupils of secondary school age from the designated multilateral secondary schools was more likely a concession to managers of existing 'all-age' schools which would otherwise be 'decapitated'. While this separation of the island's senior pupils might be considered a deviation from a 'truly' multilateral system, it was nonetheless consistent with the LEA's educational thinking during the 1930s (and beyond). The predominant idea throughout Britain in the 1920s and 1930s was that academic secondary education should be reserved for the select few.<sup>48</sup> Although secondary education in Britain had always been selective, by the 1920s and 1930s research by educationists such as Cyril Burt provided seemingly evidential support for this tenet. This justified the use of IQ-testing in order to evaluate pupils' 'types', and also saw an increase in the use of the 11-plus examination to decide on entrances to the grammar schools.<sup>49</sup> The proposed multilateral system in

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<sup>47</sup> For more on this, see Chapter Four.

<sup>48</sup> The most well-known and influential British academic in the field of child intelligence was 'hereditarian' Cyril Burt. Although Burt's findings were controversially found fraudulent by the British Psychological Society in 1980, there is no denying his influence on educational thinking and policy in the 1930s and 1940s. For accounts in defence of Cyril Burt see, for example, R. B. Joynson, *The Burt Affair* (London, 1989); R. Fletcher, *Science, Ideology, and the Media: The Cyril Burt Scandal* (New Brunswick, 1991) and *The Guardian*, 9 July 1991. For criticisms of Burt as an academic see, for example, W. H. Tucker, 'Re-reconsidering Burt: Beyond A Reasonable Doubt', *Journal of the History of the Behavioural Sciences*, 33:2 (1997), pp. 145-162 and L. S. Hearnshaw, *Cyril Burt, Psychologist* (London, 1979). For opposition to Burt's views on inherent intelligence see, for example, Simon, *Intelligence Testing and the Comprehensive School*; Simon, *Education and the Social Order* and J. E. Floud, A. H. Halsey and F. M. Martin (eds.), *Social Class and Educational Opportunity* (Melbourne, 1957). For Burt's own views see, for example, C. Burt, 'The Influence of Mental Characters', *Eugenics Review*, 4 (1912), pp. 83 and 84.

<sup>49</sup> The view that intelligence was inherited was significantly influential not just on attitudes towards education but on education policy as well. Provision based on the idea that there were different 'types' of child would be realised in practice through the selective tripartite system where different kinds of children would attend separate schools. The advocacy of the tripartite system had developed gradually. A collection of Committee Reports from the 1920s up until the 1940s all promoted this kind of differentiated education: The Hadow Report (1926) had suggested three different types of schools; the Spens Report (1938) reinforced this suggestion; and the Norwood Report (1943) further pushed for this kind of reorganisation see, for example, Lawton, *Education and Labour Party Ideologies*, p. 44 and McCulloch, 'Secondary education', pp. 37-40. Nevertheless, there had been opposition to the 'hereditarian' view already in the 1920s, although egalitarian thinking in relation to social as well as educational affairs increased more significantly later on, especially during the Second World War see, for example, Burt, 'The Influence of Mental Characters', p.196 and Tucker, 'Re-reconsidering Burt: Beyond A Reasonable Doubt', pp. 148 and 149. For examples of these opposing views see, for example, Simon, *Intelligence Testing and the Comprehensive School* and Floud, Halsey and Martin (eds.), *Social Class and Educational Opportunity*.

1936 was therefore not intended as a rejection of the notion of different 'types' of children, but rather a measure which would allow the LEA to expand the intake to the island's secondary schools in order to provide places for a higher proportion of children. In 1931 the principle of free secondary education for all had been considered 'an ideal that should not be lost sight of by those concerned with education in the County'.<sup>50</sup> This 'ideal' still informed the Development Plan of 1936, albeit that it was differently and perhaps slightly more strategically presented than it had been in 1931, and nevertheless became a serious point of contention in negotiations with the Welsh Department.

In order to evaluate what might be dubbed more 'ideological' support for the multilateral scheme, it is essential to consider the proposed division of pupils, particularly the sixty per cent of children intended for more academic study in the secondary schools. The rejection in 1931 by the BoE of the LEA's plans to provide free secondary education for all children indicated that if the LEA was to submit a very similar proposal in 1936 it was likely to prove just as unsuccessful. However, a circular issued by the BoE in January 1936 established that no upper limit for Special Places for pupils attending secondary schools would be implemented.<sup>51</sup> The LEA was hopeful that this could be used to its advantage in promoting its goal of increasing the number of pupils in secondary education.<sup>52</sup> Consequently, and to the dismay of the Welsh Department, throughout the second half of the 1930s the LEA vigorously pursued its goal of admitting sixty per cent of Anglesey's children to its grammar schools. Although this policy was primarily presented and perceived as the most practical solution for the island, arguments expressed in support of the policy during interviews with the BoE often

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<sup>50</sup> AEC, 'Proposal for Reorganisation', 2 July 1931, Llangefni, AA: WA 4/18. Despite the LEA's continuous efforts to attain increased grants from the BoE in order for the LEA to be able to provide free secondary education for all pupils, the scheme had to be abandoned due to the lack of funding for such ambitious plans. Instead, a gradual programme to extend existing provision for senior pupils both in secondary schools and elementary schools was envisaged.

<sup>51</sup> This meant that the LEA was free to admit any number of pupils from the elementary schools to its secondary schools, as long as those pupils were of secondary school age and had passed the scholarship examinations. Means-tested Special Places had been introduced in 1932 to replace the free places available in grammar schools. The measure had encountered extensive protests in Wales (relative to population more protests were put forward in Wales than in England), Jones and Roderick, *A History of Education in Wales*, p. 132.

<sup>52</sup> This was the BoE Circular 1444 (January 1936), see AEC, 'Proposal for Educational Development in Anglesey', 17 September 1936, London, TNA: ED 16/827.

revealed principled motives. For example, in a meeting with Wheldon in 1937 Humphreys suggested that 'Wales, being a more democratic country [than England] with fewer class distinctions, required...one Type of school for all senior children' and in August 1938 it was felt that:

...the Authority differed fundamentally from the Board. The latter divided children into two classes, those who might become leaders and those who would only be followers. The second class were to go to senior schools... [but] it was impossible at the age of 11 to determine into which of these groups any child should be placed. The Authority wished the majority of their children to be given a chance in the Secondary School<sup>53</sup>

The desire to admit high numbers of pupils to the secondary schools was therefore not purely practical, but among some of the LEA's representatives at least, this policy was also a matter of providing equal educational opportunities for Anglesey's children. It was felt that those who were refused entry into grammar schools at the age of eleven were being unfairly treated, and that the LEA should aspire to allow as many pupils as possible entry into secondary schools. However, although the idea that secondary education should be provided for all children was sometimes supported on ideological grounds, Anglesey's multilateralism still incorporated the tenet that different kinds of secondary education would have to be provided for different 'types' of children. The majority of children would, however, be educated within the same school buildings, albeit in different forms depending on their ability and aptitude. The fact that it was deemed acceptable that such a high proportion of children would be educated in all-age schools does indicate that the real driving force behind the LEA's policy was still the increase in number of pupils entering the secondary schools. The principle of multilateralism was rarely specifically addressed or defended, while the policy of accelerating pupil numbers was consistently prioritised despite considerable sacrifices in terms of schools accommodation and facilities.

The educational thinking of the Anglesey Education Committee during this period was a precursor to the ideas that would underpin the wholly comprehensive scheme that developed in the county

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<sup>53</sup> For the comments on Wales being more 'democratic' than England, BoE, 'Interview Memorandum', 3 May 1937, London, TNA: ED 35/6808. For the statement on the differences in opinion between the Welsh Department and the LEA, BoE, 'Interview Memorandum', 24 August 1938, London, TNA: ED 35/6804.

during the 1940s. The multilateral plans that were submitted to the BoE in 1936 (and subsequently rejected) were carried forward into the 1940s and beyond. Although the Education Act of 1944 meant that the LEA had to incorporate more drastic changes than those which had been required in 1936, the fundamental premise of four (possibly five) multilateral schools in the main population centres with a comprehensive intake remained very similar. There is no doubt that the scheme from 1936 informed and underpinned the Development Plan submitted by the LEA in 1946. In fact, the original ideal of multilateral (not comprehensive) secondary schools was retained in the original scheme where the LEA described its plans as multilateral, not comprehensive. It was not until late 1947 that the LEA referred to Anglesey's schools as comprehensive rather than multilateral. However, the LEA's own vision for its secondary schools had not changed, and was still modelled on the idea of the multilateral school as envisaged during this period.

### **Deliberations with the Board of Education**

The 1936 scheme encountered persistent resistance from the BoE and several subsequent proposals (both formal and informal) were prepared by the LEA in 1937 and 1938, all of which were consequently rejected. A final scheme was submitted in early 1938 and was deemed 'generally acceptable' by December of that year. After the rejection of the original plan, a deputation from the LEA went to see the Welsh Department in November. It was an opportunity for the Department to clarify its stance and emphasise its reasons for rejecting the LEA's proposed plans. At that meeting, the response from Wheldon (Permanent Secretary to the Welsh Department, 1933-45) to Anglesey's multilateral scheme was not encouraging. Although there was some recognition of the practical difficulties faced by the LEA in regards to school reorganisation, the multilateral solution was nevertheless deemed unacceptable. The justification for the BoE's rejection was multi-faceted. The main objection consisted of a general defence of Central (or Senior) Schools. Wheldon emphasised that in those local authorities where Central Schools had already been introduced, these had proven

successful and should therefore be implemented wherever possible. Significant advantages, particularly for those pupils generally considered 'unsuitable' for an academic education, had been recorded in existing Central Schools. The Welsh Department underlined that such observations, based on practical experience, could not be ignored in favour of an untested form of multilateral schooling. The recognition of such benefits in a segregated secondary school system made the BoE 'reluctant to abandon the general principle' of such organisation of schools.<sup>54</sup> Furthermore, the lack of experience of multilateral education meant that:

...while there might be a case for an experiment in a circumscribed area, he [Wheldon] suggested that it would be unwise to regard multilateral schools as the solution of the post-primary problem for a whole county.<sup>55</sup>

The unknown, but potentially damaging, impact multilateral schooling might have on the brighter pupils who would otherwise have attended the grammar schools was another serious concern. It was feared that brighter pupils may be neglected in a mixed-ability setting, and consequently that the standard of their work might suffer.<sup>56</sup> All these concerns reflected a reluctance to implement an untested system throughout an entire local authority. A more limited experiment might have had a greater chance of receiving the BoE's blessing, however, Anglesey's scheme was wholly constructed around a fully multilateral system and limited experiments were never considered. The apprehension in relation to the potential influence of mixed-ability schools on the achievements of 'grammar type' pupils was a question which would become an increasingly significant issue during the 1950s and 1960s. The debates surrounding secondary education were often dominated by the question of how grammar school pupils would be affected if mixed-ability schools were to be introduced.<sup>57</sup> This grievance was an indicator not merely of the concern which would dominate pro-grammar school campaigns for decades to come, but also the key criteria upon which Anglesey's future comprehensive scheme would be judged.

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<sup>54</sup> BoE, 'Interview Memorandum', 17 November 1936, London, TNA: ED 35/6804.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> For more on this, see Chapters Three, Four and Five.

Apart from objections as to the advisability of implementing an untested system for the whole county, there were also issues of practicality. Statistics collated from 1934 suggested that out of the island's 2,455 senior pupils only 573 attended schools that had already been reorganised along Hadow lines, while the rest were still attending elementary schools. The situation remained the same into the late 1930s. The Welsh Department considered Anglesey's position untenable, and these circumstances convinced them of the urgency to reorganise the island's schools. Their concerns were put to the LEA, and it was emphasised that pupils needed to be concentrated in specific schools, and that the LEA was expected to devise a scheme to this effect as soon as possible. Additionally, the financial implications of the LEA's plans were emphasised since providing education to all senior pupils in 'Secondary Schools', as opposed to Central Schools, involved significantly higher costs.<sup>58</sup> These clear objections expressed in relation to the multilateral scheme generated rather scant responses from the LEA representatives. Their reply was primarily focused on the practical issues raised by Wheldon, rather than a solid defence of the educational benefits of a multilateral system. The only attempt by Humphreys to address the criticisms levelled at the multilateral model was his belief that it was 'inadvisable to uproot pupils of low intelligence and send them to centrally situated schools'.<sup>59</sup> In view of the LEA's Development Plan presented to the MoE in 1946, and its proposal to centralise all secondary education in the main four population centres, Humphreys' objection appears at best pragmatic and at worst insincere. Therefore, this was not so much a defence of multilateralism *per se*, but rather a justification for the proposition to retain forty per cent of pupils in the already existing elementary schools.<sup>60</sup> This demonstrates that the main concern for the LEA at this time was to achieve its target of sixty per cent of pupils attending secondary schools rather than the actual principle of multilateralism.

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<sup>58</sup> Humphreys disputed the claim that the expense would be significantly higher if multilateral schools were introduced instead of Central Schools, BoE, 'Interview Memorandum', 17 November 1936, London, TNA: ED 35/6804.

<sup>59</sup> BoE, 'Interview Memorandum', 17 November 1936, London, TNA: ED 35/6804.

<sup>60</sup> AEC, 'Proposal for Educational Development in Anglesey', 17 September 1936, London, TNA: ED 16/827.

Although Wheldon had clearly set out the position of the BoE in relation to Anglesey's multilateral scheme very soon after the submission of the Development Plan, the LEA retained its support for the scheme and simply tried to carry out its proposed changes regardless of the Board's objections. This meant that relations between local and central government did not improve in the wake of the deputation, and became especially inflamed due to the LEA's refusal to heed the Board's call to abandon the plans for a sixty per cent intake to its secondary schools. The obstinacy of Anglesey's LEA and Humphreys as its Director was acknowledged in no uncertain terms by internal correspondence in the summer of 1938. The Director was described as 'bewitched by the slogan "Secondary education for all"' and was believed to have convinced his Education Committee 'that no pupil ought to be refused admission to a secondary school'.<sup>61</sup> The LEA's continued policy of admitting high numbers of pupils to its secondary schools was in effect a way of adhering to its original plans, but without necessarily labelling its secondary schools multilateral. Internal communication reveals how the Welsh Department's patience was running out in regards to Anglesey's unrelenting tendency to overcrowd its secondary schools, and its refusal to reorganise the island's elementary schools. By the summer of 1938 there was a palpable sense of urgency from the Department to get reorganisation on Anglesey underway. It was decided that the LEA's record seemed to suggest that it would continue to refuse any alterations to its secondary school policy unless more forceful tactics were deployed.<sup>62</sup> It was therefore decided that the LEA would be reminded of its obligation to provide sufficient secondary education for all senior pupils in its institutions, and the possible consequences a failure to do so might have on those pupils forced to attend all-age schools instead. A letter was sent to the LEA on 22 July 1948 highlighting the deficiencies of the LEA's overcrowded schools, and it was pointed out that unless these problems were rectified the situation would result in a failure to satisfy the conditions for the payment of grants from the BoE.<sup>63</sup> The fact that Wheldon received Anglesey's MP, Megan Lloyd George, five

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<sup>61</sup> BoE, 'Internal Memorandum', 12 July 1938, London, TNA: ED 35/6804.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> BoE, 'Letter from BoE to LEA', 22 July 1938, London, TNA: ED 35/6804.



days later, and had an informal visit from the Director (Humphreys) on 30 July would suggest that the letter had been received with the intended attention and urgency.<sup>64</sup>

Two further deputations from the LEA were received by the Board in 1938 before a tentative agreement could be reached. There was a deputation from the LEA in Shire Hall in Llangefni in August 1938, where it was pointed out that they (the LEA) 'were faced with possibly the greatest crisis in their history'.<sup>65</sup> By this time Wheldon was convinced that Anglesey's LEA 'did not want to reorganise' and that its aim was solely to gain 'exceptionally high admissions to their secondary schools'.<sup>66</sup> He was also certain that the LEA's intention was to pursue its policy regardless of the Board's disapproval, and it was pointed out by the Permanent Secretary that secondary education on Anglesey was more generous than anywhere else in England and in most of Wales. The LEA 'must not assume that they could follow their own policy without reference to the Board' since a proposal involving the admission of as high a proportion as sixty per cent of elementary school pupils to Secondary Schools was unlikely to be approved.<sup>67</sup> Wheldon's suspicions as to the LEA's intentions of accepting the BoE's demands were further revealed by his view that:

The main difficulty in coming to an agreement lay in the fact that the Authority were attempting to press on with their own policy and to present the Board with a fait accompli by offering admissions to large numbers in September next...the Authority...had done nothing to meet the Board's wishes on the reorganisation question.<sup>68</sup>

Wheldon's assertion was certainly justified in view of the endurance of the LEA's approach towards the question of how many (or how big a proportion of) pupils to admit to the island's secondary

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<sup>64</sup> Megan Lloyd George enquired about the possibility of the BoE granting Amlwch a two-form entry school, also indicating that if the two-form entry was allowed in Amlwch there was a possibility that the LEA would agree to the BoE's demands for reorganisation. She also suggested that 'there might be trouble over this matter...[if the BoE]...maintained their present attitude'. BoE, 'Interview Memorandum', 28 July 1938, London, TNA: ED 35/6804. Humphrey paid an informal visit to see Wheldon. In his defence of Anglesey's policy to admit such high numbers of pupils to its secondary schools he referred to the Intermediate Act (1889) and pointed out that the 'Secondary Schools of Wales were intended to be different from those in England'. BoE, 'Interview Memorandum', 30 July 1938, London, TNA: ED 35/6804.

<sup>65</sup> BoE, 'Notes from deputation, Shire Hall, Llangefni', 24 August 1938, London, TNA: ED 35/6808. Wheldon met the representatives from the LEA to discuss the urgent situation in the island's secondary schools (in terms of overcrowding) and to urge the LEA (yet again) to reorganise along Hadow lines.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> BoE, 'Notes from deputation, Shire Hall, Llangefni', 24 August 1938, London, TNA: ED 35/6808.

schools. The LEA could feasibly manage the numbers of entries into the schools via its control of the entrance tests, and aided by the allowance since 1936 for LEAs to provide a hundred per cent Special Places in secondary schools.<sup>69</sup> The LEA produced a report on the allocation of Special Places in 1939. The link between the number of pupils passing the test and the LEA's desire to admit between fifty and sixty per cent of pupils to the island's secondary schools was clearly recognised.<sup>70</sup> While the Welsh Department saw the LEA's continuous admittance of 'excessive' numbers of pupils to its secondary schools as a way of pursuing its original policy even though it contradicted the wishes of the BoE, it had proved difficult to counteract the LEA's actions in this respect. While it had become obvious by this time that the BoE would not approve a multilateral scheme, by carrying on with its original plans as far as entrance numbers were concerned, the LEA had managed to avoid the kind of reorganisation that they deemed undesirable. Although the island's secondary schools had not officially been allowed to be labelled multilateral, the outcome, as far as pupil numbers were concerned, had largely been along the desired lines. The hardening stance by the Board was to have an adverse effect on the LEA's manoeuvrability in this respect. Nevertheless, up until this point, Humphreys' reputation as a 'rebel *vis-à-vis* central authority' had not just been in evidence, but had also proved rather effective.<sup>71</sup>

The final deputation in relation to this matter was received by Lord Stanhope (President of the BoE) together with Wheldon on 6 September 1938.<sup>72</sup> Practical issues were reiterated by the President of

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<sup>69</sup> At the meeting in Shire Hall (1938) Wheldon pointed out that the allowance for one-hundred per cent Special Places (meaning free means-tested places for pupils whose parents were unable to pay for a secondary education, often taken up by pupils from elementary schools) was not intended as a free pass for LEAs to admit excessive numbers of pupils to their secondary schools. Especially, he emphasised, where the accommodation was not sufficient to admit such numbers, as was the case in Holyhead, BoE, 'Notes from deputation, Shire Hall, Llangefni', 24 August 1938, London, TNA: ED 35/6808. Anglesey's generous intake to its secondary schools was highlighted in the BoE's internal correspondence in July 1938. It was described as 'unfortunate' that too many pupils on Anglesey would yet again be admitted to the secondary schools in September that year. The reason for the high number of secondary school pupils was identified as the pass mark of the scholarship examination being fixed as low as 33.3 per cent, see BoE, 'Internal Note', 12 July 1938, London, TNA: ED 35/6804.

<sup>70</sup> LEA, 'Examination for the Award of Special Places in Secondary Schools. Report of an investigation held on 17th, 18th, and 19th January', 1939, London, TNA: ED 77/134.

<sup>71</sup> B. Bowen Thomas, 'E. O. Humphreys – the man who created comprehensives', *Education*, (1975), p. 658.

<sup>72</sup> AEC, 'Minutes 1934-38', 11 August 1938, Llangefni, AA: WA 1/100.

the Board, and financial pressures were yet again emphasised. The LEA was questioned as to whether Anglesey would be able to afford the essential reorganisation of their elementary schools (reforming these schools were by this point acutely urgent in light of the projected raising of the school leaving age in 1939), as well as the need for extensive alterations to secondary school buildings. It was also pointed out that the fifty per cent grant for school building was only in place for a limited period of time, and was in fact about to expire. If the LEA did not 'seize the opportunity now they would have to pay a greater proportion later' and the delays may therefore prove costly in the long run.<sup>73</sup> Apart from this, the issue of overcrowding was strongly deplored and shortcomings within the schools severely criticised. The LEA's decision in 1938 to admit 140 secondary pupils in Holyhead, 128 in Llangefni and seventy-nine in Beaumaris made matters worse, both in terms of the congestion in the schools and the increasingly frosty relationship with the Welsh Board.<sup>74</sup> The LEA also favoured the practice of entering pupils to the secondary schools at the age of twelve rather than the conventional age of eleven. This LEA justified this practice on linguistic grounds, claiming that pupils required an extra year in the primary school to practice their English since such a large number of pupils had Welsh as their first language. The BoE questioned both this practice and the rationale behind it. The cynicism of the BoE towards the motivation behind this policy was not wholly unfounded. In 1937, J. M. Hughes (head teacher in Holyhead up until Trevor Lovett's appointment in 1949) highlighted that the age of entry had risen for that academic year. However, this was not due to any specific Welsh language policy, but was because the year 1937 was the first instance where one-hundred per cent Special Places had been granted. The head teacher emphasised that pupils of higher ages and lower ability, who would not have been able to qualify for

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<sup>73</sup> BoE, 'Interview Memorandum', 6 September 1938, London, TNA: ED 35/6804.

<sup>74</sup> For the numbers of pupils entering the secondary schools, see BoE, 'Interview Memorandum', 6 September 1938, London, TNA: ED 35/6804. There were further disagreements too. The LEA's policy of admission to secondary schools at the age of twelve (rather than the conventional age of eleven) and the completion of secondary courses in four years (rather than the usual five) was strongly condemned by the Board. The LEA's justification of the admission policy on the grounds of Welsh speaking pupils' needing to stay an extra year in primary education to improve their English, was also refuted as an exaggeration (especially for the Holyhead district), BoE, 'Interview Memorandum', 6 September 1938, London, TNA: ED 35/6804.

a secondary school education previously, were in 1937 able to do so.<sup>75</sup> Despite the Welsh Department's exasperation with the LEA's persistence with its policy, and its dislike of the way that the LEA had circumvented their instructions, Wheldon still expressed his willingness to try to come to an arrangement. The suggestion, which was finally accepted by the LEA, was that they would be allowed to retain the number of forms in their secondary schools for the present year (1937) only, on the condition that they would provide the Board with a scheme for the reorganisation of its elementary schools as soon as possible. The LEA would also have to agree to the condition that pupils would transfer to secondary schools at the conventional age of eleven and attend secondary school for five years.<sup>76</sup> The LEA was thus committed to accelerating the reorganisation process on the island, and consequently pledged to deliver a new scheme at the earliest possible date. It was expected that the new plans would provide adequate provision for all senior pupils. This was particularly urgent in respect of those pupils still receiving their education in elementary schools after having failed to gain entry to one of the island's grammar schools.<sup>77</sup> A negotiated agreement had finally been reached, but while the Board had eventually been successful in their attempts to counteract the LEA's resistance, due to the war, the agreement was never fulfilled.

The new arrangements prompted the LEA's Sub-Committee for Educational Development to produce a revised proposal as early as September that same year. However, the scheme anticipated that the instruction of senior pupils outside of secondary schools would be provided at twenty-one centres across the island. The BoE was unlikely to approve this proposal since it scarcely constituted a concentration of pupils in Central Schools considering the high number of institutions still dedicated to the instruction of senior pupils.<sup>78</sup> The scheme was submitted to the BoE informally

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<sup>75</sup> *Holyhead & Anglesey Mail*, 12 February 1937.

<sup>76</sup> The decision of how many parallel forms the new school in Amlwch would eventually be allowed was postponed. This issue would be resolved at a later date when reorganisation on the island was actually underway, and when the need for secondary school places would be easier to assess, BoE, 'Interview Memorandum', 6 September 1938, London, TNA: ED 35/6804.

<sup>77</sup> AEC, 'Proposals for Reorganisation', 10 November 1938, Llangefni, AA: WA 1/100.

<sup>78</sup> AEC, 'Minutes 1934-38', 10 November 1938, Llangefni, AA: WA 1/100. The scheme in September 1938 proposed that senior pupils would receive instruction in the following towns: Holyhead St. Cybi School, Llanrhuddlad, Llanddeusant, Llanbadrig Cemaes, Llanerchymedd, Amlwch, Llanallgo, Pentraeth, Llangefni,

(September 1938), and the swift response (October 1938) predictably deemed the plans unsatisfactory.<sup>79</sup> The proposal finally accepted by the BoE was based on ten (rather than the previous twenty-one) centres to accommodate those senior pupils who had not qualified to enter the grammar schools.<sup>80</sup> The concentration of pupils at ten centres across the island might be considered as a victory for the BoE in the aftermath of its rejection of the multilateral scheme in favour of the creation of Central Schools. However, the new plans did not propose a complete set of Central Schools as alternatives for those senior pupils who would be educated outside of the grammar schools, and a majority of the units remained all-age institutions. Only Llangefni, Newborough and the already assigned Central School in Holyhead (St. Cybi) would be exclusively allocated to senior children, while all the other seven centres would accommodate junior children as well.<sup>81</sup>

While plenty of practical, financial, and educational reasons were put forward by the BoE to justify its opposition to the Anglesey scheme, there had in fact been other reasons behind the Board's rejection of the multilateral Development Plan. This tenacious opposition to the scheme was motivated by additional concerns which were not expressed in the official communication with the LEA. Internal correspondence reveals further considerations which impacted on the Welsh Board's decision-making: it was felt that an approval of Anglesey's multilateral scheme might encourage other Welsh LEAs to protest if their demands for similar plans were rejected. It was also feared that if Anglesey was allowed to go ahead with its plans, other local authorities might abandon their plans to reorganise along the BoE's preferred lines. Furthermore, those who had already been persuaded

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Gwalchmai, Bryngwran, Rhosneigr, Pencarnisiog, Trefdraeth and Llangadwaladr, Newborough, Llanidan, Llanfairpwll, Menai Bridge, Beaumaris, Llangoed and Rhoscolyn.

<sup>79</sup> AEC, 'Proposals for Reorganisation', 10 November 1938, Llangefni, AA: WA 1/100. Out of the remaining five schools in the Holyhead area, two were county schools waiting to be reorganised, one was St. Mary's Catholic School which had been left out of the grouping all together, and the remaining two were the Holyhead Church of England schools (one girls' and one boys' school) where the managers had declined to cooperate. The two Church of England schools had submitted plans to extend their schools to the BoE in July that same year, but their schemes had been considered unsatisfactory.

<sup>80</sup> AEC, 'Proposals for Reorganisation', 10 November 1938, Llangefni, AA: WA 1/100. The ten centres which had been appointed to accommodate senior children were: Holyhead, Llangefni, Newborough, Amlwch, Menai Bridge, Beaumaris, Llechylched, Llanrhuddlad, Llanallgo and Llanerchymedd.

<sup>81</sup> AEC, 'Proposals for Reorganisation', 10 November 1938, Llangefni, AA: WA 1/100.

to build Senior Schools might feel 'defrauded' if Anglesey's scheme was allowed to go ahead.<sup>82</sup> The Welsh Department was aware of the more widespread desire in Wales to avoid reorganisation and consequently escape the introduction of Central Schools. The aspiration to provide Secondary Schools for all pupils rather than Senior Schools to complement existing grammar schools was not limited to Anglesey. Wheldon emphasised that:

if Anglesey is permitted to pursue its present policy it can be safely assumed that there will be little or no reorganisation in Merioneth, Cardigan and Pembroke, and such progress as there has been will be checked in other Counties, for instance Camarthen and Brecon.<sup>83</sup>

Hence, the potentially broader impact that developments on Anglesey might create inevitably influenced the BoE's stance towards the LEA's scheme and its refusal to agree to it. While the practical objections put forward were convincing and generally easy to justify, the potential issues which an approval of such plans might cause in other Welsh local authorities definitively sealed the fate of the scheme. It also goes some way towards explaining the Board's readiness to accept the LEA's rather patchy plans for Senior School provision in 1938, and the relatively large number of all-age schools that would still be allowed to remain on the island. The plans, although piecemeal, were not considered a threat to the Board's principles and were therefore safe to approve. Despite the fact that the new plans were far from the Board's ideal of Central Schools running alongside the existing grammar schools, it was more important that these developments could effectively be described as reorganisational plans in accordance with Hadow's recommendations. Some reluctant Welsh LEAs had already been persuaded to reorganise, whilst others were still having similar deliberations with the Welsh Department to those being had by Anglesey. Therefore, in this instance, the propensity of Welsh LEAs to oppose Central Schools, and the Board's critical awareness of this fact, actually worked against Anglesey's plans.

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<sup>82</sup> BoE, 'Internal Memorandum', 12 July 1938, London, TNA: ED 35/6804.

<sup>83</sup> BoE, 'Internal Note', 14 July 1938, London, TNA: ED 35/6804.

## Realities and practicalities

Apart from the resistance from the BoE, and subsequent delays, educational developments were also held back due to other factors. The Development Plan that was submitted to the BoE in 1936 did not attract any significant opposition from managers, teachers or parents connected to the existing grammar schools, however, head teachers were not officially informed of the detailed intentions of the Education Committee until the scheme had already been deemed acceptable by the BoE (December 1938), and when it no longer constituted a pioneering multilateral scheme.<sup>84</sup> The plans did encounter objections from managers of voluntary schools and from the Diocesan Education Committee (DEC), however, and this resistance often resulted in negotiations and delays. As a result of the drawn out proceedings with not just the BoE, but also with representatives of voluntary schools, developments in terms of school building and educational provision remained slow.

The deliberations with the Welsh Department impacted greatly on building plans for the secondary schools across the island. The negotiations in relation to the secondary school in Holyhead is illustrative of how this issue was not merely a question of differences in educational thinking, but also of how it impacted on the actual educational provision for the island's secondary school pupils. J. M. Hughes highlighted the issue of inadequate accommodation in his speech at the school's prize giving events both in 1936 and 1937.<sup>85</sup> In 1936 he pointed out that negotiations between the LEA and the BoE for 'considerable extensions' to the school were already underway, and it was hoped

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<sup>84</sup> AEC, 'Minutes 1934-38', 16 December 1938, Llangefni, AA: WA 1/100. Hughes expressed his exasperation with the BoE in relation to the slow progress of the extension to the Holyhead School. 'Why has the Board of Education been so slow?' he asked in a Prize Giving speech (1937). The head teacher's speculation as to the reason behind the slow progress indicates his lack of insight into the reasons behind the delays. He questioned whether the LEA had clarified its scheme fully, since he assumed the BoE would not accept any discrepancies, *Holyhead & Anglesey Mail*, 12 February 1937.

<sup>85</sup> Hughes pointed out that the school had admitted four entry forms in 1935 for the first time in the school's history. The number of entrants had reached a record high at 462 pupils, and in combination with the BoE's policy of a limit of 30 pupils per class, four entry forms had been required, see *Holyhead & Anglesey Mail*, 7 February 1936 and *Holyhead & Anglesey Mail*, 12 February 1937.

that these additions would be completed by the end of the following academic year.<sup>86</sup> This prediction was, however, overly optimistic. The building work was not completed before the end of 1936, and in November that same year the LEA was informed that approval of the extension plans for Holyhead's secondary school would only be granted on the condition that the LEA complied with the Board's request for a reduction in the school's entry forms from four to three.<sup>87</sup> The LEA's refusal to alter their building plans, and their rejection of the Board's alternative plan for Holyhead consequently resulted in a stalemate. The BoE's proposition envisaged a reconsideration of the Holyhead catchment area in order to make the intake smaller, hence limiting future entry numbers to ninety pupils. Assurances were sought from the LEA that the forthcoming intake for the school would not exceed this limit in order to ensure that the accommodation would remain sufficient for the foreseeable future.<sup>88</sup> The Education Committee on the other hand expressed its 'strong exception' to the suggested alterations, justifying its plans by emphasising the problem with overcrowding at the school. J. M. Hughes' speech at the prize giving event in 1937 was decidedly less optimistic. He emphasised that '[T]he seriousness of the outlook is obvious' and that '[W]e contemplate with trepidation the problem which will face us next September'.<sup>89</sup> During the same event, the first item covered in the Chair of Governors' speech was also overcrowding, where he joked that 'I only hope there is no truth in the distressing rumour that an official of the Board of Education sat on a file for a few months instead of reading it'.<sup>90</sup> Evidently, the lack of progress in finding a solution to the problem of overcrowding in Holyhead was the cause of frustration to the LEA, BoE and managers at the school alike. The pressure to come to an agreement was undoubtedly mounting, and the exasperation with the situation was evident to the audience of parents and pupils, who filled the Empire Cinema in Holyhead.<sup>91</sup> The congestion of the island's secondary schools also attracted some attention in the local press during 1937, but it was not until further pressure

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<sup>86</sup> *Holyhead and Anglesey Mail*, 7 February 1936.

<sup>87</sup> BoE, 'Interview Memorandum', 17 November 1936, London, TNA: ED 35/6804.

<sup>88</sup> B[uilding] C[ommittee], 'Minutes', 7 January 1937, Llangefni, AA: WA 1/22.

<sup>89</sup> *Holyhead & Anglesey Mail*, 12 February 1937.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>91</sup> *Holyhead & Anglesey Mail*, 12 February 1937.



was applied by the BoE that the LEA accepted the need to revise their scheme in order for school building plans to advance.<sup>92</sup> In June 1937 the BoE was informed by the LEA that the entry to Holyhead County School would not be limited to ninety as requested. The LEA also demanded that the submitted plans were returned by the BoE 'without further delay' so that the issue of overcrowding could be addressed as soon as possible.<sup>93</sup> As has already been demonstrated, the Board had no intention of allowing Anglesey to pursue its goal of sixty per cent secondary school entry, and Wheldon refused to reconsider the decision. The provision at the school was described as 'seriously deficient' and an inspection report in 1938 stressed the excessively large classes at the school, as well as inadequate staffing, accommodation and playing fields.<sup>94</sup> In their discussions with Wheldon in 1938, Anglesey's MP Megan Lloyd George and Humphreys expressed differing views as to the terms under which the LEA might accept a limit on secondary school entries. Lloyd George suggested to Wheldon that the LEA might agree to reorganise if they were granted a two-form entry school in Amlwch, rather than the Board's suggested one-form entry. Humphreys was less forthcoming, however, emphasising that the LEA was unlikely to accept the limits which had been suggested by the BoE regardless of any possible concessions in Amlwch.<sup>95</sup>

Similar issues of overcrowding were also prominent in both Beaumaris and Llangefni where the Board had stipulated that plans for alterations would be approved only on the condition that the LEA reduced the numbers of pupils.<sup>96</sup> The excessive numbers of children in both Holyhead and Llangefni

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<sup>92</sup> *Holyhead & Anglesey Mail*, 12 February 1937; *Holyhead & Anglesey Mail*, 23 April 1937; *Holyhead & Anglesey Mail*, 30 April 1937. Humphreys was also present at the prize giving event in Holyhead 1937 so would have been aware of the frustration with the issue, but also of the general tendency to blame the BoE rather than the LEA.

<sup>93</sup> AEC, 'Minutes 1934-38', 3 June 1937, Llangefni, AA: WA 1/100.

<sup>94</sup> For the BoE's views on the school in Holyhead, BoE, 'Letter from the BoE to the LEA', 3 June 1937, London, TNA: ED 35/6808. For the comments made in the inspection, BoE, 'Internal Memorandum', 12 July 1938, London, TNA: ED 35/6804.

<sup>95</sup> For details on Megan Lloyd George's meeting with Wheldon, BoE, 'Interview Memorandum', 28 July 1938, London, TNA: ED 35/6804. For Humphreys' discussion with Wheldon, BoE, 'Interview Memorandum', 30 July 1938, London, TNA: ED 35/6804.

<sup>96</sup> Full inspections of all the island's secondary schools suggested that they all suffered from overcrowding and that '...efficiency of the Schools has been seriously affected by the admission of pupils for whom adequate accommodation is not available', BoE, 'Letter from the BoE to the LEA', 22 July 1938, London, TNA: ED 35/6804.

schools also emphasised the BoE's unfulfilled promise to allow the LEA to open a new secondary school in Amlwch.<sup>97</sup> In their correspondence with the BoE the LEA pointed out that if a new school had been established in Amlwch earlier, some of the pressure on the secondary schools in both Holyhead and Llangefni would have been reduced.<sup>98</sup> However, similar delays hampered developments in Amlwch (the BoE insisted on one-form entry while the LEA demanded two) and the stalemate exacerbated overcrowding. While the original plans for a single-form secondary school in Amlwch had been approved by the Board in 1936, the building of the school was still not underway by 1940.<sup>99</sup> The LEA's insistence on entering large numbers of pupils to its secondary school did not merely hold back reorganisation of Anglesey's elementary schools, but the deliberations with the Welsh Department also delayed much needed extensions and improvements to the island's secondary schools. This resulted in excessively large classes and inadequate accommodation for pupils.

Apart from the serious delays caused to school building and improvement due to consultations with the BoE, negotiations with the DEC and managers of voluntary schools also impacted on the speed with which the LEA was able to implement its plans. Despite the LEA's expressed desire not to deprive rural elementary schools of all their older pupils, the removal of senior pupils from 'all-age' schools in order for them to attend one of the 'concentrated' county schools became a contentious issue. It was the projected numbers of pupils lost by voluntary schools which caused most disagreement at the local level, rather than the multilateral nature of the LEA's original plans. In a letter written by the Diocesan Education Committee (DEC) in 1930 it had been pointed out that:

the Committee is anxious to co-operate with the L.E.A. for the furtherance of education, but thinks it necessary at this moment to emphasise the following points: - that pending the raising of the school-leaving age to 15 the decapitation of schools at 12 plus would seem to be educationally undesirable, but that if and

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<sup>97</sup> I[ntermediate and] T[echnical] S[ub]-C[ommittee], 'Minutes', 7 January 1937, Llangefni, AA: WA 1/34.

<sup>98</sup> BoE, 'Letter from the LEA to the BoE', 4 June 1937, London, TNA: ED 35/6808.

<sup>99</sup> ITSC, 'Minutes', 7 January 1937, Llangefni, AA: WA 1/34.

when the school-leaving age is raised to 15, this Committee is prepared to advise the Managers to consider sympathetically any proposal of the L.E.A...<sup>100</sup>

The second section of this extract was quoted by the LEA in the introduction to the 1936 scheme as submitted to the BoE. The LEA's intention in including the quotation had been to demonstrate to the Board that the DEC wanted to cooperate with any future reorganisation plans on the island.

However, in its entirety the extract rather illustrates something else: the DEC was not prepared to commit to any plans of reorganisation, especially not with a view of losing their senior pupils, until the leaving age had been definitively raised to fifteen. In view of this it is not surprising that the already very limited plans for reorganisation put forward by the LEA during the 1930s encountered resistance from the DEC, and a reluctance from voluntary schools to co-operate throughout the 1930s. Subsequently, this attitude became particularly significant when the raising of the school leaving age was indefinitely delayed during the war (and not actually realised until 1947). Therefore, the DEC did not support the plans submitted by the LEA in 1936, and in December 1937 its opposition to the changes proposed for a range of schools was outlined in a letter to the LEA. A detailed account of the projected changes to voluntary schools was also published in the *Holyhead & Anglesey Mail* in December 1937, outlining the discussion between the LEA and the DEC.<sup>101</sup> It was evident that the DEC would not accept a complete transfer of senior pupils from the voluntary schools to the LEA's county schools, and instead an alternative solution was put to the LEA.

Primarily, it was suggested that senior pupils from a number of voluntary schools should be allowed to attend appropriate county schools one single day a week for practical instruction, rather than pupils being permanently transferred to one of the LEA's schools. The DEC also indicated that it would only accept potential transfers of its senior pupils from its Llanfairpwll school on the condition that their voluntary school would be the only junior school for the whole district.<sup>102</sup> Letters in response to the DEC's resistance from Humphreys to the BoE reveal his inauspicious attitude

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<sup>100</sup> AEC, 'Letter quoted in Proposal for Reorganisation', 2 July 1931, Llangefni, AA: WA 4/18.

<sup>101</sup> *Holyhead & Anglesey Mail*, 3 December 1937.

<sup>102</sup> It was suggested that pupils from the primary schools in Penrhoslligwy, Penmon, Llangaffor and Llanddaniel would attend county schools during one day each week, AEC, 'Letter reproduced in Education Committee Minutes 1934-38', 2 December 1937, Llangefni, AA: WA 1/100.

towards this opposition. In December 1937 Humphreys complained about the delays caused to the implementation of the scheme due to the refusal of the DEC to agree to the LEA plans. He objected to 'the principle of bargaining for pupils' since the LEA was 'concerned only with obtaining the best possible provision for senior children in the area'.<sup>103</sup> However, the DEC was not prepared to hand over its senior pupils without protest, and the opposition to the LEA's plans continued, having significant impact on the progress of educational provision on the island, particularly in Holyhead. The disagreements between the LEA and the DEC were not resolved in the 1930s, but rather temporarily doused during the war years when educational developments were generally stalled anyhow, and were to be reignited in the wake of the 1944 Education Act when reorganisation was yet again high on the political agenda.

A particularly illustrative example of how the LEA's plans were altered and delayed due to the DEC's opposition was the intended concentration of pupils in Holyhead. The St. Cybi school had been labelled a Central School as early as 1934, but there were delays to its progress due to the reluctance from both Church of England schools (projected to transfer 107 pupils) and the Catholic school in Holyhead (9 pupils) to send their senior pupils to the school.<sup>104</sup> Their main concern was the projected loss of substantial numbers of pupils, and they took a resilient stance against the proposed changes in Holyhead. Voluntary schools would only accept losses of students on the condition that the numbers would be recompensed by an increased quantity of 'junior scholars'.<sup>105</sup> Meanwhile, in its correspondence with the BoE, the LEA justified its plans to concentrate senior pupils in its own institutions by criticising the facilities of voluntary schools. Humphreys pointed out that provisions at several voluntary schools were '...generally unsuited to the type of education that should be available for senior children', and in his correspondence with the BoE he insisted that the authority 'is of opinion that that the present premises [in voluntary schools] are unsuitable for the advanced

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<sup>103</sup> AEC, 'Letter from Humphreys to the BoE, 17 December 1937, London, TNA: ED 16/827.

<sup>104</sup> For details on St. Cybi School, AEC, 'Minutes 1934-38', 7 June 1934, Llangefni, AA: WA 1/100. For more on the resistance by voluntary schools to attend St. Cybi, AEC, 'Letter from Humphreys to the BoE', 17 December 1937, London, TNA: ED 16/827.

<sup>105</sup> AEC, 'Letter from Humphreys to the BoE', 17 December 1937, London, TNA: ED 16/827.

instruction that should be provided'.<sup>106</sup> While these schools were in evident need of investment and improvement, the LEA was already committed to financing the extension of St. Cybi School and was therefore not prepared to pay for additional improvements of voluntary schools too.<sup>107</sup> The issue in Holyhead had not yet been resolved by the end of the year in 1937, and the Development Committee's *Memorandum on Reorganisation in Holyhead* demonstrates that while discussions with the DEC continued, little actual progress had been made. The DEC refused to admit senior pupils to St. Cybi School, while the LEA took exception to the idea of a compromise built on 'bargaining' for pupils. They would not agree to the 'transfer of Junior children from the airy and well-lighted classrooms of St. Cybi, to the low-lying, and generally much less suitable premises of the Church School'.<sup>108</sup> While the opposition from the DEC caused the LEA problems in Holyhead when it came to the concentration of senior pupils at St. Cybi School, this resistance nevertheless strengthened Anglesey's case for delaying the reorganisation of its elementary schools more generally. In the interview with Wheldon and the President of the BoE (Lord Stanhope), the actions of the managers of voluntary schools were highlighted as a key obstacle to the progress of the Central School in Holyhead.<sup>109</sup> However, according to the Board, the DEC's opposition towards the Central School had most likely been stimulated by the generally negative stance expressed by the LEA itself towards such institutions.<sup>110</sup> In order to allow the extension to St. Cybi School to finally go ahead, a recommendation by the Development Committee was approved in December 1937. The BoE agreed to the long awaited extensions to the school, but 'this block should be so planned that additional classrooms can be added in the event of the Senior children of the voluntary schools being

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<sup>106</sup> AEC, 'Letter from Humphreys to the BoE', 17 December 1937, London, TNA: ED 16/827.

<sup>107</sup> MoE, 'Letter from Humphreys to the BoE', London, TNA: ED 16/827.

<sup>108</sup> AEC, '*Memorandum on Reorganisation in Holyhead* included in Minutes 1934-38', 2 December 1937, Llangefni, AA: WA 1/100. A report on educational developments in 1937 also attempted to reassure the DEC that no school would be closed down unless in '...very extreme circumstances, such as the dilapidation of the premises', EC, 'Educational Development in Anglesey: Report of Sub-Committee', 25 May 1937, Llangefni, AA: WA 1/95.

<sup>109</sup> BoE, 'Interview Memorandum', 6 September 1938, London, TNA: ED 35/6804.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*

transferred'.<sup>111</sup> Accordingly, despite the fact that the LEA did not yet know how many additional pupils the school would be receiving, or when this increase to the school's intake was likely occur, it was finally allowed to proceed with its building plans. Alterations at St. Cybi School would be made with a view to possibly adding additional classrooms at a later date in the event that students from the voluntary schools were to transfer. The wrangling between the DEC and the LEA clearly had an impact on the speed of reorganisation in Holyhead, and also the nature of the alterations that were finally decided upon. Also, the final outcome was dependent on the flexible approach adopted by the BoE, undoubtedly engendered by its desire to see at least some reorganisational progress on Anglesey before the projected raising of the school leaving age in 1939.

In December 1938, when the LEA had been informed of its latest proposal being 'generally satisfactory', it was decided that copies of the plans would be circulated to head teachers.<sup>112</sup> However, although a scheme had finally been agreed upon between the LEA and the BoE, none of the scheduled reorganisation was actually implemented. The build-up to, and the eventual outbreak of, war significantly affected educational developments on the island and elsewhere. The impact of a war-time agenda, both political and economic, resulted in reorganisational plans being indefinitely postponed. Subsequently, school building as well as proposed extensions were also put on hold. More pressing issues such as air raid precautions and accommodation of evacuees were higher on the political agenda throughout the war and pushed other considerations aside. Despite such war-time concerns however, the LEA continued to try and pursue the BoE for its approval of extensions to school buildings and the erection of new secondary schools in both Llangefni and Amlwch.<sup>113</sup> The exception to the stalemate was the secondary school in Amlwch which, despite the wartime situation, was temporarily opened in the town's Memorial Hall in April 1940.<sup>114</sup> Therefore, Anglesey's secondary education system remained largely unchanged up until the 1944 Education Act

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<sup>111</sup> AEC, 'Minutes 1934-38', 2 December 1937, Llangefni, AA: WA 1/100.

<sup>112</sup> AEC, 'Minutes 1934-38', 16 December 1938, Llangefni, AA: WA 1/100.

<sup>113</sup> BC, 'Minutes', 4 July 1940, Llangefni, AA: WA 1/22.

<sup>114</sup> A[mlwch] C[ounty] S[chool], 'Minutes', 5 April 1940, Llangefni, AA: WA 16/1.

and the end of the war. While the lack of progress undoubtedly caused frustration at the time, the subsequent circumstances nevertheless predetermined Anglesey's position as an area of priority for reorganisation following the 1944 Education Act. By the mid-1940s the island's secondary school organisation was out of date, as was much of its secondary school provision. Even the newly established temporary secondary school in Amlwch (the exception to the rule in the otherwise stagnant situation in terms of educational developments at this time) helped propel Anglesey's 1946 Development Plan forward. As a result of the obvious need to provide adequate and purpose-built accommodation for the school, the case for establishing a newly erected school in Amlwch was particularly strong. This was why a new school in Amlwch became a priority in the eyes of both the LEA and the MoE alike in the wake of the 1944 Education Act. Therefore, the consequences of the lack of progress during the 1930s was conducive to the progress and speed of developments on Anglesey in the late 1940s and early 1950s.

With hindsight, the 1930s and early 1940s might appear to have been a stagnant period for educational reorganisation on Anglesey. However, despite the lack of progress of both reorganisation, school building and construction, the period was nevertheless seminal for future developments on the island. Foundations for both educational thinking and future provision were established during this period and the 1936 scheme was of significant influence in this respect. Although the island saw little reorganisational progress during the 1930s, the period was influential because of the impact the multilateral vision was to have on developments in the 1940s and beyond. Despite the fact that the BoE would not sanction the multilateral plan of the 1930s, the fundamentals of the Development Plan, which was approved by the MoE in 1948, were largely unchanged. While the approval of the multilateral scheme in the 1940s must be considered a significant success for the LEA, it did not constitute novel educational thinking. The ideas which underpinned the plan of 1936 originated from the very early 1930s when multilateral organisation

had first been considered, and the fact that the LEA's scheme was labelled 'comprehensive' by 1947 was dictated by the Ministry of Education's definition rather than on the initiative of the LEA. Humphreys' role within the comprehensivisation process on Anglesey has often been stressed, and the feeling within the Welsh Department was that he had significantly influenced the Education Committee.<sup>115</sup> However, although Humphreys was an outspoken supporter of multilateralism and a powerful force in the negotiations with the BoE, he did not introduce these ideas to the Education Committee. Humphreys was, nonetheless, an instrumental driving force during the LEA's negotiations with the BoE.

While the introduction of multilateral schools was primarily justified on practical grounds, there were also more ideological reasons behind the LEA's scheme.<sup>116</sup> There were numerous instances where Wales' comparatively underdeveloped class structures, in combination with the Welsh's passion for education, were used as arguments in favour of the scheme. There was a decidedly Welsh facet to the LEA's justification for its plans, and the objective to increase the proportion of secondary school pupils on the island was also perceived as a typically Welsh ideal. In fact, the desire to extend pupil numbers in secondary schools became the predominant battleground between the LEA and the Board during the latter half of the 1930s. It appears that this was the LEA's most urgent consideration during this time, and the issue preoccupied the negotiations with the Welsh Department. The multilateral plan was an attempt to achieve this aim, and while the LEA retained its support for multilateral schools, its consultations with the BoE rarely referred to the 'ideal' of multilateralism as such.

The lack of actual progress in the reorganisation of secondary schools on Anglesey throughout the 1930s resulted in a favourable situation for the authority in the wake of the 1944 Education Act. Anglesey's secondary school provision, as well as its all-age schools, were considered acutely outdated by the mid-1940s. This made the island an area of priority for the Ministry of Education in

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<sup>115</sup> BoE, 'Internal Memorandum', 12 July 1938, London, TNA: ED 35/6804.

<sup>116</sup> For more on this, see Chapter One.



its reorganisation drive of the late 1940s and early 1950s. The fact that a blueprint for a multilateral scheme already existed and had been approved by LEA also meant that while other LEAs were attempting to decide on how to implement the 1944 Education Act in their areas, these discussions had largely already been undertaken on Anglesey a decade earlier. In stark contrast to the lack of advancement during the 1930s, this permitted developments on Anglesey to progress speedily during the 1940s. For the majority of the LEAs that were proposing some form of comprehensive scheme in the immediate aftermath of the 1944 Education Act, little headway was made. Even though the path towards comprehensivisation on Anglesey was complex and multifaceted, developments in the 1930s were significant enablers for future progress, and this set Anglesey's LEA apart from other LEAs. Therefore, in order to understand the nature and evolution of the comprehensive system that emerged on the island during the 1940s and 1950s, an understanding of the developments of the 1930s is essential.

Finally, the LEA's persistence in pursuing its own policy, despite the Board's opposition, also indicates a broader theme which is significant in the broader historiographical field. The LEA had decided that a multilateral system was the most practical for the island's secondary schools as early as 1931, and regardless of the views of the Board, it intended to admit as many pupils as possible to its secondary schools. Although the final scheme in 1938 made certain concessions to the BoE's demands, it nevertheless largely avoided the creation of Central Schools. This demonstrates the LEA's commitment to multilateralism from the early 1930s, and despite more than a decade of very limited progress, it eventually managed to achieve its goal independently of central government policy. Therefore, the significance of centrally imposed educational policies must, in the case of Anglesey, be further examined. While there has been a tendency to view comprehensivisation as a national process, the developments on Anglesey in the 1930s suggest that the path towards a fully comprehensive scheme was highly dependent on the ideas and actions of the LEA.<sup>117</sup> Regardless of central governments' policies of the day, Anglesey largely pursued its own goals throughout the

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<sup>117</sup> For more on the existing scholarship, see Introduction.

period. Centralised policies helped or hindered the LEA's progress at different times, but the system established by 1953 was a fulfilment of the ideal pursued by the LEA since the early 1930s.

# Chapter Three

## Comprehensive Changes? 1944-52

many responsible members of local authorities and their officials are beginning to feel a chill wind of doubt blowing on the hot cheeks of their enthusiasm for a brave new world.<sup>1</sup>

At the time of its implementation, the 1944 Education Act was perceived as having signalled a major break with the past and to be the most comprehensive piece of educational legislation of the twentieth century.

The Act has often been described as the foundation of the tripartite system, although it did not in actual fact legislate for three separate types of secondary schools. It did, however, prescribe that:

...schools available for an area shall not be deemed to be sufficient unless they are sufficient in number, character, and equipment to afford for all pupils opportunities for education offering such variety of instruction and training as may be desirable in view of their different ages, abilities, and aptitudes, and of the different periods for which they may be expected to remain at school, including practical instruction and training appropriate to their respective needs.<sup>2</sup>

Even though the tripartite system was not specifically prescribed by the 1944 Act, the desirability of providing different types of education for different 'types' of children was widely accepted during this time.

The first steps towards the establishment of a differentiated system of secondary education had been instigated by a collection of committee reports from the 1920s up until the 1940s. The Hadow Report (1926) had suggested three different types of schools in order to provide for different abilities and aptitudes, and both the Spens Report (1938) and Norwood Report (1943) reinforced these suggestions.<sup>3</sup> The legislation passed in 1944 stressed the importance of accommodating the needs of different pupils not solely by the

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<sup>1</sup> *TES*, 31 March 1945.

<sup>2</sup> MoE, 'An Act to reform the law relating to education in England and Wales', 3 August 1944, London, TNA: ED 151.

<sup>3</sup> It has been generally accepted that the three reports were similar in both intent and content see, for example, Lawton, *Education and Labour Party Ideologies*, p. 34; Benn and Chitty, *Thirty Years On Is Comprehensive Education Alive and Well or Struggling to Survive?*, p. 5 and Jones, *Secondary Education in Wales 1934-1984*, p. 9. The similarities and differences between the Spens and the Norwood report have been further analysed in more recent work however, suggesting that their differences were just as significant as their similarities, for more on this see G. McCulloch, 'Spens v. Norwood': contesting the educational state?', *History of Education*, 22:2 (1993), pp. 163-180. For more on the Hadow Report, see Introduction.

provision of academic education but also by means of training and practical instruction.<sup>4</sup> However, the practicalities of reorganising secondary education were left to individual LEAs. The Education Act requested Development Plans from each LEA to be submitted to the newly established MoE by 1 April 1945.<sup>5</sup> The MoE required details as to what actions LEA's proposed to take in order to ensure that sufficient primary and secondary education would be provided in their areas, and furthermore, to demonstrate how they envisaged achieving the plans in practice. A majority of LEAs submitted plans for tripartite systems, but there were several authorities that proposed multilateral schemes for their areas.<sup>6</sup> The most well-known of these was London, but other LEAs such as Middlesex, Oldham, the West Riding and Coventry also submitted similar plans.<sup>7</sup> It was within this context that Anglesey in 1946 submitted its Development Plan of five multilateral secondary schools, each to serve all children within their catchment areas.

This chapter considers a range of factors which impacted on educational developments on Anglesey in the period 1944-53. The education system, its structure and also the practical implementation of the comprehensive schooling and how it impacted on the island's secondary schools will be examined. An analysis of these developments will make it possible to discern how formal political powers (i.e. those of the central and local government) influenced educational developments on the island. The impact of a wider range of other factors will also be considered, for example, the significance of particular local circumstances and contexts, including practicalities and the role of head teachers in the development of schools. The objective of this chapter is to highlight the exceptional circumstances that existed on Anglesey during this time, and also how particular circumstances impacted on the developments leading up to the establishment of the new comprehensive education system. The relationship between local factors on the one hand, and the

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<sup>4</sup> MoE, '1944 Education Act', London, TNA: ED 151.

<sup>5</sup> Jones and Roderick, *A History of Education in Wales*, p. 146.

<sup>6</sup> A survey in 1947 of 54 LEA Development Plans revealed that more than half of these plans proposed some flexibility in the system by suggesting the establishment of at least one multilateral or bilateral school within their area, Kerckhoff, Fogelman, Crook and Reeder, *Going Comprehensive in England and Wales*, p. 118.

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, Kerckhoff, Fogelman, Crook and Reeder, *Going Comprehensive in England and Wales* and Rubinstein and Simon, *The Evolution of the Comprehensive School*, p. 44.

actions and policies prescribed by central government on the other, will be compared and contrasted in order to establish why Anglesey became the first fully comprehensivised local authority in England and Wales. In addition, developments in individual schools will also be accounted for in order to distinguish the interrelationship between a series of influences and their impact on actual progresses within Anglesey's secondary schools between 1944 and 1952. The chapter therefore challenges the claim that Anglesey's comprehensive scheme was solely a product of the local authority's rural situation, and suggests that the process was much more complex and multifaceted than has previously been acknowledged. Through an analysis of the activities leading up to the implementation of the scheme it is possible to evaluate the impact of various factors on the progress of the LEA's plans. The significance of practical and administrative factors compared to the intentions and actions of the LEA will also be considered.

### **Exceptional Circumstances**

The explanation of why Anglesey emerged as a pioneering local authority is a complex combination of factors, creating a specific set of circumstances which made the comprehensive scheme possible. In the eyes of the MoE, particular conditions rendered Anglesey a viable option for experimentation with a different type of education system, allowing it to emerge as the first fully comprehensive local authority in Britain by 1953. The fact that the 1944 Education Act did not officially prescribe a tripartite system resulted in Anglesey being able to renew its commitment to a multilateral scheme in the wake of the new Act.<sup>8</sup> However, by that time, the LEA had already expressed its commitment to multilateral secondary schools in the Development Plan that had been outlined eight years earlier, and which became the blueprint for the new scheme.<sup>9</sup> Due to the fact that the multilateral plan as envisaged during the 1930s had never been implemented, and because the scheduled

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<sup>8</sup> MoE, '1944 Education Act', London, TNA: ED 151. For more on the flexibility of the Education Act and how this helped Anglesey implement a multilateral system see, for example, Lawton, *Education and Labour Party Ideologies 1900-2001*, p. 44 and Jones and Roderick, *A History of Education in Wales*, p. 143.

<sup>9</sup> Williams, 'Anglesey: Towards Comprehensive Education, 1926-1953', unpublished MEd dissertation, University of Wales, Bangor (1985), p.49; MoE, 'Proposal for Educational Development in Anglesey Adopted', 17th September 1936, London, TNA: ED 16/827.

'concentration' of senior pupils in particular centres was halted during the war, both the physical situation and the format of the island's secondary schools remained largely the same. By the end of the Second World War there were four grammar schools in existence in the county plus one Central School (St. Cybi, in Holyhead). The grammar school in Holyhead was in relatively good repair and, in contrast to the other three grammar schools, its facilities had not been identified as unsatisfactory by the report of the Central Welsh Board in 1946.<sup>10</sup> This survey positioned Holyhead School at the bottom of the list for required building work in the island's secondary schools. The situation in Amlwch was found to be of the most urgent concern, the lack of a purpose-built school building in the town meant that addressing this situation became of the highest priority for the LEA. Second on the priority list was Llangefni followed by Beaumaris and Valley, all four schools to be constructed and completed before any extensive building work in Holyhead would even be considered.<sup>11</sup>

Accordingly, the most critical situation was in Amlwch where a new grammar school had been officially opened in temporary accommodation in April 1940. The school was provisionally housed in the town's Memorial Hall, while awaiting the construction of the actual school, thus secondary education in Amlwch was still being undertaken in accommodation which had not been designed for teaching. As the number of attendees at the school rose, the accommodation in the Memorial Hall had become increasingly cramped and inadequate, and this demonstrated the dire need for suitable school accommodation in Amlwch. Consequently, by February 1944 the school room of the Wesleyan Chapel was also being used to accommodate some of Amlwch's secondary school pupils.

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<sup>10</sup> H[olyhead] C[ounty] S[chool], 'Minutes', 17 July 1945, Llangefni, A[nnglesey] A[rchives]: WA 18/28. The Central Welsh Board was the central body (set up in 1895) responsible for administering the Intermediate Schools. It was hoped that this body would be able to address the diversity in standards in Intermediate Schools through the administering of examinations and inspections, Jones and Roderick, *A History of Education in Wales*, pp. 92-93.

<sup>11</sup> PWDESC, 'Minutes', 29 August 1946, Llangefni, AA: WA 1/39. The original Development Plan envisaged five secondary schools on Anglesey. However, in 1952 it was decided that there was no need for a fifth school as a result of the delaying of the raising of the school leaving age. Therefore, the plan for a newly erected secondary school in the Valley district was abolished, PWDESC, 'Minutes', 6 June 1945, Llangefni, AA: WA 1/39. A fifth secondary school was not established until 1977 in Bodedern (in close proximity to Valley).

This meant that teaching was separated between two different sites, neither of which were purpose built secondary schools.<sup>12</sup> As the Central Welsh Board's report on the school in April 1946 noted:

Difficulties of accommodation are particularly acute at this school [Amlwch]. The Assembly Hall serves at present as classrooms for Forms IIIa and Vm; Form Vm is limited to sixteen pupils since the desks have to be placed on the stage. At the beginning of the midday interval the tables used for the school dinner are placed in the remainder of the Assembly Hall floor. It is understood that the difficulties under which the school is run are increased as a result of the frequent use made of the School Hall for outside functions. It is earnestly hoped that the proposed scheme to erect a new school at Amlwch will be put into effect with as little delay as possible.<sup>13</sup>

The report emphasised the need for a new school, and also highlighted some of the difficulties faced with such unsuitable accommodation having to be adapted for the purpose of teaching. The instruction of two different forms in the same room was far from ideal, and this set-up also dictated that the number of pupils in a particular form had to be limited to sixteen due to the lack of space for additional desks. This was clearly an unacceptable situation, which was why the need for a new school in Amlwch was considered a priority both by the BoE and the LEA.

Similarly, the grammar school in Llangefni was inspected in 1947, and the HMI report was less than encouraging. It stated that 'there is nothing in this school on which the eye can alight with pleasure', illustrating that even though Amlwch was the LEA's first priority, the situation elsewhere was also far from satisfactory.<sup>14</sup> The Llangefni school had been significantly affected by a fire in 1939, but despite the fact that the science laboratories and the domestic science room had been destroyed, the plans to re-build the school (submitted in 1939) had been deferred as a consequence of the war and the lack of money, labour, and materials. The grammar school in Beaumaris originated from the Tudor period and was the oldest grammar school on the island, having originally been established by David Hughes in 1603.<sup>15</sup> In 1939, reservations about the accommodation as well as the heating facilities in Beaumaris had been raised, and there had been an expressed commitment by the BoE to

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<sup>12</sup> ACS, 'Minutes', 1 May 1945, Llangefni, AA: WA 16/1.

<sup>13</sup> ACS, 'Minutes', 16 December 1946, Llangefni, AA: WA 16/1.

<sup>14</sup> S[econdary] E[ducation] S[ub] C[ommittee], 'Minutes', 24 May 1948, Llangefni, AA: WA 1/56.

<sup>15</sup> For more on the establishment of the Beaumaris Grammar School, Pretty, *Two Centuries of Anglesey Schools*, pp. 254-258.

improve the facilities.<sup>16</sup> Wartime restrictions had halted any building works, leaving the accommodation unchanged and inadequate throughout the Second World War and beyond. With the numbers at the school exceeding three hundred for the first time in 1945 the pressure on the facilities in the Memorial Hall in Beaumaris were emphasised, and the possibility of buying a local chapel to relieve the pressure on the accommodation was being explored. However, the application was denied by the Ministry, and it was suggested that other options should be explored.<sup>17</sup> A HMI report in 1947 yet again highlighted shortcomings in Beaumaris. This time the accommodation for the domestic subjects and the lack of adequate facilities for other practical instruction, especially biology and physics, were criticised.<sup>18</sup> The LEA was also awaiting approval from the Ministry for a new dining unit. This was a matter of urgency because of the inadequate situation of the woodwork room being used as a dining room. A dining unit would allow woodwork to be taught again, and would also mean that school dinners could be served in one rather than two sittings. The head teacher's report in October 1947 revealed his exasperation with 'the prospect of new buildings...growing increasingly dim' and urged the governing body to appeal to the Board for temporary accommodation to ease the most urgent pressures.<sup>19</sup>

Consequently, the majority of Anglesey's secondary schools were in serious need of extensive alterations, and in the cases of Amlwch and Llangefni, completely new buildings were required. This impacted on the planning process of the LEA and also affected the likely response by central government to the LEA's requests. In the plan that was presented to the MoE in 1946 it was suggested that all five proposed multilateral secondary schools would be housed in newly erected school buildings.<sup>20</sup> The evident necessity to construct new secondary schools on Anglesey made the multilateral scheme a more viable option. Whatever format of secondary education the LEA might have advocated in its Development Plan to the Ministry, new buildings would always have been a

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<sup>16</sup> B[eaumaris] C[ounty] S[chool], 'Minutes', 24 May 1939, Llangefni, AA: WA 17/79.

<sup>17</sup> BCS, Minutes, 13 November 1945, Llangefni, AA: WA 17/79.

<sup>18</sup> SESC, 'Minutes', 8 January 1948, Llangefni, AA: WA 1/56.

<sup>19</sup> BCS, 'Minutes', 29 October 1947, Llangefni, AA: WA 17/79.

<sup>20</sup> AEC, 'Development Plan Under Section 11 (1) of the Education Act, 1944' London, TNA: BD 7/1.



prerequisite of the reorganisation. Additionally, in contrast to numerous other local authorities, Anglesey did not need to incorporate an assortment of smaller schools and buildings into the plans for their secondary schools because Central Schools had not been introduced during the pre-war period.<sup>21</sup> In this respect Anglesey was in a similar situation to London and Coventry, other early supporters of comprehensivisation. The damage to both those cities, a consequence of war-time bombing, justified significant reconstruction of numerous schools in their areas, making the case for creating comprehensive schools less of a contentious issue than in many other local authorities.<sup>22</sup> Nonetheless, while Anglesey progressed with its implementation of a fully multilateral scheme in the latter part of the 1940s, this was not to be the case in London or Coventry.<sup>23</sup> The fact that any type of scheme or Development Plan, multilateral or not, would have had to incorporate newly constructed secondary schools helped to advance Anglesey's scheme. However, this fact was not enough for the MoE to allow London and Coventry to introduce wholly comprehensive schemes, even though they had expressed a desire to do so.<sup>24</sup> This emphasises the significance of other interrelated factors which, in combination with the above need to construct completely new secondary schools, explains why Anglesey's scheme emerged as an anomalous case during the second half of the 1940s and early 1950s. While there were undoubtedly a variety of reasons that encouraged the MoE to accept Anglesey's proposal, this matter of practicality should not be overlooked. It is especially illustrative in comparison to the impact such practicalities had on the

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<sup>21</sup> There were several examples of local authorities where 'all-through' comprehensive education was not a viable option due to the existing school buildings and large number of small secondary schools that would need to be incorporated into any future scheme. The West Riding was an early convert to a two-tiered comprehensive system which could incorporate the large number of small schools in the area. Leeds also opted for a two-tiered system for similar reasons, as did Leicestershire, Kerckhoff, Fogelman, Crook and Reeder, *Going Comprehensive in England and Wales*, pp. 97, 120, 123.

<sup>22</sup> Kerckhoff, Fogelman, Crook and Reeder, *Going Comprehensive in England and Wales*, p. 58.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 58-83.

<sup>24</sup> Being large cities, both London and Coventry had to incorporate not just a vast number of schools into their plans, but also a great variety of state, voluntary and independent schools. Even though bomb damage had resulted in a need for new school buildings, neither London nor Coventry were allowed to discontinue any grammar schools in order to implement their plans. This meant that while a limited number of experimental comprehensive schools were allowed to open, neither city were able to implement a fully comprehensive system, resulting in a non-comprehensive intake to these experimental schools. For example, Coventry's first eight comprehensive schools were established without the discontinuation of any grammar schools at all, D. Crook, 'Local Authorities and Comprehensivisation in England and Wales, 1944-1974', p. 249. For more on the London case, Kerckhoff, Fogelman, Crook and Reeder, *Going Comprehensive in England and Wales*, pp. 58-83.

plans of other LEAs in their pursuit of comprehensive or multilateral schemes, and how the need to utilise existing accommodation affected the manoeuvrability of LEAs where there was a necessity to incorporate existing grammar school and Central School buildings in their plans.<sup>25</sup>

The timing of the MoE's acceptance of Anglesey's Development Plan also predetermined its progress. There is no doubting the urgency within the LEA for the plan to be accepted by the Ministry. The scheme was submitted in the spring of 1946 and a deputation was consequently sent to the MoE to discuss the plans in August of the same year. The authority's plan for five new multilateral schools was deemed acceptable at that meeting (subject to consequent submission and approval of plans and drawings for each school).<sup>26</sup> A letter from the Ministry sent to the LEA in December 1946 stressed the desire to give Anglesey's Development Plan very early attention, and the wish to advance the Anglesey scheme as promptly as possible was also evident in internal ministerial correspondence.<sup>27</sup> The reservations of the Ministry did not involve the issue of multilateralism *per se*, but rather the LEA's plans for the provision for pupils with special educational needs (at the time labelled 'Educationally Sub Normal' pupils).<sup>28</sup> However, these misgivings did not prevent the LEA from proceeding with its plans for the creation of the new secondary schools. On the contrary, the Ministry expressed its readiness to consider proposals for the purchase of sites for the erection of new secondary schools even though the official approval of the plan in its entirety did not materialise until May 1948. The Ministry assured the LEA that it was prepared to consider the nature and size of accommodation for each school 'as and when plans are submitted'.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> See Crook, 'The middle school cometh'...and goeth: Alec Clegg and the rise and fall of the English middle school', pp. 117-125 and Donald, 'The Reorganization of Secondary Education in Leicestershire, 1947-1984', pp. 20-35. Crosland also commented on the necessity of incorporating existing buildings, stating that: '...There's no question but that we had to have options. For one thing, the legacy of existing buildings compelled it – it meant, for example, that a lot of areas *had* [sic] to have a two-tiered system', cited in Kogan, *The Politics of Education Edward Boyle and Anthony Crosland in conversation*, p. 188.

<sup>26</sup> PWDESC, 'Minutes', 21 August 1946, Llangefni, AA: WA 1/39.

<sup>27</sup> For the Ministry's wish to grant Anglesey's plan early treatment, see PWDESC, 'Minute Book: Letter from the MoE', 4 December 1946, Llangefni, AA: WA 1/39. For comments in the Ministry's internal correspondence, see MoE, 'Internal notes', 1946, London, TNA: BD 7/1.

<sup>28</sup> MoE, 'Minute Sheet', 26 June 1946, London, TNA: BD 7/1.

<sup>29</sup> PWDESC, 'Minute Book: Letter from the MoE', 21 May 1948, Llangefni, AA: WA 1/39.

The rapid progress of the Development Plan, and the building of Anglesey's first purpose built comprehensive school in Amlwch, was also aided by the already existing plan for a newly constructed secondary school in the town. A site had been secured in 1944 with plans for the new school building to be erected after the end of the war. Throughout the latter half of the 1940s any alterations or additions to the temporary accommodation of the school had therefore been deferred while awaiting the construction of the new school, and the subsequent inadequacy of the accommodation and the facilities being used further emphasised the need for new buildings. The secured land was finally purchased in 1947.<sup>30</sup> The fact that Anglesey could start the process of planning and building its first new school so early meant that the LEA was able to take advantage of the available funding during the immediate post-war period, when money was made available for reconstruction in the aftermath of the war. In 1947 the MoE had received 117 completed Development Plans from LEAs throughout England and Wales, while ten others had submitted incomplete instalments of their plans and a further seventeen had not submitted any plans at all.<sup>31</sup> It is illustrative of the speed of the progress of Anglesey's Development Plan that it had received informal approval by the MoE as early as August 1946. Two year later, in September 1948, D. R. Hardman, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Education, laid the foundation stone for the new school building which would finally provide purpose-built accommodation for Amlwch's secondary school.<sup>32</sup> At a time when Anglesey was building the first purpose built comprehensive school in England and Wales (Grade II\* listed today) many other LEAs were still only in the early development stages of their plans.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> ACS, 'Minutes', 29 July 1947, Llangefni, AA: WA 16/1.

<sup>31</sup> HC Deb 31 July 1947, vol 441 ,cols 655-56.

<sup>32</sup> ACS, 'Minutes', 12 October 1948, Llangefni, AA: WA 16/1.

<sup>33</sup> Some further examples of other LEAs' progress with their multilateral or comprehensive plans were Swansea, the West Riding, Bristol and Leicestershire. Swansea's Development Plan was rejected by the MoE in the year of 1948, and so was the revised plan (1953) of a gradual shift from a tripartite system to a multilateral one, D. B. M. Evans, 'The dynamics of Labour Party politics in Swansea 1941-1964', unpublished PhD thesis, University of Wales, Bangor (2007), pp. 251-253. The West Riding was another early opponent of tripartite organisation and one of the pioneering local authorities of experimental comprehensive education, albeit limited. Its first comprehensive school was permitted in 1950 but did not open its doors until 1952. Bristol's LEA was another early adversary of the tripartite system, but its plan for complete comprehensivisation was

Britain faced economic struggles during the late 1940s and early 1950s, and after the 1951 general election the new Conservative government carried out further austerity measures. By December 1951 it was clear that the government's plans to cut spending would have an impact on the funding for local authorities, which would therefore also affect education.<sup>34</sup> Cuts to educational spending, and a significantly reduced schools building programme, made the construction and establishment of new schools, comprehensive or otherwise, difficult.<sup>35</sup> In December 1951 LEAs were informed of the need to reduce administrative expenditure, and in February 1952 the MoE envisaged a significant revision of the building programme.<sup>36</sup> In these circumstances Anglesey had been fortunate to have its existing plans for the first newly built secondary school already underway two years prior to the revision of building schedules. Similarly, by 1950 Llangefni School was also under construction, only awaiting the final grant from central government. By the time of the official opening of both the Amlwch and Llangefni schools in 1953, educational spending was yet again revised by central government, and this certainly affected local plans. In the Ministry's 1951-52 building programme the final instalment of the central government grant towards the construction of Llangefni Secondary School was omitted from the main programme, but included in the reserve list.<sup>37</sup> At the official opening of the comprehensive school in Amlwch in June 1953 Florence Horsbrugh, as Education Secretary (1951-54), stated that no more comprehensive schools were

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defeated by a full Council vote in 1949. There was however an interest in developing comprehensive schools for new housing estates, but these were not opened until 1953, Kerckhoff, Fogelman, Crook and Reeder, *Going Comprehensive in England and Wales*, pp. 118, 85-87. Leicestershire's plan to abolish the 11-plus examination and create a two-tiered system with a break at fourteen was only presented to County Councillors in 1957. For more on this, see Donald, 'The Reorganization of Secondary Education in Leicestershire, 1947-1984', pp. 20-36.

<sup>34</sup> *The Guardian*, 10 December, 1951.

<sup>35</sup> As Education Secretary, Horsbrugh was under pressure from the Treasury to make educational savings. Ironically, Butler as Chancellor of the Exchequer, insisted that savings in education might have to include reducing the leaving age to fourteen and raise the starting age to six see, for example, D. Kynaston, *Family Britain 1951-57* (London, 2009), pp. 114 and 115; Lawton, *Education and Labour Party Ideologies*, p. 55; K. Jeffereys, *Retreat from New Jerusalem British Politics, 1951-64* (Hampshire, 1997), pp. 14 and 15, 145-147 and A. Seldon, *Churchill's Indian Summer The Conservative Government 1951-1955* (London, 1981), pp. 270-276.

<sup>36</sup> The building programme for 1951-52 would be closed, except for work already in progress and priority would continue to be given to building schools for new housing estates. Schools would also be asked to accommodate higher numbers of classes, see *The Times*, 5 February 1952. For more on school building during this period, see Seldon, *Churchill's Indian Summer*, pp. 274 and 275.

<sup>37</sup> PWDESC, 'Minutes', 10 January 1951, Llangefni, AA: WA 1/39.

likely to be built in the near future.<sup>38</sup> Despite some delays, and the Minister's insistence in 1952 on limiting experiments with comprehensive schooling, Anglesey's Development Plan progressed and the fully comprehensive system was implemented in 1953.<sup>39</sup>

There were clear parallels between the 1936 and 1946 multilateral Development Plans. Although the demands for reorganisation were different, and subsequently the solutions had to be altered to fulfil new demands, there was much continuity between the two schemes. The scheme devised in response to the 1944 Education Act was significantly more ambitious than that of 1936, but it was undoubtedly helpful that the discussion about the introduction of multilateralism on the island had already been held during the 1930s. While many other LEAs were discussing the various options for reorganisation, a consensus had already been reached on Anglesey a decade earlier, and the LEA was keen to submit its new plans to the Ministry. While numerous comprehensive and multilateral schemes (or sometimes more limited experiments) were submitted to the Ministry, the majority of these plans were not considered acceptable by the MoE as promptly as Anglesey's scheme had been.<sup>40</sup>

Another reason why Anglesey's plans were approved relatively readily by the MoE was that they were not viewed as an ideological or political statement of intent. While the London scheme of the early 1950s has been described as 'as much a political polemic as a statement of educational intent', the Anglesey scheme was neither presented nor perceived as such.<sup>41</sup> In the accompanying letter attached to the Development Plan, first submitted to the MoE in March 1946, the rationale for the scheme was explained:

the Authority is satisfied that Multilateral Secondary Schools are essential to secure adequate concentrations to enable the pupils to obtain such a variation in

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<sup>38</sup> *The Times*, 20 June 1953.

<sup>39</sup> *The Guardian*, 20 February 1952.

<sup>40</sup> For several examples of this, see Kerckhoff, Fogelman, Crook and Reeder, *Going Comprehensive in England and Wales* and Evans, 'The dynamics of Labour Party politics in Swansea 1941-1964', unpublished PhD thesis, University of Wales, Bangor (2007).

<sup>41</sup> Kerckhoff, Fogelman, Crook and Reeder, *Going Comprehensive in England and Wales*, p. 60.

curriculum as will enable the Authority to provide education for them suitable to their age, ability and aptitude.<sup>42</sup>

This was a clear reference to the 1944 Education Act, and the feeling that in order to implement secondary education for all children on Anglesey, the most practical option was a multilateral system incorporating the existing grammar schools. 'Environmentalism' arguments opposing hereditarian views and its tenet of 'innate' intelligence were not in evidence in either of the two Development Plans, nor in discussions of the island's Education Development Committee.<sup>43</sup> Some early comprehensive schools supporters, such as the Chief Education Officer, Alec Clegg, of the West Riding, had expressed an explicit desire to abolish the 11-plus examination.<sup>44</sup> Such questioning of the selection process was, however, not part of the rationale behind Anglesey's Development Plan. The fact that the new secondary schools would implement a system of streaming based on intelligence testing was not a matter which concerned the LEA, and since this was not an expressed objective of the reorganisation, each individual school was left to develop its own policy. Streaming became the norm for all the comprehensive schools once they were established, although Holyhead implemented a curriculum of 'progressive differentiation' which established a measure of mixed-ability teaching for the early years and in particular subjects.<sup>45</sup>

The only explicit reference to any social motives or advantages relating to the multilateral system during the 1940s were those made by the Anglesey Association of Assistant Teachers in Secondary Schools (AAAT). In June 1944 the Association expressed its support for the scheme. Its reasons for favouring the system were, however, primarily practical in nature. The multilateral system was

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<sup>42</sup> AEC, 'Letter to the MoE', 30 March 1946, London, TNA: BD 7/1.

<sup>43</sup> See Simon, *Intelligence Testing and the Comprehensive School*; B. Simon, *Education and the Social Order 1940-1990* (London, 1991) and Floud, Halsey and Martin (eds.), *Social Class and Educational Opportunity*.

<sup>44</sup> Clegg believed the differences between those pupils who narrowly failed and those who passed the 11-plus examination were marginal, and that this situation therefore created an unfair selection system. His misgivings were emphasised by the great demand for grammar school places, particularly in the southern parts of the county where only twelve per cent of pupils attended grammar schools, Kerckhoff, Fogelman, Crook and Reeder, *Going Comprehensive in England and Wales*, pp. 118-119. Clegg went on to become a prominent supporter of a tiered system of comprehensive education with the introduction of middle schools in some parts of the West Riding, see Crook, 'The middle school cometh...' and goeth: Alec Clegg and the rise and fall of the English middle school', pp. 117-125.

<sup>45</sup> For more on this, see Chapter Four.

referred to as more 'economical' than the tripartite system in a rural area such as Anglesey. They believed that a multilateral school with around five hundred pupils would be of 'maximum efficiency' and would provide a varied curriculum which would ease transfers between departments.

Nonetheless, there were also some social benefits to be gained from this type of schooling since it would encourage 'healthy mingling of the children of both sexes, of all classes and of varying ability, aptitudes and interests'.<sup>46</sup> The desire to ensure 'social mixing' of children from different backgrounds and of different abilities was not unheard of during the 1940s and 1950s, but this kind of ideological justification for the common school did not enjoy widespread political support and attention until the 1960s.<sup>47</sup> These views were, however, fairly widely discussed in educational circles during this period and an awareness of this debate was demonstrated in AAAT's comments on the subject.<sup>48</sup>

It also is noteworthy that the AAAT's memorandum disclosed that:

a minority of the Association fear that the multilateral school may retard the progress of the intellectually abler type of child, and that, therefore, an additional school, catering for this type of child should be set up. As stated though the great majority of the Association does not endorse this view.<sup>49</sup>

This kind of concern for the impact of comprehensive education on 'grammar type children' was widespread in the immediate post-war period and came to dominate and shape the debate on comprehensive schooling in Britain for decades to come. In many LEAs where alternatives to the tripartite system were being considered, it was head teachers of grammar schools who voiced their concern and coordinated local opposition to the comprehensive schemes.<sup>50</sup> However, there was no

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<sup>46</sup> PWDESC, 'Minute Book: Memorandum from Anglesey Association of Assistant Teachers in Secondary Schools', June 1944, Llangefni, AA: WA 1/39.

<sup>47</sup> For general comments on this issue see, for example, Lawton, *Education and Labour Party Ideologies*, pp. 55 and 56; Chitty, *Understanding Schools and Schooling*, pp. 124 and 125 and Jones and Roderick, *A History of Education in Wales*, p. 151. For more on this, see Chapter Four.

<sup>48</sup> Possible social benefits to both pupils and teachers of multilateral schools were highlighted in separate articles in the same issue of the *TES* 27 January 1945. Brian Simon also highlighted the prominence of radical educational ideals during the Second World War (especially in relation to criticisms of Public Schools) and in its immediate aftermath, Simon, 'The 1944 Education Act: A Conservative Measure?', pp. 32-36.

<sup>49</sup> PWDESC, 'Minute Book: Memorandum from Anglesey Association of Assistant Teachers in Secondary Schools', June 1944, Llangefni, AA: WA 1/39.

<sup>50</sup> When the comprehensive scheme for London was submitted to the MoE there was a deputation from the Headteachers' Association to the Ministry. Because the capital had countless well-established grammar schools (and independent schools) it was a real struggle to comprehensivise within the LCC. The London case was also particularly difficult due to the campaign by Horsbrugh to oppose any comprehensive reorganisation

such official opposition to Anglesey's reorganisation plans from any of the grammar schools on the island. The educational rhetoric associated with the reorganisation of secondary education during the 1930s had already positioned multilateralism as a logical option for Anglesey, and this thinking persisted.<sup>51</sup> The fact that the multilateral schools would be accommodated in new buildings, especially in view of the poor state of the existing provision, were likely to have encouraged the conciliatory attitudes of grammar school head teachers as well as governing bodies. There was no mistaking the fact that the proposed multilateral schools were perceived as extensions of each area's existing grammar schools. This combination of factors made the transition less tumultuous, and the only recorded instance where there was grammar school resistance was in relation to Beaumaris Grammar School. As the oldest and most well-established secondary school on the island it was not surprising that some reservations were expressed. At a Board of Governors' meeting, prior to the Ministry's acceptance of the scheme (January 1946), it was noted that:

The Board of Governors of the Beaumaris Grammar School wish to draw attention to the strong feeling of resentment aroused, both in the school and in the town by the proposal to change the name of the Beaumaris *Grammar* School to the Beaumaris *County* School, particularly in view of the fact that this school has been known as Beaumaris *Grammar* School ever since its foundation in 1603. We consider that if only on sentimental grounds quite apart from other reasons, the old name of BEAUMARIS GRAMMAR SCHOOL should be retained.<sup>52</sup>

The importance of the signifier *grammar* school in contrast to *county* schools was very clear, and the desire to retain the traditional label indicated the reverence to a grammar school education. The newly suggested name was rejected by the Director of Education, and when the Board of Governors was informed of the refusal, a special meeting was called, indicating how serious an issue this was perceived to be. At this special meeting, the name 'The Beaumaris Grammar and Modern School' was decided upon and referred to the Education Committee, further indicating the desire to retain the title of grammar school and the status it possessed, but also the expectation that the two

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which would involve the closure or merger of grammar schools. Manchester was also denied the majority of its proposed comprehensive schools in 1955 due to the 'destruction' of grammar schools. For more on this see, for example, Kerckhoff, Fogelman, Crook and Reeder, *Going Comprehensive in England and Wales*, pp. 62 and 63, 87 and O'Hara, *Governing Post-War Britain*, p. 163. For contemporary reporting on the conflict in London, *The Guardian*, 18 February 1945.

<sup>51</sup> For more on this, see Chapter Two.

<sup>52</sup> BCS, 'Minutes', 23 July 1946, Llangefni, AA: WA 17/79.



different kinds of schooling would remain differentiated in a multilateral school. It also demonstrates a certain lack of understanding within the governing body as to how the new scheme would in fact affect the status of Anglesey's secondary schools. The secondary school in Beaumaris would no longer be a grammar school, but the name 'The Beaumaris Grammar and Modern School' as suggested by the governing body clearly indicated their feeling that the grammar school would remain, while simply adding a secondary modern branch alongside it. Both suggestions were rejected by the LEA, however, and it was decided that the name would be the not insubstantial 'The Beaumaris County Secondary School (Incorporating the Beaumaris Grammar School established 1603)'.<sup>53</sup> The governors did not put up any further resistance, possibly pacified by the reference to 'grammar' in the title.<sup>54</sup> This example illustrates how, while there was some modest resistance from within the existing grammar schools, there was no extensive opposition to rival that of grammar schools in other areas.<sup>55</sup> It also suggests that there was a degree of misconception within the governing body as to what the scheme would actually mean for the reorganisation of the school. In an interview with *The Guardian* later on during the 1960s, one teacher remembered that at the time of comprehensivisation '[W]e didn't...really know what it meant,' and considering the general lack of consultation with the schools this was hardly surprising.<sup>56</sup> The controversy which would develop in the mid-1950s when it was announced that the school in Beaumaris was to be relocated to Menai Bridge was also revealing. It showed how the public approval of the reorganisation of the island's secondary schools was closely connected to the feeling of continuity rather than change. No opposition on behalf of the grammar schools had developed during the planning stages of the

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<sup>53</sup> BCS, 'Minutes', 23 July 1946, Llangefni, AA: WA 17/79.

<sup>54</sup> Stewart Mason, the Chief Education Officer in Leicestershire (1947-61) during the LEA's transition to comprehensive schooling also made a similar observation. Leicestershire's tiered scheme incorporated 'Upper Schools' which were allowed to retain 'grammar school' in their names in order to defuse opposition. Many head teachers kept the title 'grammar school' in the wake of the comprehensivisation drive, although the practice slowly died out with the passing of time, *The Guardian*, 12 September 1978.

<sup>55</sup> Grammar school supporters in Bristol established the Secondary Education Defence Association and the Joint Action Defence Committee. They received a lot of press coverage and raised concerns about the lack of public consultation in relation to Bristol's Development Plan, see Kerckhoff, Fogelman, Crook and Reeder, *Going Comprehensive in England and Wales*, p. 93.

<sup>56</sup> *The Guardian*, 6 December 1964.

comprehensive scheme, but perceptions changed when it was felt that the *status quo* in Beaumaris was threatened by the relocation of the school and its 'replacement' with a new comprehensive school in Menai Bridge.<sup>57</sup>

The practical rather than political nature of Anglesey's scheme also afforded it favourable treatment from the MoE. At the time when the Development Plan was submitted to the Ministry, and consequently also approved, the practicalities of the Development Plan seem to have been in the forefront of the MoE's considerations. Anglesey was favoured by its small size and the relative small number of schools and buildings that needed to be incorporated into the scheme. In comparison to the LCC, for example, the Anglesey scheme was achievable and relatively easily justifiable.<sup>58</sup> In November 1952, approximately a year prior to the full implementation of the island's comprehensive system, *The Times* published an article entitled 'Education Test Abolished'.<sup>59</sup> In the report, Anglesey was noted as having abolished the entrance test for its secondary schools. This fact had never been explicitly discussed in the correspondence with the MoE, but the abolition of the 11-plus examination was certainly a prerequisite for the LEA's plans to establish comprehensive schools throughout the local authority. The MoE's reaction to the publicity that Anglesey had abolished entrance tests to its secondary schools was rather illuminating because it reveals the MoE's lack of consideration of this prior to it being publicised in *The Times*. The article suggested that:

The recent decision of the Anglesey local education authority to abolish throughout its area the examination for allocating pupils to secondary schools will cheer many parents and children on the island – and doubtless raise feelings of envy elsewhere.<sup>60</sup>

The report suggested that parents on Anglesey would be pleased to see the 11-plus examination abolished, and that many parents elsewhere would be pleased to see similar reform. The article also demonstrated the public interest in the discussion surrounding grammar school selection at the

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<sup>57</sup> For more on the controversy over the relocation of the school in Beaumaris, see Chapter Four.

<sup>58</sup> For more on the LCC scheme and its relationship with central government, see A.C. Kerckhoff, K. Fogelman, D. Crook and D. Reeder, 'The Evolutionary Capital Experience: London' in *Going Comprehensive in England and Wales A Study of Uneven Change* (London, 1996), pp. 58-83.

<sup>59</sup> *The Times*, 20 November 1952.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

time. The MoE's in-house reaction to the article was prompt, and within two days Bowen Thomas had requested the details for Anglesey's selection arrangements to be made available to him, and a memorandum was produced for his attention within a week.<sup>61</sup> The memorandum established that in 1947 the MoE had referred to, and accepted, the creation of five secondary schools on Anglesey and that these schools would receive all of the island's children. In order for this arrangement to work the Ministry duly accepted that the entrance tests would have to be abolished.<sup>62</sup> Nevertheless, consensus within the Ministry was that, while Anglesey's scheme had been deemed acceptable, the schools had only ever been considered to be bilateral rather than comprehensive. It was pointed out that even during the building stage of the Amlwch and Llangefni schools the instalments had clearly been labelled 'Grammar' and 'Modern', and that the amalgamation of the two schools in Holyhead also made this a bilateral school.<sup>63</sup> Despite the feeling that these schools did not fulfil the criteria to be appositely referred to as comprehensive schools, it was cautiously noted that:

If it were not for this question of selection the schools could be regarded quite definitely as bilaterals even though they serve all the senior children of their catchment area. But this idea of the children being received into the school and not segregated for perhaps a year or even two after arrival does rather suggest a comprehensive idea even though in a limited way.<sup>64</sup>

By the early 1950s it appeared as if the educational organisation on Anglesey had become a cause for concern for the MoE, although the scheme had already been deemed acceptable several years earlier. It was duly noted that 'As far as the Ministry goes we have not been consulted by the LEA in this last venture. However, they did get our blessing on this kind of set-up'.<sup>65</sup> In fact, the MoE memorandum suggested that the only actual comprehensive school on the island was the school in Holyhead. It also conceded that the 'experiment' in Llangefni would have to be closely observed once the school was properly established since it was probable that it would constitute 'the nearest

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<sup>61</sup> MoE, 'Internal notes', 22 November 1952 and 26 November 1952, London, TNA: ED 216/27.

<sup>62</sup> MoE, 'Internal note', 26 November 1952, London, TNA: ED 216/27. The original letter was also referred to in PWDESC, 'Minutes', 27 November 1947, Llangefni, AA: WA 1/39.

<sup>63</sup> MoE, 'Internal note', 4 December 1952, London, TNA: ED 216/27.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> MoE, 'Internal note', 26 November 1952, London, TNA: ED 216/27.

to a fully “comprehensive” type of school’ on the island.<sup>66</sup> Furthermore, the Ministry suggested that, if it were not because of the lack of selection to the secondary schools, the system would definitely have been considered bilateral. It also distinctly emphasised that it was the practice of not segregating pupils for the first year (or even two) in the secondary school that constituted ‘a comprehensive idea’.<sup>67</sup> However, if this was such a decisive factor in whether a school should be labelled a comprehensive or not, the only school that could possibly be considered comprehensive even during the 1960s was Holyhead. When Llangefni opened its doors in 1953 to all the children of secondary school age in the catchment area, testing pupils’ academic ability in order to establish appropriate teaching groups was an essential part of the school’s organisation. It was only in Holyhead that the approach described as ‘progressive differentiation’ became the official policy. The remaining three schools all employed thorough testing of its pupils to stream children according to ability. The MoE response to the public attention on this issue emphasises how the subject of secondary school selection had become more pressing by the early 1950s, more than it had been when the Development Plan had been agreed in 1947. Furthermore, it illustrates the lack of ideological fervour within the LEA since the schools had been both described, and perceived, as multilateral throughout the late 1940s and into the 1950s. It was only in November 1947 that the LEA formally recognised its schools as being comprehensive rather than multilateral.<sup>68</sup> The change in terminology was, rather ironically considering the MoE’s reactions to *The Times* article, triggered as a response to a MoE circular, and it was noted by the Post-War Development of Education Sub Committee (PWDESC) that:

the multilateral schools envisaged in the Anglesey Development Proposals are those described in this Circular as “Comprehensive Schools”, viz. “Schools intended to cater for all the secondary education of all children in a given area without an organisation in three sides.”<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> MoE, ‘Internal note’, 27 December 1952, London, TNA: ED 216/27.

<sup>67</sup> MoE, ‘Internal note’, 4 December 1952, London, TNA: ED 216/27.

<sup>68</sup> PWDESC, ‘Minutes’, 27 November 1947, Llangefni, AA: WA 1/39.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

Provided with this description, the LEA had decided that Anglesey's schools should be defined as comprehensive rather than multilateral. Therefore, the labelling of Anglesey's scheme as comprehensive was an after-construction, hence making the scheme appear more radical by the early 1950s than it had been deemed to be at its adoption in the late 1940s. This was undoubtedly why the Ministry believed that perhaps they should have been specifically consulted in the matter of the selection process, although the abolition of the entrance test had already been granted four years earlier. Horsbrugh (Education Secretary, 1951-54) had taken a firm stance in support of grammar schools and against comprehensive reform, particularly if grammar school closures were involved. Anglesey's abolition of the 11-plus examination and consequent termination of its grammar schools was therefore far from in-line with broader developments at the time.

Finally, there was a general perception that the scheme was a practical or 'economic' measure rather than a socio-political one, and this point of view was both expressed by the LEA and accepted by the MoE. Undoubtedly, one of the reasons that Anglesey opted for a multilateral plan was the fact that it was impractical to implement a differentiated system in a county with such a small population. This was clearly acknowledged in the schemes of both the 1930s and 1940s. The 1936 scheme had clearly stated its support for the principle of multilateralism, and in the letter accompanying the 1946 Development Plan the practical advantages to a multilateral system was also clearly pointed out.<sup>70</sup>

The difficulties involved in fulfilling the requirements of the 1944 Act in a rural LEA were clear to see, and Anglesey was far from exceptional in this respect. There was also a distinctively Welsh aspect to the educational developments on Anglesey during this time, just as there had been during the 1930s. It had been generally acknowledged during the run up to the 1944 Act that there were specific demands and circumstances in Wales that might require a different approach from those of

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<sup>70</sup> AEC, 'Proposal for Educational Development in Anglesey', 17 September 1936, London, TNA: ED 16/827.

England.<sup>71</sup> Both the Federation of Education Committees (FEC) and UCAC requested special considerations to be taken into account in the case of Wales. The FEC advocated the tripartite system for most of Wales and supported multilateral schools in some rural areas. UCAC on the other hand supported multilateralism for the whole of rural Wales. The Welsh Department considered the UCAC proposals more constructive than many other Welsh responses, but when Wheldon (Permanent Secretary to the Welsh Department, 1933-45) had met a delegation from the Union the BoE's response had already been hardening, although he admitted that there was a need for good examples of all types of schools. This was particularly important for 'less academically gifted' children so that it could be ensured that they received suitable educational opportunities, but he would not accept multilaterals as the best way forward for *all* rural local authorities in Wales.<sup>72</sup> Nevertheless, the fact that Wales, particularly rural Wales, had already been considered a practicable area for trialling a multilateral solution favoured Anglesey's Development Plan. Consequently, the Welsh context of Anglesey's proposal made it relatively uncontroversial for the Ministry to approve, especially considering Wheldon's expressed support for limited multilateral experiments in Wales. The Minister's observation in 1947 in relation to Anglesey's Development Plan emphasised the significance of the broader context of the county:

having regard to linguistic and geographical features of the area and the distribution of population, there should be five Secondary Schools, each with an annual entry of about five Forms, to which all children should proceed without selective tests by the age of 12 years.<sup>73</sup>

This demonstrates how the combination of being both a small, and rural, Welsh authority made reorganisation more plausible than it could be in larger LEAs. Such organisation made practical sense, but it also presented less of a politically charged scenario than the Labour backed schemes in London and Swansea for example.<sup>74</sup> It is notable that criticisms often levelled at multilateral and

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<sup>71</sup> For more on this, see Introduction.

<sup>72</sup> Jones, *Controls and Conflicts in Welsh Secondary Education*, pp. 182-183; Webster, *School and Community in Rural Wales*, p. 45.

<sup>73</sup> PWDESC, 'Minutes', 27 November 1947, Llangefni, AA: WA 1/39.

<sup>74</sup> For more on the London scheme see, for example, Maclure, *A History of Education in London* and Kerckhoff, Fogelman, Crook and Reeder, *Going Comprehensive in England and Wales*, pp. 58-84. For an analysis of the

comprehensive schemes were never put to Anglesey's LEA at this point. The advice from the Ministry in 1947 was that comprehensive schools should have a ten or eleven-form entry in order to ensure a wide enough choice of subjects and a sustainable Sixth-Form.<sup>75</sup> The parameters for rural areas were slightly different, stating that six-form entry was considered not 'entirely unreasonable' for rural LEAs, although that number was considered to be 'the absolute minimum'.<sup>76</sup> However, despite the Ministry's stance on this matter, Anglesey was allowed to carry on with its plans for five secondary schools, the majority of which were projected to have a five-form entry, a smaller number than that deemed by the MoE to be the 'absolute minimum'.<sup>77</sup> Anglesey's 'all-through' schools would later become a talking-point, when educationists such as Robin Pedley raised concerns about school sizes and questioned the whole format of '11-18' schools.<sup>78</sup> However, as early as 1961 HMI raised questions about the viability of the Sixth Forms in the majority of Anglesey's schools and, by the latter half of the 1960s, some of the island's head teachers also acknowledged the need to address this problem. By that time, therefore, the emphasis was on the issue of the island's schools actually being too small (Holyhead was the exception) and that this caused issues with timetabling, teaching and effective Sixth Form provision.<sup>79</sup>

While Anglesey's rural situation had a significant impact on the way in which educational developments had been allowed to progress on the island, these features alone were not enough to ensure that a comprehensive scheme could emerge. Elsewhere, for example Radnorshire (the least populous county in Wales and not a dissimilar area to Anglesey) was denied its reorganisation scheme which proposed a fully multilateral system. The authority was only allowed one (effectively) bilateral school because of concerns from the BoE of the impact on 'grammar type' children if the

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proposed scheme in Swansea, see Evans, 'The dynamics of Labour Party politics in Swansea 1941-1964', unpublished PhD thesis, University of Wales, Bangor (2007).

<sup>75</sup> MoE, 'Circular 144', 16 June 1947, London, TNA: ED 142/1.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> MoE, 'Letter to the Anglesey LEA', 21 May 1948, London, TNA: BD 7/1.

<sup>78</sup> For more on Robin Pedley, his work and views, see Chapter Four.

<sup>79</sup> For more on the criticisms of '11-18' schools being too large and impersonal, see Chapter Four; for concerns relating to schools being too small, see Chapter Five.

original multilateral plan was allowed.<sup>80</sup> Another example was that of Northumberland where the educational arrangements prior to the reorganisation drive in the 1940s were very similar to those that existed on Anglesey. Similarly to Anglesey, Northumberland retained many all-age schools, and was therefore required to implement an ambitious building programme of over a hundred new schools in the period 1944-64. Curiously, however, historians who have studied educational developments in Northumberland have considered the retention of so many all-age schools as a significant reason for the LEA's lack of interest in a comprehensive system. It has been assumed that the 'post-war heritage of all-age and one-teacher schools was undoubtedly a constraining factor in putting comprehensive reorganisation in the agenda'.<sup>81</sup> For Anglesey on the other hand, the same situation favoured the case for comprehensivisation since the apparent need to extend, adapt and construct new school buildings sanctioned a comprehensive system as part of these changes. In Montgomeryshire the Development Plan, written in the wake of the 1944 Act, also differed significantly from that of Anglesey despite the obvious similarities between the two rural Welsh local authorities. Montgomeryshire's scheme advocated the tripartite system, but with combined grammar and modern educational provision for some of its secondary schools, with a complementary technical school.<sup>82</sup> These cases clearly indicate that being a rural local authority was not enough to qualify an LEA such as Anglesey, Radnorshire or Northumberland for a comprehensive system; the circumstances had to be much more particular than that. Neither did it necessarily encourage such LEAs to put forward multilateral or comprehensive systems as the most practical solutions for their areas, as the case of Montgomeryshire illustrates. Therefore, comprehensivisation on Anglesey did not solely occur because it was more 'economical' or more practical in comparison to any other type of system. There were numerous local authorities (such as Montgomeryshire and Northumberland) where this would have been the case, but where very different systems developed

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<sup>80</sup> Jones, 'Policy and Power: one hundred years of Local Education Authorities in Wales', pp. 351-353.

<sup>81</sup> The assumption has been that Northumberland was held back by its existing educational structure. The authors also pointed out that it was '...the only authority among the case studies not to have approached the comprehensive issue by 1965', see Kerckhoff, Fogelman, Crook and Reeder, *Going Comprehensive in England and Wales*, p. 161 and also pp.142 and 143.

<sup>82</sup> See Davies, *Education in a Welsh Rural County 1870-1973*, pp.199-209.



during the 1940s. While there is certainly a case for comparisons of developments in different local authorities, such assessments rather illustrate how incomparable circumstances of different LEAs were, rather than present a framework of a general pattern. Anglesey's education system did not simply develop because of its practicality; the process was much more complex than that.

## Preparing for Implementation

Anglesey's post-1944 Development Plan envisaged that, in addition to the creation of twenty-nine schools (both primary and secondary) on new sites, a further twelve buildings would need to be adapted and extended to fulfil the educational needs of the county. These substantial modifications, together with the decision to discontinue twenty-three schools, were considered necessary in order to fulfil the stipulations of the 1944 Education Act. Primary schools and secondary schools were to be provided separately, since it would no longer be possible to provide instruction in all-age schools.<sup>83</sup> The Act also established regulations for school premises as well as for the provision of special education and boarding facilities.<sup>84</sup> The extensive demands and responsibilities placed on LEAs to deliver these changes in the wake of 1944 were significant. The *TES* featured several items in the 1940s and 1950s highlighting the difficulties faced by local authorities in meeting the requirements of the 1944 Act.<sup>85</sup> The 'chill wind of doubt' apparently afflicting LEAs was referred to in the *TES* as early as 1945, and it was suggested that a measure of uncertainty had been emerging in the wake 1944 Act and the Second World War due to the sheer scale of the reorganisation

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<sup>83</sup> Despite the fact that the discontinuation of 'all-age' schools had been part of the Hadow reorganisation drive during the 1930s, a large proportion of these still remained on Anglesey. However, the 1944 Education Act reiterated the need to differentiate between primary and secondary education since 'Secondary Education for All' would now be provided for children over the age of eleven. The Act (section II:7) clearly stated that: '[T]he statutory system of public education shall be organised in three progressive stages to be known as primary education, secondary education, and further education', MoE, '1944 Education Act', London, TNA: ED 151. For more on the Hadow reorganisation, see Introduction.

<sup>84</sup> For example, section II (10) referred to 'Requirements as to school premises' and sections II (33) and II (34) provided guidance for pupils requiring 'Special Educational Treatment', see MoE, '1944 Education Act II (7)', London, TNA: ED 151.

<sup>85</sup> See, for example, *TES*, 20 January 1945; *TES*, 31 March 1945 and *TES*, 16 January 1953.

required.<sup>86</sup> LEAs had to produce their Development Plans while Britain was recovering from war with inadequate figures to estimate prospective population numbers, limited building materials and with expected shortages in the labour force. It was impossible to foresee the scale and speed of which new school buildings would be constructed, let alone to know whether adequate numbers of teachers would be available to staff these schools. Also, Education Committees had to fight for investment in education during the post-war scramble for public sector investment.<sup>87</sup> New requirements for school buildings, facilities, and the need to ensure that education was provided for all 'abilities and aptitudes' made it virtually impossible for small village schools with one or two teachers to remain open.<sup>88</sup>

Even though the LEA's plans had been quite readily accepted by the Ministry, the task of implementing such an overhaul of the existing system was not easy. Practical considerations often delayed and complicated the implementation of the Development Plan, and interim solutions involving the concentration of senior pupils in particular 'all age' schools also had to be employed in order to prepare for the implementation of the system. The closure of small village schools attracted criticism both at the national and the local level.<sup>89</sup> On Anglesey, those schools that were deemed obsolete were primarily all-age institutions with an intake of pupils between the ages of three and fifteen which, according to the LEA, 'were becoming, or had become, redundant, and with the removal of the senior pupils to Secondary Schools, they have become too small to survive as efficient education units'.<sup>90</sup> Aside from closures of schools, there were even more extensive plans for alterations, extensions, and newly constructed school buildings on the island. Apart from the completely new secondary school that was planned for the Valley School District, the remainder of the secondary schools were to be incorporated into the already existing grammar schools, even

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<sup>86</sup> *TES*, 31 March 1945.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>88</sup> *TES*, 16 January 1953.

<sup>89</sup> See, for example, *TES*, 16 January 1953; HC Deb 24 July 1951, vol 491, cols 210-331 and MoE, 'Development Plan: Protests', 1946-1950, London, TNA: ED 216/25.

<sup>90</sup> AEC, 'Letter to the MoE', 30 March 1946, London, TNA: BD 7/1.

though the majority would be accommodated in newly constructed buildings.<sup>91</sup> With such extensive alterations to be realised it was considered advisable to implement an interim scheme to take effect in September 1946. This involved the concentration of senior pupils into a few designated existing all-age schools. The purpose of the interim plan was to accommodate pupils of the 'modern type' for whom there was no sufficient accommodation in the existing secondary schools.<sup>92</sup> The plan for the interim schools in 1946 envisaged a concentration of all these senior pupils into thirteen existing all-age schools. 1,473 pupils from fifty-five different schools would be accommodated in the interim schools until the multilateral schools had been established.<sup>93</sup> From September 1946 interim secondary education was provided at the St. Cybi School in Holyhead, and at the all-age schools in Llangefni, Menai Bridge and Rhoscolyn. New teaching staff were employed for the 'secondary modern' subjects: general science, woodwork and metal work, domestic subjects, general subjects and commercial training.

Despite the fact that these schools were aimed particularly at senior pupils who had failed to attain places in the grammar schools, not all senior pupils attended the interim schools. Out of the pupils who sat the 11-plus examination in 1946, forty-six pupils were still considered unable to benefit from secondary education. Therefore, because their attainment was considered too low to warrant them entry to the interim schools, they were to remain in 'all-age' schools.<sup>94</sup> The practice of streaming pupils according to their ability in the interim secondary schools might appear paradoxical considering that the Development Plan stated that there would be no tests prior to entry into the county's secondary schools once these had been established.<sup>95</sup> The way in which the interim scheme was implemented certainly demonstrated how the LEA concurred with the contemporary view that

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<sup>91</sup> AEC, 'Development Plan Under Section 11 (1) of the Education Act, 1944', London, TNA: BD 7/1.

<sup>92</sup> PWDESC, 'Minutes', 29 August 1946, Llangefni, AA: WA 1/39.

<sup>93</sup> PWDESC, 'Minutes', 14 February 1946, Llangefni, AA: WA 1/39. Those senior pupils who had been 'concentrated' would be accommodated in the following all-age schools: Amlwch, Rhoscolyn, Holyhead St. Cybi School, Llangefni, Bryngwran, Pencarnisiog, Bodorgan, Llafairpwll, Menai Bridge, Beaumaris, Newborough, Llanallgo and Pentraeth.

<sup>94</sup> PWDESC, 'Minutes', 29 August 1946, Llangefni, AA: WA 1/39.

<sup>95</sup> AEC, 'Development Plan Under Section 11 (1) of the Education Act, 1944', London, TNA: BD 7/1.

different 'types' of children were suited to different kinds of secondary education. The existing system, with its prevailing grammar schools, meant that the interim system would have to deliver an alternative to the already existing 'academic' secondary education provided on the island. The required reorganisation of both primary and secondary schools predetermined that senior pupils from the all-age schools would be concentrated in institutions equivalent to what would have been termed modern schools in a tripartite system. Indeed, from 1948 the interim schools were regularly referred to as 'Modern' schools in minutes from LEA meetings.<sup>96</sup> The structure of secondary education that emerged on Anglesey in the wake of the 1944 Act was therefore an amalgamation of the existing system of grammar school provision and the newly created interim institutions. When these different types of schools merged in the period 1949-53 to create the new comprehensive schools, children were in fact already institutionally divided, and these divisions were carried forward into the new multilateral schools.

Holyhead was the first school to 'go comprehensive' in 1949 under the new head teacher Lovett who would become a prominent figure in educational circles during the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>97</sup> The situation of the school in Holyhead at this early stage is illustrative of the divisions that existed within the schools from their inception. The early merger of the grammar and modern schools in Holyhead has, quite accurately, been described as a 'geographical accident'.<sup>98</sup> The two distinct secondary schools in Holyhead were situated in close proximity, across the road from each other (South Stack Road). This 'geographical accident' in combination with the appointment of Lovett, an ex-grammar school teacher and an avid supporter of multilateral schooling, resulted in the Holyhead school 'going comprehensive' as early as 1949.<sup>99</sup> However, the newly created comprehensive school was far from a closely integrated unit in the late 1940s and early 1950s since a combination of factors meant that the school remained a segregated institution after its amalgamation. Firstly, apart from issues

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<sup>96</sup> PWDESC, 'Minute Book', Llangefni, AA: WA 1/39.

<sup>97</sup> For more on Lovett's contributions on comprehensive schooling, see Introduction and Chapter Four.

<sup>98</sup> Author's Interview with former pupil in Holyhead School (1950s), 30 April 2013.

<sup>99</sup> See Rowlands, 'The Evolution and Development of an Early Comprehensive School', unpublished MEd dissertation, University of Wales, Bangor (1971).

related to the physical accommodation of the school and the fact it spanned two different sites, there were other factors that emphasised the divisions within the school. For example, during the initial period of the amalgamation, many pupils from the secondary modern school retained their old uniforms, making them appear distinctly different from their peers who had previously attended the grammar school.<sup>100</sup> During this early period in the life of the new school, practicalities such as parents' inability or reluctance to pay for new school uniforms therefore dictated that divisions remained very visible within the school despite its, by then, comprehensive intake. In addition, at the time of the merger of the two schools in Holyhead, the new entrants who joined the school from the St. Cybi Central School were all put into form IVM (for Modern), emphasising the separation of the 'secondary modern' pupils from those who had previously attended the grammar school.<sup>101</sup> The entrance examination also remained in place until 1953 when the entire LEA officially 'went comprehensive'. Prior to the abolition of the entrance test, first year pupils were placed in form classes depending on their results. Those who succeeded were placed in forms A-C, while those with lower scores entered into forms D-F. The subjects of instruction were the same for the whole range of forms, however, the head teacher described the syllabus for the D-F forms as 'more of the modern type'.<sup>102</sup> Secondly, the pupils who had been part of the grammar school, and who were at the time of the merger preparing for their GCE examinations, were not much affected by the changes to the secondary school. A former pupil who attended the school at the time of the reorganisation commented that:

...the procedure didn't affect us greatly, we just carried on in the same way, but immediately before then, it had actually happened, and suddenly there appeared amongst us, when I was in the fifth form ... pupils from the far side ... including one of my closest friends actually who had the misfortune to fail the 11-plus, and ... that was very pleasant.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Author's Interview with former pupil in Holyhead School (1950s), 30 April 2013.

<sup>101</sup> Author's Interview with former pupil in Holyhead School (1950s), 11 February 2014.

<sup>102</sup> T[revor] L[ovett's] P[apers], '1952 Memorandum for attention of the Board of Governors – *Holyhead County School Progressively Differentiated Curriculum for 1952-53*', N[ational] L[ibrary] of W[ales], Aberystwyth: GB 0210 TREVETT (3).

<sup>103</sup> Author's Interview with former pupil in Holyhead School (1950s), 30 April 2013.

While this testimony suggests continuity rather than change in terms of pupils' experiences, it also highlights the fact that while divisions remained within the system, a degree of mixing between pupils inevitably occurred. While friends had previously been separated into different schools, they were now being educated together, if not in the same class than at least in the same school. Similar comments have been recorded in relation to the Llangefni comprehensive school where the significance of pupils going '...to the same school through the same gate...' meant that '...everybody had the same opportunity...' even though '...there were different levels of achievements ... that didn't really matter, they all went to the same school'.<sup>104</sup> Despite the subjectivity of these personal testimonies, they nevertheless give an indication of how perceptions of pupils within the schools were not always necessarily decided by the system's inherent differentiation. The mixing of pupils was also aided in Holyhead by the determination of the head teacher that '[T]here must be freedom of transfer between the various streams within the school'.<sup>105</sup> The increased number of pupils entering the Sixth Form by 1952, as noted by Lovett, also indicates how the merger of the two schools altered the options available to pupils.<sup>106</sup> Some children who would otherwise have attended the secondary modern schools, and thus would not have been given the opportunity of entering the higher forms, were now able to remain in secondary education beyond the stipulated school leaving age. In the fifth year there was a designated 'C-form' for those pupils, many of which were of the 'Modern Type', who had not reached the appropriate level in all subjects but were deemed good enough in particular areas to continue their education further.<sup>107</sup> This allowed these pupils the chance to attain a nationally recognised certificate of their achievements, something which would not have been possible in the secondary modern schools with their exemption from examinations.

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<sup>104</sup> Author's Interview with former pupil in Llangefni School (1950s), 12 April 2013.

<sup>105</sup> TLP, '1952 Memorandum for attention of the Board of Governors – *Holyhead County School Progressively Differentiated Curriculum for 1952-53*', Aberystwyth, NLW: GB 0210 TREVETT (3).

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> TLP, '1952 Memorandum for attention of the Board of Governors – *Holyhead County School Progressively Differentiated Curriculum for 1952-53*', Aberystwyth, NLW: GB 0210 TREVETT (3).

## Responses and consequences

Existing studies that have commented on Anglesey's multilateral scheme have concluded that the LEA's plans did not encounter any significant opposition at the local level.<sup>108</sup> This assumption is largely accurate in relation to the views of teachers and parents, but there was nevertheless some significant local resistance to the plans, and these responses will be evaluated here. In contrast to the attention paid to the campaigns against comprehensive schooling in other areas such as London, Manchester or Leeds, the resistance that occurred on Anglesey was not a noteworthy presence in the press or the public debate.<sup>109</sup> However, interest groups such as the DEC felt threatened by these new educational developments and made their reservations known to both the LEA and the MoE. Although there was no official public campaign against the Development Plan on Anglesey, the opposition, especially from the DEC, impacted on the speed and progress in several areas of the LEA's scheme.

Even though it appears that no official complaints were put forward by parents during the 1930s and 1940s, there were a modest number of complaints from managers of schools, as well as from the Twrcelyn Rural District Council and the Penrhoslligwy Parish Council regarding the impact the anticipated reorganisation might have on existing schools.<sup>110</sup> These local reservations were strictly concerned with how 'all-age' schools would be affected by the transfer of senior pupils, first to the

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<sup>108</sup> Two MEd theses have previously looked at aspects of comprehensivisation on Anglesey, both of which emphasised the lack of local opposition, Williams, 'Anglesey: Towards Comprehensive Education, 1926-1953', unpublished MEd dissertation, University of Wales, Bangor (1985), p.96; Rowlands, 'The Evolution and Development of an Early Comprehensive School', unpublished MEd dissertation, University of Wales, Bangor (1971), p. 31. For more on this, see Introduction.

<sup>109</sup> Anglesey did not have to deal with opposition within the local authority either, which was often the case in many other areas. For examples of debates between local Labour authorities and the executive during the 1950s, see Bogdanor, 'Power and Participation', p. 93. For further Welsh examples of issues related to multilateral Development Plans see, for example, Jones, 'Policy and Power: one hundred years of Local Education Authorities in Wales', pp. 351-353 and Evans, 'The dynamics of Labour Party Politics in Swansea 1941-64', unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Wales, Bangor (2007), p. 168.

<sup>110</sup> Megan Lloyd George (as the MP for Anglesey) received a letter of complaint concerning the closure of a local primary school from Penrhoslligwy Parish Council (April 1946). Another objection was sent to the MoE in August 1946 on behalf of the managers of Llandegfan Primary School, due to close with the transferral of pupils to Menai Bridge Primary School. Another letter dated 2 April 1948 expressed concerns by the Twrcelyn Rural District Council over the closure of several primary schools, see MoE, 'Development Plan: Protests', 1946-1950, London, TNA: ED 216/25.

planned interim institutions, and then to the new multilateral schools once these were up and running. The introduction of a multilateral system, and the fact that it conflicted with the centrally favoured tripartite system of the central government, did not appear to have caused any significant local debate. The idea of multilateral schooling might largely have been viewed as the least complicated and practical solution for the island's schools. However, practical issues related to the implementation of the new scheme aroused disapproval.

The DEC was the most vociferous opponent to the transfers of senior pupils and school closures associated with the reorganisation drive. During the 1930s the DEC had opposed the LEA's reorganisation plans, and its resistance had caused delays and disruption to the implementation of the new scheme, particularly in Holyhead.<sup>111</sup> The wrangling between the LEA and DEC had not been resolved in the 1930s, however, and became a significant factor for the development of school reorganisation during the 1940s. The Ministry informed the LEA of its final approval of the plan on 21 May 1948.<sup>112</sup> However, as early as 1945 the LEA's Development Committee had expressed its intentions towards the voluntary schools and their role within the island's future secondary education system. It would, according to the Development Committee, be:

extremely difficult, if not impossible, to make adequate provision for these [320 children in Anglesey of secondary school age] senior children outside the Authority's County Secondary Schools. The effect of the Committee's Memorandum is therefore to suggest that there should not be a Voluntary Secondary School in Anglesey.<sup>113</sup>

Furthermore, it was suggested that seventeen primary schools would be closed down, both because of the dwindling numbers of pupils and the inadequate buildings of some of these schools.<sup>114</sup>

Curiously, especially considering both previous and future disagreements, the DEC expressed its 'earnest desire' to cooperate with the LEA in providing the best possible education scheme for the

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<sup>111</sup> For more on this, see Chapter Two.

<sup>112</sup> AEC, 'Development Plan Under Section 11 (1) of the Education Act, 1944', London, TNA: BD 7/1.

<sup>113</sup> PWDESC, 'Minutes', 6 June 1945, Llangefni: WA 1/39. (The term voluntary school was used to describe schools that were not maintained by the local authority.)

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.



island's children.<sup>115</sup> However, this amicable tone did not endure when actual closures loomed and little agreement was in evidence as to what would indeed be 'the best possible Scheme' for the island. As the details of the plans were being discussed and altered in line with ministerial demands, the LEA's manoeuvrability was declining as the DEC's stance became more rigid. There were numerous examples where the DEC opposed the projected plans, causing the MoE to interject. In Llangefni, for example, the plan had been for senior pupils to be concentrated in Llangefni County School and junior pupils to attend the town's Voluntary (Controlled) School, but the DEC made it quite clear that they were unable to accept these proposed changes to the interim plan.<sup>116</sup> Meanwhile, the Ministry's objection to the Llangefni plan was due to the questionable legality of the LEA extending a controlled school to such an extent that it could be perceived to have become a 'new' school. Since the proposed arrangement in Llangefni was viewed as a breach of these rules, the LEA had little choice other than to try and adapt its plans. Further complaints were made in 1946 when the LEA received notice from the local managers of St. Mary's Roman Catholic School, explaining that they had decided not to send their senior pupils to the St. Cybi Interim Secondary School.<sup>117</sup> Similar resistance against the closure of schools was also expressed in several villages during this time.<sup>118</sup>

The complaints from those involved with the voluntary schools were very similar in 1946 to what they had been in the 1930s when senior pupils were expected to be transferred to St. Cybi Central School. The main worry among voluntary schools had always been the projected loss of substantial numbers of senior pupils, and this was a persistent cause for concern. It was made very clear that they would only accept such losses on the condition that these numbers would be compensated for

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<sup>115</sup> PWDESC, 'Minutes', 6 June 1945, Llangefni: WA 1/39.

<sup>116</sup> PWDESC, 'Minutes', 29 August 1946, Llangefni: WA 1/39.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> The proposed closures of primary schools in Carregonen, Llansadwrn, Penmon and Penynydd were met with resistance. The Director was nominated to respond to the complaints, which were also passed on the MoE for an enquiry, PWDESC, 'Minutes', 29 August 1946, Llangefni: WA 1/39.

by an increased quantity of 'junior scholars'.<sup>119</sup> Although Humphreys had previously expressed his distaste for the practice of 'bargaining' for pupils, it nevertheless appeared as though the earlier altercations during the 1930s had had a demonstrable impact on proceedings in the 1940s. There were clear attempts by the LEA in 1945 and 1946 to negotiate with the DEC. Humphrey's stark rejection of the 'bargaining' for pupils in 1937 was not repeated during the mid-1940s, and the discussions between the LEA and DEC regarding the control of different schools in 1945 definitely involved bartering over pupil numbers.<sup>120</sup> The DEC advocated a solution whereby they would be compensated for the closure of any small church schools by being allowed to run alternative controlled schools in their place.<sup>121</sup> Despite a rather unwilling acknowledgement by the Director of the concerns raised over school closures, further efforts were made to try and reach a compromise with the DEC. In relation to the controversy over the control of Llanfairpwll and Llangefni primary schools, the LEA Development Committee expressed their willingness to:

sympathetically ... examine the position some years hence before the proposal was put into practice and then to agree to the proposal of the Diocesan Committee if the numbers of children in the area would be sufficient to justify on educational grounds, the establishment of two collateral Junior and Infant Schools in the area.<sup>122</sup>

This was an attempt to pacify the DEC in its demand to retain control of both junior and infant education in Llangefni and Llanfairpwll. Despite the obvious desire on behalf of the LEA to come to an arrangement by promising further consideration of the matter in the future, the renewed offer was refused.<sup>123</sup>

Due to these continued negotiations, the implementation of the interim scheme had still not been fully realised in 1950. An illustrative example of how these delays affected particular individuals and

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<sup>119</sup> AEC, 'Letter to the Board of Education', 17 December 1937, London, TNA: ED 16/827.

<sup>120</sup> PWDESC, 'Minutes', 6 June 1945, Llangefni: WA 1/39.

<sup>121</sup> The DEC had suggested such an approach in 1945, see PWDESC, 'Minutes', 6 June 1945, Llangefni, AA: WA 1/39. An illustrative example of such negotiations was the suggested fusion of Llangefni Church School and Llangefni County School. This merger would allow the school in Llangefni to remain a voluntary school. As a concession, the DEC would accept the merger between the church school and county school in Llanfairpwll and the fact that the school would be controlled by the LEA, see PWDESC, 'Letter from the Secretary of the Diocesan Education Committee', 13 April 1945, Llangefni, AA: WA 1/39.

<sup>122</sup> PWDESC, 'Minutes', 10 February 1947, Llangefni, AA: WA 1/39.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

their schooling was the situation that arose in relation to the interim scheme in Newborough and Pencarnisiog. The prolonged discussions with the DEC over the arrangements for these two areas resulted in a readjustment of the catchment areas for some of the already existing interim schools where pupils had already been required to transfer once as part of the educational restructure.<sup>124</sup> This resulted in pupils from certain schools having to transfer between different institutions three times in the period 1946-53.<sup>125</sup>

Anglesey's multilateralism of the 1930s and 1940s has sometimes been described as progressive and pioneering, but more regularly it has simply been viewed as the most economic and practical solution for a rural area such as Anglesey. As a result, the case of comprehensivisation in Anglesey has regularly been disregarded in terms of its value for the wider scholarship of comprehensive schooling in Britain, because of its supposed lack of political and ideological zest. However, careful study of the contextual circumstances reveals a more complex picture. The explanation as to why Anglesey became the first local authority in England and Wales to implement a fully comprehensive system lies in the specific circumstances of the authority. The exceptional circumstances that existed on Anglesey explain its early commitment to a fully comprehensive system, and why such plans were able to develop there when similar advances eluded many other local authorities. However, the potential impact of an individual Education Officer (such as Humphreys) as a decisive driving force

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<sup>124</sup> At a meeting in Newborough in July 1949, the Director of Education stressed the urgency in concentrating senior pupils in the areas of Newborough and Pencarnisiog. However, no consensus had been reached with the DEC in May 1950 when further plans were presented in the hope of achieving, as soon as possible, the 'concentration' of senior pupils for the remainder of the county. The DEC finally agreed to the Newborough plan (rather than the alternative Llanfairpwll plan) after further input by the LEA, but also after the intervention from Anglesey's well-known MP Megan Lloyd George. The Education Committee expressed their appreciation for 'the Lady's' intervention with 'very warm thanks ... for her successful intervention on behalf of the children from the Newborough district', see PWDESC, 'Minutes', 19 May 1950, Llangefni, AA: WA 4/21.

<sup>125</sup> For example, nineteen senior pupils from Gaerwen who had previously transferred to Llangefni were now relocated to the interim school in Llanfairpwll (to enable thirty-two senior pupils from Llangefni Voluntary School to enter the secondary modern interim school in Llangefni instead). As a result, pupils from Gaerwen who had been concentrated at Llangefni from 1946 had to move schools yet again, and those in their first or second year of secondary education would transfer schools again in 1953 when the new comprehensive school in Llangefni was finally opened, PWDESC, 'Minutes', 19 May 1950, Llangefni, AA: WA 4/21.

for secondary school reorganisation was less significant on Anglesey than might be expected. The existing situation and prevailing circumstances were deciding enablers for the island's comprehensive system, and it is doubtful whether Humphreys as Director of Education would have been able to achieve similar results in the contexts of other LEAs at the time.

The existing plan for a multilateral system from 1936 and the subsequent lack of Hadow reorganisation in the 1930s, combined with the apparent need for new school buildings (with the existing permission for a new secondary school in Amlwch) were all determining factors. Furthermore, the early treatment of the scheme by the MoE and its propensity to view the authority as a rural LEA where a multilateral solution might be advisable also allowed Anglesey's scheme to progress. The practical issues of implementing a tripartite system on the island played a significant role in making the scheme appear the most appropriate option for Anglesey. The geographical size of the authority was also of great significance since it meant that the four catchment areas could be achieved relatively easily. The fact that the plans were put across as non-ideological and practical in nature also enabled the acceptance of the scheme at both the local and central level. This was the very opposite of the situation facing many other local authorities where resistance from managers of grammar schools, politicians, and central government halted any potential progress where there was an ideological rationale behind Development Plans, or where there were significant practical implications involved in the implementation of these schemes. Putting the new Development Plan into practice was not always easily achieved however, and various practical issues impacted on both the speed and nature of the scheme's application. Nevertheless, the inadequate accommodation in the majority of the island's secondary schools ensured that new school buildings were forthcoming even after cuts in educational spending by the central government after 1951. As a result of the drawn out discussions and wrangling with the DEC, there were significant delays in carrying out the LEA's interim plans. However, whilst the DEC might have been able to resist some of the LEA's interventions up to a point, by 1953 all senior pupils were being educated in the LEA's comprehensive schools as envisaged in the original Development Plan.

Retrospectively there has been a tendency among comprehensive school enthusiasts and certain historians to apply particular criteria of what they believe a 'proper' comprehensive school reorganisation should look like. However, the resulting reflections made from this perspective have routinely overlooked or forgotten the novel approaches and practices that were developed as part of pioneering comprehensive schemes. With hindsight Anglesey's scheme might not have been considered particularly radical, but the criteria projected onto it by subsequent observers would not have been part of the LEA's rationale at the time of its inception. Although the new system would inevitably result in alternative experiences for the island's pupils compared to what they might have experienced in a tripartite system, these were predominantly consequences of the practicalities of the scheme rather than of its rationale. It is also important to recognise that while Anglesey's schools would go on to attract much attention from radical educationists after 1953, the Development Plan was drafted and approved prior to the LEA's recognition of its newly adopted scheme as a *comprehensive* system. In actuality, while the physical provision, organisation and administration of Anglesey's education system experienced great changes from the late 1940s and throughout the 1950s, there was continuity rather than change in terms of the educational thinking of the LEA. The scheme that was implemented in 1953 had originally been developed as early as the 1930s and while significant changes had to be made in order to fulfil the new requirements of the 1944 Education Act, the Development Plan remained very similar. In view of the above, it is not surprising, therefore, that Anglesey's comprehensive schools did not endorse progressive practices such as mixed-ability teaching, since such approaches did not become associated with comprehensive schooling until the 1960s and 1970s. In the next chapter, the nature of the comprehensive education which developed in Anglesey's schools after the implementation of the new scheme will be examined. By 1953 the education system and school provision on Anglesey had experienced 'comprehensive changes'. The foundations existed to create less divisive educational experiences after 1953, and the subsequent chapter will show how the comprehensive nature of

Anglesey's schools varied significantly. While the LEA had largely fulfilled its pioneering role, the next decade saw the most significant changes take place in the island's schools.

## Chapter Four

### Pioneering Comprehensive Schooling,

#### Problems and Possibilities: 1953-63

much remains to be done; and for the most part, the idealist is left high and dry,  
gazing with troubled eyes at the new homes of old follies...<sup>1</sup>

While the tripartite system of education was rolled out in a majority of LEAs during the 1950s, there was a sizable minority that had submitted plans to the MoE for some type of bilateral, multilateral or comprehensive arrangement.<sup>2</sup> LEAs such as Reading, Oldham, Coventry, London and Anglesey were all planning comprehensive systems of some description, but in 1953 Anglesey was the only LEA to have become fully comprehensivised in England and Wales.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, as the 1950s and the early 1960s progressed, the island's system became a rare example of comprehensive schooling in practice. In 1953 Anglesey's secondary provision consisted of four comprehensive schools, and in contrast to other experimental schemes, such as those in London or the West Riding, Anglesey's schools did not run alongside selective institutions but accommodated all the island's secondary school pupils irrespective of ability.<sup>4</sup> The scheme was not prescriptive in terms of the internal organisation of schools, and head teachers were given significant powers to develop their schools in accordance with their own views. It was during the period 1953-63 that Anglesey's schools were

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<sup>1</sup> R. Pedley, 'Comprehensive Schools Today: an Interim Survey (3)', *Education*, 22 October, 1954, p. 613.

<sup>2</sup> A survey of fifty-four Development Plans (one third of LEAs) in 1947 showed that fourteen of those (a little less than a quarter) proposed to provide one or more multilateral schools, and another twenty proposed bilateral schools (either technical-modern or grammar-modern). Therefore, over half of the LEAs surveyed were not intent on implementing the tripartite system in full but proposed more flexible plans, see Simon, *Education and the Social Order*, p. 106.

<sup>3</sup> For more on these early comprehensive Development Plans, see Simon, *Education and the Social Order*, p. 106. Although Anglesey was considered to be the only LEA in England and Wales to have implemented a fully comprehensive system, the Isle of Man's scheme was also included in Pedley's survey, see R. Pedley, 'Comprehensive Schools Today: an Interim Survey (1)', *Education*, 8 October 1954, pp. 518-520; R. Pedley, 'Comprehensive Schools Today: an Interim Survey (2)', *Education*, 15 October 1954, pp. 564-568 and Pedley, 'Comprehensive Schools Today: an Interim Survey (3)', pp. 612-613. The combination of the Isle of Man's devolved status and the conclusion that its system (just like Anglesey's) was a response to practical considerations rather than ideological ones, means it has only been awarded scant acknowledgement in the wider historiography however. For more on the Isle of Man scheme, see Introduction.

<sup>4</sup> See Kerckhoff, Fogelman, Crook and Reeder, *Going Comprehensive in England and Wales*, pp. 60 and 118.

most rigorously scrutinised by those wanting to gather proof of how effective comprehensive schooling actually was in practice, and particular interest was paid to the progress of pupils who would previously have attended grammar schools.

The aim of this chapter is to trace the impact of a variety of influences on the comprehensive schools that evolved on Anglesey during this period. More specifically the significance of Anglesey's pioneering role will be evaluated and re-examined within its wider educational context. The physical accommodation and layout of Anglesey's secondary schools had a significant impact on the kind of comprehensive education each school could provide. Accommodation was especially significant for practical and technical education, but also tended to reinforce traditional divisions between grammar and modern 'type' pupils. This chapter suggests that the accommodation in these comprehensive schools impacted on the 'comprehensiveness' of the education provided by the different institutions. The effects such practicalities had on the nature of secondary school provision in individual schools was not considered during the decision-making process, but was rather an unintentional outcome of the comprehensivisation process as it developed during the late 1940s and early 1950s.

Notwithstanding the impact of existing buildings and governmental influences on the system that emerged on Anglesey, significant controls also rested with the head teacher of each school. Important aspects of school organisation were decided upon by head teachers (in agreement with school governors who generally respected the authority of the professional school leader). Policies on streaming and setting of pupils were the responsibility of each individual school. Schools' curricula were also developed internally, affecting the availability as well as the scope of subjects on offer. Pastoral and extra-curricular activities also depended upon decisions and provisions within each institution. Therefore, in order to understand the fundamentals of Anglesey's comprehensivised system, developments at the school-level need to be incorporated into the analysis.



As this chapter will show, due to its exceptional status, Anglesey's secondary school system attracted a great deal of external interest, and its schools were viewed as models for the new type of 'common schools' that were attracting attention more widely. Lovett had by this time become the most well-known of the island's head teachers, and was the most prominent spokesperson on Anglesey's pioneering system. Lovett had become head teacher at Holyhead School in 1949, and his appointment coincided with the merger of Holyhead's grammar school with the St. Cybi Central School in that same year. He was already a supporter of multilateral schooling prior to his appointment, and as such he was the only one of the original head teachers of Anglesey's multilateral schools who had been specifically selected due to his beliefs.<sup>5</sup> Lovett had implemented a multilateral type of structure in his small Breconshire secondary school during the Second World War. Together with the handicraft teacher, Lovett had developed a scheme where pupils contributed to the war effort by producing plug gauges, breaking pins, drill bushes and cutters of various kinds. This experience notably influenced Lovett's views on secondary education, and he proclaimed that:

The development of those lads who are engaged upon these technical courses is in no way inferior to that of the pupils following the more academic courses...it has been shown clearly that daily contact in work, at table, and in play, of all types of youth, with as many diverse aims as possible, as members of one large school family is by far the best experience of our future citizens. Recent suggestions that youth should be offered a Grammar, Technical, or Modern education, are excellent. But, if they are to be separated into three different schools, then that loss of contact of various types...is, from my experience, going to offset many of the advantages the suggestion would bring. I am convinced that the solution offered by the Multilateral School is far better than the present method of segregation into different types of schools.<sup>6</sup>

Lovett had expressed his strong views in favour of multilateral education as early as 1944, and by 1949 was employed as head teacher for Anglesey's first multilateral school. He was, however, a proponent of multilateral rather than comprehensive schooling, but he nevertheless became known as an expert in the field of comprehensive education. His views on educational reorganisation and

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<sup>5</sup> TLPF, Llangefni, AA: WA 18/53.

<sup>6</sup> Lovett expressed these views in a BBC radio programme, see TLP, Aberystwyth, NLW: GB 0210 TREVETT (1). He had also put forward his views and experiences in an article published by the *TES* in 1945 titled 'A Multilateral School in a rural area', *TES*, 27 January 1945.

his personal experience of running a fully comprehensive school made Lovett a prominent figure. His work in Holyhead, the practical organisation of the school, and its examination results were referenced widely in journals, newspapers and other studies.<sup>7</sup> Lovett's opinions were sought by politicians, educational administrators and educationists alike. Particular interest was expressed by Labour Party groups, requesting information and insights into the Anglesey 'experiment'. For example, the education panel of the Welsh Labour Groups of MPs contacted Lovett to acquire:

any information you may have to offer on the operation of the Comprehensive system in Anglesey, together with any comments on the successes and weaknesses of the experiment. It is probable that Education in Wales will form the basis of an early discussion in the Welsh Grand Committee, and obviously our Members would wish to make reference to the Anglesey experiment.<sup>8</sup>

Other requests from Labour Party interests included an inquiry by a Local Government Officer from the Labour Party asking for details on examination results which may help to counter 'the main Tory attack on our education policy, namely that grammar school standards fall in comprehensive schools', and an invitation to a conference on 'The Implementation of Labour's Education Policy' in 1964.<sup>9</sup> Such statistics of examinations results in Holyhead (and for the whole of Anglesey) were also requested by a range of educationists and interest groups in aid of their attempts to evaluate the effectiveness of comprehensive schools.<sup>10</sup> The impact of the kind of scrutiny and interest paid to Anglesey's schools will also be evaluated more fully in this chapter. This will allow an assessment of Anglesey's position within the wider educational context, and will also provide further understanding of the responses to the island's pioneering scheme.

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<sup>7</sup> For Lovett's contributions in Newspapers and journals see, for example, *TES*, 6 February 1953; *TES*, 27 January 1956; *The Teacher in Wales*, November 1960; *The Teacher in Wales*, March 1961; *Teacher in Wales*, 16 June 1967 and *Teacher in Wales*, 30 June 1967. For contributions in books, see T. Lovett, 'Educational Opportunities (C) More Advanced Courses and The Sixth Form', in NUT, *Inside the Comprehensive School* (London, 1958), pp.48-54.

<sup>8</sup> TLPF, Llangefni, 'Letter from the education panel of the Welsh Labour Groups of MPs', 1 June 1960, Llangefni, AA: WA 18/53.

<sup>9</sup> TLPF, 'Letter from Peggy Crane, Local Government Officer from Labour Party', 8 August 1958, Llangefni, AA: WA 18/53 and TLPF, 'Letter from the Secretary of the Labour Party Standing Committee on the Sciences and Education', 3 June 1964, Llangefni, AA: WA 18/53.

<sup>10</sup> Requests were made by educationists such as Brian Simon and Robin Pedley, but also by disparate groups such as the Ty Croes Camp Wives' Club, The Secondary School Examination Council and the NUT. Lovett's papers also contain abundant requests for advice and visits from various individuals, LEAs, schools and universities, see TLPF, Llangefni, AA: WA 18/53.

As has been suggested, the history of comprehensivisation in England and Wales has regularly been framed within a national and party-political framework. Despite the acknowledgement of numerous scholars that the original ‘breakout’ by LEAs towards comprehensive schooling happened prior to central government’s support for such education, it has predominantly been described and explained from a party-political stance.<sup>11</sup> In this chapter, however, it is argued that it is misleading to consider the Anglesey case, and indeed other early comprehensive converters, as parts of a national ‘comprehensive movement’ (particularly if framed in a party-political context). It is also suggested that both central and local government’s influence on educational developments during this period was limited and largely unintentional. Formal governmental policies set the parameter for educational developments on Anglesey, but other factors had very significant and lasting effects on the island’s comprehensive system.

### **The Anglesey system – ‘All-through’ comprehensive schools**

As a result of Anglesey’s early conversion to a comprehensive system, there was a dearth of existing examples to model its schools on. However, the planning process undertaken by Anglesey’s LEA in the period running up to 1953 had ensured the establishment of a plan of four comprehensive schools in the island’s main population centres.<sup>12</sup> The existing plans for the creation of the four new schools accommodating 760 pupils in Amlwch, 588 in Beaumaris, 842 in Llangefni and almost 1,000 in Holyhead in 1953, did not engender any significant debate at that time.<sup>13</sup> Lovett frequently emphasised the benefits of large comprehensive schools in rural areas, reiterating some of the arguments put forward by the LEA in the period leading up to 1953. One of these arguments was that large comprehensive schools were the only option whereby children in rural areas could be given the opportunity of specialised instruction comparable to that in large urban grammar schools.

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<sup>11</sup> For more on this, see Introduction.

<sup>12</sup> For more on this, see Chapters Two and Three.

<sup>13</sup> HMI, Llangefni, AA: WA 4/21 and *TES*, 6 February 1953.

Not only could staff numbers in large comprehensive schools ensure extensive specialised teaching, but also provide the possibility for students to experience a broad range of subjects. At Holyhead, in the late 1950s, pupils 'came into active contact' with no less than eighteen subjects during their time in the secondary school.<sup>14</sup> However, this chapter will show how large comprehensive schools were controversial from their initial formation, and how they increasingly attracted disapproval from various observers throughout this period and beyond.

Despite such criticisms, alternatives to '11-18' schools were never considered by Anglesey's LEA. The creation of so called 'all-through' comprehensive schools meant that the scheme came under criticism from very early on, and therefore a defensive stance was adopted by several of the head teachers in order to counter such denunciations. Central government had stated its preference for the tripartite system in the pamphlet *The Nation's Schools* (1945), and also in further Circulars in the late 1940s. However, multilateral schools would be considered on an individual basis, but central government's view on the appropriate size of such schools was rather ambiguous.<sup>15</sup> The fact that all schools were expected to 'provide an adequate number of alternative courses to suit their [pupils'] needs' inevitably dictated that such schools would have to accommodate large numbers of pupils in order to ensure wide-ranging specialist teaching (especially for the Sixth Form).<sup>16</sup> Due to the lack of experience of comprehensive institutions of that size, any development plans which incorporated such schools had to demonstrate that if it was found to be desirable at a later date, they had planned for, and would be able to revert back to, separate units as and when required.<sup>17</sup> A government circular in 1947 argued that the minimum size for a multilateral school should be of a ten or eleven form entry, accommodating between 1,500 -1,700 pupils, although nine hundred might not be 'entirely unreasonable' in rural areas. Once again, a range of issues likely to arise in

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<sup>14</sup> See Lovett, 'Educational Opportunities (C) More Advanced Courses and The Sixth Form', p.50.

<sup>15</sup> Apart from the *The Nation's Schools* (May 1945), another circular titled 'The Organisation of Secondary Education' was also issued in December the same year. In 1947 the MoE published Circular 144: 'The Organisation of Secondary Education' together with the pamphlet *The New Secondary Education*.

<sup>16</sup> MoE, 'Circular 73: Organisation of Secondary Schools', 12 December 1945, London, TNA: ED 142/56.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

schools with such large numbers of pupils were also highlighted.<sup>18</sup> Central government's mixed views and equivocal advice in relation to this question reveals the rather precarious foundations of '11-18' comprehensive schools at the time of Anglesey's submission of its Development Plan (1946). Nevertheless, the LEA believed large '11-18' units to be the only possible way to ensure sufficient numbers to sustain Sixth Forms in the island's comprehensive schools. The prospect of providing wide-ranging courses was deemed impossible by means of the tripartite system, and the possibility of doing so through larger units was one of the more frequent and powerful arguments put forward in favour of comprehensivisation.<sup>19</sup> Additionally, the Anglesey scheme had always been based on the assumption that four or five large schools would serve the whole island. Already in the 1930s this had been the preferred policy, and even the original plan in the wake of the Welsh Intermediate Act (1889) had proposed five large schools in the island's main population centres.<sup>20</sup> Therefore, a tiered system, like the one pioneered by Leicestershire in 1957 for example, was never considered on Anglesey.<sup>21</sup> Apart from the fact that such tiered schemes did not come to the fore until Anglesey's reorganisation had already been completed, they were also primarily designed to utilise existing secondary school accommodation. In LEAs where differentiated provision had resulted in the existence of an array of secondary school buildings this kind of organisation was deemed most

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<sup>18</sup> Simon, *Education and the Social Order*, pp. 107 and 108.

<sup>19</sup> For more on this, see Chapter Three.

<sup>20</sup> The Welsh Intermediate Act (1889) had allowed the grammar schools in Llangefni and Holyhead to be established (although originally intended as intermediate schools rather than grammar schools). It had originally been envisaged that the new intermediate schools, together with the existing grammar school in Beaumaris, would provide educational opportunities in the main population centres for the whole of the island, see T. Lovett, 'Developments in Anglesey', *The Teacher in Wales* (1961), pp. 9-11.

<sup>21</sup> The Leicestershire scheme was a tiered system of comprehensive schooling which avoided the problem of abolishing grammar schools. Modern schools were made into 'junior high schools' (accommodating all pupils from a dedicated catchment area), and grammar schools became 'senior high schools' (taking pupils who would continue their academic education). The 'junior high schools' would teach all pupils for three years, and those who did not progress to the 'senior high school' for another extra year, Crook, 'Local Authorities and Comprehensivisation in England and Wales, 1944-1974', p. 250. The option of tiered systems of comprehensive school organisation was a model which proved much less controversial than systems of 'all-through' schools. These types of options became more prominent during the early 1960s and were adapted and implemented by other LEAs such as Leeds and the West Riding, see Kerckhoff, Fogelman, Crook and Reeder, *Going Comprehensive in England and Wales*, pp. 101, 121, 127. In an article in 1978 Leicestershire's comprehensive system was described as 'The Conservatives' comprehensives', *The Guardian*, 12 September 1978.

economical.<sup>22</sup> This situation never arose on Anglesey, however, since there had only ever existed one purpose-built Modern school (in Holyhead) which was easily merged together with the grammar school to create the new comprehensive school in 1949.

Perhaps predictably, considering the general uncertainty as regards to '11-18' comprehensive schools, external views on Anglesey's school organisation were not always positive. Both supporters and detractors of comprehensive schools tended to criticise '11-18' schools for being too big and impersonal.<sup>23</sup> Robin Pedley published several acclaimed books on comprehensive education in the 1950s and 1960s, and became one of the most well-known and vociferous spokespersons on comprehensive education.<sup>24</sup> His interim survey of Britain's existing comprehensive schools in 1954 (a summary of which was published in the journal *Education* in 1954) was the first attempt by an educationist to undertake a review of comprehensive schooling along these lines. Anglesey was one of Pedley's case studies in his survey, and he was in intermittent contact with Lovett during the 1950s and the first half of the 1960s.<sup>25</sup> In his letters to Lovett, Pedley often requested information

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<sup>22</sup> See Kerckhoff, Fogelman, Crook and Reeder, *Going Comprehensive in England and Wales*, p. 7. Anthony Crosland's acceptance of flexible solutions, such as tiered schemes, resulted in less opposition from Conservative LEAs since they were able to abolish selection while still retaining grammar schools by rebranding them 'upper-tiered schools'. In these circumstances existing modern and primary schools largely became middle- and lower-tiered schools respectively, Kerckhoff, Fogelman, Crook and Reeder, *Going Comprehensive in England and Wales*, pp. 101 and 102.

<sup>23</sup> Grammar school teachers had emphasised their concerns regarding the size of comprehensive schools, and the threat of such institutions becoming impersonal, as a particular worry as early as the 1940s, Fenwick, *The Comprehensive School 1944-1970*, p. 52. Critics from the Conservative Party also pointed out such shortcomings, Barker, *Education and Politics 1900-1951*, p. 91. Horsbrugh also stated in the House of Commons that she considered large schools a 'monster of mass education, with children on the assembly line', see HC Deb 24 July 1951, vol 491, cols 210-331. R. A. Butler referred to comprehensive schools as 'soulless education factories', cited in Benn, *School Wars*, p. 52 and Benn and Chitty, *Thirty Years On Is Comprehensive Education Alive and Well or Struggling to Survive?*, p. 108. Some within the Labour Party also expressed their concern about large size comprehensive schools, Lawton, *Education and Labour Party Ideologies*, p. 55.

<sup>24</sup> Pedley's most well-known publications on the topic were, *Comprehensive Schools Today* (1955), *Comprehensive Education, A New Approach* (1956) and *The Comprehensive School* (1963). Pedley's views were brought to the attention of the press and the public, as well as to David Eccles (Conservative Minister of Education, 1954-57 and 1959-62) who met with Pedley in the wake of the publication of *Comprehensive Education, A New Approach* in 1956. For more on this, see B. Simon, 'Pedley, Robin (1914-1988)', rev. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/39992>, accessed 3 Sept 2014].

<sup>25</sup> See, for example, 'Letter from Brian Simon to Lovett' (requesting a visit for Pedley and himself), 26 February 1954; 'Letter from Pedley to Lovett', 4 December 1958; 'Letter from Pedley to Lovett', 28 September 1961; 'Letter from Lovett to Pedley', 23 November 1961; 'Letter from Lovett to Pedley', 30 January 1962; 'Letter

and statistical data relating to Holyhead School. His writings as an external observer of Anglesey's schools therefore provide valuable source material. He also became one of the most prominent critics of '11-18' comprehensive schools. His books expressed support for two-tiered comprehensive systems, not only for their possible economic and practical benefits, but also because of Pedley's commitment to the idea of small community schools combined with County Colleges.<sup>26</sup> In a 1956 meeting with Eccles it was supposedly made clear to Pedley that the Ministry would encourage experimentation with two-tiered systems along the lines he proposed, and the two-tiered comprehensive system in Leicestershire (introduced in 1957) has therefore largely been attributed to Pedley's ideas and influence.<sup>27</sup> His books sold significant numbers of copies, providing public exposure for his ideas, and the (admittedly rather meagre) details on existing comprehensive schools in Crosland's *The Future of Socialism* were also generated from Pedley's research.<sup>28</sup> The report for the Association of Education Committees' journal *Education* (1954), where he levelled significant criticisms of existing comprehensive schools, established him as a key observer of early experimental

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from Pedley to Lovett', 11 October 1963; 'Letter from Pedley to Lovett', 23 July 1964 and 'Letter from Lovett to Pedley', 11 December 1964. All letters available in TLPF, Llangefni, AA: WA 18/53.

<sup>26</sup> Pedley was a firm proponent of a two-tiered system of education where existing school buildings (often secondary modern schools) would be used for lower schools. These units would be able to serve as small community comprehensive schools. Existing (predominantly grammar schools) would be turned into County Colleges, serving Sixth Forms as well as further studies in practical subjects, effectively forming an upper-comprehensive school see, for example, R. Pedley, *Comprehensive Education, a New Approach* (London, 1956) and R. Pedley, *The Comprehensive School* (Harmondsworth, 1970).

<sup>27</sup> See B. Simon, 'Pedley, Robin (1914–1988)', rev. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/39992>, accessed 3 Sept 2014]. Pedley also argued that the MoE had encouraged such experimentation prior to the introduction of the Leicestershire scheme, rather than having been swayed by the Leicestershire experiment, see *The Guardian*, 21 January 1959. Pedley has been considered instrumental for the developments in Leicestershire see, for example, *The Times*, 24 November 1988 and B. Simon, 'Pedley, Robin (1914–1988)', rev. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/39992>, accessed 3 Sept 2014]. Pedley also set out his view for the future along these lines in his three part interim survey of comprehensive education, see Pedley, 'Comprehensive Schools Today: an Interim Survey (1)', pp. 518-520; Pedley, 'Comprehensive Schools Today: an Interim Survey (2)', pp. 564-568 and Pedley, 'Comprehensive Schools Today: an Interim Survey (3)', pp. 612-613. However, Leicestershire's Chief Education Officer in charge at the time of its reorganisation claimed that the idea for the Leicestershire Plan came to him '...in a flash of inspiration while...shaving', see *The Guardian*, 12 September 1978.

<sup>28</sup> *The Comprehensive School* (1963) had by 1970 gone through five reprints or new editions, see Pedley, *The Comprehensive School* (1963). Crosland referenced Pedley's book *The Comprehensive School Today* (1955) in his chapter on education, C. A. R., *The Future of Socialism*, pp. 235-237.

comprehensive schemes.<sup>29</sup> Pedley's ideas attracted increasing attention and the *Observer's* educational correspondent referred to his *Comprehensive Education* (1956) as 'the intelligent parents' guide to secondary education'. The correspondent even suggested the book warranted becoming a best-seller due to the growing interest in education among parents and politicians.<sup>30</sup> Although the majority of his criticisms were reserved for the tripartite system, Pedley's reservations concerning '11-18' comprehensive schools did nothing to allay already existing fears. The question whether these large institutions would have negative effects on their 'grammar type' pupils continued to plague '11-18' schools. Holyhead, one of Pedley's fourteen surveyed schools in 1954, was specifically criticised because of its size.<sup>31</sup> In *Comprehensive Education A New Approach* Pedley observed that '[T]he only serious objections to Anglesey's comprehensive schools have concerned their size', and went on to quote a former teacher from the area who had claimed that concerns had been raised suggesting that children from small communities felt lost in these vast institutions. He also pointed out:

There is the story of the small and very puzzled boy who mistook an elderly master for the caretaker, but who voiced the master's own feelings exactly by asking him in Welsh. "Where in the world is this bloody IIF?" The parents similarly feel that there is no [sic] comparable to the head of a small school, to whom they can go, confident that he will know their child and his problems.<sup>32</sup>

These comments were consistent with his argument that large comprehensive schools were too impersonal and that community schools were preferable. However, there is no evidence to suggest that this was a recurring complaint among substantial numbers of Anglesey parents during this time. Some criticism from parents had been noted by Jones-Davies (Director of Education, 1960-1964). While the transition to comprehensive education had not attracted any significant opposition from

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<sup>29</sup> See Pedley, 'Comprehensive Schools Today: an Interim Survey (1)', pp. 518-520; Pedley, 'Comprehensive Schools Today: an Interim Survey (2)', pp. 564-568 and Pedley, 'Comprehensive Schools Today: an Interim Survey (3)', pp. 612-613. The report was also highlighted in the *Guardian*, 23 October 1954, where the national newspaper recounted Pedley's criticisms concerning strict streaming of pupils, a lack of sense of community in large schools and their 'tendency towards educational orthodoxy, not to say conventionality' which had depressed Pedley.

<sup>30</sup> *The Guardian*, 16 September 1956.

<sup>31</sup> See Pedley, 'Comprehensive Schools Today: an Interim Survey (2)', pp. 564-568.

<sup>32</sup> Letter from anonymous teacher to Pedley cited in Pedley, *Comprehensive Education A New Approach*, p. 125.



parents previously, he acknowledged that there were those within the county who were critical of the comprehensive system. After having discussed these concerns with them, the Director felt that their criticisms of the 'large size schools' were in fact associated with their 'social dislike of the Comprehensive School' rather than with the actual size of these institutions.<sup>33</sup>

Considering that the island's schools were the recipients of such external scrutiny and criticism, and in view of the mounting concerns surrounding the '11-18' comprehensive schools, it is not surprising that moves were made by a proactive head teacher such as Lovett to defend the system. Pedley had also directed more general criticisms towards those, like Lovett, who were providing a defence of '11-18' schools. He suggested that those expressing such arguments were '[D]riven to defend the indefensible' and that they must have had to 'turn their basic principles topsy-turvy by playing down the lamentable social effects' of such large institutions.<sup>34</sup> Pedley also discounted the suggestion that the 'class' or the 'house' could fulfil the role of a supportive social unit for pupils, since he considered the ceremonious allocation of thirty pupils to a tutor a case of a relationship being both 'forced and artificial'.<sup>35</sup> It is understandable that Lovett's contributions on this issue became increasingly more defensive as criticisms increased. An article by Lovett published in the *TES* in 1953 was dedicated to a detailed account of Holyhead's school curriculum.<sup>36</sup> His contribution to the same publication in 1956 on the other hand offered a much more defensive piece of writing, and in relation to the size of Holyhead School, Lovett stated that:

From past experience the headmaster has found that personal contact with every pupil is extremely difficult even in small schools, and is largely mythical in most... The only person who can acquire this intimate personal knowledge of his pupils in a day school is the form teacher, and even then there must be ample time for personal contact.<sup>37</sup>

This response to the accusation of providing an impersonal environment also defended the role of the form teacher in assessing pupils' needs and capabilities. The dedication of forty-five minutes to

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<sup>33</sup> See Jones-Davies, 'Secondary Organization in Anglesey', pp. 366-369.

<sup>34</sup> Pedley, *Comprehensive Education A New Approach*, pp. 113 and 119.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 119.

<sup>36</sup> *TES*, 6 February 1953.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

'form time' each day was also pointed out as a means of generating a sense of belonging within the group.<sup>38</sup> Further details of Lovett's views on these matters were provided in an article in 1958.<sup>39</sup> The practice of the form period (last period each day) where social, athletic or supervised independent study activities could take place under the direction of the form teacher was described:

It is during this daily period that the form teacher can discover those intimate details affecting each of his thirty pupils, the knowledge of which is so essential to the Headmaster. It is also to each pupil a "homing point" after the day's many and various activities, where he or she can be assured of good advice and guidance from a teacher who is their confidant, and of understanding from form-mates.<sup>40</sup>

This was a concerted attempt to show how pupils' needs for stability and support in the school were successfully met. Whether pupils actually considered their form teachers 'confidants' and the form period a 'homing point' is debatable, and the proposition perhaps appears overly-optimistic.

However, it is indicative of the criticisms which large comprehensive schools were subject to during this period, and how such censures were being addressed by comprehensive supporters. By 1958 the Leicestershire scheme, partially designed to avoid the problematic issue of over-sized comprehensive schools was underway. Those involved in the comprehensivisation debate at the time would have been aware of these developments, and these new solutions put pressure on head teachers of '11-18' schools to show that they were tackling this problem. While Lovett tended to firmly refute the proposition that the size of 'all-through' comprehensive schools was problematic, the head teachers in some of the other schools perceived size as a problem. In Llangefni, for example, the head teacher believed the circulation of eight to nine hundred pupils '...on migration every forty minutes a dreadful prospect,' revealing his exasperation with the size of the school.<sup>41</sup>

Apart from the attempts in Holyhead to sustain strong pastoral support to pupils through the form system, Llangefni's head teacher Davies was trialling pioneering work. The rationale behind the policy was predominantly to maintain a sense of community in the new large comprehensive

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<sup>38</sup> *TES*, 27 January 1956.

<sup>39</sup> T. Lovett, 'Comprehensive Schools at Work – 3 No Longer An "Experiment"', in *The Schoolmaster* (1958), p. 653.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> HR, 'Amlwch, Beaumaris and Llangefni Secondary Schools. HM Inspectors Report Summer and Autumn Terms, 1961. Part II – Section Relating to Llangefni Secondary School', Llangefni, AA: WA 1/72.

schools. In an article in the *Observer* Davies likened ‘the daily fleet of school buses to Pied Pipers, “blowing their horns and taking the children away from their communities”’.<sup>42</sup> To counteract this problem, his approach (which continued into the 1970s) was to arrange the house system in accordance with pupils’ home villages in order to try and retain a sense of local affiliation.<sup>43</sup> Additionally, two full-time teachers were employed to integrate the school into local communities by, for example, arranging village entertainment to be performed through the medium of Welsh to the local population.<sup>44</sup> Davies also defended his policy by pointing out that ‘[U]nless we can take this social dimension into consideration, this school might as well be in Liverpool’.<sup>45</sup> Part of this organisation of the house system in accordance with geographical considerations was also an endeavour to respond to the question of how to integrate pupils into such a large school. Davies emphasised this point, saying about the first year pupils ‘[W]hen they arrive at a school like this it is a crisis in their lives. It is possible that their first class here is larger than their primary school’.<sup>46</sup> Davies’ assessment that the difference in size between the primary schools and the comprehensive schools had a significant effect on pupils has also been observed in testimonies by former pupils. All interviewees from Llangefni School emphasised that the difference in size between the primary and secondary schools was one of the most memorable features of the transition between the two schools.<sup>47</sup> The positive action taken in Llangefni to address the issue of pupils attending school away from their localities was therefore linked with a response to the problem of size. Because Anglesey’s schools were such early pioneers they were forced to experiment with innovative solutions to problems as and when they emerged. While initiatives such as that in Llangefni was part of an attempt by the head teacher to improve the running of his school by making it part of the local community, it nevertheless constituted a pioneering approach.

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<sup>42</sup> *The Observer*, 6 December 1964.

<sup>43</sup> The continuation of the Llanefni approach was confirmed in a questionnaire (December 1970), TLP, Aberystwyth, NLW: GB 0210 TREVETT (3).

<sup>44</sup> *The Observer*, 6 December 1964.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> *The Times*, 5 April 1965.

<sup>47</sup> See author’s interview with former pupil in Llangefni School (1950s) 12 April 2013; former pupil in Llangefni School (1960s) 20 May 2013 and interview with former pupil in Llangefni School (1950s) 23 May 2013.

Despite continuous concerns about the size of '11-18' schools, the idea of a Leicestershire-type tiered system of comprehensive education was never considered as an option for Anglesey. There were several reasons why such a solution was strongly opposed by Anglesey's head teachers. The idea of creating County Colleges which would be attended by all pupils over the age of sixteen was treated with suspicion. Apart from misgivings about whether Sixth Form pupils were in fact that keen on attending such institutions (this was one of Pedley's arguments in favour of County Colleges) there were indeed other, more practical reasons to oppose such suggestions. It was strongly believed that the loss of Sixth Form teaching in the comprehensive schools would result in difficulties when trying to recruit good specialist staff. The absence of opportunities to teach the Sixth Form would put specialist teachers off applying to the comprehensive schools.<sup>48</sup> Another issue was that in the absence of a Sixth Form, comprehensive schools would be deprived of their natural leaders, something Lovett emphatically commented on in *Inside the Comprehensive School* (1958). The importance of the Sixth Form's influence on the entire comprehensive school was explained by his suggestion that '[I]t is only those educational advisers and writers who have spent little - if any, time in contact with the real school society who ignore, belittle or overlook this [the influence of the Sixth Form] important factor'.<sup>49</sup> Considering the criticisms '11-18' comprehensive schools received in relation to their size, the subsequent efforts made by head teachers to alleviate this problem is understandable. However, it is rather incongruous that one of the main concerns of the LEA during the latter half of the 1960s would become the question of whether the island's comprehensive schools were actually too small to be efficiently run.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> See Jones-Davies, 'Secondary Organization in Anglesey', pp. 366-369. Jones-Davies also mentioned the concern of head teachers about the potentially great travelling distances for pupils if County Colleges were to be introduced.

<sup>49</sup> Lovett, 'Educational Opportunities (C) More Advanced Courses and The Sixth Form', in *NUT*, p. 49.

<sup>50</sup> For more on this, see Chapter Five.

## From grammar schools to comprehensive schools

The physical accommodation available to Anglesey's newly established comprehensive schools became a significant factor for the organisation of these schools, something which also influenced the local perceptions of them. One of the more controversial issues related to education on Anglesey during the period 1953-66 was the creation of the new David Hughes School in Menai Bridge, and the subsequent closure of the old grammar school in Beaumaris. The debate followed the LEA's decision to discontinue the use of the old grammar school in Beaumaris and erect the new purpose-built comprehensive school in Menai Bridge in its place. The arguments put forward during the discussions are illustrative of how, up until that point, the reorganisation of the island's schools had constituted continuity rather than change. It also reveals similarities between the opposition to the relocation of David Hughes and the sentiment expressed among grammar school supporters elsewhere where the comprehensive question was being discussed.

The school facilities in Beaumaris had already been considered inadequate ahead of the creation of the new LEA scheme in the wake of the 1944 Act.<sup>51</sup> The need to facilitate new accommodation for the school had been part of the original Development Plan, but the final decision on the new site, and the official notice for the new school, was not forthcoming until 1955.<sup>52</sup> The long and distinguished history of the Beaumaris grammar school (with its Tudor origins) had already caused a certain amount of tension in the mid-1940s due to the change of name at the time of the school being reorganised along comprehensive lines.<sup>53</sup> It is therefore unsurprising that the proposal to

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<sup>51</sup> The Board of Governors' minutes show numerous requests from the head teacher for the improvement of the accommodation, and also appeals from the governors to the Education Committee for the matter to be addressed. The promise of the erection of new buildings meant that no extensions to the existing accommodation were allowed, but plans were continuously postponed (1944, 1947) and the head teacher's observation that '...the prospect of new buildings is growing increasingly dim...' was by no means an over-pessimistic assessment, see BCS, 'minutes', 1933-1949, Llangefni, AA: WA 17/79.

<sup>52</sup> The notice under section 13 (3) of the 1944 Education Act was given by the County Council in April 1955, see *The North Wales Chronicle*, 22 April 1955.

<sup>53</sup> The governing body at Beaumaris grammar school tried several times to retain the title 'grammar school' in its name, and finally accepted 'The Beaumaris County Secondary School (Incorporating the Beaumaris Grammar School established 1603)', BCS, 'Minutes', 23 July 1946, Llangefni, AA: WA 17/79. For more on this, see Chapter Three.

relocate the school from Beaumaris to Menai Bridge caused further disapproval among certain local interests. Plans for the new school on a different site had encountered continuous complications due to the difficulty of finding an appropriate and available site in Beaumaris. The alternative option of locating the school in Menai Bridge was first proposed in 1953, but was subsequently abandoned after an objection signed by 1,242 local residents had been received by the LEA.<sup>54</sup> However, the plans were officially revived again in 1955 after further deliberations by the LEA.<sup>55</sup> By June 1955 the Beaumaris Borough Council had voted against the proposal and submitted an objection to the Ministry. A subsequent petition was signed by 2,506 local residents and parents.<sup>56</sup> The issue proved an emotive one, and in January 1955 *The Guardian* published an article: 'Tearing a school up by its roots: Beaumaris wants to know why'.<sup>57</sup> National newspaper coverage undoubtedly stirred the LEA to rally its defence in support of its decision, and an official response was presented in a letter to the newspaper about a month later.<sup>58</sup> The LEA objected to the suggestion that the reason for the relocation of the school was a matter of a lack of an appropriate site in Beaumaris. The centrality of Menai Bridge within the catchment area, and the consequent savings to be made in regards of pupil transport were emphasised, as was the argument that building plans indicated that more houses were scheduled to be built in Menai Bridge than in Beaumaris.<sup>59</sup> A couple of letters from local residents (one of whom was Rev. Ramage of the Beaumaris Appeal Committee) to *The Guardian* demonstrated a strong emotional attachment to the old grammar school.<sup>60</sup> Even stronger opposition to the LEA's proposal was expressed when suggesting that the LEA's conduct was: 'the grave concern

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<sup>54</sup> MoE, 'Internal correspondence', 12 December 1954, London, TNA: ED 216/35. Apart from the petition, the progress of the new school had also been hampered by the problems of finding a site and in 1953 the Education Committee also inferred that the project might have to be put-off indefinitely due to spiralling costs.

<sup>55</sup> The Secondary Education Sub-Committee strongly opposed the Education Committee's suggestion to delay the school building project (report in July 1953), and the building plans were subsequently reinstated, TLP, 'Report: The Past, Present and Future of Secondary Education in Anglesey', July 1954, Aberystwyth, NLW: GB 0210 TREVETT (6).

<sup>56</sup> AEC, 'Letter from Humphreys to the P[ermanent] S[ecretary to the] W[elsh] D[e]partment', 4 July 1955.

<sup>57</sup> *The Guardian*, 28 January 1955.

<sup>58</sup> *The Guardian*, 26 February 1955.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> Ramage was the most vociferous of the protesters in the Beaumaris Appeal Committee. His views were published in *The Guardian*, 2 March 1955, he was also in correspondence with Hughes, MoE, 'Letter from Ramage to Cledwyn Hughes', 19 March 1956, London, TNA: ED 216/35.

of all democrats, and free people everywhere...[and that]...such an audacious uprooting of an old school without some regard to the voice of the people' was a serious threat to the democratic process.<sup>61</sup> The LEA's response, as published in *The Guardian*, was also firmly criticised and condemned because of its alleged focus on geographical and financial concerns rather than educational issues. It was proposed that educationally, the children of the catchment area would best be served by 'this [David Hughes] historic old grammar school, which has an excellent academic record'.<sup>62</sup> Once informed of the MoE's refusal to grant the public enquiry which had been requested by the campaigners, Ramage nevertheless sent a letter to Cledwyn Hughes expressing his gratitude for calling the Minister's attention to the matter. He also reiterated the case for retaining the school in Beaumaris, and apart from expressing his shock at the refusal of the enquiry, very similar arguments to those expressed in *The Guardian* in 1955 were put forward. Ramage also strongly criticised the Minister, highlighting the fact that:

The Minister has stated publicly that he would not "assassinate" the old grammar schools, yet this is in effect what is being done in this area, for though the old Beaumaris Grammar School has been already incorporated in the larger David Hughes Secondary School, it does still exist on the old original site where the founder willed, three and a half centuries ago, that it should "remain from time to time for ever"... We invite him [the Minister] to give one reason why it is educationally advantageous to uproot this Tudor Grammar School.<sup>63</sup>

The view that the old grammar schools had been incorporated into the new comprehensive schools had undoubtedly aided the transition throughout the latter half of the 1940s and the early 1950s. The island's grammar schools had already admitted a larger than average proportion of children during the 1930s (a great area of contention between the LEA and the BoE) and the provision of multilateral education in the island's secondary schools was fundamentally an extension of this trend.<sup>64</sup> Furthermore, the creation of interim 'secondary modern schools' as extensions to existing primary schools had in effect ensured that the foundation for the comprehensive system rested on the traditional 'all-age' school provision with 'higher classes' of senior pupils within the elementary

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<sup>61</sup> *The Guardian*, 7 February 1955.

<sup>62</sup> *The Guardian*, 2 March 1955.

<sup>63</sup> MoE, 'Letter from Ramage to Cledwyn Hughes', 19 March 1956, London, TNA: ED 216/35.

<sup>64</sup> For more on this, see Chapter Two.

schools. The head teacher's report to the Board of Governors in October 1952 also shows how pupils in Beaumaris were clearly perceived as divided along grammar and modern lines:

At the present time the school is of necessity more bilateral than comprehensive – since it has been necessary to face the existing Secondary Modern with the existing Grammar School. Thus there are two main streams – the Grammar and the Modern stream.<sup>65</sup>

Evidently, despite the comprehensivisation of the school in Beaumaris in 1953, there had still been significant continuity rather than change as far as school organisation was concerned. However, the proposition to move the school into a purpose built comprehensive school building made its 'comprehensive nature' more obvious. Correspondence between the Director and the Welsh Department also reveals the feeling that it was, at least partially, the closure of the grammar school and its replacement with a clearly comprehensive institution that was causing local opposition. In a letter from Humphreys to the Welsh Department in 1955 he specifically urged for its permission to omit any 'reference to the character of the school' in the impending official notice.<sup>66</sup> The Director expressed his concern over parents' potential opposition to the comprehensiveness of the school, commenting that 'it would not help anyone to get something approaching a riot among the parents of children in the south-eastern part of the County'.<sup>67</sup> Humphreys' suggestion in another letter concerning the wording of the official notice for the new school, also revealed his anxiety towards public opposition to the comprehensive nature of the new institution. Humphreys recommended that the official notice should be phrased in such a way that any specific declaration of the actual discontinuation of David Hughes School in Beaumaris was side-stepped. His suggestion was to notify the public that:

The County Council propose to discontinue the use of the building at present housing the David Hughes County Secondary School which will be housed in the building now to be erected.<sup>68</sup>

This was an attempt by the Director to pacify any potential opposition by solely referring to the discontinuation of the buildings, rather than the actual school. However, the phrasing was not

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<sup>65</sup> BCS, 'Headmaster's Report to the Governing Body', 14 October 1952, London, TNA: ED 216/34.

<sup>66</sup> MoE, 'Letter from Humphreys to the Welsh Department', 12 January 1955, London, TNA: ED 216/34.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> MoE, 'Letter from Humphreys to the Welsh Department', 23 March 1955, London, TNA: ED 216/34.



approved by the Ministry, and considering the significant number of signatories in the petition against the replacing of the school six months later, Humphreys' apprehension might have been justified.<sup>69</sup> Although comprehensivisation was never expressly the official reason for public disapproval of the new school, the Welsh Department also considered it a significant cause for public resistance to the new site. Even though the grammar school had already been discontinued, the (inaccurate) perception among some of the staff within the Welsh Department was that the school had yet to be turned into a comprehensive school.<sup>70</sup> David Hughes School was generally still referred to as a grammar school, and the debate associated with the relocation of the school was resonant of the wider national picture where grammar schools were considered to be under threat when LEAs were considering comprehensive schemes.<sup>71</sup> The historian G. E. Jones has commented that it was 'difficult to dissect the precise nature of the opposition' to the relocation of David Hughes School. While this is undoubtedly the case, the disapproval expressed in this case indicates that while there had been no articulated opposition to comprehensivisation during the 1940s, the more tangible issue of replacing the historic school building, and what was considered its particular identity, nevertheless generated opposition in the mid-1950s. The statement in the *Guardian* that '[T]he case

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<sup>69</sup> In G. E. Jones' evaluation of the protests concerning David Hughes School he assigned the attempts to avoid referring to the new school in Menai Bridge as a comprehensive school to reluctant civil servants within the MoE. He suggested that this showed a 'fixation on the nature of the organization of Menai Bridge School' by the MoE rather than local preoccupation with the principle of comprehensive schooling, G. E. Jones, *Which Nation's Schools?* (Cardiff, 1990), p. 164. However, closer scrutiny of the documents shows that it was on the insistence of Humphreys that the question was initially raised, and that it was Allinson (a senior civil servant to the Ministry) who insisted that the notice would not just refer to 'buildings' but to the actual school, MoE, 'Letter from Allinson of the Welsh Department to Humphreys', 12 April 1955, London, TNA: ED 216/34.

<sup>70</sup> Internal correspondence in January 1955 shows the inaccurate impression within the Welsh Department that the secondary school in Beaumaris still had not been turned into a comprehensive school. It was noted that: 'Beaumaris is not comprehensive of course, and that is reason for supposing that a considerable volume of public opinion will be against the extinction of the school', and another internal note proposed that '...in Anglesey all the secondary schools with the exception of this particular one at Beaumaris are already comprehensive' see, for example, MoE, 'Internal Correspondence', 29 January 1955, London, TNA: ED 216/34 and MoE, 'Internal Correspondence', 9 February 1955, London, TNA: ED 216/34.

<sup>71</sup> Sir David Eccles (Education Secretary 1954-57 and 1959-62) had made a promise to protect grammar schools, and in 1955 he explained in a Cabinet memorandum that he would not approve any comprehensive school plans that involved an existing 'good school...[being]...swallowed up', see D. Crook, 'Politics, politicians and English comprehensive schools', *History of Education: Journal of the History of Education Society*, 42:3 (2013), pp. 365-380. This promise by the Minister was referred to specifically in Ramage's correspondence with Hughes in 1956 when stating his case for David Hughes to remain in Beaumaris, MoE, 'Letter from Ramage to Cledwyn Hughes', 19 March 1956, London, TNA: ED 216/35.

for the comprehensive school...is perhaps unusually strong in the island' and that "'Going Comprehensive'" had not 'caused David Hughes' School to lose its identity', is illustrative of the perception of Anglesey's schools during this time.<sup>72</sup> Comprehensivisation had been implemented with very little adverse public opinion, but the tendency had been to continuously refer to the school in Beaumaris as a grammar school. The emphasis on the significance of its long history as well as its academic excellence, suggests that comprehensivisation was not considered quite as acceptable once traditional institutions were being disposed of and replaced.<sup>73</sup> By contrast, at the time of the erection of the new school in Amlwch the grammar school had been housed in the town's Memorial Hall, in effect making the purpose built comprehensive school (1953) the first tangible home of Amlwch's secondary school. In the case of David Hughes, the prospect of the erection of a completely new school in another town posed a more evident threat to the status quo and therefore antagonised certain elements of the local population. A memorandum produced by the MoE in anticipation of receiving members of the Appeal Committee in London (May 1956) identified key members and provided profiles of the participants of the committee.<sup>74</sup> Notably, the Appeal Committee was not directly associated with the school, and it was believed that the head teacher knew 'nothing of its activities'.<sup>75</sup> It was also pointed out that two members with children of school age were sending their sons and daughters to independent schools away from Anglesey. Although not explicitly expressed, the grammar school, having been the only one on the island established prior to the Welsh Intermediate Education Act (1889), had undoubtedly afforded Beaumaris a certain status. The local gossip, according to the MoE memorandum, was that the quarrel with the LEA stemmed from the lack of consultation with local interests. More revealing,

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<sup>72</sup> *The Guardian*, 28 January 1955.

<sup>73</sup> For more on the history of David Hughes School see, for example, Pretty, *Two Centuries of Anglesey Schools* and *The Guardian*, 28 January 1955.

<sup>74</sup> The document identified five central individuals: The already mentioned Reverend Ramage, a bank cashier, one member of the Beaumaris Borough Council and two retired teachers (one of whom was also a prominent member of the Beaumaris Women's Conservative Association and another married to a former *Manchester Guardian* employee, possibly aiding the publication of the article about the school in 1955), MoE, 'Internal Memorandum', 19 April 1956, London, TNA: ED 216/35.

<sup>75</sup> MoE, 'Internal Memorandum', 19 April 1956, London, TNA: ED 216/35.

however, were comments made in relation to these alleged consultations by the MoE. Ramage commented in his letter to Hughes:

He [the Minister of Education] states in his letter that he has been making local enquiries. We would not, of course, dispute this, but it is within our knowledge that none of the prominent public figures in the area who are associated with the petition – not even the Town Clerk of Beaumaris or the Directors of Messrs. Saunders Roe Ltd – have been consulted by any agent of the Ministry of Education, either officially or unofficially.<sup>76</sup>

The indignant comment that ‘none of the prominent public figures’ involved in the protests had been consulted demonstrates the feeling that local interests had been ignored. It also suggests that the Appeal Committee perceived itself as an elite group. The social and professional positions of the majority of the members of the group, and the fact that the Committee had been formed by individuals not officially connected with the school, also indicates that the issue was one concerned with conserving an existing and traditional institution, rather than one of particular concern for educational provision. In the interview with the Appeal Committee it was pointed out by Sir Ben Bowen Thomas (Permanent Secretary to the Welsh Department, 1945-63) that:

the supporters of the grammar school in Beaumaris could have taken the opportunity to object at the time when the comprehensive school proposals were under discussion. But there were no protests at all at that time. The battle had been lost then.<sup>77</sup>

Bowen Thomas’ comments clearly showed that he believed that the Committee was trying to protect a grammar school which no longer actually existed, since it had been discontinued several years previously. This was an undeniably accurate assessment by the Permanent Secretary. However, the Committee’s attempts to protect the school in Beaumaris demonstrates the commonplace perception that rather than having been discontinued after 1953, the island’s grammar schools had simply accommodated an additional intake of ‘less academically gifted’ pupils within their school walls, but separate from their grammar school intake. Therefore, the school

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<sup>76</sup> MoE, ‘Letter from Ramage to Cledwyn Hughes’, 19 March 1956, London, TNA: ED 216/35.

<sup>77</sup> MoE, ‘Interview Memorandum’, 1 May 1956, London, TNA: ED 216/35. A very similar sentiment was expressed by Humphreys in a letter to the Welsh Department in July 1955 when he suggested that: ‘They [the objectors] must know that had they wished to object to the character of the proposed school, they had ample opportunity to do so in response to Public Notice under Section 11 (4) of the 1944 Act in June 1948. No objection was taken at that time, nor subsequently’, MoE, ‘Letter from Humphreys to the Welsh Department’, 4 July 1955, London, TNA: ED 216/34.

provision had been extended to incorporate different 'types' of secondary education, but these had remained largely separate up until this point. This was why the establishment of the purpose-built comprehensive school in Menai Bridge became an important development in the comprehensivisation process for the catchment area. Apart from cutting the close ties with the original grammar school, the new school building in Menai Bridge was also designed to organise pupils into houses where it was envisaged that mixed-ability house groups would replace the streamed form groups.<sup>78</sup> The practical aspect of educational facilities and accommodation were therefore able to influence not merely the nature of the secondary education provided, but also local perceptions of comprehensive schooling.

Accommodation and existing facilities also played an important role in developments elsewhere.

Despite the fact that new buildings had been provided in Llangefni and Amlwch, the HMI report undertaken in 1961 (issued in 1962) stated that:

Although the buildings at Amlwch and Llangefni are less than ten years old, they were planned at a time when ideas relating to the nature of comprehensive schools had scarcely crystallised into a coherent pattern. As a result of this, and of growing numbers the premises at both schools are deficient in many ways, more particularly in respect of accommodation for the practical subjects.<sup>79</sup>

Apart from the fact that the accommodation at the three schools was deemed inadequate, particularly in relation to practical subjects, the report also emphasised the difficulties related to pioneering a new system. Both schools had been built without blueprints upon which to model purpose-built comprehensive facilities, and numerous deficiencies were pointed out in both Amlwch and Llangefni. In Amlwch there were several instances where store rooms were being used as classrooms, and there was a general lack of equipment for a host of practical subjects and science laboratories. Practical instruction was also on the whole considered ill-equipped, poorly provided for

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<sup>78</sup> For more on this, see Chapter Five.

<sup>79</sup> HMI, 'Report: Amlwch, Beaumaris and Llangefni secondary schools', summer and autumn 1961, London, TNA: ED 216/27.

and often undertaken in overcrowded school buildings.<sup>80</sup> Due to the size of Llangefni School it was pointed out that problems of ‘circulation’ and ‘acute congestions’ had to be expected, and even though these were undesirable features they were nevertheless considered tolerable. Both the ‘circulation’ problem and the absence of a designated block for practical instruction were identified as significant flaws, and were considered to be consequences of the steadily increasing number of pupils in combination with ill-considered architectural plans. On the whole, these deficiencies made it difficult to provide sufficient practical education on the whole. Craftwork was particularly singled out as a problem area where it was ‘quite impossible and even farcical to expect good craft work’.<sup>81</sup> Practical education had consequently been identified as the most significantly deficient aspect of both schools, and such shortcomings naturally affected ‘modern type’ pupils more acutely. The lack of adequate facilities for these subjects put those pupils considered less academically gifted at a relative disadvantage compared to those undertaking ‘academic’ subjects. A supposed objective for secondary education in the wake of the 1944 Education Act had been ‘parity of esteem’ between different types of education, but as has often been highlighted, this proved virtually impossible to achieve. The traditionally academic subjects which had previously been taught in grammar schools, continued to be considered of superior status to practical subjects. Subsequently, head teachers and teachers as well as parents and politicians aimed to emulate the traditional ethos and curriculum of the grammar schools in other ‘types’ of secondary schools.<sup>82</sup> The outrage among parts of the local population in Beaumaris at the closure of the old David Hughes grammar school indicated this sentiment.

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<sup>80</sup> HMI, ‘Report: Amlwch, Beaumaris and Llangefni secondary schools’, summer and autumn 1961, London, TNA: ED 216/27.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> See, for example, C. Barnett, *The Verdict of Peace Britain Between Her Yesterday and the Future* (London, 2001), pp. 452 and 453; Lowe, *Education in the Post War Years*, pp. 117-120; M. Holt, *Schools and curriculum change* (Maidenhead, 1989), p. 5 and Chitty, *Understanding Schools and Schooling*, p. 20. The position among Labour politicians (perhaps particularly important politically while in opposition) increasingly indicated a desire to provide academic education more widely. In 1958 Gaitskell proposed that “‘It would be nearer the truth to describe our [Labour’s] proposals as ‘a grammar school education for all’...Our aim is greatly to widen the opportunities for all children to receive what is now called a grammar school education, and we also want to see grammar school standards – in the sense of higher quality education – extended far more generally””, *The Times*, 7 July 1958.

As has already been argued, Anglesey's schools had been overcrowded during the 1930s and 1940s. Despite the newly erected school accommodation in Menai Bridge (opened in 1963), overcrowding was yet again becoming a serious problem during the 1960s.<sup>83</sup> In Amlwch the school had been built for 650 to 700 pupils but in 1961 it housed 854. In Llangefni a temporary wooden building had to be erected in order to be able to accommodate woodwork classes, while certain other classes were forced to be taught in the old grammar school building.<sup>84</sup> Due to the difficulty in remedying such serious inadequacies in the accommodation (and the slow pace with which the MoE was able to extend and improve premises), head teachers' attempts to respond to these criticisms were often insufficient. For example, the head teacher in Amlwch decided to move classes out of those rooms that HMI had deemed unsuitable, but was forced to simply use the same inadequate rooms for the teaching of other subjects instead. Other measures in Amlwch included a store room being converted into an office for a deputy head teacher, while a headmistress still had to share her office with the clinic for sick pupils. Agricultural science was allocated a more 'attractive' room after the HMI had deemed the accommodation insufficient, although the newly appointed classroom was still largely without any suitable equipment.<sup>85</sup> While HMI's conclusions about the relatively newly built schools in Amlwch and Llangefni were rather bleak, the accommodation at Holyhead was also criticised. In general terms the school buildings were described as 'daunting', and were considered inadequate for the number of pupils on the roll. Holyhead's comprehensive school still encompassed the two different sites (previously the grammar school and the St. Cybi secondary modern school) that had originally merged in 1949. The accommodation was not only considered 'seriously deficient

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<sup>83</sup> There had been lengthy discussions concerning the re-arrangement of catchment areas in connection to the relocation of David Hughes School. Llangefni was overcrowded by the late 1950s, and calculations (keeping in mind industrial developments in the Llangefni area) seemed to suggest that the situation would become untenable by the mid-1960s if left unchanged. One of the main arguments in favour of the secondary school being situated in Menai Bridge was the potential to redraw the catchment area to reduce the intake in Llangefni by extending the catchment of David Hughes School. For a summary of the discussions and arguments, MoE, 'Internal correspondence', 18 July 1956, London, TNA: ED 216/34.

<sup>84</sup> HMI, 'Report: Amlwch, Beaumaris and Llangefni secondary schools', summer and autumn 1961, London, TNA: ED 216/27.

<sup>85</sup> HR, 'Minutes: General Comments', Llangefni, AA: WA 1/72.

in teaching area and various facilities' but was also 'generally inconvenient and bleak'.<sup>86</sup> The physical accommodation of the school was also considered insufficient and limiting to the life of the school, both academically and socially. Particular shortcomings in the provision of science, physical education and needlework were identified, but it was emphasised that these were mere examples of a host of problematic issues in accommodation and equipment.<sup>87</sup> The provision for practical education was therefore considered inadequate across the board in 1961. The school facilities and accommodation in Beaumaris were also described as insufficient, but due to the new school being under construction at the time of the inspection, David Hughes School was not commented upon in depth.<sup>88</sup>

Parallel to the deficiencies in accommodation for practical education, the internal organisation of the schools was also focused around the academic subjects. All of the four head teachers were former grammar school teachers, as were all heads of departments.<sup>89</sup> The significance of this was emphasised in a 1961 inspection report where it was observed that in Holyhead:

the present Heads of Departments do not have enough time to give to the needs and problems of the education of the average and less-than-average pupils, nor are they, in the main (with their heavy 'grammar' time-table) sufficiently involved in the teaching of these pupils to acquire a realistic view of the problems that arise from one level of ability to another, in particular those of the less able pupils.<sup>90</sup>

The report concluded that this resulted in a lack of consideration of the needs of the less able pupils, but apart from that, it also illustrates the persistent grammar school character and ethos within the schools. Therefore, the internal organisation in Holyhead reinforced pre-existing attitudes with its

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<sup>86</sup> HMI, 'Report: Holyhead County Secondary School', 13-17 November 1961, Llangefni, AA: WA 4/22.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> HMI, 'Report: Amlwch, Beaumaris and Llangefni secondary schools', summer and autumn 1961, London, TNA: ED 216/27.

<sup>89</sup> HMI, 'Report: Holyhead County Secondary School', 13-17 November 1961, Llangefni, AA: WA 4/22 and HMI, 'Report: Amlwch, Beaumaris and Llangefni secondary schools', summer and autumn 1961, London, TNA: ED 216/27.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid. Similar comments were made about the provision in Amlwch, Llangefni and Menai Bridge where it was observed that '[T]he fact that the schools grew from existing grammar schools has not unnaturally led to emphasis being placed on the maintenance and consolidation of academic standards...the remaining pupils [less academically gifted], who constitute the majority, are obliged to labour under an appreciable handicap', HMI, 'Report: Amlwch, Beaumaris and Llangefni secondary schools', summer and autumn 1961, London, TNA: ED 216/27.

bias towards 'grammar school subjects' and a staffing structure that favoured academically gifted pupils. The combination of such attitudes and the lack of sufficient equipment and facilities for practical education meant that the situation for pupils in the 'lower' or 'backward' forms was considered unsatisfactory by the early 1960s. The HMI report even commented that:

very much more still needs to be done in order that it may be demonstrated that all pupils derive equal opportunity, treatment and benefit from the establishment of the comprehensive school.<sup>91</sup>

The Director's reply to the proposition that pupils studying practical subjects needed to be managed more carefully if equal opportunities were to be extended to this group was dismissive. He questioned the understanding of the inspectorate as to the 'comprehensiveness' of Anglesey's system. He emphasised that to appoint particular co-ordinators to administer the education of the less able pupils would constitute a multilateral rather than comprehensive structure. Therefore, he believed the inspector's comment betrayed 'the "bilateralism" which underlies his thinking'.<sup>92</sup> Nevertheless, the suggestion was received much more favourably among the head teachers who seemed to feel the plight of the practically minded pupils more keenly.<sup>93</sup>

The most damning comments in both the Amlwch and Llangefni cases were made about those pupils considered 'backward'. The inspectorate noted in Amlwch that a:

very small room situated at the rear of the hall stage is used as a classroom for backward pupils (1F); it is most unsuitable and can only serve to create a mood of depression on the part of the teacher and of the pupils.<sup>94</sup>

Similarly gloomy observations were made in Llangefni where four classrooms for 'backward' children had been housed in the old grammar school building:

these classrooms are small, congested with old fashioned desks, and it must be stated without reservation that provision for these classes is deplorably inadequate. The teachers have a mere pittance for books and illustrations, and they are considerably handicapped by the teaching conditions which are the worst in the school. It is a matter of concern that pupils of low intelligence demanding at

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<sup>91</sup> HMI, 'Report: Amlwch, Beaumaris and Llangefni secondary schools', summer and autumn 1961, London, TNA: ED 216/27.

<sup>92</sup> HR, 'Amlwch, Beaumaris and Llangefni Secondary Schools. HM Inspectors Report Summer and Autumn Terms, 1961. Part II – Section Relating to Llangefni Secondary School', Llangefni, AA: WA 1/72.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> HMI 'Report: Amlwch, Beaumaris and Llangefni secondary schools', summer and autumn 1961, London, TNA: ED 216/27.



least a modicum of sympathy, stability and serenity should have to work under such colourless and drab surroundings.<sup>95</sup>

It was an unlikely coincidence that the instruction of 'backward' children at Llangefni had been allocated to the old grammar school building, where the accommodation was shared with an infant school. The lack of investment in teaching aids for these children also indicates the schools' inadequacy in providing education for this group. The head teacher's (Davies) response to these criticisms was one of acceptance. However, he expressed the view that the lack of equipment was due to insufficient funding as apportioned to each pupil by the LEA. The allocation of this funding out of the school's overall budget, 'a pittance for books and illustrations' for 'backward' pupils according to the inspection report, was nevertheless a matter for the school rather than the LEA.<sup>96</sup> The Director also acknowledged the need for improvement in accommodation, and was confident that the old school would cease to be used as soon as 'the Ministry allows the additional accommodation required to be built'.<sup>97</sup> Similarly, in Holyhead, it was observed that the less able pupils were not adequately catered for. It was suggested that more co-operation and concerted efforts were needed in order to provide the best possible education for these pupils. It was further believed that heads of departments:

do not have enough time to give to the needs and problems of the education of the average and less-than-average pupils, nor are they, in the main (with their heavy 'grammar' time-table) sufficiently involved in the teaching of these pupils to acquire a realistic view of the problems that arise from one level of ability to another, in particular those of the less able pupils.<sup>98</sup>

While it would be an exaggeration to declare Anglesey a particularly poor case, especially without a thorough comparison with inspection reports from other schools in different LEAs, certain conclusions can nevertheless be made from the above examples. The situation described above emerged due to a combination of factors. The shortcomings of the available school accommodation in conjunction with the fact that practical education was generally considered of inferior status to

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<sup>95</sup> HMI 'Report: Amlwch, Beaumaris and Llangefni secondary schools', summer and autumn 1961, London, TNA: ED 216/27.

<sup>96</sup> HR, 'Minutes: General Comments', Llangefni, AA: WA 1/72.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> HMI, 'Report: Holyhead County Secondary School, 13-17 November 1961', Llangefni, AA: WA 4/22.

those 'academic' subjects that had traditionally been taught in grammar schools, resulted in pupils considered less academically gifted, and those with special educational needs, being frequently ill-served by Anglesey's comprehensive system in the early 1960s. Although HMI emphasised these shortcomings in 1961, scant attention was paid to these concerns until the latter half of the 1960s and the early 1970s. It was this issue that would prove the most problematic to tackle in the longer term, both in Anglesey's comprehensive schools and in similar schools throughout England and Wales.

It was, however, the fate of 'grammar type' pupils that attracted the most attention during this period. While significant anxiety had been voiced with regards to the effects of comprehensivisation on 'grammar type' pupils, the situation on Anglesey during this period suggests that such fears were largely unfounded.<sup>99</sup> Pedley's 1954 interim survey concluded that there was no 'levelling down' of standards, as had been feared by educationists and frequently proposed by sceptics. His findings rather suggested the opposite, where all the schools in the survey could provide evidence of pupils exceeding expectations.<sup>100</sup> In contrast, it was 'modern type' pupils who had been identified as the group of concern in the island's comprehensive schools in the 1961 report. Early press coverage in 1953 and 1954, reporting on the island's newly established educational scheme, regularly praised

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<sup>99</sup> The Conservative Party's official policy, often traced back to educational thinking expressed in the pamphlet *One Nation* was strongly in favour of grammar schools, Conservative Political Centre, *One Nation – A Tory Approach to Social Problems* (London, 1950) and Lowe, *Education in the Post War Years*, p. 47. Cyril Norwood was a very influential grammar schools supporter. He was a former head teacher at Harrow, Chairman of the Secondary School Examinations Council during the 1940s and Chairman of the Norwood Committee. His concerns regarding any changes to the existing educational system were based on the anticipated effects an increase in the number of secondary school pupils would have on the more able pupils, who, he believed, had been served very well by the grammar schools. He was also troubled by the possibility of future pressures in favour of changing the traditional curriculum. For further comments on Norwood's and others' views and influence, McCulloch, 'Secondary education', p.38. For a scathing critique of the role of Norwood and the committee in hindering educational progress, Barnett, *The Verdict of Peace Britain*, pp. 452 and 453 and R. G. Wallace, 'The origins and authorship of the 1944 Education Act', *History of Education*, 10:4 (1981), pp. 283-285.

<sup>100</sup> Pedley used statistics collected from Holyhead as evidence to support his conclusions. He emphasised that 'three State scholarships and nine county major scholarships were gained last year; 45 Advanced level passes (including four distinctions) were gained by 19 pupils in G.C.E.; 327 Ordinary level passes were gained by 101 pupils – including a dozen who took a single subject from the sixth form'. He also pointed out that the figures would be nowhere near as high if a tripartite system would have been in place where approximately twenty per cent would have been selected for an academic education, see Pedley, 'Comprehensive Schools Today: an Interim Survey (1)', pp. 518-520.

the facilities for both practical and scientific education. A clear majority of the photographs used in these reports also portrayed pupils undertaking various kinds of practical education.<sup>101</sup> However, the interest in Anglesey's provision of practical and technical education waned rapidly, and while the facilities had been congratulated in the press during the early stages of the comprehensive scheme, they were by the early 1960s considered inadequate on the whole. The increased preoccupation with the fate of grammar school pupils, in combination with the sustained tendency to measure comprehensive schools' successes in relation to academic achievements, left the educational situation of 'modern type' pupils relatively unexplored and largely forgotten. In terms of pupils' achievements and educational experiences, the focus of the writing on Anglesey's education system 1953-63 was on 'grammar type' pupils.<sup>102</sup> The island's education system, and its comprehensive schools, were assessed according to examination results and the proportion of pupils entering the Sixth Form. On the other hand, the quality of the education for the pupils receiving a practical education was never emphasised apart from in the HMI report. Due to the intense scrutiny of Anglesey's schools during this period, and the general preoccupation with comprehensive schools' examination results, there was a tendency to concentrate efforts and attention onto academic rather than practical education. Consequently, reports on Anglesey's progress towards the end of

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<sup>101</sup> See, for example, *Liverpool Daily Post*, 19 January 1954; *Herald of Wales*, 30 January 1954; *Evening Chronicle*, 12 February 1954; *Western Mail & South Wales News*, 12 February 1954 and *Picture Post*, 4 December 1954.

<sup>102</sup> There were numerous journal articles written about Anglesey's education system, and the comprehensive system was consistently justified on the grounds that high achievers had not been shown to have suffered in Anglesey's comprehensive schools. A few examples include the articles "'Secondary education for all" has a new meaning in Anglesey's Comprehensive Schools' where it was emphasised that '...there is no evidence to suggest that the work of pupils of the grammar-technical type has suffered', *The Schoolmaster*, 3 July 1953. In 'The organisation of secondary schools 8. Anglesey' the author pointed out that 'standards have not gone down...[neither does]...one think it likely that comparable results could have been achieved by the former grammar schools', *Education*, 20 March 1959. In *The Guardian* it was pointed out that '[T]here is some evidence against the fear that the abler children will be handicapped; the examination results cited from Anglesey and the Isle of Man are creditable', see *The Guardian*, 23 October 1954. *The Western Mail* reported that Anglesey's sixth-formers were 'the cleverest in Wales' (with the highest proportion of State Scholarships per capita in Wales in 1960), and the interview with the Director of Education suggested that the good results were due to the county's comprehensive secondary schools, *The Western Mail*, 4 March 1961. In *The Observer* the head teacher of Llangejni was quoted saying that Anglesey's comprehensive schools were 'at least as successful scholastically as the grammar schools before them', *The Observer*, 6 December 1964. Trevor Lovett also consistently commented on the academic success of 'grammar type' pupils see, for example, *TES*, 27 January 1956 where he proposed that 'there is no evidence of any "levelling down"'. For a further example, see *The Schoolmaster*, 17 October 1958.

the period generally referred to the island's system as a success. This tendency would also continue into the latter half of the 1960s and the early 1970s.<sup>103</sup>

Finally, school accommodation also impacted on the 'comprehensiveness' of Anglesey's schools in other respects. The HMI's 1961 report aptly emphasised the relationship between the existing accommodation in Holyhead and the comprehensive nature of the school. It highlighted how pupils in the lower school (first two years) were housed mainly in the old St. Cybi unit; 'a rambling building in which difficulties of access from one part to the other lead to much inconvenience, interruptions to lessons, and waste of time'.<sup>104</sup> Because of these limitations, the head teacher only found the St. Cybi accommodation suitable for the lower school as well as for the 'modern' forms of the second and some of the third years. On the other hand, the three 'top' forms of the second year (A, B and C) were housed in the main building, that of the old grammar school. HMI believed that this arrangement:

deprives the lower school of much of its reality as an educational, social unit and what is perhaps worse serves to underline at the outset a distinction between 'grammar' and 'modern' pupils which, in its overtness, is an unfortunate beginning for a 'comprehensive' school. It is hoped that the remodelling of the school building will ensure that whatever form of organisation is considered desirable it will find embodiment and support in the physical reality of the accommodation.<sup>105</sup>

The assessment of the impact of the school's accommodation on the nature of the organisation at the school was clear and conclusive. It was undeniably the case that the school buildings in Holyhead were creating divisions between different 'types' of children. The view that the school had evolved from an 'unfortunate beginning' reveals something of the HMI's expectations on comprehensive schools in the early 1960s, while it is also telling of a key objective in the 1961 inspection. One of the key aims of the HMI report was to evaluate the comprehensive system on Anglesey, which had by then been up and running for approximately eight years. The view among the inspectors was that the comprehensive scheme in Holyhead suffered from a lack of cohesion between grammar and modern 'type' children, and that the physical accommodation of the school exacerbated the issue.

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<sup>103</sup> For more on this, see Chapter Five.

<sup>104</sup> HMI, 'Report: Holyhead County Secondary School, 13-17 November 1961, Llangefni, AA: WA 4/22.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

This assessment was undoubtedly accurate, yet it misinterpreted the intention and rationale of the original plans for Anglesey's education system. The intention and the organisation advocated by the LEA (acknowledged in MoE correspondence) had been for a multilateral or bilateral system, not the kind of organisation which later became associated with comprehensive schooling.<sup>106</sup> More radical views on how such schools should be organised were expectations largely transferred onto Anglesey's system by external observers. In fact, the kind of differentiated curriculum implemented by Lovett in Holyhead was rather more progressive than what had been specifically prescribed as far as comprehensive education was concerned in the LEA's scheme. Lovett had implemented a common syllabus for each subject which was applied across all streams in order to make transitions between forms easier. The possibility to move between forms according to ability was positively commented upon in the inspection, and the school was said to have 'an impressive record of such transfers and of unexpected achievement in many pupils after a slow start in their first year'.<sup>107</sup>

The merger of the two schools in Holyhead in 1949 naturally created issues of organisation in accommodating a single school over two sites.<sup>108</sup> The accommodation in Holyhead suffered from significant deficiencies due to the necessity to house the school over two sites, for example the lack of an Assembly Hall to accommodate the whole school, or the insufficient facilities for physical education.<sup>109</sup> It was acknowledged by the HMI inspection in 1961 that the 'evolution of the school, in its organisation, must wait upon a remodelling of the school designed to match its amenities with its educational aims'.<sup>110</sup> There was no doubt in the view of the inspectorate as to the significant impact the inadequate accommodation was having on the comprehensive organisation of the school. Lovett also expressed his frustration over the delays in bringing the accommodation in Holyhead up to

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<sup>106</sup> AEC, 'Development Plan Under Section 11 (1) of the Education Act, 1944', London, TNA: BD 7/1.

<sup>107</sup> HMI, 'Report: Holyhead County Secondary School', 13-17 November 1961, Llangefni, AA: WA 4/22.

<sup>108</sup> TLP, 'Interim Report on the fusion of the former Holyhead Grammar School with the former St. Cybi Modern School', 1949, Aberystwyth, NLW: GB 0210 TREVETT (3).

<sup>109</sup> HMI, 'Report: Holyhead County Secondary School, 13-17 November 1961, Llangefni, AA: WA 4/22.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

standard, contrasting the facilities very unfavourably with the newly built comprehensive schools in London when pointing out to a potential visitor that:

the conditions under which I am trying to work a system of comprehensive secondary education in this school are anything but ideal and I must warn you not to expect conditions anything like those which exist in London.<sup>111</sup>

However, the provision of a purpose-built unit did not necessarily provide solid foundations for a less fragmented comprehensive school. In Amlwch, practicalities also resulted in the persistence of divisions between different 'types' of pupils even after the establishment of the newly built school. The freshly constructed first instalment of the comprehensive school in Amlwch was completed and available for occupation in the autumn term of 1950. However, the whole building had yet to be completed, thus it was decided that only those pupils who attended the grammar school in Amlwch were to start at the new school at that early date.<sup>112</sup> Those pupils who were to transfer from the interim modern schools would have to await the completion of the rest of the building before they were able to join their peers at the new school.<sup>113</sup> Therefore, despite never formally opting for a differentiated system, the creation of the interim system not only institutionalised these divisions, but also predicated divisions in the newly created comprehensive schools as well.

### **Decisions within the schools**

Anglesey's comprehensivisation process had partially been determined by parameters decided by central and local government. Apart from these factors, curricular development and school organisation were aspects of comprehensive education highly dependent on policies within each individual school. Therefore, the nature of comprehensive education differed significantly between different institutions. While similarities as well as differences existed, it is worth noting that

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<sup>111</sup> TLPF, 'Letter from Trevor Lovett', 12 February 1958, Llangefni, AA: WA 18/53.

<sup>112</sup> ACS, 'Minutes', 15 May 1950, Llangefni, AA: WA 16/1.

<sup>113</sup> The official opening was not to be undertaken until all senior pupils from the Amlwch area were in attendance at the school. It was finally held in June 1953, ACS, 'Minutes', 22 May 1953, Llangefni, AA: WA 16/1.

particular variances had significant impact on the type of comprehensive organisation that the different secondary schools provided. Head teachers had substantial powers to influence the organisation within their own schools, and the views and approaches of the head teacher impacted considerably on the overall 'comprehensiveness' of each school. Although Lovett at Holyead School was Anglesey's most well-known head teacher, pioneering approaches were trialled both in Llangefni and the newly erected school in Menai Bridge.

In 1953 the most significant change had been the abolition of the 11-plus examination that had previously differentiated between those pupils of grammar and modern 'types'. While the removal of entrance examinations established a fully comprehensive intake to each secondary school on the island, all four schools still implemented some form of setting or streaming process in order to enable the provision of instruction suitable to each individual's abilities and aptitudes (as prescribed in the 1944 Education Act).<sup>114</sup> However, the procedures varied between the different schools, and consequently the style of comprehensive provision that pupils acquired in each individual school differed. Lovett's organisation of the syllabus in Holyhead, based on his idea of 'progressive differentiation' was the model that attracted most external attention. 'Progressive differentiation' was not an all-encompassing system, despite sometimes being perceived as such, and was not implemented across all of Anglesey's secondary schools but exclusively in Holyhead. Lovett expressed his views on educational differentiation quite clearly in 1960, declaring that:

In devising the curriculum of a school probably the easiest method of organisation is to decide the various educational activities which certain Forms shall experience... Such a process is one of making the pupils fit the organisations. A more natural but far more difficult mode of organisation is to consider the pupils aptitude and ability first and then offer certain combinations of Forms sufficient alternatives... This is a process of "setting" according to specific ability where the organisation is made to meet the needs of the pupils.<sup>115</sup>

This shows that Lovett accepted that there were different 'types' of pupils (of different 'aptitude' and 'ability') and that school organisation therefore needed to provide suitable alternatives. It was in

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<sup>114</sup> 'Education Act 1944', [<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Geo6/7-8/31/section/8/enacted>, accessed 12 November 2014].

<sup>115</sup> See T. Lovett, 'A form of comprehensive secondary education', *The Teacher in Wales* (1960), pp. 15 and 17.

the pursuit of this vision that he introduced his progressive curriculum in Holyhead during the 1950s and the early 1960s. The organisation of the school remained largely the same throughout the period 1953-63, although slight alterations were made in accordance with Lovett's view that '[C]hange in the curriculum each year is a sure sign of a living school'.<sup>116</sup> In 1953 the entrance examination had been duly abolished, and the 180 first-year pupils to enter Holyhead School that year were divided into six forms in alphabetical order. Monthly tests were given, and an examination sat after six months. The results from these tests, together with teachers' impressions and primary school record cards, allowed a preliminary grading of each pupil. Those pupils considered the brightest were then placed in form A-C and the 'less academically gifted' were entered into forms D-F.<sup>117</sup> The practice of teaching pupils in alphabetically organised forms on entry to the secondary school was retained into the 1960s. However, the scope of mixed-ability teaching altered slightly during this period. While there had been six months of first-year pupils being taught exclusively in form groups in 1953, by 1961 'objective tests' were given within the first fortnight of entry in English, Welsh, mathematics, geography and history. Consequently, the nine forms were divided up into three sub-groups of three forms each. The pupils in each of these sub-groups were then rated in accordance with their ability (as assessed in the six-month test) and entered into the equivalent of the top, middle or bottom set for each of the assessed subjects. As a result there were in total three 'best' sets, three 'average' and three 'slow' sets for each subject area, with an additional form for those children deemed 'backward'. Apart from selected subjects, however, pupils were taught in their mixed-ability forms and each class followed a common syllabus.<sup>118</sup> A pupil's first year at Holyhead was therefore largely treated as a diagnostic period, where they were allowed to experience instruction in a wide range of subjects in order to carry out an assessment of their 'ability and aptitude'. The diagnostic process was also understood to be carried on throughout pupils'

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<sup>116</sup> TLP, '1952 Memorandum for attention of the Board of Governors – Holyhead County School Progressively Differentiated Curriculum for 1952-53', Aberystwyth, NLW: GB 0210 TREVETT (3).

<sup>117</sup> *TES*, 6 February 1953.

<sup>118</sup> HMI, 'Report: Holyhead County Secondary School', 13-17 November 1961, Llangefni, AA: WA 4/22.



second, third and fourth year at the school.<sup>119</sup> Nevertheless, by the end of the first year, pupils were arranged into sets according to their 'general ability' which was carefully 'worked out' by the deputy head teacher.<sup>120</sup> In contrast, in Amlwch, Llangefni and Beaumaris the six first-year forms were classified and put into ability groups from the very start. In Amlwch, the initial groupings were only in place for the first term, after which pupils were divided according to ability in six subjects (science, mathematics, geography, history, English and Welsh).<sup>121</sup> In Llangefni, the top three forms (A-C) were organised into sets for English, Welsh and mathematics, while the bottom three sets were taught in their mixed-ability form groups. In David Hughes, pupils were also given an internal classifying examination at an early stage during the first year. A slightly different approach was adopted in David Hughes School because pupils were streamed into parallel groups according to proficiency in their first language as well as their 'general ability'. This created two English medium forms and three Welsh medium forms, and an additional mixed medium class for 'backward' children.<sup>122</sup>

In this way, the setting and streaming procedures were similar in the different schools, but nonetheless varied for each institution. Holyhead was decidedly more 'comprehensive' in the sense of providing students with equal educational opportunities during the first year at the school, and was the only institution not to set a specific entrance test at the very start of the school year. The practice of dividing children into sets according to ability was nevertheless present in all schools, and during a time where the majority of children in Britain's schools were being streamed into different types of secondary education, the approach to mixed-ability teaching adopted in Holyhead can arguably be described as quite progressive. However, Lovett's educational thinking was neither founded on a belief that meritocratic selection was ultimately undesirable, nor on reservations concerning inherent intelligence. His concern was with a system that streamed children into different types of education, without any further consideration to their specific aptitudes and

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<sup>119</sup> *TES*, 27 January 1956.

<sup>120</sup> HMI, 'Report: Holyhead County Secondary School', 13-17 November 1961, Llangefni, AA: WA 4/22.

<sup>121</sup> HMI 'Report: Amlwch, Beaumaris and Llangefni secondary schools', summer and autumn 1961, London, TNA: ED 216/27.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*

personality. The ultimate goal of his policy of progressive differentiation was of course to separate children according to aptitude and ability, but to do so over a longer period of time and to allow pupils to experience the whole range of subjects before specialising in either practical, technical or academic subjects.<sup>123</sup> In contrast to many other supporters of comprehensive education, Lovett's views hardly sprung from any left-wing or radical convictions of the benefits of social mixing or a belief that comprehensive education should become a nation-wide policy.<sup>124</sup> Lovett did not show any particular concern as far as inherent versus environmental influences on pupil attainment were concerned. His views in this respect were aptly demonstrated in an account of the benefits of comprehensive schooling. Lovett emphasised the duty of schools to prepare 'socially efficient' individuals and proposed that comprehensive schools were better equipped to fulfil this task than any other type of school due to their true representation of the community of their catchment area. Therefore, Lovett insisted, 'the young adolescent learns his true relative position to those with whom he will one day enter into society'.<sup>125</sup> While this outlook was far from a radical one, it should not detract from the progressiveness of the organisation of the syllabus in Holyhead. The abolition of the entrance test, as implemented in accordance with the LEA's Development Plan, allowed the kind of mixed-ability teaching that Lovett promoted. Considering the organisation in the rest of the islands schools, where pupils were tested and organised according to ability on entrance, this kind of approach was not a foregone conclusion. In fact, the abolition of the 11-plus examination did not in itself eliminate divisions of pupils into different 'types', neither had this been the LEA's intention.

However, it afforded the island's schools the foundation of a comprehensive intake, allowing head

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<sup>123</sup> Lovett, 'A form of comprehensive secondary education', pp.15 and 17.

<sup>124</sup> Lovett's correspondence regularly reveals his reluctance to embrace comprehensive education as an all-encompassing principle. His key argument was that in rural areas, the only way to provide secondary education to rival that in urban localities was through comprehensive schools. Lovett therefore expressed his doubts as to the introduction of comprehensive education indiscriminately, see TLPF, 'Letter from Lovett', 23 July 1959, Llangefni, AA: WA 18/53. In a response to a letter from a head teacher of a grammar school in Liverpool Lovett responded that: 'Although I have no hesitation in championing the cause of the comprehensive school in such a rural area as Anglesey I would be the last person to pass comment or judgment as to its adoption in such a municipal area as yours', see TLPF, 'Letter from Lovett', 10 January 1964, Llangefni, AA: WA 18/53. In another letter he also urged 'I would only ask you to remember that on no occasion have I ever upheld that comprehensive secondary school as the ideal solution in all areas,' see TLPF, 'Letter from Lovett', 15 June 1959, Llangefni, AA: WA 18/53.

<sup>125</sup> TLPF, 'Letter from Trevor Lovett', 15 June 1959, Llangefni, AA: WA 18/53.

teachers to organise their schools in accordance with their ideas. While school organisation generally constituted more continuity than change after 1953 and into the early 1960s as far as differentiation was concerned, more progressive policies (such as those in Holyhead) were also allowed to develop.

The most noteworthy distinction of the practical practice in Anglesey's comprehensive schools compared to the situation in schools organised in accordance with the tripartite system, was the real possibility for pupils to be able to move classes according to their ability. The opportunity for pupils to be transferred between classes existed in all the island's schools, and the prospect was not just a theoretical one. In Llangefni transfers in the first year primarily took place at the end of the Christmas term, but were also possible at other times if considered desirable. The HMI inspection report in 1961 noted that:

There is ample evidence that some children who were not originally selected as a result of the internal examination as suitable for a grammar-type education will be transferred into academic streams as a result of late development, perseverance and hard work, while a number who were so selected will fail to maintain their original promise. The organisation permits a certain degree of mobility, though in practice it is more usual to move a pupil up than down.<sup>126</sup>

The HMI report from Holyhead (1961) also pointed out that in the year 1960-61, nineteen misplaced pupils in mathematics were moved up from the lower forms.<sup>127</sup> Although it might have been theoretically possible to transfer pupils between the different types of schools in a tripartite system, this was not a common occurrence in LEAs where such systems existed due to practical obstacles related to variances in curricula between the different types of schools.<sup>128</sup> Despite considerable continuity as far as views on different 'types' of children was concerned, therefore, the real possibility for pupils to transfer between sets meant that the physical barrier between different

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<sup>126</sup> HMI 'Report: Amlwch, Beaumaris and Llangefni secondary schools', summer and autumn 1961, London, TNA: ED 216/27.

<sup>127</sup> Several interviewees' testimonies also confirm that transfers between forms was a real possibility in Anglesey's schools, see author's interview with former pupil in Amlwch School (1960s), 2 May 2013 and former pupil in Llangefni School (1950s), 23 May 2013.

<sup>128</sup> There was a possibility for children to transfer at the age of thirteen (as proposed in the Norwood Report) but it was rarely a practical option due to the significant differences in curricula, Jones and Roderick, *A History of Education in Wales*, p. 146.

'types' had in effect been removed. Although radical educationists and politicians considered Anglesey's scheme conformist, and even pointed out the ills of the competition for transfers this was nevertheless a radical departure from the rigid divisions that were features of the tripartite system.<sup>129</sup>

### **External scrutiny – consequences and impact**

Due to its pioneering status, Anglesey's education scheme attracted significant attention from an array of observers during this period. Its reputation as an experimental LEA meant that the island's education system came under sustained scrutiny in the press, by educationists, politicians and central government. During the period of its initial introduction in the 1950s, Anglesey's system attracted external interest, and further attention was also generated during the 1960s due to the increase in public awareness of the comprehensivisation question and the politicisation of the issue.

Early responses to the island's new education system were published in the local press as well as education journals during the mid-1950s. These reports generally portrayed a positive image of the experiment being undertaken on Anglesey, and did not attach particular political significance to the scheme. Some of the earliest articles on Anglesey's new system were published in *The Schoolmaster* (July 1953) and provided some background and a general overview of the newly implemented scheme. One of the *The Schoolmaster* articles emphasised the gap between the significant amounts of theorising on the subject of comprehensive education compared to the lack of opportunity to actually observe such systems in practice. Therefore, like the majority of articles dedicated to the issue of the organisation of Anglesey's secondary education at this time, the main focus was on how the scheme worked in practice.<sup>130</sup> In this early period the big national newspapers did not report on

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<sup>129</sup> See Pedley, 'Comprehensive Schools Today: an Interim Survey (1)', pp. 518 and 519.

<sup>130</sup> See "'Secondary Education for all' has a new meaning in Anglesey's Comprehensive Schools', *The Schoolmaster*, 3 July 1953, pp. 19 and 27 and 'Comprehensive School at Work', *The Schoolmaster*, 10 July 1953, pp. 52 and 53. Similar focus on the organisation in a comprehensive school, particularly in Holyhead due

Anglesey's implementation of its new system specifically (although *The Guardian* commented on the island's abolition of the 11-plus examination in a general article dedicated to this issue in February 1953).<sup>131</sup> In 1954, Welsh and local newspapers also published items describing the changes to Anglesey's education system, emphasising the LEA's pioneering role in articles such as 'Britain is watching this school experiment, Anglesey leads the way' and 'Teachers' Eyes are on this experiment'.<sup>132</sup> Education journals also dedicated significant attention to Anglesey's 'experiment', and Lovett produced numerous articles for *The Schoolmaster*, *Teacher in Wales* and the *TES*.<sup>133</sup>

The pronounced interest shown in the Anglesey's scheme was commented upon in the 1961 HMI reports, where it was suggested that because Anglesey's comprehensive scheme had been:

[E]arly in the field it has had to face...the challenge of a new idea, the absence of established precedents, of accepted practice, and the necessity of proving itself to a more obvious and more 'public' degree than the traditional form of secondary education.<sup>134</sup>

Apart from recognising issues related to the LEA's pioneering role, HMI also acknowledged the subsequent pressures of defending and justifying the system due to the interest among external observers. It was therefore somewhat ironic that the introduction to the inspection report in for Amlwch, Llangefni and Beaumaris in 1961 specifically pointed out that the timing of a general assessment of the organisation of Anglesey's comprehensive schools was 'not inopportune'. It was suggested that after eight years of comprehensive schooling it would be possible to evaluate the scheme's successes and weaknesses.<sup>135</sup> Lovett's comments in a letter to Pedley the same year (1961) illustrate the situation quite appositely, with Lovett suggesting that:

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to its early amalgamation in 1949, were also published in the mid-50s in an article by Lovett in *TES*, 6 February 1953.

<sup>131</sup> *The Guardian*, 21 February 1953.

<sup>132</sup> See, for example, *Liverpool Daily Post*, 19 January 1954; *Herald of Wales*, 30 January 1954; *Western Mail & South Wales News*, 12 February 1954 and *Evening Chronicle*, 12 February 1954.

<sup>133</sup> See, for example, *TES*, 6 February 1953; *TES*, 27 January 1956; *The Teacher in Wales*, November 1960; *The Teacher in Wales*, March 1961; *Teacher in Wales*, 16 June 1967 and *Teacher in Wales*, 30 June 1967.

<sup>134</sup> HMI, 'Report: Holyhead County Secondary School', 13-17 November 1961, Llangefni, AA: WA 4/22.

<sup>135</sup> HMI 'Report: Amlwch, Beaumaris and Llangefni secondary schools', summer and autumn 1961, London, TNA: ED 216/27.

[T]his full Inspection is part of the Ministry's plan that certain comprehensive schools have been in existence long enough to stand the test of a Full Inspection. I can only hope that we have weathered the storm...<sup>136</sup>

Central government undoubtedly felt that it was timely to evaluate this experimental comprehensive scheme, and an HMI inspection was an effective way to do so. Lovett's hope that they had 'weathered the storm' indicates the feeling of responsibility as perceived by those involved in this pioneering scheme and the desire to prove the virtues of comprehensive schooling. It was not merely the MoE that was looking to Anglesey for evidence of the results of comprehensive education in practice, but sustained interest was expressed among both supporters and detractors among politicians, educationists, LEAs and the general public. Pedley was one such interested party, and his response to Lovett on reading the 1961 inspection report was congratulatory, where he emphasised the importance of the HMI's appreciation of 'the splendid work you have done at Holyhead'.<sup>137</sup> Despite going on to suggest that 'the whole country owes a very great debt to you for your pioneer work', Pedley had nevertheless identified the negative effects this kind of scrutiny might have on pioneering LEAs and their activities.<sup>138</sup> His assessment was that pioneers had been forced to occupy a middle-ground with their comprehensive schemes for 'tactical' reasons. Newly developed schemes had to be in line with local opinion, and due to the kind of scrutiny illustrated here, schools were compelled to justify their activities through examination results in order to prove that comprehensive schools did not result in 'grammar type' pupils' achievements being levelled down.<sup>139</sup> Each comprehensive school had to 'justify itself by examination results, or parents will lose confidence in it' and a school 'has only to deliver the goods (in the form of G.C.E. results and university scholarships)...to justify itself in both public and professional opinion'.<sup>140</sup>

Pedley's view that external scrutiny encouraged Anglesey's (and other pioneering) schools to concentrate their attention on the more traditional aspects of academic education and achievement,

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<sup>136</sup> TLPF, 'Letter from Lovett to Pedley', 23 November 1961, Llangefni, AA: WA 18/53.

<sup>137</sup> TLPF, 'Letter from Pedley to Lovett', 11 October 1963, Llangefni, AA: WA 18/53.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

<sup>139</sup> Pedley, 'Comprehensive Schools Today: an Interim Survey (3)', p. 519.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid., p. 612.

was certainly a reasonable assessment. However, his second tenet (that innovative LEAs had chosen a middle-ground for 'tactical' reasons), is more doubtful. Pedley's disappointment concerning the lack of new and radical educational approaches in the fourteen schools of his survey in 1954 was unmistakable.<sup>141</sup> Other supporters of comprehensive education also expressed similar misgivings concerning the lack of progressiveness among early comprehensive schools. At a conference in 1977 Brian Simon commented specifically on Holyhead's comprehensive school after a visit he had undertaken in 1953:

I remember Trevor Lovett, the pioneer, at Holyhead, standing with us as the pupils came in to dinner and proudly saying that you could not tell the difference between the children (which were 'secondary modern' and 'secondary grammar'). Of course, that was so. But we also found, secondly, that these pioneer schools, with one or two exceptions, placed major emphasis on differentiation. Indeed this concept of differentiation, of the necessity of streaming and setting, had entered so deeply into our thinking that, in the new set-up, there seemed a possibility that this might be carried to even greater excess in the comprehensive than in the divided system<sup>142</sup>

Evidently, in Simon's view, early comprehensive schools such as the one in Holyhead had failed to abolish differentiation, and might even have entrenched these barriers more deeply into their reorganised systems than had been the case in LEAs with selective arrangements. However, Simon's ideals for the comprehensive schools had never been in line with the rationale for Anglesey's educational restructure. While there was no 11-plus entrance examination in Anglesey by 1953, as Simon highlighted, the organisation of its schools was nevertheless one of streaming according to ability. Pedley's survey in 1954 also confirmed that 'early examination and classification are being retained within all the comprehensive secondary schools which I have seen'.<sup>143</sup> It is therefore clear that the external scrutiny which early comprehensive schemes were under, particularly of ideological supporters of comprehensive education, was often misdirected. Pedley's thoughts in view of his survey aptly demonstrates this misnomer where he surmised that:

much remains to be done; and for the most part, the idealist is left high and dry, gazing with troubled eyes at the new homes of old follies: prefects and prizes,

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<sup>141</sup> Pedley, 'Comprehensive Schools Today: an Interim Survey (1)', p. 518.

<sup>142</sup> Brian Simon Papers, 'Conference Paper: *What Schools are for Retrospect and Prospect* to Lancashire County Council', 16 February 1977, London, Institute of Education University of London: Archives, SIM/1/18.

<sup>143</sup> See Pedley, 'Comprehensive Schools Today: an Interim Survey (1)', pp. 518-20.

authoritarian discipline and individual competition, out-of-date curricula, crowded time-tables, and formal examinations.<sup>144</sup>

The period 1953-63 was the time when the Anglesey LEA's long-standing plans for a multilateral organisation of its secondary schools were finally implemented. It was undeniably the LEA's abolition of the 11-plus examination and the introduction of '11-18' comprehensive schools which set the parameters for each individual school's development. However, the influence of both central and local government on educational developments during this period was limited and often unintentional. Once the framework was in place, the input from the LEA was minimal compared to its critical involvement during the planning stages. Decisions of central and local government impacted indirectly on the nature of comprehensive education through their influence on educational accommodation and facilities, and such factors impacted on school organisation. The fact that all four of the island's comprehensive schools evolved out of the existing grammar schools, and were run by former grammar school head teachers, ensured significant continuity as far as school organisation was concerned. A combination of the above factors, together with educational thinking among the island's head teachers, largely saw divisions between 'grammar' and 'modern' pupils retained. There had been no public opposition to the LEA's comprehensivisation plans previously, but there was outrage among certain sections of the local population at the proposition to relocate David Hughes School to Menai Bridge from Beaumaris. The debate accompanying the transfer indicates that the creation of comprehensive schools was much more acceptable when it did not threaten the status quo, and for the most part the transition to the new system had been achieved without controversy.

Bearing this in mind, it would nevertheless be inappropriate to propose that Anglesey's comprehensive system failed to engender any radical change at all. For example, the possibility for pupils to transfer between different 'sets' or 'streams', depending on their academic achievements,

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<sup>144</sup> Pedley, 'Comprehensive Schools Today: an Interim Survey (3)', p. 613.



was something virtually impossible in the tripartite system – although it emphasises the conformity to traditional educational thinking. The mixed-ability teaching introduced in Holyhead, albeit limited, was still educationally progressive during the early 1950s, and again, would have been impossible to achieve in a differentiated system. Similarly, so was Llangefni’s experiment with a house system centred around pupils’ local communities. Radical educationists viewed the LEA’s scheme as conformist and lacking in progressive thinking, and it therefore became the recipient of criticism. Despite the employment of some forward-thinking approaches in individual schools, within the context of new educational thinking and approaches to comprehensive schooling during the 1960s, the rationale and set-up of Anglesey’s comprehensive schools were not particularly radical on the whole. In newspapers and journal articles the rationale for the island’s original scheme was often misrepresented when educational debates of the time were superimposed onto it. Issues such as the accuracy of IQ testing, the abolition of the 11-plus examination and the unfair advantage awarded to pupils from the higher social classes were highly significant in the debate during the 1950s and 1960s. However, these issues had not been prioritised by the Anglesey LEA in the formation of their comprehensive scheme which had largely been developed during the 1930s and the early 1940s. Albeit misdirected, the attention which Anglesey’s education system attracted impacted on activities of the schools’ head teachers, as well as wider perceptions of the island’s education scheme. Significantly, the development of comprehensive *schooling* has often automatically been considered and described as one and the same as the emergence of comprehensive *education*. However, this study proposes that the introduction of comprehensive schools did not necessarily equate to the implementation of comprehensive education. The picture is more nuanced than such an interpretation suggests, and this case study shows how diverse the ‘comprehensiveness’ of these four schools was even in such a small LEA as Anglesey.

The island's position as the only fully comprehensive system in England and Wales had already prompted a certain influence on, and a role for it within, the 'comprehensive movement' of which it was arguably not originally a part. The roles of early comprehensive schemes in the wider educational context have been largely discounted in subsequent scholarship. Observers have often viewed them as practical solutions in rural areas, and therefore dismissed them as not 'properly' comprehensive. Given the amount of attention devoted to Anglesey's education system during the early 1950s, this chapter has demonstrated that the absence of references to the island's scheme (and other similar pioneers) in the available historiography is contradictory. There was significant interest from educational journals and publications, as well as coverage in both the local and national press. Looking ahead, by the time of the establishment of a Labour government in October 1964 educational developments on Anglesey's had been carefully scrutinised, and its policy had generally been declared a success. The new government's approach towards secondary education, and the introduction of Circular 10/65 where LEAs were encouraged to reorganise along comprehensive lines, would see increasing numbers of LEAs moving towards comprehensive schemes. Anglesey was nevertheless still considered an educational pioneer, and other LEAs would regularly turn to prominent figures such as Lovett for advice and direction. Paradoxically, during the latter half of the 1960s, when comprehensivisation was encouraged on a national level, there was resurgence in the interest in Anglesey's system. However, the parameters for what constituted comprehensive education and schooling were becoming more idealistically and politically charged, positioning Anglesey's scheme further apart from the general rationale at the time.

# Chapter Five

## Comprehensive success? 1964-74

To select or not select? That is the question.<sup>1</sup>

The period 1964-74 saw significant changes to central government's attitude towards comprehensive schooling. The question whether 'to select or not select' pupils on entry to secondary schools had certainly become a dominant issue by this time. However, with the introduction of Circular 10/65 (1965) all LEAs were encouraged to move away from 11-plus selection towards a comprehensive organisation of secondary education. Significant numbers of LEAs already favoured some form of comprehensive set-up prior to the 1965 circular, but the support from central government in the wake of the new policy allowed LEAs to proceed with these plans.<sup>2</sup> The general public opinion was increasingly supportive of the comprehensive system during the 1960s, with a common mistrust of the selection process to secondary schools and a growing number of (especially middle-class) parents disinclined for their children to attend secondary modern schools.<sup>3</sup> Although central government now asked LEAs to consider comprehensive reorganisation, Circular 10/65 identified no less than six different organisational models, seemingly accepting that pre-existing conditions as well as local sentiment would have to allow for a variety of schemes depending on prerequisites in different LEAs.<sup>4</sup> There was, however, a lack of consensus

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<sup>1</sup> For further details on the discussion on secondary education in the House of Lords in February 1965, see HL Deb 10 Feb 1965, vol 263, col 129.

<sup>2</sup> See Boyle, 'The Politics of Secondary School Reorganization: Some Reflections', pp. 28-38. In 1963 the Labour run cities of Manchester and Liverpool both made definitive moves towards comprehensive systems, making their intentions for future secondary education clear, Simon, *Education and the Social Order*, pp. 271 and 272. For more on developments in Manchester, Kerckhoff, Fogelman, Crook and Reeder, *Going Comprehensive in England and Wales*, pp. 84-106.

<sup>3</sup> Boyle, 'The Politics of Secondary School Reorganization: Some Reflections', pp. 32 and 33.

<sup>4</sup> MoE, 'Circular 10/65: The Organisation of Secondary Education' 12 July 1965, London, TNA: ED 147/827C. Crosland (Education Secretary, 1965-67) commented on Circular 10/65 that the basic policy of going comprehensive had been decided prior to his appointment as Education Secretary, as had the decision to issue the circular itself. Crosland's role was to influence the form, content, and style of the circular. As far as the six different organisational options he stated that apart from problems with existing accommodation '...there was no clear consensus on which type of organization was best on merit', cited in Kogan, *The Politics of Education Edward Boyle and Anthony Crosland in conversation*, p. 188.

regarding the definition of comprehensive schools and education. Policies on comprehensive education were only concerned with administrative and organisational structures rather than with the nature of the kind of education comprehensive schools would provide. No guiding principles were given to assist schools in their curricular organisation, since such matters were still considered to be strictly within the parameter of each individual school (although HMI of education commented and advised on curricular issues in inspections and surveys). Therefore, education policies did not take into consideration how the needs of pupils in mixed-ability settings would be met, what kind of groupings should be implemented, how to effectively deal with assessment in a comprehensive setting or what kind of curriculum should be developed.<sup>5</sup>

For many LEAs, the second half of the 1960s and the early 1970s was a period of significant discussion, planning and eventual implementation of new schemes for secondary education. For Anglesey on the other hand, this period was one of less tangible changes than the years preceding it. In its response to Circular 10/65 Anglesey's LEA informed the Welsh Department that it would maintain the organisational structure of its comprehensive system and its four '11-18' schools.<sup>6</sup> The LEA would consider the practicality of introducing sixth-form units (attached to the existing schools) and also investigate the possibility of concentrating pupil numbers for particular subjects in certain schools.<sup>7</sup> This kind of organisation had originally been discussed in the developing stages of the LEA's scheme during the 1940s, but had proved unpopular with head teachers who were reluctant to lose their senior pupils.<sup>8</sup> The comprehensive organisation of the secondary schools would remain the same, however, and the MoE accepted Anglesey's scheme as fully compliant with Circular 10/65 without the need for any alterations.<sup>9</sup> It appeared as if the educational thinking of central government had caught up with developments already underway in Anglesey and elsewhere. This heightened the perception of the island's role as a successful pioneer ahead of its time, and the

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<sup>5</sup> Benn and Chitty, *Thirty Years On*, p. 28.

<sup>6</sup> MoE, 'Letter from LEA to the Welsh Department of the MoE', 7 July 1966, London, TNA: ED 216/26.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> See Jones-Davies, 'Secondary Organization in Anglesey', pp. 366-369.

<sup>9</sup> MoE, 'Letter from LEA to the Welsh Department of the MoE', 7 July 1966, London, TNA: ED 216/26.

LEA's comprehensive scheme was considered a successful experiment, bolstering the case for comprehensivisation from the mid-1960s.

This chapter looks at the changing priorities and challenges in the realm of secondary education during a period when the reorganisation along comprehensive lines was no longer at the top of Anglesey's educational agenda. While other local authorities were grappling with reorganisational issues, Anglesey's scheme was largely established. However, certain issues, some of which had been identified during the early 1960s but had previously been largely ignored, were resurfacing in the latter half of the 1960s. By that time these issues demanded further attention. For example, the question of how to effectively provide suitable education for all abilities, and particularly for those pupils considered less academically gifted, was becoming more urgent. Welsh-medium teaching had also been raised as an area of concern by HMI during the early 1960s, but no language policy had been introduced by 1964. With the issuing of the Gittins Report in 1967 there was increasing pressure to address this issue.<sup>10</sup> Another concern in the late 1960s were the poor examination results recorded, particularly in David Hughes but also in the other Anglesey schools. The inevitable question was how far this was a consequence of the island's comprehensive organisation, and what measures might be taken to address the problem. Furthermore, questions as to the viability of certain aspects of the island's comprehensive schools' curricula were also being raised. Responses from both local and central government to these matters indicated their view that school organisation and management were to blame for such shortcomings, and that these were more or less directly associated with the comprehensive nature of the island's schools. This chapter evaluates the causes and consequences of such organisational issues, but also emphasises the importance of

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<sup>10</sup> The 1967 Gittins Report (*Primary Education in Wales*) was the Welsh equivalent to the Plowden Report in England. Both reports stressed the correlation between pupils' social backgrounds and their academic attainment. While the reports primarily focused on primary education, the transition between primary and secondary education was also commented upon. However, the most controversial aspects of the report were those related to Welsh-medium teaching and the Welsh language. The report emphasised that the Welsh language should be a means to expressing social, cultural and spiritual values of Welsh society. For a summary and analysis of the report, Jones and Roderick, *A History of Education in Wales*, pp. 176 and 177, 187. For the actual report and sections regarding the Welsh language, Central Advisory Council for Education (Wales), *Primary Education in Wales* (1967), pp. 138-140, 209-256, 257-280, 281-288.

assessing the responses to these challenges from both central and local government, and what they reveal in terms of attitudes towards comprehensive education.

Due to the prominence of the comprehensivisation issue within the national educational debate, Anglesey continued to play a role (albeit diminishing) within the broader context of educational developments. Regular requests were made for visits to the island's schools from across Britain as well as from abroad, and input from both the head teachers and the LEA was regularly sought.<sup>11</sup> National press coverage from the mid-1960s also demonstrated a sustained interest in Anglesey's system.<sup>12</sup> Further analysis of the writing in the national press shows that representations of the comprehensivisation process on Anglesey had, to an extent, shifted in focus. By this time Anglesey's policies were described as part of the wider contemporary educational debate – interpreted as having 'showed the way to a new education'.<sup>13</sup> This chapter argues that the attention at a national level, and the use of Anglesey as an example of a success story that justified comprehensive education, was rather paradoxical at a time when both the island's schools and the LEA were increasingly forced to address various complications, some of which were considered direct results of the comprehensive nature of the island's secondary schools. As the period progressed, and numerous LEAs implemented new and more radical schemes of comprehensive secondary education, the interest in Anglesey's education system diminished. Due to the emerging perception that Anglesey's scheme was rather unadventurous, and merely a practical solution to a rural situation, the LEA and the island's secondary schools were allowed to tackle challenges during the first half of the 1970s with diminishing external scrutiny in comparison to the more noticeable attention during the 1950s and the 1960s. There was, however, a disparity between what was

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<sup>11</sup> TLPF, Llangefni, AA: WA 18/53.

<sup>12</sup> A series of nine articles titled *Comprehensives: A Closer Look* were published in *The Times* in April 1965, in anticipation of the imminent Circular 10/65. Anglesey's system was thoroughly investigated in one article, see *The Times*, 3 April 1965. Llangefni's community-linked house system in another, see *The Times*, 5 April 1965 and Holyhead's examination successes in a third report, see *The Times*, 9 April 1965.

<sup>13</sup> *The Times*, 3 April 1965.

essentially happening in Anglesey's secondary schools between 1964-74 and how these developments were portrayed by observers from the outside.

### **School size – a new problem?**

Among the increasing issues attracting the attention of Anglesey's LEA and its comprehensive school head teachers during the period 1964-74, several related to the limited size of the island's secondary schools. It was also during this period that questions were starting to emerge as to the efficiency of the island's '11-18' comprehensive schools. This period was one of relative organisational continuity on Anglesey as far as official LEA policies were concerned, but significant developments were taking place inside the secondary schools during this time. Even though Anglesey reviewed its system around the time of Circular 10/65, it was decided that the authority would adhere to its scheme of 'straight through 11-18 comprehensive schools' and that there was no need to modify the system.<sup>14</sup> However, in the wake of the circular, and in the run-up to the LEA's submission of its proposal to the MoE (to retain its already existing system), some significant scrutiny of the scheme was carried out. The Director made substantial enquiries with a view to 'review[ing] the working of the system of comprehensive schooling in Anglesey, to identify any weaknesses which may exist and to consider in what ways it could be improved', and some rather problematic issues were subsequently raised.<sup>15</sup> The main concern raised in this review was the feasibility of Sixth Form provision within the existing set-up. So called 'all-through' comprehensive schools had come in for a lot of criticism during the late 1950s and early 1960s due to their size. Questions had been asked about the welfare of pupils in schools where the intake was considered too large. However, some concerns had also been raised as to the viability of Sixth Forms in comprehensive schools with a limited entry of six or seven parallel classes, and this was the issue which occupied much of the review in the wake of Circular 10/65.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> AEC, 'Letter from the Director to the Welsh Department', 26 May 1966, London, TNA: ED 216/26.

<sup>15</sup> D[evelopment] C[ommittee], 'Reports and Minutes', 5 April 1966, Llangefni, AA: WA 1/63.

<sup>16</sup> For more on this, see Chapter Four.

Jones-Davies (Directory of Education, 1962-1964) had commented on this already in 1962 when he admitted that '[T]he number studying each subject in each year of Sixth Form is of necessity very small'. He also emphasised that the possibility of each school specialising in particular subjects for Sixth Form study had indeed been considered when the original Development Plan had been prepared.<sup>17</sup> However, the ultimate decision had been to establish '11-18' schools, and for the Sixth Form to be an integral part of each individual school. Therefore, even though this issue had been acknowledged earlier on in the comprehensivisation process, alternative arrangements for the Sixth Form were not seriously contemplated during the period of great organisational reforms on the island. It was in the wake of Circular 10/65 that the question was again raised. By this time (1966) the practical problems involved with providing Sixth Form studies in relatively small comprehensive schools was less hypothetical. The system had been implemented for over ten years and difficulties associated with Sixth Form staffing, timetabling and pupils' choices had by this time become apparent and real. The Director's report, which was submitted to the Development Committee in 1966, acknowledged the broader and more general opinion at the time that:

It is claimed that a fair selection [of subjects] spread over three years can only be offered when the sixth form is 400 to 500 strong as they are in schools like Dulwich College and Manchester Grammar School...The introduction of 11-18 comprehensive schools has if anything aggravated the problem inasmuch as one would need a comprehensive school of between 2,000 and 3,000 to produce a sixth form of this size.<sup>18</sup>

These observations had often been made by Pedley and others who favoured a tiered system of comprehensive schooling, and could clearly be applied to all four of Anglesey's secondary schools since they only accommodated 340 Sixth Formers between them.<sup>19</sup> The view that '11-18' comprehensive schools had 'aggravated the problem' seemed to suggest that Anglesey's scheme did have some inherent problems that needed to be addressed. The report proceeded by highlighting some examples to illustrate significant problems stemming from the '11-18' organisation. Firstly, the staffing issue was exemplified by the situation in Llangefni where ten per cent of the school

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<sup>17</sup> See Jones-Davies, 'Secondary Organization in Anglesey', pp. 366-369.

<sup>18</sup> DC, 'Reports and Minutes', 5 April 1966, Llangefni, AA: WA 1/63.

<sup>19</sup> For more on Pedley's views, see Chapter Four. For information about the numbers in Anglesey's Sixth Form, DC, 'Reports and Minutes', 5 April 1966, Llangefni, AA: WA 1/63.



population was made up of Sixth Formers, while teachers devoted approximately thirty per cent of their time to Sixth Form instruction. The staffing ratio at the school was roughly one teacher to every 19 pupils, while the ratio in the Sixth Form was the significantly lower figure of 1:5. It was pointed out that this situation was unfair for pupils in the lower school, and also uneconomical due to the high number of specialist teachers needed to cover the teaching of the Sixth Form. Secondly, timetabling was described by the head teacher Davies not merely as a 'compromise' and an 'inconvenience', but even as a form of 'exploitation'. Apart from in a few popular subjects, teachers were forced to instruct first and second year A-level pupils together. Furthermore, he believed it to be:

impossible to initiate first year pupils with the more mature ways of the sixth form; they are thrown in at the deep end to sink or swim... A proper division of the sixth form courses into Majority [sic] and Minority [sic] time subjects is impossible and consequently, Anglesey pupils are at a disadvantage compared with those applying for admission to universities, etc. from big sixth forms.<sup>20</sup>

The limited numbers of Sixth Form pupils in Anglesey's '11-18' comprehensive schools resulted in restrictions to the curriculum because of staffing issues. Teaching was undertaken in classes consisting of a combination of pupils from the two year groups within the Sixth Form, but could only really be focused on the education of the most advanced pupils. Davies even suggested that the island's Sixth Forms were 'so small that no one is really doing sixth form work. What we are doing is Advanced work under difficulties'.<sup>21</sup> The report also conceded that apart from the administrative, organisational and economic problems associated with Sixth Form instruction, senior pupils' academic studies consequently suffered, an issue that would become more apparent as the 1960s and 1970s progressed. Problems concerning Sixth Form teaching in all of Anglesey's schools had in

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<sup>20</sup> DC, 'Reports and Minutes', 5 April 1966, Llangefni, AA: WA 1/63.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. These observations were in stark contrast, however, to Davies' comments in 1963 when he had assigned the growing Sixth Forms, and the associated problems, (at least partially) to: 'the Committee's organisation of its Secondary education on comprehensive lines...The Anglesey Comprehensive Schools, with the possible exception of Holyhead, were planned for small Sixth Forms, and no account had been taken of the special requirements of the Sixth Forms in the staffing ratio...' The suggestion was of course that the growth in numbers had resulted in a situation where pupils from the different year groups within the Sixth Form had to be taught together by the same teacher. Unless the teacher/pupil ratio was significantly increased, or Sixth Forms could somehow be concentrated, the '11-18' organisation of the island's schools meant that Sixth Form instruction would remain ineffective and uneconomical.

fact been raised in the HMI report as early as 1961, where problems related to staffing as well as timetabling had been specifically emphasised. It was pointed out that the broad scope of subjects offered at Llangefni, Amlwch and Beaumaris resulted in some classes attracting very low numbers of pupils. HMI believed that it was 'having an adverse effect upon the remainder of the school, particularly in relation to the size of classes and the flexibility of the organisation and curriculum for the non-academic streams'.<sup>22</sup> Therefore, it was felt that unless the pupil to staff ratio was improved, alterations might have to be made to the curriculum. Certain subjects may have to be taught in only one or possibly two of the island's schools instead of being offered at each institution.<sup>23</sup> Similar concerns had also been raised in Holyhead where some classes were excessively large, the number of subjects available for the Sixth Form (twenty-three) was considered 'unusually high' and resulted in very low numbers sitting particular examinations, and where timetabling issues meant excessive free periods for Sixth Formers. Despite the encouraging examinations results at the school HMI considered the situation in Holyhead 'unacceptable', and stressed that unless teacher numbers were increased the existing organisation was untenable.<sup>24</sup> Despite these stark warnings by HMI during the early 1960s, the Sixth Form question had not been a priority on Anglesey's educational agenda prior to 1966, and was therefore not much closer to being resolved. On the contrary, the problem appeared rather more urgent as the system solidified.

There was no consensus among the four head teachers on the island as to how to address the problem, although the establishment of some sort of Sixth Form units were generally agreed upon in principle. The headmasters in Amlwch (H. S. Richards) and Menai Bridge (W. S. Evans) favoured Sixth Form units that were attached to each school, while Davies (Llangefni) and D. M. Lloyd (Holyhead)

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<sup>22</sup> HMI, 'Report: Amlwch, Beaumaris and Llangefni secondary schools', summer and autumn 1961, London, TNA: ED 216/27.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> The high number of subjects available created a great demand on staffing, resulting in certain year groups having to be taught together, and some classes having numbers as high as thirty-one (English). The report did not condone the practice of teaching different year groups within the same class, and insisted that Sixth Form classes needed to be separated into single year groups in order to provide the proper amplitude and breadth of a Sixth Form teaching, see HMI, 'Report: Holyhead County Secondary School', 13-17 November 1961, Llangefni, AA: WA 4/22.

preferred the idea of two collective Sixth Form institutions (one in Holyhead and another in Llangefni).<sup>25</sup> The arguments against the concentration of Sixth Form pupils at just two centres were two-fold: firstly, according to Circular 10/65 it had by this time been officially established that schools with a six or seven form entry were indeed viable, and therefore there should be no need for alterations on Anglesey.<sup>26</sup> Secondly, that it would be foolhardy to abandon the existing provision considering the lack of any experience in running Sixth Form units. It was also hoped that one option might be to retain the existing system, but with the benefit of employing a greater number of teachers. Therefore, the likelihood of being allowed to appoint extra teaching staff in order to address these problems should be explored first, before any further commitments were made in terms of changing the system.<sup>27</sup> The idea of concentrating Sixth Form instruction in order to make it more efficient had previously been opposed by the island's head teachers. Their resistance was primarily due to the potential negative effect this might have on the individual comprehensive schools. Head teachers were unwilling to lose Sixth Form pupils who were considered the natural 'leaders' of their schools, and also believed it would become more difficult to recruit good staff if teachers were deprived of the opportunity to teach in the Sixth Form.<sup>28</sup> These considerations were certainly influential on the views of the head teachers, and this is aptly illustrated by the fact that the two head teachers who would still be in charge of Sixth Form instruction (in Llangefni and Holyhead) were indeed the two in favour of such arrangements. However, both Davies and Lloyd stressed the importance of providing the best possible facilities for pupils, and Davies even advocated the possibility of a separate College in Llangefni. Davies was evidently the most vociferous critic of the existing system, suggesting that Anglesey would fall behind other LEAs if it did not implement changes to its school organisation.<sup>29</sup> If other authorities centralised their Sixth Form

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<sup>25</sup> DC, 'Reports and Minutes', 5 April 1966, Llangefni, AA: WA 1/63.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> See Jones-Davies, 'Secondary Organization in Anglesey', pp. 366-369.

<sup>29</sup> Davies had also outlined a detailed account of the problematic Sixth Form situation in Llangefni in a report to the Governing Body in 1963. He pointed out that certain six form subjects had experienced significant increases. For example, the history class had expanded from five to twenty-two and geography from five to

instruction - and it had indeed been reported that Caernarvonshire would only be offering advanced studies in Llandudno, Bangor, Caernarfon and Pwllheli in the future - Anglesey's pupils would be at a disadvantage compared to their peers.<sup>30</sup> Davies went even further in his criticism of the existing system, indicating that:

Anglesey is going to be overtaken by events and its sixth form pupils in four small sixth forms will be at disadvantage for range of subjects, organisation and teaching in comparison with other Authorities. The small comprehensive school of 800-1000 is not the ultimate in school organisation. It has defects, one of which is the small sixth form and by "small" I mean any number under 120, i.e. two full forms, 60 pupils in each intake.<sup>31</sup>

His criticism was a strong and potent condemnation of Anglesey's comprehensive model, and the negative comparison to the situation in other LEAs was striking. In an interview for *The Observer* less than eighteen months earlier such negative views were not in evidence when Davies had proclaimed Anglesey's comprehensive schools 'administratively efficient' and 'at least as successful scholastically' as the island's grammar schools had been.<sup>32</sup> His misgivings as to the efficiency of small '11-18' comprehensive schools had, however, been expressed and published as early as 1958. In the NUT publication *Inside the Comprehensive School*, Davies had pointed out both possibilities and problems in small comprehensive schools. He identified the key weakness of such schools as 'economic', and stressed the difficulty in providing satisfactory alternatives for those pupils deemed to be of 'practical' bias. He suggested that while schools felt it would be advisable to separate the different streams for instruction in subjects such as building, engineering and commerce, they could not afford to implement such organisation through the comprehensive set-up as it existed at the time. He had suggested even then that '[T]he answer may be functional differentiation of curriculum from school to school or concentration of certain courses in one or two...'<sup>33</sup> With Davies' support for Sixth Form units already expressed in the late 1950s, it was not surprising that he expressed his

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nineteen. Davies put the increases in numbers down to the high O-level success rate, but also due to the increasing number of candidates who had narrowly missed out when sitting the examinations, and who had therefore returned to the school in order to try again, HR, 'Davies at Llangefni', Llangefni, AA: WA 1/72.

<sup>30</sup> DC, 'Reports and Minutes', 5 April 1966, Llangefni, AA: WA 1/63.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> *The Observer*, 6 December 1964.

<sup>33</sup> See E. Davies, 'The Smaller Comprehensive School (C) Possibilities and Problems', in NUT, *Inside the Comprehensive School* (London, 1958), pp. 123-130.

sincere support for the concentration of advanced studies in the review a decade later. However, by that time Davies' reservations had largely been proven accurate, even though it would be several years before the island's first Sixth Form unit was established. In addition, and possibly more significant, were Davies' criticisms of the LEA's system more broadly. Apart from deeming Anglesey's '11-18' comprehensive schools 'not the ultimate in school organisation,' he also warned that:

What the Committee ought to realise is that Anglesey may become as backward vis a vis others as it was in the 30's and that what Anglesey really did after 1944 was merely carrying out the reorganisation recommended by the Hadow Report of 1926 in a particularly convenient and economic way.<sup>34</sup>

This was not solely a comment on the island's Sixth Form provision, but undoubtedly an expression of the head teacher's feelings on the LEA's comprehensive organisation more generally, particularly in the rapidly changing educational landscape of the mid-1960s. Davies had been acknowledged for his pioneering role in establishing the house system in Llangefni, but by this time he was evidently questioning the scheme's progressiveness more broadly and suggesting it was a product of convenience.<sup>35</sup> Davies' observations that Anglesey's scheme was a product of the Hadow reorganisation drive during the 1930s were certainly pertinent, but it is also illustrative of the changing educational debate at the time. The fact that Anglesey's Development Plan owed much to the thinking and planning of the 1930s had not caused any visible tensions earlier in the period, but by 1966 developments were moving rapidly and inventive comprehensive schemes elsewhere were increasingly making Anglesey's schools appear outmoded. Davies' comments were an expression of such feeling. He also plainly viewed the issues related to Sixth Form instruction as serious weaknesses of Anglesey's scheme, and was emphatic in his view that this situation needed to be rectified. His comments are illustrative of the complications emerging within Anglesey's secondary school system during this period, but also of the increasing awareness of the need to address these problems.

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<sup>34</sup> DC, 'Reports and Minutes', 5 April 1966, Llangefni, AA: WA 1/63.

<sup>35</sup> For more on Llangefni's house system (constructed around pupils' home towns and villages), see Chapter Four.

However, little immediate action was taken, and despite the report's account of the problems associated with Sixth Form instruction, its recommendations were not particularly radical. Four alternatives were presented, including: A Sixth Form College, concentrated Sixth Forms in Llangefni and Holyhead, Sixth Form units attached to each school, and finally the option to retain the system without alterations. The option of establishing these units at each school was described as 'politically, probably the most attractive proposal in that the schools would all gain from it'. However, it was also emphasised that this option did little to solve the difficulties 'inherent in a small sixth form'.<sup>36</sup> Despite the report's emphasis on the economic benefits to be had from concentrating advanced studies (either in one or two units), the final decision by the Education Committee was to avoid any firm guarantee of future developments in this respect. In its correspondence with the Welsh Department, the LEA suggested that units at each school might be considered in the future, but that there was no urgent need to intervene in the organisation of the island's secondary education since it was 'already organised on comprehensive lines'.<sup>37</sup> The Welsh Department informed the LEA of the Ministry's approval of the Authority's response to the circular.<sup>38</sup> Internal correspondence even suggests that the Welsh Department considered Anglesey's desire to reorganise its Sixth Form provision ill-advised. However, since such alterations were considered a matter of 'internal organisation', and therefore outside of the Welsh Department's remit, it would be an issue for the LEA to resolve without any interference from central government.<sup>39</sup> Therefore, despite the fact that Sixth Form provision had been acknowledged as an area of concern, the LEA had not committed to any changes in this respect, and were free to continue with Sixth Form units if it was considered desirable.

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<sup>36</sup> DC, 'Reports and Minutes', 5 April 1966, Llangefni, AA: WA 1/63.

<sup>37</sup> AEC, 'Letter from the Director to the Welsh Department', 26 May 1966, London, TNA: ED 216/26.

<sup>38</sup> MoE, 'Letter from the Welsh Department to the Director', 7 July 1966, London, TNA: ED 216/26.

<sup>39</sup> MoE, 'Internal Notes', June and July 1966, London, TNA: ED 216/26.

## Problems in providing for all abilities

Apart from Sixth Form provision, other issues related to advanced studies were also arising and demanded the attention of the LEA. A-level teaching and poor examination results in 1968 in Menai Bridge attracted the attention of Cledwyn Hughes (the local Labour MP), the Welsh Department, as well as the LEA. Concerned parents had contacted Hughes regarding their anxieties about A-level provision at David Hughes, particularly in History, Latin and French.<sup>40</sup> Hughes' enquiries at the Welsh Department led to discussions with inspectors from HMI as well as the Director of Education. The Welsh Department's investigation into the issue found that the examination results in Llangefni, Holyhead and Amlwch were 'within a not unreasonable range of variability, but the figure of thirty per cent [pass rate] at Menai Bridge is low'.<sup>41</sup> Internal comments made by representatives of the HMI shows that they were far from surprised by these complaints.<sup>42</sup> They were aware of the fact that the poor examination results in David Hughes were already 'causing local parents considerable anxiety' and that the Parent and Teacher Association (PTA) had already raised the question of examination results with the governing body of the school.<sup>43</sup> Several reasons for the poor results were suggested, including; sub-standard teaching, disorganisation, confusion in subject choices, and a library described as a 'disgrace'. These deficiencies, in combination with generally inadequate facilities for the Sixth Form, made the inspector's assessment rather disparaging.<sup>44</sup> However, while the Welsh Department seemed inclined to assign the blame to the above factors, David Hughes' head teacher and the LEA saw other issues as more influential. Evans firmly believed that the poor results stemmed from the fact that pupils were sitting A-level examinations even though they had not shown themselves to be of 'advanced level quality'.<sup>45</sup> The Director also expressed his agreement with the head teacher's views:

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<sup>40</sup> MoE, 'Letter from Cledwyn Hughes to the PSWD', 28 August 1968, London, TNA: ED 216/28.

<sup>41</sup> MoE, 'Letter from the PSWD to Cledwyn Hughes', 25 September 1968, London, TNA: ED 216/28.

<sup>42</sup> MoE, 'Internal correspondence', 11 September 1968, London, TNA: ED 216/28.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> MoE, 'Letter from Director to the Welsh Department', 1 January 1969, London, TNA: ED 216/28.

I personally am satisfied with the quality of the teachers in charge...and am inclined to agree, at the moment, with the Headmaster that many of the pupils who come back to the Sixth Form work in our Secondary Schools are not really capable of following the intensive advanced level course which is required.<sup>46</sup>

The sentiment that pupils in Anglesey's comprehensive schools were choosing to continue their studies to an advanced level even though they were considered ill-suited to do so, was not a novel observation. The HMI report in 1961 had emphasised the 'danger of allowing too many pupils to undertake work for which they are ill-fitted', and that less able pupils should be encouraged to seek fulfilment in 'less exacting' subjects.<sup>47</sup> The head teachers largely agreed on this point, although differed in their views as to the severity of the problem. It was believed that pupils as well as parents were convinced of the advantage of acquiring GCE qualifications, and it was difficult to get them to realise the 'difference between wants and needs', resulting in some pupils following courses 'unsuitable to their intellectual ability'.<sup>48</sup> In 1963 Llangefni's head teacher also commented that: 'Parents are going to keep their children in school indefinitely until they get the required paper qualifications. Parents are not going to be satisfied with the inferior Beloe, the Certificate of Secondary Education'.<sup>49</sup> Thus the feeling was that due to the high status of GCE qualifications, many parents would insist on their children continuing advanced level studies irrespective of whether their children were considered suited to such courses. This supposition had occurred as a result of the comprehensive nature of the island's secondary schools. Because the option to study for the GCEs had, within the comprehensive school set-up, been opened up to pupils who in a tripartite system or in the old elementary schools would have been prohibited the option to pursue advanced study. In the reorganised comprehensive schools there were no such obstacles to pupils' progress, and the continued reverence of academic qualifications undoubtedly pushed pupils towards Sixth Form

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<sup>46</sup> MoE, 'Letter from Director to the Welsh Department', 1 January 1969, London, TNA: ED 216/28.

<sup>47</sup> HMI, 'Report: Amlwch, Beaumaris and Llangefni secondary schools', summer and autumn 1961, London, TNA: ED 216/27.

<sup>48</sup> HR, 'Amlwch, Beaumaris and Llangefni Secondary Schools. HM Inspectors Report Summer and Autumn Terms, 1961'. Llangefni, AA: WA 1/72.

<sup>49</sup> HR, 'Davies: Llangefni', September 1963, Llangefni, AA: WA 1/72. Davies also referred to his meeting with Sir Edward Boyle (Minister of Education) in May that same year, and the fact that the Minister had suggested that the O-level 'is on the way out'. However, the O-level remained in place until 1984 although Beloe's recommended Certificate of Secondary Education was duly introduced in 1965, Manzer, *Teachers and Politics The role of the National Union of Teachers*, p. 89.



study. The increasing number of pupils joining the island's Sixth Forms undoubtedly supported this assessment, and Davies observed that a growing number of pupils were returning for advanced studies in Llangefni (1963). He noted that the large number of returnees was not merely due to a high success rate in Ordinary Level (O-level) examinations, but also a response from those pupils who had narrowly failed the O-level examinations and consequently decided to return to school for a second attempt. He also noted that while O-level successes had been high in 1962, the recorded A-level results were the poorest since the change-over to a comprehensive system in 1953.<sup>50</sup> Thus, the relative disappointing academic results in A-level examinations was considered a consequence of the unsuitability of some of the candidates sitting them. The inevitable question therefore seemed to be what a comprehensive education should entail, and what this would mean for the internal organisation of Anglesey's secondary schools? In 1961 the Director had been adamant that HMI's insistence on employing 'teachers-in-charge' to co-ordinate non-academic studies betrayed the inspectors' bilateralism (as opposed to a comprehensivist view). Furthermore, the Director had suggested that to establish a distinction between academic and non-academic pupils would be to create a 'completely artificial' division, and would be a departure from 'the fundamental tenet of comprehensive education'.<sup>51</sup> However, the persistence of entrance tests in the majority of the island's schools illustrates the ambivalence in both thought and approach in this matter. Therefore, it was unsurprising that problems arose when the comprehensive system, built on the foundations of four former grammar schools, was expected to provide appropriate education for pupils of all abilities.

Other organisational and curricular issues, related to the problem of provision for mixed-ability pupils, were also coming to the fore during this time. The problems of language instruction attracted attention from HMI, and these issues were illustrative of much wider concerns. In their attempts to negotiate comprehensive curricula, the island's secondary schools were faced with practical

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<sup>50</sup> HR, 'Davies at Llangefni', September 1963, Llangefni, AA: WA 1/72.

<sup>51</sup> HR, 'Amlwch, Beaumaris and Llangefni Secondary Schools. HM Inspectors Report Summer and Autumn Terms, 1961. Part II – Section Relating to the Amlwch County Secondary School', Llangefni, AA: WA 1/72.

problems as well as concerns associated with language based examination results in the Sixth Form. Issues with the teaching of languages had been flagged up by HMI in 1961, and they demonstrated the kind of difficulties these pioneering comprehensive schools faced during the 1960s. In the report, the lack of instruction in either German, Spanish or Russian in Amlwch, Llangefni and Beaumaris had been criticised, as had the low numbers of pupils sitting the French A-level examination (only two pupils from all of the above three schools). It was also considered unacceptable to pitch French as an alternative to Welsh (Llangefni and Amlwch) or against scripture and history (Beaumaris).<sup>52</sup> The HMI's observation in Llangefni was that the majority of fourth and fifth year pupils were left with only one language apart from English, and that 'this must have a restrictive effect upon pupils who may have particular ability in this direction'.<sup>53</sup> The response to these remarks by the Llangefni head teacher (Davies) was telling:

How many pupils in a small comprehensive school with an academic intake of not more than one form have a flair for languages? Only a few. Languages in such a school is a problem, very expensive in teacher-pupil ratio...Teaching of language to whole forms in a small comprehensive school is work with a diminishing return as things are now. If the emphasis were changed from writing and the grammatical grind to comprehension and conversational power, the educational increment might be greater, but this would involve a fundamental change in method as well as aim – more teachers of foreign languages and two or three big language laboratories.<sup>54</sup>

The organisational issues raised by Davies are illustrative both of the impact school accommodation and facilities had on the ability to provide effective language teaching in the school, and also how the size of the school impacted on curricular arrangements. Curiously, guidelines in the late 1940s had considered urban comprehensive schools with a ten or eleven-form entry feasible, while rural schools with a six-form entry were judged to be not 'entirely unreasonable'.<sup>55</sup> By the time of Circular

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<sup>52</sup> The numbers sitting A-level examinations for languages in July 1961 were rather dismal. Amlwch had no entries in neither Latin nor French and Beaumaris had one single entry for French and none for Latin. Llangefni had one entry in French and four in Latin, HMI, 'Report: Amlwch, Beaumaris and Llangefni secondary schools', summer and autumn 1961, London, TNA: ED 216/27.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid. The question of foreign language instruction had also pre-occupied Lovett who discussed the difficulties involved in the organisation of language teaching in a 1959 article where he questioned the value of teaching foreign languages in Secondary Modern Schools, see T. Lovett, 'The Organisation of Language Teaching in Secondary Schools', *The Welsh Secondary School Review*, (December 1959), pp. 18-20.

<sup>54</sup> HR, 'Amlwch, Beaumaris and Llangefni Secondary Schools. HM Inspectors Report Summer and Autumn Terms, 1961. Part II – Section Relating to Llangefni Secondary School', Llangefni, AA: WA 1/72.

<sup>55</sup> MoE, 'Circular 144', 16 June 1947, London, TNA: ED 142/1.

10/65, central government claimed that six or seven-form entry schools would be able to effectively cater for the whole ability range.<sup>56</sup> However, Anglesey's experiences seemed to suggest otherwise, and Davies' observations in relation to language instruction indicated that he believed that the small number of parallel forms in Llangefni was the reason why the school was experiencing these problems. Davies proposed that in a school of this size, the numbers could only deliver enough pupils for one 'academic' form. This suggested that the numbers were not sufficient to make language instruction economically viable since it inevitably involved a low teacher to pupil ratio. Quite apart from the organisational problems this caused in terms of timetabling, it also demonstrates the recurring problem in Anglesey's comprehensive schools when attempting to negotiate a comprehensive curriculum. Language teaching demonstrably continued to be approached in a similar fashion to how it had been in the old grammar schools, with instruction undertaken by the same methods that had been considered suitable in academically minded selective schools. While such a set-up was seen as inevitable due to class sizes as well as the preferred teaching methods of former grammar school teachers, the facilities and accommodation available for language teaching in the school also fortified such traditional approaches. Considering Davies' previous reservations regarding school sizes, it was not unexpected that he attributed the weaknesses of Llangefni's language provision to the nature of the small comprehensive school. Such an argument may also have suited Davies since it seemed to suggest that tampering with timetables would simply not suffice in the face of significant and intrinsic deficiencies of the system, therefore, allowing the school to continue along familiar lines. In contrast, the Director's comments in relation to this issue were rather different. He suggested that the issues could be rectified by some changes to the timetabling.<sup>57</sup> Although the Director's observations might have been fair, language provision

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<sup>56</sup> MoE, 'Circular 10/65: The Organisation of Secondary Education' 12 July 1965, London, TNA: ED 147/827C.

<sup>57</sup> The Director's suggestion was to reduce the 'very generous [time] allocation' in mathematics and English, and also to allow more able first language Welsh speakers to take both Welsh and French for their O-level subjects. He also proposed a re-shuffle of lesson allocation, allowing pupils to undertake more extensive language studies which might conceivably result in higher numbers sitting both O-level and A-level examinations in French, HR, 'Amlwch, Beaumaris and Llangefni Secondary Schools. HM Inspectors Report

in the comprehensive schools symbolised more fundamental questions about the nature of comprehensive curricula and their implementation.

Although these concerns had originally been raised during the early 1960s, language provision in Anglesey's secondary schools remained inadequate throughout the decade. The situation was reassessed by the inspectors for the 1966-67 session. There had been some significant changes since 1961, particularly in Holyhead where an experimental modern language scheme had been introduced in September 1967.<sup>58</sup> However, the HMI's assessment of the new arrangements were not overly encouraging. The aim of Holyhead's scheme had been to try and increase the number of pupils starting to learn French, and also to enhance the numbers taking French examinations. The new arrangements ensured that all first-year streams (apart from remedial) studied French and continued to do so in years Two and Three. The top stream also had to study three further languages from the second year onwards. However, the excessive workload of six languages (Welsh and English added onto the modern languages) for pupils in the top-stream was strongly criticised by HMI. It was suggested that '[O]nly the most gifted can be expected to meet this demand' and that '[T]here must be very few pupils anywhere who can profitably study six languages at once'.<sup>59</sup> It would appear that despite, or possibly because of, Holyhead's attempt to expand the pupil-base for modern languages, there were still significant issues that needed to be addressed. Apart from the above criticisms, time allocation was considered inadequate in Holyhead as well as Llangefni, and the blanket four lessons a week for all junior pupils in Menai Bridge and Amlwch were considered 'barely adequate for the more gifted pupils, and accounts for a great extent for the heavy casualty rate in the weaker forms'.<sup>60</sup> These observations indicate HMI's main concerns for Anglesey's modern language

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Summer and Autumn Terms, 1961. Part II – Section Relating to Llangefni Secondary School', Llangefni, AA: WA 1/72.

<sup>58</sup> HMI, 'Survey of Modern Languages in the Comprehensive Schools of Anglesey', 1966-1967, London, TNA: ED 216/28.

<sup>59</sup> The top stream was required to continue with French in their second year, but also to embark on German, Latin and Russian in the same year, see HMI, 'Survey of Modern Languages in the Comprehensive Schools of Anglesey', 1966-1967, London, TNA: ED 216/28.

<sup>60</sup> HMI, 'Survey of Modern Languages in the Comprehensive Schools of Anglesey', 1966-1967, London, TNA: ED 216/28.

provision, and clearly illustrate the practical difficulties the comprehensive schools experienced in their attempts to provide suitable education for pupils of all abilities. The schools' attempts to set the number of French lessons at an acceptable level for *all* pupils was deemed insufficient for the more able pupils, while simultaneously too demanding for the less academically gifted. There was also a perceived waste of teaching time and pupils' efforts considering the fact that most pupils who studied French would only do so for two (or possibly three) years, the number of 'casualties' were high. Furthermore, this also fostered a negative attitude towards French among pupils. In Menai Bridge these attitudes were ascribed to 'the foreknowledge that they are to give up French after only three years, [this] creates from the outset an attitude of indifference and even hostility among pupils'.<sup>61</sup> Additionally, and a much more serious criticism of the comprehensive nature of Anglesey's secondary schools, were concerns regarding the provision for those pupils considered 'less able'. The survey was highly critical of how pupils of differing abilities were catered for in all four schools (although Holyhead was considered a little more advanced in this respect than the other three). The nature of French instruction in the majority of the schools were of a 'traditional and grammar nature'. For example, in Amlwch it was observed that:

The Head of Department follows, conscientiously, a 'traditional' grammar-based course, with emphasis upon carefully-corrected written exercises. There appears to be little differentiation between the three streams, who are in fact following the same course...to learn French, they [less able pupils] can do so only on the basis of a carefully planned programme designed to meet the needs of the less able pupil. The traditional formal grammar-based course cannot possible [sic] appeal to weaker pupils.<sup>62</sup>

It was believed that, despite disappointing outcomes (both at O-level and A-level), three out of the island's four schools primarily judged their own success in terms of examination results. It was pointed out that:

Little or nothing is done to provide an effective course for the weaker pupil. Even in Holyhead, where some use is made of modern teaching methods, those are only half-heartedly employed...This over-concentration upon examination results,

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<sup>61</sup> HMI, 'Survey of Modern Languages in the Comprehensive Schools of Anglesey', 1966-1967, London, TNA: ED 216/28.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

judged by its own standards, is generally unsatisfactory... [This] represents a poor return for the sacrifice of the less gifted pupils in the earlier years.<sup>63</sup>

These observations by HMI were not merely condemnatory of the teaching of French and its organisation and implementation, but more critically questioned the comprehensiveness of the education received in the island's schools. The shortcomings in the provision for the 'less gifted' pupils had been emphasised previously, but while such weaknesses had primarily been attributed to deficiencies in facilities and accommodation in 1961, the 1966-67 survey suggested that the problem might be of a more organisational nature.<sup>64</sup> Considering the legacy of Anglesey's scheme it was not unexpected that the emphasis, especially in traditionally 'academic' subjects, would be on traditional courses and teaching methods.<sup>65</sup> However, the apparent failure by the schools to adapt language teaching in order to suit and appeal to 'weaker' pupils, was clearly considered a significant issue by HMI. Considering the teaching resources available, the survey implored the schools to agree on 'how far down' the ability range languages should be taught. At the follow-up meeting after the survey (held in the summer in 1968) the Director was keen to co-operate with the inspectors. He agreed to arrange meetings with each head teacher separately to discuss the findings and with a view to agreeing on a common policy for all four schools. The arrangement would involve a minimum of five hours language teaching a week, for just under half of all first-year pupils to study French, and a commitment to ensure that once pupils had started to learn a language they would continue to pursue it.<sup>66</sup>

### **Addressing the issues**

It was evident that Anglesey was experiencing some difficulties associated with the comprehensive nature of the system. However, there were concerted attempts to deal with these burgeoning issues

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<sup>63</sup> HMI, 'Survey of Modern Languages in the Comprehensive Schools of Anglesey', 1966-1967, London, TNA: ED 216/28.

<sup>64</sup> For more on this, see Chapter Four.

<sup>65</sup> For more on this, see Chapters Two and Three.

<sup>66</sup> HMI, 'Notes from meeting', 30 July 1968, London, TNA: ED 216/28.

<sup>66</sup> For more on this, see Chapter Four.

during this period. After more than ten years of comprehensive schooling, Anglesey's system might have been firmly established, but changes were frequently instigated within its schools. By the late 1960s the issue of the raising of the school leaving age was looming. Central government's decision to raise the school leaving age to sixteen had been taken by the outgoing Conservative government in 1964, but due to financial restraints the incoming Labour government had delayed its implementation until 1972.<sup>67</sup> The prospect of all pupils, regardless of ability, remaining in secondary education for an extra year undoubtedly urged secondary schools to pay further attention to the provision for those pupils considered 'less able'. A scheme was being developed in Llangefni by 1969 in an attempt to engage Fourth and Fifth form pupils who had little or no involvement in external examinations. The experiment involved the grouping together of classes for one afternoon a week when a project of community service was carried out. The aim of these activities was to 'encourage mutual sympathy and understanding between our young people and other groups in the community' through activities involving helping the elderly and individuals with disabilities.<sup>68</sup> By November 1970 the scheme had been running for three years, and further attention was also being paid to this particular group of pupils (64 in total) in the planning and timetabling of the curriculum. The courses included in the specially designed curriculum demonstrate the types of studies that were considered suitable for these pupils: 'Number', 'language', 'oral language', a 'domestic' or 'pre-marriage' course and 'citizenship'.<sup>69</sup> The education of these pupils was co-ordinated by the Head of the Remedial Department and clearly showed a bias towards practical 'life skills' rather than any particular vocational direction. Language and number courses provided core skills, however, and it

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<sup>67</sup> See Cowan, McCulloch and Woodin, 'From HORSAs huts to ROSLA blocks: the school leaving age and the school building programme in England, 1943–1972', pp. 361–380.

<sup>68</sup> Similarly to schemes in other comprehensive schools during this time, activities involved assistance in local hospitals and homes of elderly people. Concerts were also arranged and performed for individuals with visual impairments and at the Training Centre for the Mentally Handicapped in Llangefni, HR, 'Morgan in Llangefni', Llangefni, AA: WA 1/73.

<sup>69</sup> The oral language course would include activities in drama, interviews and public speaking. The domestic or pre-marriage course would involve money matters, house-holding budgeting, simple maintenance, gardening, personal values, sex in the marriage, and first aid. Citizenship would cover social government, taxation, law, trades union, social welfare, current affairs, the Highway Code and leisure use, HR, 'Morgan in Llangefni', Llangefni, AA: WA 1/73. In 1973 the school in Holyhead also started to develop a specific educational centre for those pupils likely to leave school without sitting external examinations, HMI, 'Report by HM Inspectors on Holyhead Comprehensive School, Gwynedd', 1977, Llangefni, AA: WA 4/23.

was specifically pointed out that these pupils were not isolated from the rest of the year-group but joined the rest of the classes for certain activities.<sup>70</sup> Whether these pupils felt an integral part of their year-groups is debatable, but this initiative reveals how Llangefni School tried to address the issue of providing suitable education for all its pupils. Compared to the meagre provisions previously made available to 'backward' pupils (as recognised by HMI in 1961) the awareness in Llangefni of the need to provide more effectively for the 'less academic' children constituted definite progress.

Morgan, the teacher in Llangefni, admitted that this provision would become even more central to the school curriculum once the leaving age was raised to sixteen, and it is clear that the tendency to concentrate on traditional 'grammar' type education in Anglesey's comprehensive schools was starting to change by the late 1960s. Despite the scepticism of the Director, the idea of co-ordinating provisions for the 'less gifted' pupils had largely been supported by head teachers during the early 1960s, but by the latter stages of the decade such policies were actually being implemented.<sup>71</sup>

Apart from trying to devise suitable, but separate, provision for the less academically gifted pupils, moves were also made in other directions to try and cater for all abilities. In the wake of the growing momentum of comprehensive education during the second half of the 1960s and early 1970s, new approaches and ideas of how comprehensive schools should be organised were emerging. During the early 1970s the practice of mixed-ability teaching was becoming more common, but it was still at an experimental stage. The practice of streaming pupils on entry to comprehensive schools was being questioned more widely, but practical problems often prevented the full implementation of mixed-ability teaching. A degree of uncertainty of the educational effects this practice might have on pupils also persisted and tended to hold back changes. A report on mixed-ability practices in north Wales had found in its survey that the majority of teachers in the region's secondary schools were opposed to mixed-ability teaching. Predominately, teachers believed that mixed-ability teaching

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<sup>70</sup> HR, 'Morgan: Llangefni', Llangefni, AA: WA 1/73.

<sup>71</sup> HMI, 'Report: Amlwch, Beaumaris and Llangefni secondary schools', summer and autumn 1961, London, TNA: ED 216/27.



might 'hinder the development of the abler child'.<sup>72</sup> Llangefni's head teacher expressed his concern about his school's streaming policy, which was still heavily reliant on testing on entry in 1970. He observed that such practices were increasingly being questioned and abandoned in other secondary schools. He emphasised the difficulties involved in assessing pupils for their assignment to the appropriate forms, especially since this could be viewed as a sort of extension of the abolished 11-plus examination. Contrary to the findings in the mixed-ability survey, however, Morgan believed that 'enough of our staff are interested in developing these methods for them to succeed if they can be given the chance to train and observe'.<sup>73</sup>

However, any confirmed moves towards a new system of mixed-ability teaching were not forthcoming at this stage, especially while still awaiting the report on mixed-ability teaching in north Wales (1972).<sup>74</sup> The other secondary schools on the island had not opted for a wholly mixed-ability set-up during this period. Such practices, increasingly associated with a 'proper' comprehensive education, left Anglesey's pioneering schools looking rather dated. The fact that the scheme had been devised and implemented during the 1950s undoubtedly meant that the schools' approaches were less radical in this respect than other, more recently comprehensivised, schemes. Flintshire was considered the foremost pioneer of mixed-ability teaching in north Wales during the early 1970s.<sup>75</sup> While Flintshire's contrasting social setting, compared to that in Anglesey, might account for this trend to a certain extent (urban, anglicised and supposedly less traditionally attached to the virtues of an academic education); the timing of their comprehensive drive was just as significant a

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<sup>72</sup> U[niversity] C[ollege] [of] N[orth] W[ales], Bangor: Collegiate Faculty of Education, *Mixed Ability Grouping in the Secondary Schools of North Wales Project Report* (April, 1972), p.3. Practical obstacles mentioned in the report were: existing school buildings and classrooms, timetabling and lengths of lessons, assessment procedures, as well as inadequate equipment, resources and facilities. See UCNW, Bangor, *Mixed Ability Grouping*, p.69.

<sup>73</sup> Morgan's exact quote read as follows: 'The practice of streaming is now being questioned and some secondary schools are abandoning the practice. A major difficulty in streaming is the actual process of assessment. If it is done by examination early in the first year then it can be argued that the 11-plus is being prolonged. Assessment based on the reports of primary school heads is beset with by problems; these reports vary from school to school (we take children from eleven different schools). If assessment is to be postponed, for these and other reasons, the continuation of the mixed ability methods of teaching primary school children is necessary', HR, 'Morgan in Llangefni', 2 March 1970, Llangefni, AA: WA 1/73.

<sup>74</sup> UCNW, Bangor: Collegiate Faculty of Education, *Mixed Ability Grouping*, (April, 1972).

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

factor. Flintshire had comprehensivised its system in the late 1960s when new ideas in the field were thriving. The appointment of a Curriculum Development Officer ensured uniformity in approach, and also indicates the urgency with which curricular issues were treated by that LEA.<sup>76</sup> While the policy of 'progressive differentiation' in Holyhead had been rather radical in the mid-1950s, new ideas and practices surrounding mixed-ability teaching had not encouraged any significant changes to the organisation in Holyhead by this time.<sup>77</sup>

The newly built David Hughes School had in fact been planned and constructed around the idea of a house system where identification with 'the form' would be phased out in favour of pupils' affiliation with houses. The experimentation with mixed-ability teaching in Menai Bridge provides an illuminating example of how such changes to curricular organisation were difficult to implement, and how despite the acknowledged need to address the issue of how to cater for all abilities, the idea of testing and streaming was still firmly entrenched. The school building in Menai Bridge was constructed to incorporate six houses, each with a 'house room' attached (also designed to double up as a separate dining room for each house). However, once fully occupied in 1962, despite the building being purpose-built and designed for a house system, the school's curriculum was still organised by a system of streaming. Conscious of the fact that the school had been intended to be based on a house system, the Director employed an education officer to go into David Hughes School and help reorganise the curriculum along mixed-ability lines.<sup>78</sup> Pupils would be assigned a house on their first day in school, and each house would be arranged in mixed ability and linguistic (Welsh and English) groups. In the forty period teaching week, twelve periods were to be taught in house groups while the remaining twenty-eight would be taught in streamed sets (1964).<sup>79</sup> The new organisation was first employed to just years one and two in order to assess the new system, but by

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<sup>76</sup> UCNW, Bangor, *Mixed Ability Grouping*, p. 11.

<sup>77</sup> For more on this, see Chapter Four.

<sup>78</sup> HMI, 'Internal note', 16 September 1968, London, TNA: ED 216/28.

<sup>79</sup> TLP, 'of organisation at the David Hughes School, Menai Bridge, Anglesey', December 1964, Aberystwyth, NLW: GB 0210 TREVETT (6).

1966 the plan was to reorganise the whole school in accordance with the house system.<sup>80</sup> Noticeably, the building and design in Menai Bridge might have been innovative when developed during the late 1950s and early 1960s, but the internal organisation at David Hughes still largely conformed to traditional lines despite its new curricular set-up. Although there was some mixed-ability teaching within the houses, the subjects involved were those conventionally viewed as non-academic, while 'academic subjects' were taught in streamed sets with the most gifted pupils in set one and so on.<sup>81</sup> The practice of applying a mixture of banding in academic subjects and mixed-ability teaching in practical subjects was a visible trend in many of north Wales' secondary schools during this period, so in this respect the organisation in David Hughes was not exceptional.<sup>82</sup> There were also ample opportunities to transfer between sets, and there were few obstacles in the way of pupils attending different sets for different subjects (according to their perceived abilities). However, while these kind of arrangements afforded pupils enhanced possibilities to progress in comparison to what the situation would have been under a tripartite system, these were not novel opportunities as far as the Anglesey comprehensive scheme was concerned. Transfers of pupils had been one of the system's particular strengths emphasised as early as the 1950s when the scheme was first introduced.<sup>83</sup> Thus, while the house system in Menai Bridge provided some limited impetus towards less rigid streaming of pupils, its primary aim was nevertheless seen as enhancing the pastoral care in a sizeable comprehensive school.

There were, in fact, some significant issues with the house system as far as mixed-ability provision was concerned. HMI's observations in 1966 criticised the existence of 'a hidden form structure' within the house system, and suggested that enhanced efforts were required for that part of the

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<sup>80</sup> HMI, 'Internal note', 16 September 1968, London, TNA: ED 216/28.

<sup>81</sup> The subjects taught in the mixed-ability house groups during the first two years were: P.E., Games, Art, Woodwork, Metalwork, Cookery, Needlework, Religious Knowledge, Activities and Music. The remaining subjects such as Mathematics, English, Welsh, History, Geography, French and the Sciences were 'streamed' subjects, TLP, '...of organisation at the David Hughes School, Menai Bridge, Anglesey', December 1964, Aberystwyth, NLW: GB 0210 TREVETT (6).

<sup>82</sup> 'Banding' was the practice of dividing pupils into ability bands, usually two equal and parallel A and B forms together with a remedial form. In Holyhead (by the early 1970s) the practice was to implement three ability bands with transfers between them if appropriate, UCNW, Bangor, *Mixed Ability Grouping*, pp. 12-13.

<sup>83</sup> For more on this, see Chapter Four.

curriculum which was supposed to be taught in mixed-ability groups. The head teacher, described by one inspector as 'very kindly though weak' and as a 'hopeless time-tabling mechanic', attempted to implement suggestions so as to counteract the identification among pupils with the 'hidden forms' (groups of pupils of similar academic ability who therefore often attended classes together) which had been pointed out by HMI. However, the head teacher's failed efforts in this respect were described by one inspector:

The mess that he [the head teacher] made of this, and especially the actual time-tabling of it, played straight into the hands of reactionary (separatist) elements in the staff...It being in his nature to do so, the HM [head master], instead of persisting with the new curriculuar structure and improving it, gave it up after a month's trial, and succumbing to reactionist pressure, reverted to an even more easily discernible structure of hidden forms. Moreover, he did this in such a hurry that, probably, the time-table had in it many clashes and imperfections.<sup>84</sup>

Thus, the attempt by the LEA and HMI for David Hughes School to implement a more far-reaching mixed-ability policy was unsuccessful. It is conceivable that the policy imposed from above, albeit in line with the original design and layout of the school, lacked support not merely from the 'reactionary' or 'separatist' elements of the school, but the head teacher too. Evans had retained his headship after the school's transfer from Beaumaris, hence he was a traditional grammar school head teacher. He did, however, express his aversion to streaming at the age of eleven, and was supportive of the limited model of mixed-ability teaching intended to take place in David Hughes in 1964. In relation to this practice he commented that '[T]his way you mix the children thoroughly, but at the same time you give people with ability the chance to get on'.<sup>85</sup> Considering the lack of support for the LEA's and HMI's desire to enhance the mixed-ability element at David Hughes, the inspector consequently conceded that the curricular structure, and its aims, would in the future have to be decided by the school itself. It was also emphasised that HMI would assess the efficiency of any internal reorganisation along mixed-ability lines in relation to those objectives set by the school, rather than by the LEA or HMI. Furthermore, it was highlighted that '[T]he existence of the house

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<sup>84</sup> HMI, 'Internal note', 16 September 1968, London, TNA: ED 216/28.

<sup>85</sup> *The Times*, 3 April 1965.

type of premises is not itself a sufficient reason to press for mixed-ability groups'.<sup>86</sup> It had been widely acknowledged that the comprehensive system on Anglesey presented particular difficulties related to school curricula, particularly in terms of the challenge of providing suitable education for all abilities. While there were attempts to address such issues within the island's schools during this period, approaches were inconsistent and included an assortment of initiatives. Meanwhile, the question whether comprehensive education needed to incorporate more mixed-ability teaching, or whether the opposite approach with more distinct curricula for different pupils was preferable, remained unanswered. The LEA's intervention in David Hughes was an incongruity and it demonstrates the restricted powers the local authority actually had when it came to curricular concerns. The attempt by the LEA to impose its policy onto the school was a failure, and even though it had been able to control the design of the school in accordance with the house system it was still unable to enforce such organisation on the school.

Finally, in order to understand the increasing pressures on timetabling and curricular organisation, the additional consideration of Welsh-medium teaching also needs to be taken into account. Part of the LEA's challenge to provide education which was deemed suitable for all pupils, was the increasing demand for Welsh medium education. Up until the mid-1960s, the issue did not feature high up on the LEA's educational agenda for secondary schools. While Welsh was used informally in the classroom by some teachers, there was no uniform Welsh language policy for Anglesey's secondary schools.<sup>87</sup> In 1961 HMI observed that while Welsh medium instruction was commonplace in the island's primary schools, there was little continuity in the transition to secondary schools. While all four schools offered Welsh as an individual subject, Welsh medium teaching only occurred in classes for less able pupils, although more often than not instruction was bilingual. The inspection report commented that:

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<sup>86</sup> HMI, 'Internal note', 16 September 1968, London, TNA: ED 216/28.

<sup>87</sup> Author's interview with former pupil in Llangefni School (1950s), 12 April 2013 and former pupil in Llangefni School (1960s) 20 May 2013.

Attention has been drawn in full inspection reports in the past to the need for paying more than lipservice to the matter of preserving the native language in an area where the social background is so homogeneous and so culturally Welsh in every aspect. There is, however, no real evidence that the work of the primary schools is being effectively continued in the secondary schools... It would no doubt be of considerable advantage were the Authority to give guidance by clear definition of its language policy in the secondary school.<sup>88</sup>

The LEA had clearly been made aware of HMI's desire for a formal language policy to be introduced in the island's secondary schools for a while, but had seemingly only paid 'lip-service' to such considerations up until this point. HMI's concern as to the LEA's dedication to Welsh medium instruction in its secondary schools was well founded. There had been no real attempt to establish a joint language policy up until 1967, and there had scarcely been any discussion of Welsh language instruction at all prior to this time.<sup>89</sup> The Welsh Language Act was passed in 1967, and the Gittins Report, published under the title *Primary Education in Wales*, also came out that year.<sup>90</sup> The report was the Welsh equivalent to the Plowden Report in England and was not specifically commissioned to investigate Welsh medium teaching. Even though it was expected that Welsh medium teaching would occupy a significant section of the Gittins report, its recommendations went further than many had foreseen.<sup>91</sup> The endorsement of the introduction of Welsh medium teaching for first language Welsh speakers was therefore received with some surprise. The *Times* suggested that the report 'caused a splash of surprise that soaked even the most complacent' and that whether the recommendations were implemented or not 'ripples from that splash will be felt for many years'.<sup>92</sup>

The report did indeed become highly influential both in the contemporary public debate and for

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<sup>88</sup> HMI, 'Report: Amlwch, Beaumaris and Llangefní secondary schools', summer and autumn 1961, London, TNA: ED 216/27.

<sup>89</sup> There is virtually no mention of a Welsh language policy in the documents related to the LEA prior to this time. Even after the Gittins Report the speed of the development of the LEA's language policy was far from rapid.

<sup>90</sup> It is rather ironic that while the report had been handed in by Gittins to the Education Secretary (Crosland) during the spring of 1967, the finished version did not actually appear until January 1968 due to a shortage of translators, *The Guardian*, 17 December 1967. For further general comments on the Gittins Report see, for example, Jones, 'From Intermediate to Comprehensive Education: A Personal View', pp. 76 and 87; Jones, *Controls and Conflicts in Welsh Secondary Education*, pp. 142 and 143; Morgan, *Modern Wales: Politics, Places and People*, p. 200 and Butt, *The Welsh Question Nationalism in Welsh Politics*, pp. 59 and 60.

<sup>91</sup> Chapter eleven of the report was titled 'Welsh in the Primary Schools of Wales', and it made far-reaching recommendations for Welsh-medium teaching, also emphasising the need for continuity in Welsh-medium teaching in the transfer from primary- into secondary schools, see Department for Education and Science, *Primary Education in Wales* (London, 1967), pp. 209-256.

<sup>92</sup> *The Times*, 1 March 1968.

developments of Welsh language policies in LEAs throughout Wales, putting the issue of Welsh medium teaching a lot higher on the educational agenda.<sup>93</sup>

On Anglesey, the Gittins Report prompted a special meeting of the Primary and Secondary Education Committee in April 1968. It was decided in that meeting that a report on the teaching of Welsh in the island's schools would be produced. The Committee's report was issued in spring 1969, triggering further action, another sub-committee was to be set up so that 'full and serious consideration be given to Anglesey's language policy'.<sup>94</sup> The first meeting of the Language Sub-Committee was held in June 1969, and after consultations with teachers, representatives from the teaching unions and discussions with all four head teachers of the secondary schools, the report was issued in late October 1969. The 'cardinal principle' for the island's secondary schools was for pupils to be taught through the language of their choice. However, any such provision would have to be 'consistent with the availability of properly qualified staff, their efficient deployment, the viability of teaching groups and the avoidance of unreasonable expenditure'.<sup>95</sup> So it seemed that the language policy for secondary schools would be very much dependent on the circumstances of each individual school, and the amount of Welsh medium teaching provided in each institution would be down to the four head teachers who would be expected to 'arrange the maximum possible bilingual provision'.<sup>96</sup> As far as A-level provision was concerned it was assumed that the numbers would be too low, at least initially, to sustain Welsh medium classes. It was therefore recommended that advanced studies would be offered through the medium of Welsh in Llangefni only.<sup>97</sup> Although the implementation of Welsh medium provision was inconsistent and limited, there was nevertheless an increase in the subjects taught through the medium of Welsh. There were difficulties involved with

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<sup>93</sup> There was significant interest in the bilingual issue in the local press see, for example, *Liverpool Daily Post*, 8 January 1968; *Liverpool Daily Post*, 25 January 1968; *Liverpool Daily Post*, 27 January 1968; *Y Clorianydd*, 30 January 1968; *Liverpool Daily Post*, 9 February 1968; [*North Wales*] *Chronicle*, 9 May 1968; *Holyhead & Anglesey Mail*, 10 May 1968 and *Liverpool Daily Post*, 30 May 1968.

<sup>94</sup> P[primary and] S[econdary] E[ducation] C[ommittee], 'Report of the Sub-Committee, issued 29 October 1969', Llangefni, AA: WA 1/60.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>96</sup> PSEC, 'Report of the Sub-Committee, issued 29 October 1969', Llangefni, AA: WA 1/60.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*

these changes, particularly since the schools were already overcrowded and staff-shortages were a recurring problem. In Llangefni it exacerbated the existing problem of a lack of teaching areas. The need to create an additional Welsh form for second year pupils prompted the head teacher to urge the LEA to provide an extra mobile classroom. Welsh medium teaching also affected the school's curriculum and streaming procedures when language choice had to be incorporated into calculations.<sup>98</sup> Although increases in Welsh medium teaching also resulted in an increased demand for Welsh speaking teachers, these needs were regularly met by the Welsh Department who generally agreed to the LEA's demand without much negotiation (once the demand had been substantiated by LEA calculations).

However, although Anglesey's LEA had started to take some steps towards a more uniform approach to Welsh medium teaching, secondary school head teachers were still free to decide the extent to which subjects were being offered through the medium of Welsh. Because of the lack of teaching staff, the scarcity of Welsh-medium teaching materials, and the great demand on classroom spaces, the provision in the schools remained patchy. It was not until the local authority reorganisation in 1974, when Anglesey became part of the reformed county of Gwynedd, that Anglesey had to implement a much more wide-ranging language policy. Gwynedd County Council implemented the much more prescriptive and ambitious language policy of the former Caernarvonshire, and that involved significant changes for Anglesey in the wake of reorganisation.<sup>99</sup> The lack of urgency in Anglesey LEA's implementation of more progressive Welsh medium policies was not uncommon among the councils in the Welsh 'heartland'.<sup>100</sup> The severe lack of interest and attention to this issue within the LEA throughout most of the period covered in this thesis suggests that reorganisation issues were prioritised above Welsh medium teaching for a majority of the period. While these two

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<sup>98</sup> HR, 'Morgan: Llangefni', 2 March 1970, Llangefni, AA: WA 1/73.

<sup>99</sup> See, for example, Pretty, *Anglesey The Concise History*, p. 153; Webster, *School and Community in Rural Wales*, pp. 201 and 202 and Author's interview with former pupil in Amlwch School (1960s), 2 May 2013.

<sup>100</sup> I. R. Lloyd, 'A Period of Change – Working for Progress: Secondary Education in Wales, 1965-1985', in Jones (ed.), *Education, Culture and Society Some perspectives in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries* (Cardiff, 1991), pp. 103-106.



policies were by no means mutually exclusive, the kind of organisational problems emphasised in this chapter would undoubtedly have been exacerbated if a more ambitious language policy had been adopted. The concerns, reflected in both minutes and correspondence, suggests that while the language problem became a more prominent issue than it had previously been, other curricular concerns which occupied the LEA were perceived as more pressing than the Welsh-medium issue. This left each head teacher to implement the language policy in accordance with the circumstances of his school and, until 1974, resulted in slow and uneven progress.

### **Anglesey's system – the national and the local contexts**

Anglesey's comprehensive scheme had received substantial scrutiny throughout the comprehensivisation period, but the interest in the island's education system fell into decline during the late 1960s and early 1970s. The broader educational context during this period, and Anglesey's place within it, was nevertheless of continued significance. With the Labour government's pledge to support comprehensive schooling, and the publication of Circular 10/65, Anglesey's education policy appeared not only to have been pioneering, but also to have been proven to be the 'right' choice. Anglesey County Council reported that it considered itself fortunate to have been 'saved the predicament' facing many other LEAs in the mid-1960s of having to completely reorganise their systems after 1965.<sup>101</sup> At the time of the installation of the new Labour government, comprehensive schooling had still only been experimentally introduced in a limited number of LEAs. Even in local authorities where staunch supporters of comprehensive education had been allowed to start the reorganisation at an earlier date, they were still not wholly comprehensivised because of the assortment of different types of schools that still existed. It was still only on Anglesey, and the

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<sup>101</sup> *Holyhead & Anglesey Mail*, 24 April 1964.

independently governed Isle of Man, that fully comprehensive systems had been introduced by April 1965.<sup>102</sup>

However, while public opinion was decidedly positive towards the abolition of the 11-plus examination, this did not necessarily mean that the public automatically embraced Labour's education policy. The discussion in the national press at the time suggests that it was generally felt that there had not yet been sufficient research to definitively judge the outcomes of educational reform along comprehensive lines. *The Times* published 'Comprehensives: A Closer Look' in April 1965. It was a nine-part series of articles considering a range of aspects related to comprehensive education. One article specifically pointed out the need for research, suggesting that: 'The greatest weakness of those who try to sway emotions for or against comprehensive schools is that their views are generally unsupported by facts, especially educational facts'.<sup>103</sup> Earlier the same year *The Daily Mail* had also concluded: 'The most astonishing fact about the comprehensive – versus – grammar school row...is the lack of facts'.<sup>104</sup> While there had been some attempts to evaluate comprehensive schooling prior to 1965, these studies were often written by proponents of the system and were limited in scope due to the lack of wholly comprehensive schemes to investigate.<sup>105</sup> These assessments of comprehensive schemes were not wide-ranging or scientific studies, and were generally not considered rigorous enough to inform formal political policy. When interviewed in 1970 and asked why no research had been undertaken prior to the creation of Circular 10/65, Crosland replied:

Well, this argument had a natural attraction for an ex academic like myself. But as soon as I thought the thing through I could see it was wrong. It implied that

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<sup>102</sup> *The Times*, 1 April 1965.

<sup>103</sup> *The Times*, 8 April 1965.

<sup>104</sup> *The Daily Mail*, 7 January 1965.

<sup>105</sup> See, for example, Pedley, 'Comprehensive Schools Today: an Interim Survey (1)', pp. 518-520; Pedley, 'Comprehensive Schools Today: an Interim Survey (2)', pp. 564-568; Pedley, 'Comprehensive Schools Today: an Interim Survey (3)', pp. 612-613 and NUT, *Inside the Comprehensive School* (London, 1958). During the early 1960s the journal for comprehensive education *Forum* often carried articles with case studies and individual teachers' and head teachers' experiences of implementing forms of comprehensive education see, for example, Simon, J., 'Report from South Wales', *Forum*, 1:2 (1959), pp. 42-49; N. Read-Collins, 'Social Integration in the Comprehensive School', *Forum*, 3:1 (1960), pp. 3-7 and L. J. Culcheth, 'Autonomy within the Comprehensive School', *Forum*, 6:1 (1963), pp. 21-23.

research can tell you what your objectives ought to be. But it can't. Our belief in comprehensive reorganization was a product of fundamental value-judgements about equity and equal opportunity and social division as well as about education. Research can help you to achieve your objectives...But research can't tell you whether you should go comprehensive or not... there was no conceivable case for holding up the circular for another three years until some further bit of research had been done.<sup>106</sup>

Despite the government's lack of research into the comprehensive question, Crosland felt that comprehensive reform was a value-judgement and that its objectives would therefore not be fundamentally altered by research into its educational consequences. This ideological standpoint seems to correspond with his views as expressed in *The Future of Socialism* (1964) where he claimed that '...the school system in Britain remains the most divisive, unjust and wasteful of all aspects of social inequality'.<sup>107</sup> However, Crosland's own comments on comprehensive schooling epitomise the ambivalence within the Labour Party towards comprehensivisation. Before becoming Education Secretary in 1964 Crosland had expressed his distaste for the tripartite system of education, but was nevertheless reluctant to advocate a comprehensive plan for the entire country, and emphasised in *The Future of Socialism* that: '[I]t is not sensible to stifle all private educational experiments.'<sup>108</sup> Nonetheless, once in government he supposedly vowed to 'destroy' all grammar schools, while the terminology of Circular 10/65 proposed only to 'request' rather than 'require' LEAs to reorganise along comprehensive lines. The terminology of the circular indicates the reluctance to force LEAs to comprehensivise, but also corresponds to Crosland's views regarding the introduction of

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<sup>106</sup> Kogan, *The Politics of Education Edward Boyle and Anthony Crosland in conversation*, p. 190. Maurice Kogan started his career as a civil servant in the Ministry of Education during the 1950s, and through his appointment as Committee secretary to the Plowden Committee he was able to develop his strategy of evidence-based research. Kogan left the civil service in 1969 to become one of the founding professors at Brunel University (Uxbridge). During his time at Brunel Kogan raised awareness of the importance of public administration as an issue for academic study. It was from this perspective he conducted his discussions with Boyle and Crosland for his book *The Politics of Education Edward Boyle and Anthony Crosland in conversation*, see Kogan, *The Politics of Education Edward Boyle and Anthony Crosland in conversation*. For more on Kogan see, for example, *The Guardian*, 10 January 2007 and *The Times*, 12 January 2007.

<sup>107</sup> C. A. R. Crosland, *The Future of Socialism* (London, 2006), p. 216.

<sup>108</sup> In *The Future of Socialism* Crosland emphasised how 'unjust' private education was, but did not commit to the idea of abolishing private education all together, C. A. R. Crosland, *The Future of Socialism*, p. 219. In her biography of Anthony Crosland Susan Crosland referred to her husband having said '...if it's the last thing I do, I'm going to destroy every f\*\*\*\*\* grammar school in England...and Wales. And Northern Ireland.' Cited in S. Crosland, *Tony Crosland* (London, 1982), p. 144.

comprehensive schools in *The Future of Socialism*.<sup>109</sup> However, the fact that the policy was already part of the Labour Party's manifesto, and that issuing the circular had already been decided upon, undoubtedly made such decision-making easier for the Secretary of State. Crosland also pointed out that the circular was not simply produced on the back of guesswork, but that some evidence existed and had consequently been considered. He emphasised that 'a number of' comprehensive systems had already been running for a 'considerable time', and that the leading Swedish educationist consulted by the MoE had been 'wholly in favour of our pushing on as we were doing'.<sup>110</sup> Crosland's defence of his ideological standpoint undoubtedly seems more convincing than his attempt to justify the MoE's policy on the grounds of prior investigation. The consultation of one specialist in the field hardly constituted rigorous expert advice. Also, as has already been pointed out, while comprehensive schools had been patchily established in LEAs such as London and Leicestershire prior to 1965, their intakes were not 'truly comprehensive' since they had been running alongside other types of schools. In this light, any criticism aimed at the circular due to its ideological objectives might have been at least partially justified, but the reluctance to await any potential research findings is also revealing. By the mid-1960s it was generally acknowledged that public opinion was supportive of the abolition of the 11-plus examination, and both the public mood and developments in numerous LEAs suggested that the momentum was decidedly in favour of

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<sup>109</sup> Crosland suggested that the Labour Policy had to be realistic and firmly anchored in reality and the practical situation at the time. Therefore, he suggested: 'there can be no question of suddenly closing down the grammar schools and converting the secondary moderns into comprehensive schools...[when]...[O]nly a minority of education authorities at present favour a large-scale conversion to a comprehensive pattern; and no one proposes that the remainder should be coerced'. Instead, a future Labour Government should 'explicitly state a preference for the comprehensive principle, and should actively encourage local authorities...to be more audacious in experimenting with comprehensive schools', C. A. R. Crosland, *The Future of Socialism*, pp. 232 and 233.

<sup>110</sup> The expert consulted by the MoE was Torsten Husén, an eminent Swedish educationist who had been involved in the evaluation of the research project in Stockholm (started in 1950) prior to the introduction of the comprehensive system in Sweden. For more on the Swedish case and Husén's research, see T. Husén and G. Boalt, *Educational Research and Educational Change The Case of Sweden* (Stockholm, 1967). For Crosland's comments on the consultations with Husén, see Kogan, *The Politics of Education Edward Boyle and Anthony Crosland in conversation*, p. 190. For further contemporary comments on the Swedish system, M. Miles, 'Comprehensive Education in Sweden', *Forum*, 1:2 (1959), pp. 52, 71 and 72.

comprehensive schooling.<sup>111</sup> The abolition of the 11-plus examination had been part of the Labour Party's manifesto since 1955, and once in government Circular 10/65 took priority.<sup>112</sup> In view of so many LEAs (ninety according to Boyle) already preparing plans for reorganisation along comprehensive lines, there was undoubtedly a feeling of positive momentum in favour of secondary school reform.<sup>113</sup> The impression might well have been that time-consuming research was not strictly necessary, and that with such obvious public support swift action would be favourable.

The widespread support for secondary school reform during this time is also evident in the national press. Despite the limited experience of comprehensive systems in England and Wales and the dearth of research into the consequences of such reforms, the overwhelming impression in the press was that comprehensive education was, on the whole, desirable. Reports on comprehensive schools during 1964 and 1965 often used Anglesey, and particularly Holyhead, to indicate how successful comprehensive education had proven to be. The system was described as 'strikingly successful' in educating those children who would otherwise have attended grammar schools. Ten years into the new scheme, twice as many pupils were taking O-level examinations and the number of A-level students had increased threefold.<sup>114</sup> Anglesey was reported to be very proud of its record for GCEs, and Lovett was quoted as claiming that '200 children who would have failed 11-plus have GCE passes since the school turned comprehensive'.<sup>115</sup> A report on Anglesey in *The Times* portrayed a more multifaceted picture of the situation, especially in respect of the question of whether comprehensive schooling benefitted the 'less gifted' pupils. The overall assessment was that the experiment had been a success.<sup>116</sup> A follow-up article used examination results from Holyhead to try and assess

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<sup>111</sup> See, for example, Boyle, 'The Politics of Secondary School Reorganization: Some Reflections', pp. 32 and 33; Kerckhoff, Fogelman, Crook and Reeder, *Going Comprehensive in England and Wales*, pp. 22 and 23 and Crook, 'Local Authorities and Comprehensivisation in England and Wales, 1944-1974', pp. 247-260.

<sup>112</sup> For the 1955 Manifesto, see 'Labour Party: 1955' Forward With Labour: Labour's Policy for the Consideration of the Nation', [<http://www.politicsresources.net/area/uk/man/lab55.htm>, accessed 11 October 2015].

<sup>113</sup> See, for example, Kogan, *The Politics of Education Edward Boyle and Anthony Crosland in conversation*, p. 78 and Boyle, 'The Politics of Secondary School Reorganization: Some Reflections', p. 32.

<sup>114</sup> *The Guardian*, 6 December 1964.

<sup>115</sup> *The Daily Mail*, 7 January 1965.

<sup>116</sup> *The Times*, 3 April 1965.

claims made by Crosland that neither academically gifted 'grammar type' children, nor those pupils of 'less intellectual ability', would lose out in a comprehensive school setting. The article's author concluded:

What are the facts? Who is right? I have studied two traditional grammar schools that long ago were turned into comprehensives. On the evidence from these two schools, which one would hope but cannot prove are typical, Mr. Crosland is right.<sup>117</sup>

Thus, Anglesey's case was repeatedly used as an example to strengthen the case for comprehensive education on the broader, national, stage. Curiously, despite various reservations expressed by teachers and parents in some of the national newspaper reports as to the benefits to less able pupils, the overall evaluations were nevertheless positive. The *Daily Mail*, as a right of centre newspaper, questioned the general lack of research but its overall assessment of the Anglesey scheme was encouraging. It is notable that regardless of the political stance of *The Guardian*, *The Times* and the *Daily Mail*, they all rendered Anglesey's scheme a success. This can, in part at least, be ascribed to the overwhelming concern with examination results. The general debate had concentrated on the potential effects of comprehensivisation on academically gifted pupils, and this focus remained.<sup>118</sup> Whilst there had been a general dearth of research into the consequences of comprehensive schooling generally, the perceived academic success of Anglesey's schools had nevertheless attracted attention. At Llangefni in 1965, the head teacher Davies was reported to have observed that:

This school is a bit of a sweat shop. We are all so anxious to prove ourselves. I think all comprehensives err on the academic side. It stems from the original desire to prove that the best people do not suffer.<sup>119</sup>

This was not only illustrative of the focus on academic education and examination results among observers interested in comprehensive education, but also highlights the kind of pressure Anglesey's

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<sup>117</sup> *The Times*, 9 April 1965.

<sup>118</sup> Apart from comments in the national press, the parliamentary debate leading up to the 1965 motion in favour of Circular 10/65 was also indicative of the significance of the grammar school question in the political debate. The majority of the contributions to the debate, on both sides of the house, were concerned with the implications for grammar school children and grammar education, HC Deb 21 January 1965, vol 705, cols 413-541.

<sup>119</sup> *The Times*, 3 April 1965.

secondary schools and the LEA was under. In the same year a HMI inspector commented on the scrutiny that Anglesey was under, pointing out that the number of visitors who had come to observe the system in practice in the island's secondary schools amounted to higher figures than '...in any other area known to me'. The LEA was described as 'often distressed, knowing only too well that standards in Anglesey schools are not what they should be...'<sup>120</sup>

Regardless of several indications that Anglesey's scheme was showing inconsistency in its achievements, particularly concerning the provision for the 'less academically gifted' pupils, external observers still described the system as a success. Despite the fact that it was generally acknowledged that Anglesey's scheme had been a solution to practical problems and therefore based on 'efficiency and economy, not ideology', it was nevertheless portrayed as a generalised model of comprehensive schooling.<sup>121</sup> One teacher suggested in an interview for *The Times* that although the system worked well in an area such as Anglesey, this did not necessarily mean it would be equally successful in large urban centres.<sup>122</sup> The fact that the system had also evolved through the conversion of four grammar schools was also regularly emphasised.<sup>123</sup> However, despite peculiarities relating to the island's geography and demography, general conclusions were nonetheless drawn from Anglesey's experiences. Paradoxically, such portrayals of Anglesey's system as an unqualified success coincided with the emerging awareness of specific difficulties within Anglesey's schools. Furthermore, problems associated with the comprehensive nature of Anglesey's schools were becoming more, rather than less, noticeable as the decade progressed. HMI had expressed concerns about some of these aspects previously, but it was during this period that problems related to

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<sup>120</sup> The notes were prepared in advance of an HMI deputation to Anglesey on 27 April 1965 to discuss staff numbers and the need to increase Anglesey's teacher quota, HMI, 'Notes ahead of deputation in April 1965', 14 April 1965, London, TNA: ED 216/29.

<sup>121</sup> See *The Guardian*, 6 December 1964. In *The Times* it was considered a decision 'in favour of expediency, *The Times*, 3 April 1965. The *Daily Mail* described the transition on Anglesey as 'more economic and efficient in a scattered rural area', *Daily Mail*, 7 January 1965.

<sup>122</sup> *The Times*, 3 April 1965.

<sup>123</sup> See, for example, *The Times*, 3 April 1965; *The Guardian*, 6 December 1964 and *The Daily Mail*, 7 January 1965.

organisation and curricula started to receive more attention both from the LEA and within the schools themselves.

While Circular 10/65 proposed six different ways in which LEAs could choose to reorganise their secondary schools, the MoE's preferred option was that of 'all-through' schools.<sup>124</sup> Crosland's response to the question of how, and why, six optional schemes had been decided upon is quite illuminating. In part he put the decision down to the necessity to accommodate existing buildings, but also to the fact that 'there was no clear consensus on which type of organization was best on merit – 'all-through' comprehensives, or the Leicestershire system, or what...So there was no alternative to allowing options. The detail of the options was mainly a product of thinking in the Inspectorate'.<sup>125</sup> In view of the experiences on Anglesey, however, its relatively small '11-18' comprehensive schools were experiencing a range of difficulties in sustaining its Sixth Forms, as well as providing appropriate education for the mixed-ability intakes. Nonetheless, Circular 10/65 clearly stated that such schools were able to 'cater properly for the whole ability range and produce a viable sixth form'.<sup>126</sup> This suggests that while Anglesey's case was routinely used in the national press to bolster the case for comprehensive education, the situation which emerged during the 1960s did not accurately correspond to that image. Crosland's assertion that it was primarily HM inspectors that had informed the six options presented to LEAs in the circular was perhaps accurate, although the findings on Anglesey by HMI in 1961 did not appear to support some of the assertions made in Circular 10/65. According to HMI, the Sixth Form provision in the smaller comprehensive schools

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<sup>124</sup> MoE, 'Circular 10/65: The Organisation of Secondary Education' 12 July 1965, London, TNA: ED 147/827C.

<sup>125</sup> Kogan, *The Politics of Education Edward Boyle and Anthony Crosland in conversation*, p. 188. In his interview with Maurice Kogan Boyle commented that 'I remember when I first discovered as Minister in 1963 that no fewer than ninety local education authorities had reorganization plans. One of the historical myths is comprehensive reorganisation started with *Circular 10/65 [sic]*. It didn't. It started a number of years before', Kogan, *The Politics of Education Edward Boyle and Anthony Crosland in conversation*, p. 78. Boyle (Education Secretary, 1962-64) also emphasised that he had no doubts that the tripartite system was on its way out. This statement is supported by the fact that Boyle ensure the passing of the Act (1964) to legalise middle-schools (in turn allowing LEAs to develop tiered reorganisation plans), Kogan, *The Politics of Education Edward Boyle and Anthony Crosland in conversation*, p. 94.

<sup>126</sup> MoE, 'Circular 10/65: The Organisation of Secondary Education' 12 July 1965, London, TNA: ED 147/827C.



(Holyhead excluded) had expanded with the increase in numbers of pupils, and this had created 'heavy demands' on teaching resources. The report concluded that:

Unless there is an improvement in the pupil : staffing ratio, the range of studies might well have to be reconsidered along with the possibility of concentrating tuition in some of the subjects in one or at most two of the three schools.<sup>127</sup>

Considering the recognised lack of experience from which to draw conclusions, it might seem careless not to account for such observations made on Anglesey (still one of only two LEAs with a fully comprehensivised system). However, as Crosland acknowledged, Circular 10/65 was not a document generated as a result of research. Therefore, the outcomes of Anglesey's reorganisation, which were starting to become more apparent at this time, were neither fully recognised nor considered in wider educational policy-making or debates. By October 1967 a majority of LEAs had submitted reorganisation plans to the MoE, and the most popular option had proven to be the system of 'all-through' comprehensive schools.<sup>128</sup> Meanwhile, the local Council's own assessment of Anglesey's '11-18' secondary schools appeared to have changed. The section on education in the County's report for 1963-64 had expressed confidence in the system's ability to provide effective provision for children of all abilities, albeit by different means in the different schools on the island. It was felt that '[T]he achievements of the comprehensive schools have given the lie to the jeremiads uttered in many quarters ten years ago'.<sup>129</sup> On the other hand, a similar report for 1967-68 professed that:

The task of catering for the able child, the average child and the slow learning child, is a formidable one, and this is the task that still faces our secondary comprehensive system of education in Anglesey. Much needs to be done, and not least is the provision of comprehensive buildings.<sup>130</sup>

The contrast between the two assessments were stark, and the local authority's confidence in the virtues of the system overall had clearly altered. By 1968 the authority was acknowledging the difficulties in providing education for children of all abilities, and its continued struggle to attempt to

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<sup>127</sup> HMI, 'Report: Amlwch, Beaumaris and Llangefni secondary schools', summer and autumn 1961, London, TNA: ED 216/27.

<sup>128</sup> *TES*, 6 October 1967.

<sup>129</sup> *Holyhead & Anglesey Mail*, 24 April 1964.

<sup>130</sup> See, for example, *Liverpool Post*, 12 June 1968; *North Wales Chronicle*, 20 June 1968 and *Liverpool Post*, 26 June 1968.

do so within its comprehensive system. This realisation was twofold. Firstly, it might have been easier to declare the system a success in 1964 because of the relative lack of experience in the field, as well as the less nuanced debate of what a comprehensive education should entail. And in 1964 academic success, particularly in Holyhead School, had been sufficient evidence of a successful system. By 1968, however, the debate on comprehensive schooling had progressed and in the midst of progressive comprehensive schemes being introduced elsewhere, Anglesey's scheme might have appeared less successful.<sup>131</sup> Secondly, as has already been established, a range of difficulties were emerging within the island's secondary schools, many of which were considered consequences of the comprehensive re-organisation.

Anglesey's comprehensive system experienced some organisational issues in the period 1964-74. Previous evaluations of the scheme, both at a local and national level, had emphasised the successes of academically gifted pupils. The momentum of public opinion in favour of the abolition of the 11-plus examination, in combination with central government's pro-comprehensive agenda, resulted in Anglesey's system being used to illustrate educational success within a comprehensive set-up. Despite the fact that particular problems within the secondary schools had been acknowledged by both the LEA and HMI, they were nevertheless largely disregarded in the wider national educational debate where Anglesey still featured relatively regularly. The way examination results were allowed to exemplify the effectiveness of comprehensive education is a reflection of the dominance of the grammar school debate during this period. At this point the Labour Party was promising 'grammar school education for all', and the discussion leading up to Circular 10/65 predominantly concerned

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<sup>131</sup> The local elections in 1967 were described as a landslide victory for the Conservatives and resulted in renewed discussions as to the desirability of comprehensivisation and the speed it should take. There was also strong opposition from many Conservatives to the government's suggestion to legislate for the removal of the 11-plus examination see, for example, *The Guardian*, 15 February 1967; *The Guardian*, 12 May 1967 and *The Times*, 4 October 1968. New types of comprehensive schemes had emerged by this time, and were being assessed (often differently depending on the observer's point of view) and the perception of the successes of comprehensive education was just as divisive as ever. A telling example was the exchange in the *Daily Post* regarding the situation in Liverpool in 1968, *Daily Post*, 16 October 1968 and *Daily Post*, 31 October 1968.

the potential consequences for the grammar schools and their pupils.<sup>132</sup> The decision to issue Circular 10/65 without undertaking any specific research into the consequences of comprehensive schooling was a conscious decision by the MoE. The fact that the circular clearly stated its preference for '11-18' comprehensive schools, as well as a determined defence of small (six or seven form) '11-18' institutions, clearly reveals that observations of the few existing wholly comprehensive schemes in England and Wales had not been instrumental in informing the policy. Furthermore, it is evident that if there had been a desire by central government to examine Anglesey's scheme more closely, the evidence from HMI's inspections and surveys would have been available from the very early 1960s and would plainly have indicated particular problems related to the schools' sizes as well as concerns with provision for the 'less academically gifted' pupils.

Locally, meanwhile, the LEA admitted that the island's comprehensive schools were still struggling with the task of providing suitable provisions for pupils of all abilities. The issue was complex, involving not merely practical difficulties of timetabling, staffing, equipment and suitable facilities. Additionally, more overarching questions were being asked about the nature of the kind of education that should be provided in the island's secondary schools, particularly to those pupils who were considered unsuitable for an academic syllabus. New solutions were tried and tested: the house system in Menai Bridge, the community service initiative in Llangefni, a novel language syllabus in Holyhead (1967) and a Six Form Unit (also in Holyhead).

However, whilst Anglesey had been one of a very few pioneers of comprehensive education during the 1950s, over time the scheme appeared less radical. New comprehensive systems were implemented in a majority of LEAs during the latter half of the 1960s and early 1970s. These new converters, such as Flintshire, had very different aims and objectives compared to those with which Anglesey's system had originally been introduced. Even though the LEA intervened in Menai Bridge

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<sup>132</sup> Hugh Gaitskell, during his time as leader of the Labour Party in opposition, expressly emphasised Labour's policy as one of 'grammar schools for all' see, for example, *The Guardian*, 7 July 1958 and *The Times*, 7 July 1958. This proposition was also carried through into Circular 10/65 where the pledge was to extend grammar school education so that 'in future no child will be denied the opportunity of benefitting from it...', MoE, 'Circular 10/65: The Organisation of Secondary Education' 12 July 1965, London, TNA: ED 147/827C.

to reorganise the school so as to provide more mixed-ability teaching, the head teacher was unable to carry through the changes in the face of hostile, reactionary opposition from some of the senior staff. While this period saw a variety of new approaches in order to address these problems, these changes were still in progress by the time that Anglesey was incorporated into Gwynedd County Council in 1974.

The difficulties experienced were not exclusive to Anglesey. Similar issues would materialise in other LEAs later on, but the possible lessons to be learnt from Anglesey's pioneering scheme constituted a lost opportunity. The wider issue of what this new comprehensive education should look like, and how schools would be able to provide suitable education for all abilities, had yet to be addressed. The Labour party's promise of 'grammar schools for all', was in actuality undeliverable since there was no national curriculum through which central government could control the kind of education which schools provided. While central government was able to legislate for the organisation of schools, the details of how these schools dealt with their comprehensive intakes was still very much a matter for each school. The Labour Party had failed to define what a comprehensive education should look like, and only really provided the parameters for a comprehensive schooling system rather than for a comprehensive education.<sup>133</sup> That was why comprehensive schools had to trial novel approaches to engage and educate their mixed-ability intake. By the late 1960s and early 1970s scathing criticisms were directed at progressive practices and the presumed damage such teaching was having on the more gifted pupils, paving the way for the 'Great Debate' on education which followed Callaghan's 1976 'Ruskin Speech' and the gradual centralisation of educational decision-making.<sup>134</sup> There was a continued lack of direction for comprehensive schools in the 1970s, and in combination with the legacy of decades of prioritising the fate of gifted pupils it was not surprising that Anglesey's schools found it a challenge to try and address the issue of how to provide

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<sup>133</sup> See Benn and Chitty, *Thirty Years On Is Comprehensive Education Alive and Well or Struggling to Survive?*, p.28.

<sup>134</sup> For more on the Ruskin Speech, see Introduction.

suitable educational provision for its comprehensive intake of pupils, particularly since they had no existing model on which to fashion its policies.

## Conclusion

This thesis has developed an understanding of how and why Anglesey became an early pioneer of comprehensive schooling during the 1950s and 1960s, and has attempted to place the experience of Anglesey in the wider context of educational developments that took place during these decades. The study was motivated by a desire to gain further understanding of the rationale and priorities of local government's role in education, but also to compare and contrast the influence of the LEA with the impact of central government objectives in relation to progressive developments. By examining Anglesey's case within this broader context it has been possible to evaluate the inter-dependent relationship between local schools, the LEA and central government. Despite the complexities of these interactions, it has nevertheless been possible to conclude that the decisive factors that impacted on the development of the comprehensive scheme were those at the local level. However, an analysis of educational reform on Anglesey, and subsequent responses to these developments has revealed the prominent role played by the island's scheme within the broader debate taking place during the 1950s and 1960s. These findings further emphasise the need to incorporate the history of pioneering comprehensive systems into the wider historiography on comprehensivisation.

### I

There is a well-established assumption that comprehensive school reform was predominantly promoted by the Labour Party and first initiated in Labour controlled councils during the 1960s. Such assumptions do, however, underestimate the significance of individual LEAs in the development of comprehensive schooling prior to the return of a Labour government in 1964. The few existing studies that have attempted to examine the progress in different LEAs have tended to adopt a comparative approach. These works have attempted to establish particular similarities between selective case studies in order to explain why pioneering schemes emerged in particular areas as and when they did.<sup>1</sup> However, Chapters Two and Three demonstrated that it was Anglesey's exclusive

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<sup>1</sup> See Kerckhoff, Fogelman, Crook and Reeder, *Going Comprehensive in England and Wales*.

circumstances that were decisive in the creation and implementation of the comprehensive scheme.

<sup>2</sup> This indicates the ineffectiveness of applying an approach merely aimed at detecting similarities between case studies in order to explain why pioneering comprehensive schemes emerged as and when they did. This thesis found that a unique combination of local factors engendered a favourable situation for the practical establishment of Anglesey's Development Plan. Simultaneously, these peculiarities also made Anglesey a viable candidate for an experimental scheme in the eyes of the MoE. Chapter Three showed that the perceived lack of ideological fervour from within the LEA, as well as in its justification of the plan, further strengthened its case. Anglesey's Development Plan did not appear to cause a significant political threat to the stance of central government. As far as the existing historiography comments on Anglesey's comprehensive system, the overwhelming consensus has been that it was solely based on practical and economic considerations.<sup>3</sup> However, this interpretation has been disputed in this study. The comprehensivisation process was too complex simply to be described as a practical solution for a rural region or a rural 'problem', and the nuances of this process can now be understood more fully.<sup>4</sup> As Chapter Two suggested, the ideological objectives were an integral part of the LEA's rationale for reform during the 1930s, particularly in relation to the desire to increase the number of pupils allowed entry into secondary education. Furthermore, the rhetoric of the Director of Education indicates the significance of local circumstances - for example that Welsh society was perceived as less hierarchical than the English - and how this impacted on educational thinking and how it helped to justify Anglesey's developing policy.<sup>5</sup>

The above findings suggest that pioneering comprehensive schemes warrant further study in order to ensure a more exclusive place for these early developments within the broader historiography.

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<sup>2</sup> For more on this, see Chapters Two and Three.

<sup>3</sup> For a full account on comments regarding the practical (rather than ideological) rationale behind Anglesey's multilateralism, see Introduction.

<sup>4</sup> For more on this, see Chapter Three.

<sup>5</sup> For an account of these views on Anglesey as a 'classless society', see Chapter One. For further comments on the views expressed by the LEA in relation to social differences between England and Wales, as well as differences in opinion between the BoE and the LEA, see Chapter Two.

Such research would aid further understanding of the dynamics of the policy-making process and the implementation of educational reform during this period. The post-war era has often been described as a time of political consensus, but also as a period of shifting political power. Local government control over education was allegedly in decline after 1944 due to the expanding remit of central government.<sup>6</sup> However, this thesis has shown that Anglesey was able to retain its education policy throughout the 1930s and 1940s, and by 1953 the authority had been largely successful in executing its plans regardless of the generally hostile stance of central government towards the development of comprehensive schemes. This suggests that although power might have shifted towards a more centralised control of education, an independently run local authority such as Anglesey, still retained significant manoeuvrability and autonomy when pursuing its own policy. If compared to, for example, the slow progress in the Labour run council of Swansea, it seems feasible to suggest that (even during the time of the 1945 and 1950 Attlee governments) it was easier to justify a multilateral system in an independently run local authority where the local circumstances were favourable, than in an expressly Labour run council.<sup>7</sup>

## II

Studies concerned with the history of education have tended to equate the reorganisation of schools into comprehensive *systems*, with a development of comprehensive *education* on a national scale. However, this study has suggested that it is essential to differentiate between these two features in order to portray an accurate picture of how developments actually unfolded. The implementation of a comprehensive system of education by an LEA did not necessarily lead to a conscious initiative to reform the *kind* of education that schools provided. This thesis has demonstrated that in order to fully appreciate the comprehensivisation process it is necessary to go beyond the realm of official

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<sup>6</sup> For more on the power relationship between central and local government, see Introduction.

<sup>7</sup> For more on the Swansea case, see Evans, 'The dynamics of Labour Party politics in Swansea 1941-1964', unpublished PhD thesis, University of Wales, Bangor (2007).



policy-making. It is possible to examine the policy-making process and the physical reorganisation of schools without necessarily referring to subsequent educational developments within these institutions. However, in order to trace the developments of comprehensive *education*, an analysis of developments within schools is essential. Throughout the period covered in this thesis, the way in which comprehensive education was interpreted and delivered was highly dependent on circumstances and decision-making within schools. As Chapter Four showed, once the education system was established on Anglesey in 1953, the role of the LEA became significantly less prominent and the 'comprehensive nature' of each school was predominantly an issue of internal organisation. The intervention from central and local government was limited once the system had been established, and Chapter Four showed how governmental influences on schools often emerged unintentionally rather than by design during the period between 1953 and 1964.<sup>8</sup>

These findings firmly underline the importance of taking the history of comprehensivisation beyond the party political and governmental frameworks, or indeed from the clutches of a post-1945 Labour reform-centric history. This study has emphasised the potential for further investigation into policy-making at the local level, but furthermore and perhaps more importantly, to incorporate developments in schools into the history of the politics of education. In order to understand how comprehensive schooling *and* comprehensive education developed, it is necessary to go beyond the familiar perspective of political frameworks. Despite the fact that Anglesey's schools should be considered multilateral rather than comprehensive at their introduction in 1953, developments within some of these institutions still constituted radical, pioneering approaches. For example, Chapter Four examined Lovett's introduction of his policy of 'progressive differentiation' and how it incorporated features of mixed-ability teaching for pupils of 'all abilities' as early as 1953.<sup>9</sup> Attempts to counter criticisms of the 'monster of mass education' also resulted in progressive policies, where

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<sup>8</sup> For more on the unintended influences that school accommodation had on Anglesey's schools, see Chapter Four.

<sup>9</sup> For details on the curriculum developed in Holyhead during Lovett's time as head teacher, see Chapter Four.

Llangefni's house system was of particular note.<sup>10</sup> However, Chapter Five revealed the struggles Anglesey's schools faced when trying to adapt curricula to suit the whole range of abilities contained in the comprehensive schools, but also how such issues generated innovative approaches. These findings suggest that any examination restricted to the observation of local and central government policies would not provide sufficient evidence to comment on the 'comprehensiveness' of Anglesey's schools. This reiterates the significance of broadening the study of comprehensivisation during this period if the historical process is to be understood more fully.

### III

Paradoxically, however, this study has also stressed the significance of continuity rather than change in Anglesey's educational developments and thinking throughout the 1930s, 1940s and beyond. Chapter Two and Three illustrated how the educational thinking of the LEA, which underpinned the Development Plans of both the 1930s and 1940s, accepted the tenet of the existence of different 'types' of children who were considered suitable for different 'types' of education.<sup>11</sup> These divisions were also largely accepted by the comprehensive schools' head teachers, and were realised in the majority of the schools by entrance tests, followed-up by policies of 'streaming' and 'setting'. This was fully in line with the types of schools the LEA had envisaged in the Development Plan submitted to the MoE in 1946. The new secondary schools were labelled multilateral rather than comprehensive in the 1946 Plan, just as they had been in 1936. This continuity allowed Anglesey to rapidly produce a fully-developed plan which was highly influenced by the existing blueprint from 1936. The timing of the scheme, which was submitted to the MoE in 1946 (relatively early on) aided its prompt approval. Importantly, this meant that the LEA was able to get the construction of its purpose-built comprehensive schools underway prior to the austerity measures introduced in the

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<sup>10</sup> HC Deb 24 July 1951, vol 491, cols 210-331.

<sup>11</sup> For more on contemporary views on pupils' abilities and different 'types' of children, see Introduction and Chapter Two.

wake of the 1951 election. Furthermore, after 1951, the approach of the central government towards comprehensive reform hardened, particularly as far as grammar school closures were concerned.<sup>12</sup> However, because Anglesey's scheme was already underway, the LEA was allowed to proceed with its plans to transform its grammar schools into multilateral units.

This thesis has also shown how continuity of school provision and accommodation impacted both on local responses to the reorganisation as well as the 'comprehensive' nature of the schools. Chapter Three and Four demonstrated how each comprehensive institution evolved from the existing grammar schools, and how all four head teachers were former grammar school teachers. The overwhelming perception, as expressed in LEA and MoE documents, head teachers' reports, minutes of the Boards of Governors, as well as in the press, was that Anglesey's comprehensive schools had been established by the incorporation of the interim secondary modern schools *into* the existing grammar schools. As suggested in Chapter Four, the reaction to the relocation of the school in Beaumaris during the mid-1950s revealed how significant this sense of continuity was in shaping local perceptions and opinions in order to avoid local opposition to comprehensive reorganisation.<sup>13</sup>

#### IV

By examining Anglesey's place within the wider educational context of the time, this thesis has been able to show the interrelationship between the LEA, its schools and external observers. The introduction of a pioneering education system, virtually without examples upon which to model it, was not without complication. An analysis of the running of the system as well as the 'comprehensiveness' of the schools has shown that the scheme's pioneering status impacted on a range of developments. The causes and consequences of the external scrutiny which the system

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<sup>12</sup> For more on the austerity measures of the 1951 Conservative government, and Horsbrugh's stance on the closure of grammar schools, see Chapter Three.

<sup>13</sup> For a detailed analysis of the response to the closure of the school in Beaumaris, see Chapter Four.

experienced have also been assessed, further distinguishing the role of Anglesey within the wider educational context.

Chapter Three showed that, as the only wholly comprehensive system of secondary education in England and Wales, Anglesey's scheme attracted attention in the local press and educational journals during the 1950s. It was not until the 1960s that the wider national press showed any sustained interest, and as Chapter Five showed, these reports predominantly strengthened the case for comprehensive schooling during a time when both central government and public opinion were turning against selective tests at the age of eleven.<sup>14</sup> The nature of reports in journals and newspapers produced during the mid-1950s, compared to those published about a decade later, differed considerably. While early articles had focused on describing the system and the organisation of the schools, the emphasis in the mid-1960s was on the potential negative educational consequences on pupils, particularly 'grammar type' pupils, in comprehensive schools. However, reports in the national press did not always correlate to what was actually being observed by those involved in the education system at the local level. Chapters Four and Five demonstrated how newspapers and journals primarily assessed the successes of Anglesey's comprehensive schools in relation to the progress of 'grammar type' pupils in its schools.<sup>15</sup> For example, closer scrutiny of a series of articles published in *The Times* (April 1965) reveals an entire article on examination results from the school in Holyhead. Throughout this series of articles, the general outlook on comprehensive schooling remained cautiously positive regardless of the concerns raised by several interviewees from the island's schools about the comprehensive experience for the 'less able' pupils. Two different teachers' expressed their concern about the 'less gifted' pupils. One commented that '[I]t is the not-so-bright who suffer...', while the other emphasised that '[I]n these comprehensives,

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<sup>14</sup> For further analysis on newspaper coverage, see Chapters Four and Five.

<sup>15</sup> For more on the discussion on the significance of the focus on 'grammar type' pupils, see Chapters Four and Five.

my sympathies are with the backward children'.<sup>16</sup> Llangefni's head teacher (Davies) also acknowledged that the scrutiny which Anglesey's scheme had been under had indeed resulted in the school becoming 'a bit of a sweat shop' in order to prove themselves and to show that gifted pupils did not suffer in comprehensive schools.<sup>17</sup> Thus, by the mid-1960s there was an interest in Anglesey's system as well as its schools in the national press. However, the reports (in both left- and right-leaning newspapers) tended to reflect the general public opinion that selective tests to enter grammar schools should be abolished – and replaced by some type of non-selective comprehensive schools. Therefore, representations of Anglesey's system, in the press, were rather one-dimensional, and largely ignored the issues which the LEA and the schools faced during this time. The reports presented the scheme as an example of the kind of new comprehensive schools that were being envisaged as part of the advancing comprehensivisation drive. In reality, the scheme long pre-dated central government's Circular 10/65, and its rationale had been significantly different from the motivation behind the plans of those LEAs clamouring for change during the mid-1960s. Thus, Anglesey's school organisation was portrayed as a model example which helped to boost the policy of central government, despite the fact that it was often acknowledged as an atypical case.<sup>18</sup> The scheme was incorporated into the narrative of the so called 'comprehensive movement' even though it had arguably never actually been part of it.

There were other areas where disparities were found between actual developments on the ground and the perceptions and expectations imposed on the system from the outside. In Chapter Four criticisms by educationists such as Pedley and Simon were examined, and it was established that many of these criticisms were somewhat misdirected in view of the rationale behind Anglesey's scheme.<sup>19</sup> The '11-18' schools that were introduced on the island had been designed as multilateral institutions, large enough in size to provide secondary education for all of the island's children of

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<sup>16</sup> For the article about examination results, using Holyhead as an example, *The Times*, 9 April 1965. For the article with the interviews of Anglesey teachers, *The Times*, 3 April 1965.

<sup>17</sup> *The Times*, 3 April 1965.

<sup>18</sup> For more on this, see Chapter Five.

<sup>19</sup> For more on this, see Chapter Four.

secondary school age. It was also hoped that these schools would be able to rival the provision and breadth of subjects of grammar schools in urban areas. Criticisms were often voiced in opposition to the size of '11-18' schools, and head teachers spent both time and effort developing approaches to counter the perceived ills associated with large schools. It is rather ironic, therefore, that by the early 1970s the overall assessment by the LEA was that, apart from the school in Holyhead, the schools were actually too small to be able to effectively sustain Sixth Form provision. It is also essential to note that Anglesey, still one of the only existing systems of '11-18' schools in England and Wales, was struggling to address the challenges involved with comprehensivisation. Curiously, more or less concurrently, central government issued guidelines to LEAs recommending '11-18' schools as the most desirable option. Furthermore, Circular 10/65 suggested that it was viable to establish '11-18' schools where provision would be made for the whole range of abilities, even for institutions with an intake as small as six or seven-forms.<sup>20</sup> This was the very size of the majority of Anglesey's schools that the LEA was finding increasingly difficult to sustain. This poses the question that *if* some research had been undertaken into the outcomes of the schemes that did exist in England and Wales, would it have influenced the advice distributed by central government? The momentum in support of comprehensive schooling was undoubtedly such that any attempt to stave off educational change would have been unwise politically. Furthermore, the Labour Party had officially been in favour of the abolition of the 11-plus examination since the mid-1950s and would have been highly unlikely to delay or abolish educational reform, particularly in light of the favourable conditions by the mid-1960s. However, if the evidence coming to light on Anglesey by the mid-1960s had been more thoroughly scrutinised, it might have been able to inform the detail of governmental guidelines in relation to the six different options put forward in Circular 10/65. Central government's preferred option of '11-18' schools might not have appeared such an obvious choice, particularly in respect of small 'all-through' comprehensive schools. Keeping in mind the difficulties that would emerge later regarding the provision for less academically minded pupils in

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<sup>20</sup> MoE, 'Circular 10/65: The Organisation of Secondary Education' 12 July 1965, London, TNA: ED 147/827C.

comprehensive schools, it is nevertheless certain that Anglesey's experiences foretold future issues even though these concerns were not heeded at the time.

## V

Because the study of pioneering comprehensive schemes is fairly uncultivated ground, certain aspects of this thesis warrant further consideration and investigation. This study has shown how the examination of case studies can generate further research into the wider history of the politics of education. This demonstrates the importance of integrating local studies of educational development into the broader national discourse, thus avoiding treating advances in LEAs as less significant parentheses compared to the policy-making of central government. By applying such an approach it is possible to shed light on aspects of the comprehensivisation process which have not, as yet, been scrutinised by historians of education.

Firstly, one particular aspect that presents an opportunity for further investigation is the reflection of the potential influence the Anglesey case (and other pioneers alongside it) might have had on educational developments more widely. This would include considerations of the scheme's impact on the thinking around comprehensive schooling and school organisation in those LEAs that initiated moves towards comprehensive reorganisation, both prior to Circular 10/65 and in the immediate aftermath of its issuing. Anglesey's schools received a myriad of visitors throughout the 1950s and 1960s, and numerous head teachers, teachers and representatives from LEAs came to observe the running of the schools.<sup>21</sup> Chapter Four showed how Lovett's views and input were in particularly high demand. Lovett, the head teacher in Holyhead, contributed to large numbers of conferences, journals and debates.<sup>22</sup> He also provided information for educationists, Labour Party committees

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<sup>21</sup> For more on visitors to Holyhead, see TLPF, Llangefni, AA: WA 18/53.

<sup>22</sup> For more on Lovett's contributions in various publications, see Chapter Four.

and officials from LEAs.<sup>23</sup> The response to such contributions and their wider impact are not strictly questions included in the remit of this study, and therefore remain under-developed. Due to the lack of existing scholarship on this aspect of the comprehensivisation process, the scale of the undertaking to locate and analyse the relevant source material rendered it impossible to incorporate into this thesis. This study does, however, provide a springboard for further study within this field.

Another aspect worthy of further examination is the Labour Party's, and the first Wilson government's, preparation for the implementation of its comprehensive policy. The lack of any government funded research into comprehensive schooling prior to the issuing of Circular 10/65 has occasionally been commented upon.<sup>24</sup> However, to date, there has been a lack of investigation into this issue, and subsequently also a lack of comment on the potential impact this might have had on education policy and its implementation by LEAs. The findings in this thesis have shown how the analysis of developments in the case study of Anglesey presents new avenues of research in this respect. It indicates that important questions can be asked about the information available to central government at the time of Circular 10/65, and also as to how far the few comprehensive schemes that existed in England and Wales were referred to in the policy-development process. There were discrepancies between those observations made from within Anglesey's education system and the guidelines articulated in Circular 10/65. This poses uncomfortable questions regarding the possibility that those findings, observed in LEAs where comprehensive systems were being trialled, could have anticipated – or indeed helped prevent - future problems experienced by '11-18' comprehensive schools elsewhere, had they been acknowledged at the time.

Furthermore, reservations about the effectiveness of relatively small '11-18' comprehensive schools were also raised in Anglesey during the early 1960s.<sup>25</sup> There were growing concerns about Sixth Form provision as well as uncertainty of how to provide suitable education to pupils of all abilities –

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<sup>23</sup> For more on requests from different individuals and groups, see Chapter Four.

<sup>24</sup> For more on this, see Introduction.

<sup>25</sup> For more on this, see Chapters Four and Chapter Five.



and indeed, how well-served 'less able' pupils were in Anglesey's comprehensive schools.<sup>26</sup> Juxtaposed to the overwhelmingly positive view of comprehensive schooling that was being portrayed in much of the national press, the concerns expressed in Anglesey do not appear to have penetrated the general debate. This suggests that the use of examples from early pioneering schemes during the 1960s in the press, but also to justify education policy, were unbalanced in their focus. Throughout the 1950s, and carrying on into the 1960s, the discussion on comprehensive schooling had been dominated by the 'grammar schools debate'.<sup>27</sup> Therefore, the limited research that had been undertaken in existing comprehensive schools had predominantly concentrated on grammar school pupils rather than on the entire schools population. However, the evidence from Anglesey suggests that the main concern of the LEA and its schools during the period 1964-74 was how to adapt curricula to adequately provide suitable education for 'less academically gifted' pupils. In terms of the Labour Party, this preoccupation with the grammar school debate presents further thought-provoking questions as to whether the Labour Party was able to use this debate to its advantage when promoting its policy as 'grammar school education for all', and how far this was beneficially and consciously done.<sup>28</sup> It might even be argued that the lack of concrete evidence, in combination with the preoccupation with the 'grammar school debate', made the Labour Party's education policy easier to justify.

## VI

The above considerations can aid our understanding of the organisation of state education and the educational debate, not merely in the past but also in the present. It is a common misconception that a national comprehensive system was introduced during the mid-1960s, when in actual fact one

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<sup>26</sup> For more on this, see Chapter Five.

<sup>27</sup> For more on this, see Introduction and Chapters Four and Five.

<sup>28</sup> Circular 10/65 stated that the new comprehensive schools would '...preserve all that is valuable in grammar school education for those children who now receive it and make it available to more children', MoE, 'Circular 10/65: The Organisation of Secondary Education' 12 July 1965, London, TNA: ED 147/827C. The dominating concern of grammar school pupils can also be observed in the debate leading up to the issuing of Circular 10/65, see HC Deb 21 January 1965, vol 705, cols 413-541. Gaitskell specifically referred to 'grammar school education for all' see, for example, *The Guardian*, 7 July 1958 and *The Times*, 7 July 1958.

cohesive system of school organisation on a national level never actually existed (and still does not exist). The election campaign in 2015 showed how the old-style rhetoric of ‘aspiration’ in relation to grammar schools and social mobility is still utilised by educational conservatives and traditionalists today. Supporters still describe grammar schools as the best opportunity for underprivileged children to attain an education akin to that provided by public schools.<sup>29</sup> The UK Independence Party (UKIP) has repeatedly expressed its support for a ‘grammar school in every town’.<sup>30</sup> The Prime Minister’s decision to express his enthusiasm for the expansion of the existing grammar school in Tonbridge (February 2015) was described in *The Guardian* as ‘policy by nostalgia’.<sup>31</sup> Nevertheless, it shows how the ‘grammar school debate’ survives, and how it is supposed that backing for such institutions still exist among core Tory voters.<sup>32</sup> The announcement on 15 October 2015 by the Department of Education for the go-ahead of the ‘new’ grammar school in Sevenoaks (Kent) generated extensive public interest and debate, and its legal foundations have been questioned (although it is, at present, illegal to establish new grammar schools, expanding existing schools is not). Although central government has accepted the Sevenoaks School as an extension of the existing Weald of Kent Grammar School in Tonbridge, the two sites are situated nine miles apart and questions as to the legality of utilising this loophole to establish new selective schools are ongoing.<sup>33</sup> The public debate in the wake of the government’s decision over the Weald of Kent Grammar School has generated passionate responses in the national media, revealing how emotional reactions towards selective schooling are still being generated in the public debate today.<sup>34</sup> These current developments also reveal how certain local authorities, such as that in Kent, have managed to retain grammar school institutions. Although the educational debate today tends to reinforce the myth

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<sup>29</sup> *The Guardian*, 7 March 2015.

<sup>30</sup> UKIP has supported the ideal of a ‘grammar school in every town’ for a prolonged period of time see, for example, [http://www.ukip.org/policies\\_for\\_people](http://www.ukip.org/policies_for_people), accessed 10 April 2015; *The Guardian*, 1 June 2014 and *The Times*, 23 September 2013.

<sup>31</sup> *The Guardian*, 4 March 2015.

<sup>32</sup> *The Guardian*, 18 February 2015 and *The Guardian*, 9 December 2014.

<sup>33</sup> *The Guardian*, 15 October 2015 and *The Times*, 15 October 2015.

<sup>34</sup> For emotional reactions both in support of and against grammar schools see, for example, *The Guardian*, 16 October 2015; *The Guardian*, 20 October 2015; *The Guardian*, 22 October 2015; *The Times*, 15 October 2015; *The Times*, 19 October 2015; *Daily Mail*, 16 October 2015 and *Daily Mail*, 19 October 2015.

that the first Wilson government imposed a nation-wide comprehensive system after 1965, the situation in Kent is a reminder of the inaccuracy of this notion. Comprehensive schools have received a multitude of criticisms since the mid-1960s, specifically in the Black Papers and during the 'Great Debate' on education.<sup>35</sup> However, such criticisms only really applied to specific schools, and those supportive of comprehensive education have more recently emphasised what they consider to be inaccuracies in such critiques.<sup>36</sup> This thesis has shown the necessity to differentiate between the introduction of comprehensive schools and later moves towards more comprehensive curricula. If this distinction was taken into consideration in the present day debate on grammar and comprehensive schools, the introduction of the national curriculum (1988) under the Conservative government should attract a lot more attention than it is usually afforded. By acknowledging this, the assumed 'ills' of the education system would have to be shared not merely between the two main political parties (and not solely as a stick with which to beat the Labour Party), but also between individual LEAs and schools. Therefore, it is only by appreciating the complexities of the process that shaped today's educational structures that it becomes possible to start analysing its successes and shortcomings.

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<sup>35</sup> For more on this, see Introduction.

<sup>36</sup> See, for example, *The Guardian*, 10 February 2015 and M. Benn and J. Downs, *School Myths: And The Evidence That Blows Them Apart* (Local Schools Network Books Book 1, 2015).

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# Appendix 1

Map 1

