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ECDE 7017

Exploring Contemporary Issues in Education 1: Policy Review and Critical Analysis Session 4 part 2: 20th October 2026

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Transforming Education, Transforming Lives

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Goals for education – what are governments trying to do?

Public confidence

‘Belief in, faith in, understanding of, willingness to support, pride in, loyalty to, and willingness to defend a school or school system. Public confidence is the aggregate of individual citizens’ sentiments about institutions.’

(Carol & Cunningham, 1984)



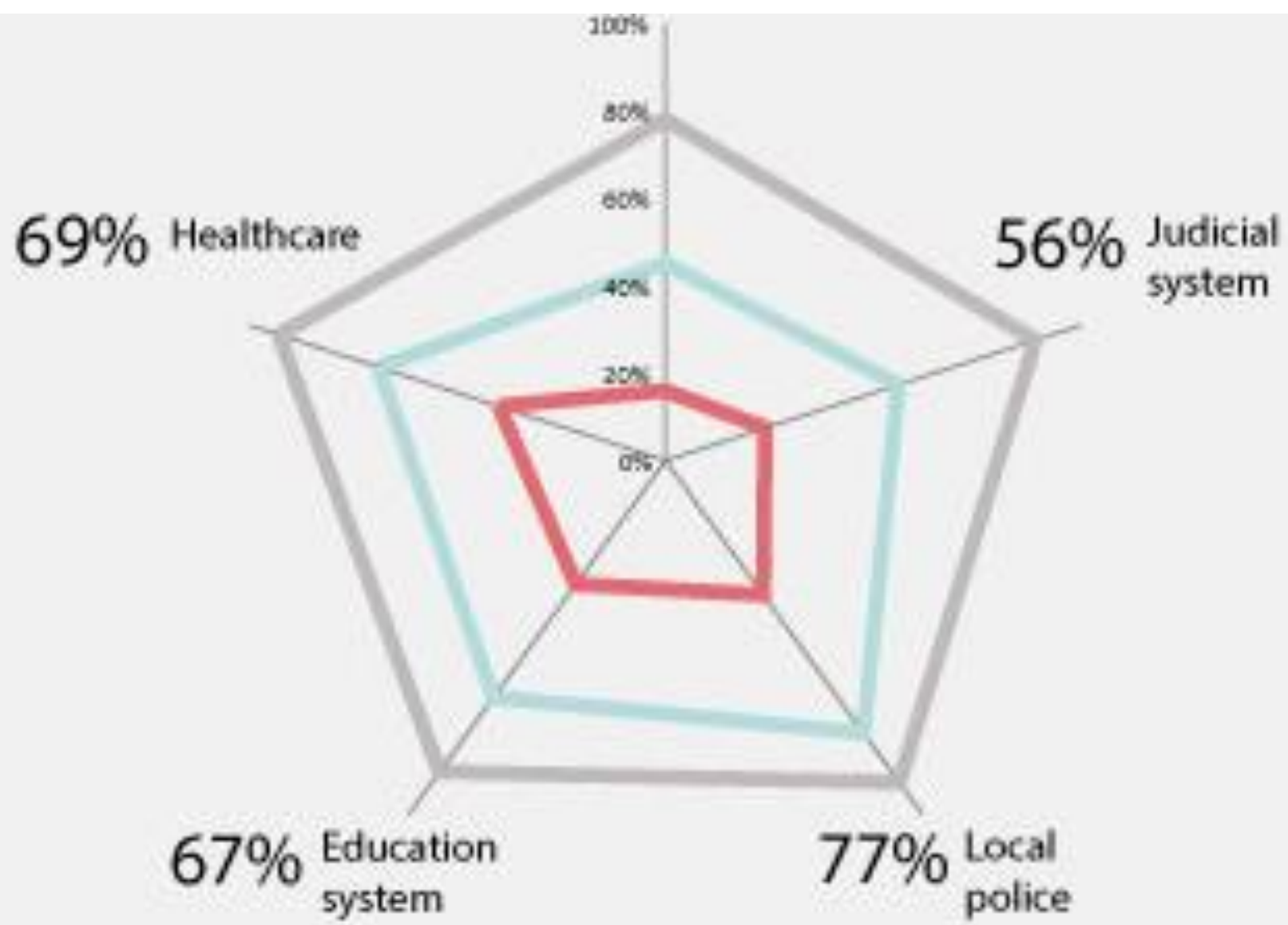
Instilling public confidence

How do governments do this?

What level of
confidence
is there in
education?



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‘A nation’s economic prosperity, social cohesion and well-being are built on the foundations of a strong and successful education system. That is why I describe our focus on raising school standards, reducing the attainment gap between different groups of learners and delivering an education system that is a source of national pride and **public confidence** as our national mission.’

(Kirsty Williams, 2017)



‘It’s also important that we evolve our safeguards around propriety and good management and management of public funds. So things like the rules that we bring in on related-party transactions and challenging on high pay and making sure there’s transparency, these are all very important for **public confidence** in our system.’

(Damian Hinds, 2018)

Ontario's Renewed Goals for Education



- **Achieving Excellence:** Children and students of all ages will achieve high levels of academic performance, acquire valuable skills, and demonstrate good citizenship. Educators will be supported in learning continuously and will be recognized as among the best in the world.



- **Ensuring Equity:** All children and students will be inspired to reach their full potential, with access to rich learning experiences that begin at birth and continue into adulthood.



- **Promoting Well-Being:** All children and students will develop enhanced mental and physical health, a positive sense of self and belonging, and the skills to make positive choices.



- **Enhancing Public Confidence:** Ontarians will continue to have confidence in a publicly funded education system that helps develop new generations of confident, capable, and caring citizens.



To what extent does
public confidence
play a role in the
policy intentions of
your chosen issue?



Three levels of communication:

Education systems tend to work on three inter-connected levels:

- a) the macro level – where national policies are developed and negotiated;
- b) the meso level – which oversees the implementation of national policy into practice, this is often located in the equivalent of provincial/local departments of education;
- c) the micro level – the schools and communities where policies are put into practice, and where educational stakeholders want to see change in practices in education.

‘Effective communications in formal education systems therefore have to take place at a range of levels and include diverse groups of actors, depending on the messages and ideas being communicated.’

(Hunt, 2007)

How is public
confidence
achieved?

Macro – government

Meso – local
authorities/regional consortia

Micro – schools

Task: How can public confidence be achieved?

Macro	Meso	Micro

OECD (2021)

<i>Policy Dimension</i>	<i>Responsiveness</i>	<i>Reliability</i>
<i>Public institutions role leading to trust</i>	<i>1</i> ----- <i>Provide or regulate public services</i>	<i>2</i> ----- <i>Anticipate change, protect citizens</i>
<i>Integrity</i>	<i>Openness</i>	<i>Fairness</i>
<i>3</i> ----- <i>Use power and public resources ethically</i>	<i>4</i> ----- <i>Listen, consult, engage, & explain to citizens</i>	<i>5</i> ----- <i>Improve living conditions for all</i>

Table 3. OECD Framework on Drivers of Trust in Public Institutions, 2021

Levels of trust in different public institutions		
Trust in national government, local government , civil service, parliament, police, political parties , courts, legal systems and intergovernmental organisations		
Public Governance Drivers of Trust in Public Institutions		
Competencies	Responsiveness	- Provide efficient, quality, affordable, timely and citizen-centred public services that are co-ordinated across levels of government and satisfy users. Develop an innovative and efficient civil service that responds to user needs.
	Reliability	- Anticipate needs and assess evolving challenges. - Minimise uncertainty in the economic, social and political environment. Effectively commit to future-oriented policies and co-operate with stakeholders on global challenges.
Values	Openness	- Provide open and accessible information so the public better understands what government is doing. - Consult, listen, and respond to stakeholders, including through citizen participation and engagement opportunities that lead to tangible results. Ensure there are equal opportunities to be part of and participate in the institutions of representative democracy.
	Integrity	- Align public institutions with ethical values, principles, and norms to safeguard the public interest. - Take decisions and use public resources ethically, promoting the public interest over private interests while combating corruption. - Ensure accountability mechanisms between public institutions at all levels of governance. Promote a neutral civil service whose values and standards of conduct uphold and prioritise the public interest.
	Fairness	- Improve living conditions for all. - Provide consistent treatment of businesses and people regardless of their background and identify (e.g. gender, socio-economic status, racial/ethnic origin).

1. Engagement/Partnerships/Relationships

“...citizen engagement values the right of citizens to have an informed say in the decisions that affect their lives.”

2. Accountability/Transparency

“Improved accountability won’t happen without transparency. ...Transparency means the public has easily accessible, understandable and meaningful information that makes clear what is being achieved for society with public funds and where the gaps are.”

3. Communication Plan

“Effective communication fosters relationships and builds confidence. It informs the public on data, policies, decisions, and the current state of schools’ achievement, successes, strengths and weaknesses”

The Council of Ontario Directors of Education (CODE), 2012
http://www.ontariodirectors.ca/CODE_Advisories/Downloads/CODE%20Advisory%20No%2021%20Web.pdf



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'An education system that is sustainable, responsible, accountable and transparent inspires public confidence and contributes to positive student outcomes. **Public trust is built when the education system makes decisions based on evidence and research, and when it is seen as a good steward of public resources.'**



Enhancing public confidence

'Our education system is consistently recognized as one of the best in the world, and for good reason. This **international recognition** also builds confidence among Ontario's parents and families, who have come to expect extraordinary results.'



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‘Our national mission is to achieve high standards and aspirations for all by tackling the impact of poverty on educational attainment and supporting every learner.’

(Miles, 2023)

‘My first message is that good mental health will be the platform on which our education system will be built...

‘I have been really clear that raising attainment and standards is my top priority. I have announced additional support for schools improving the new curriculum...

‘Attendance is a huge part of the effort to raise standards. We have seen some improvement but there is a lot more work to do.’

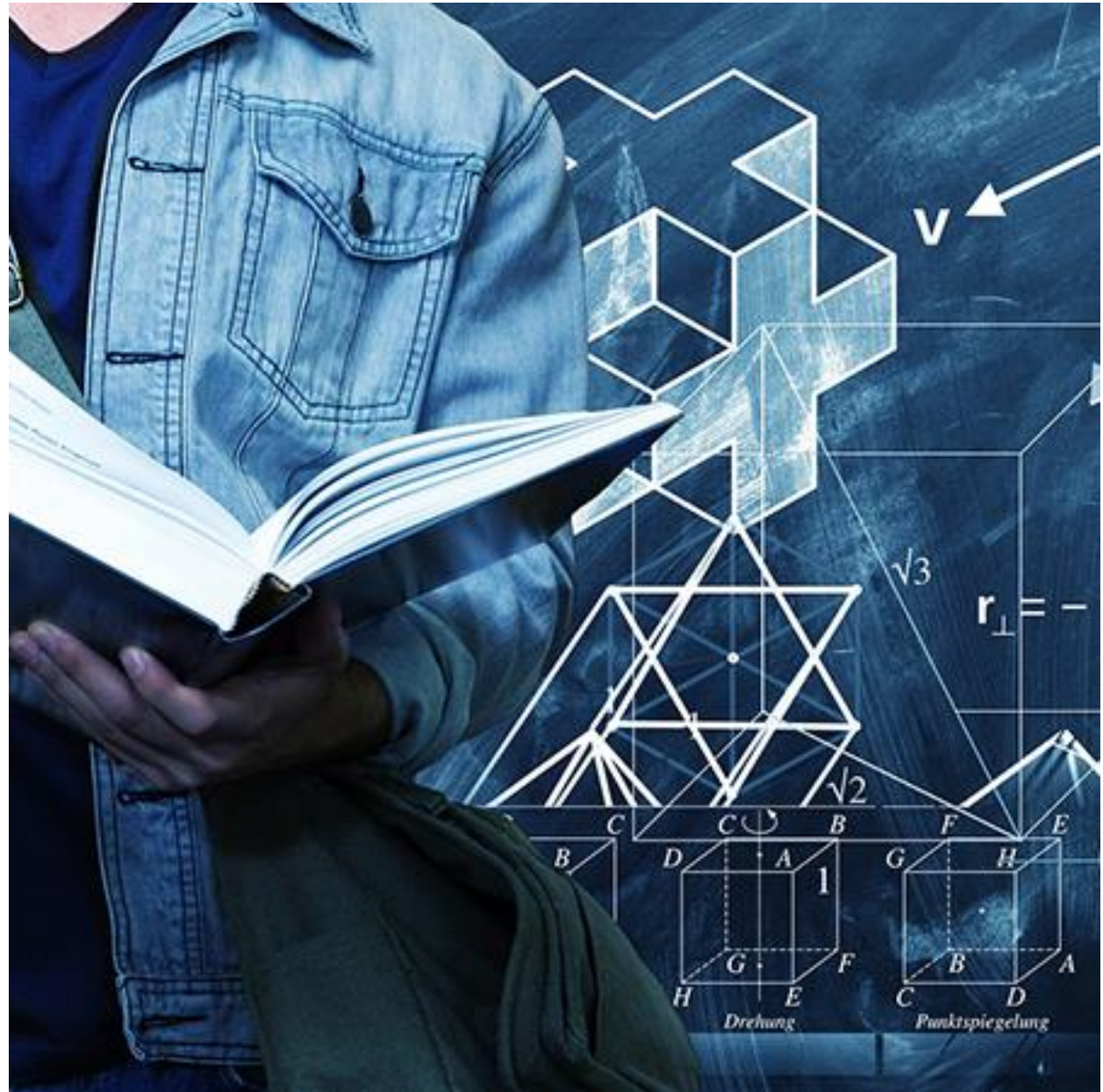
(Neagle, 2024)



Task: How has public confidence been established (or not) with regards to your policy focus? What are the barriers/enablers?

Macro	Meso	Micro

What is
education
for?



Industrial paradigm

The school system is run for the benefit of industry, and in many senses along industrial lines, mirroring a factory system of production in at least the following ways:

Ringling bells

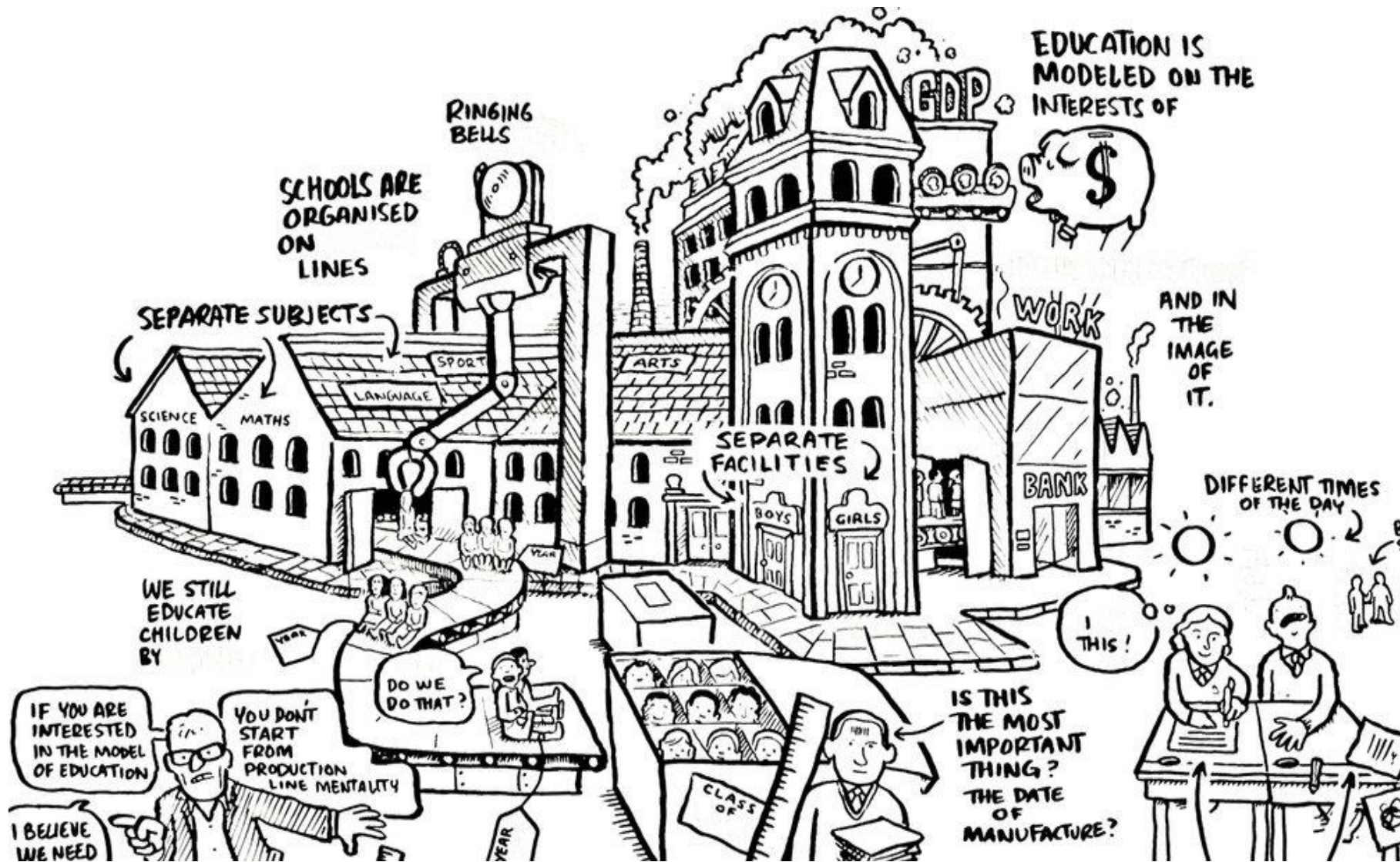
Separate facilities

Specialised subjects

We still educate children by batches ('as if the most important thing about them is the date of their manufacture')

Increasingly education is about conformity, and you see it in the growth of standardised curricula and standardised testing. The current paradigm is mainly to do with standardisation, and we need to shift the paradigm and go in the other direction...

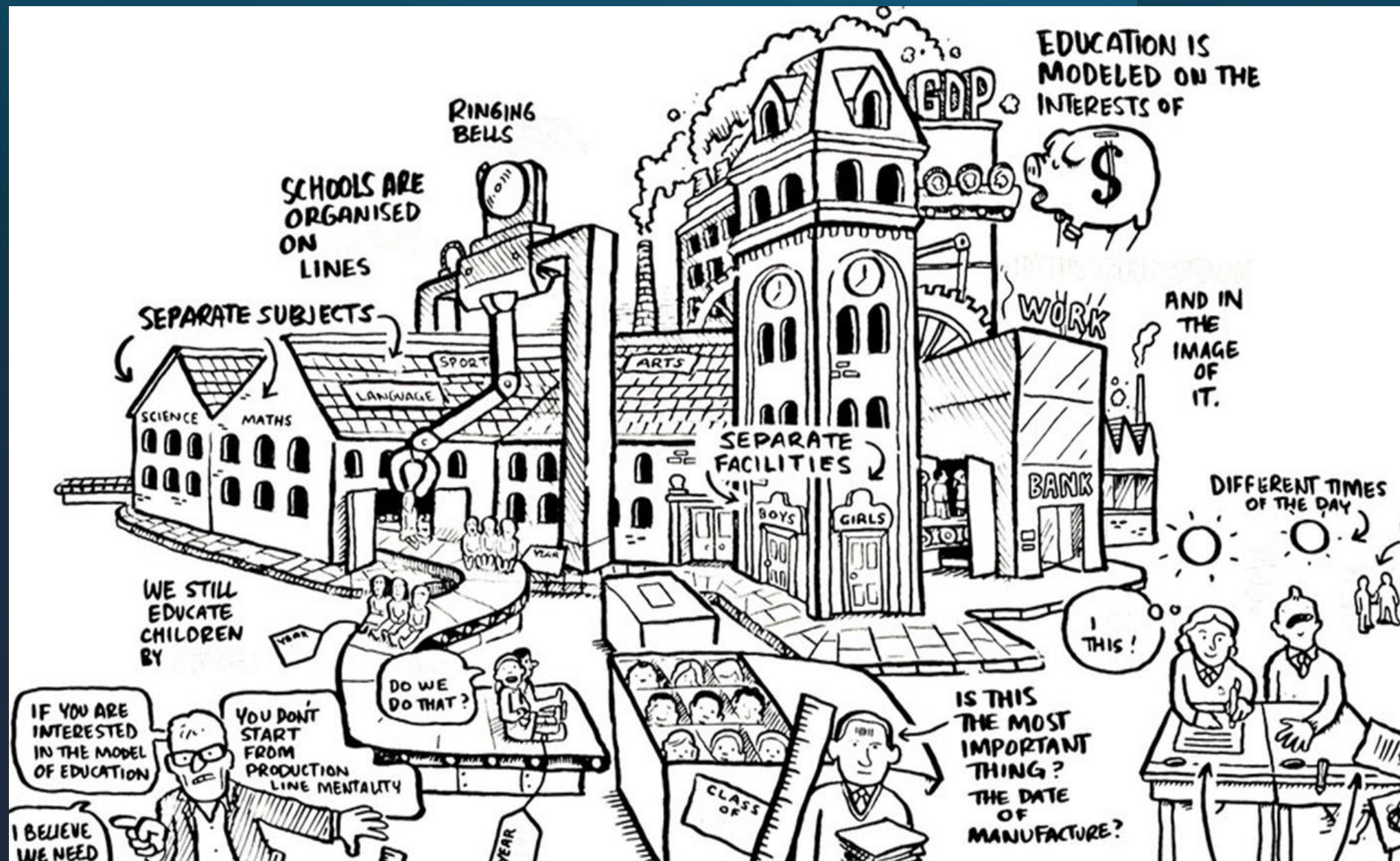
(Robinson, 2008)

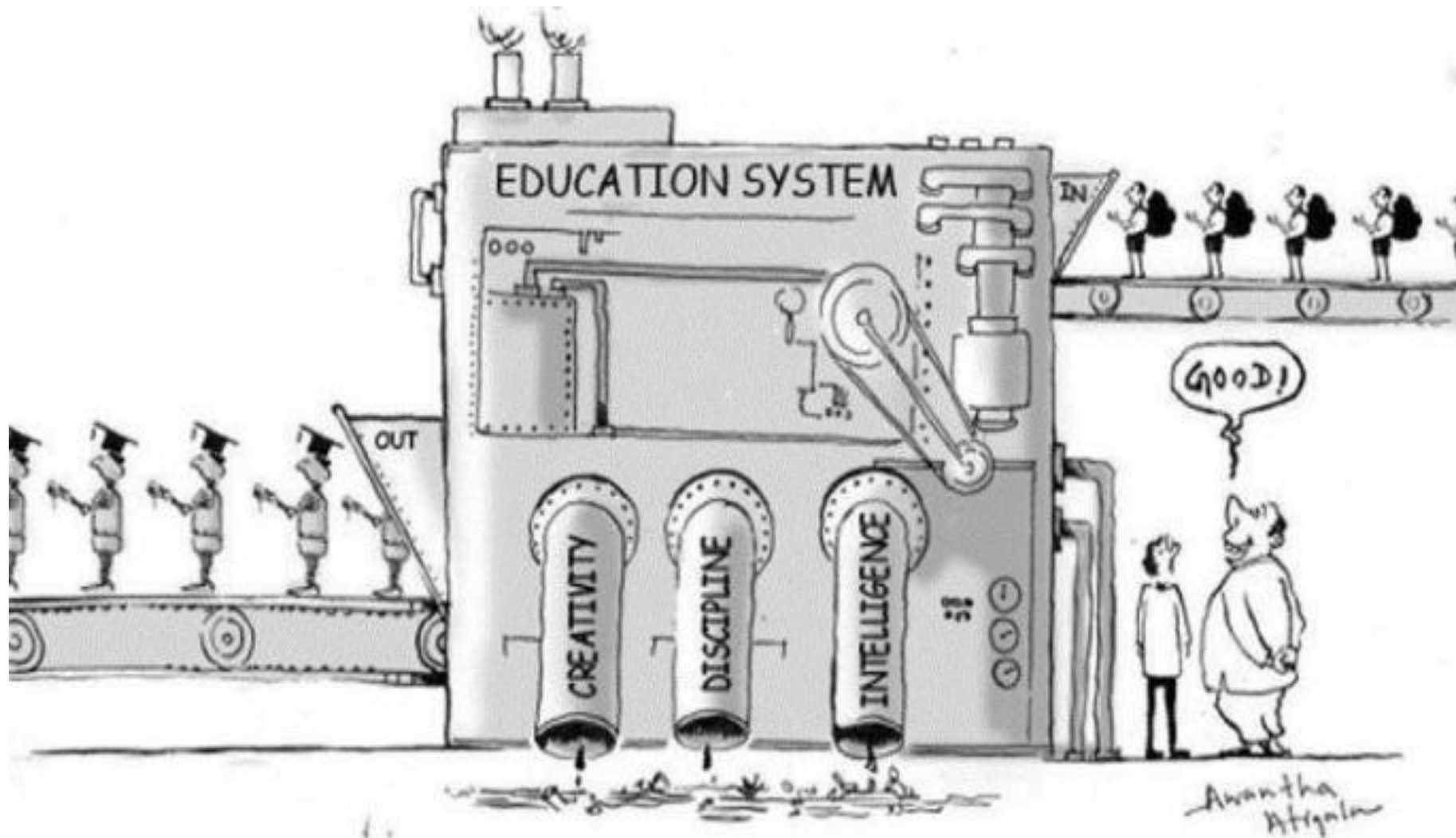


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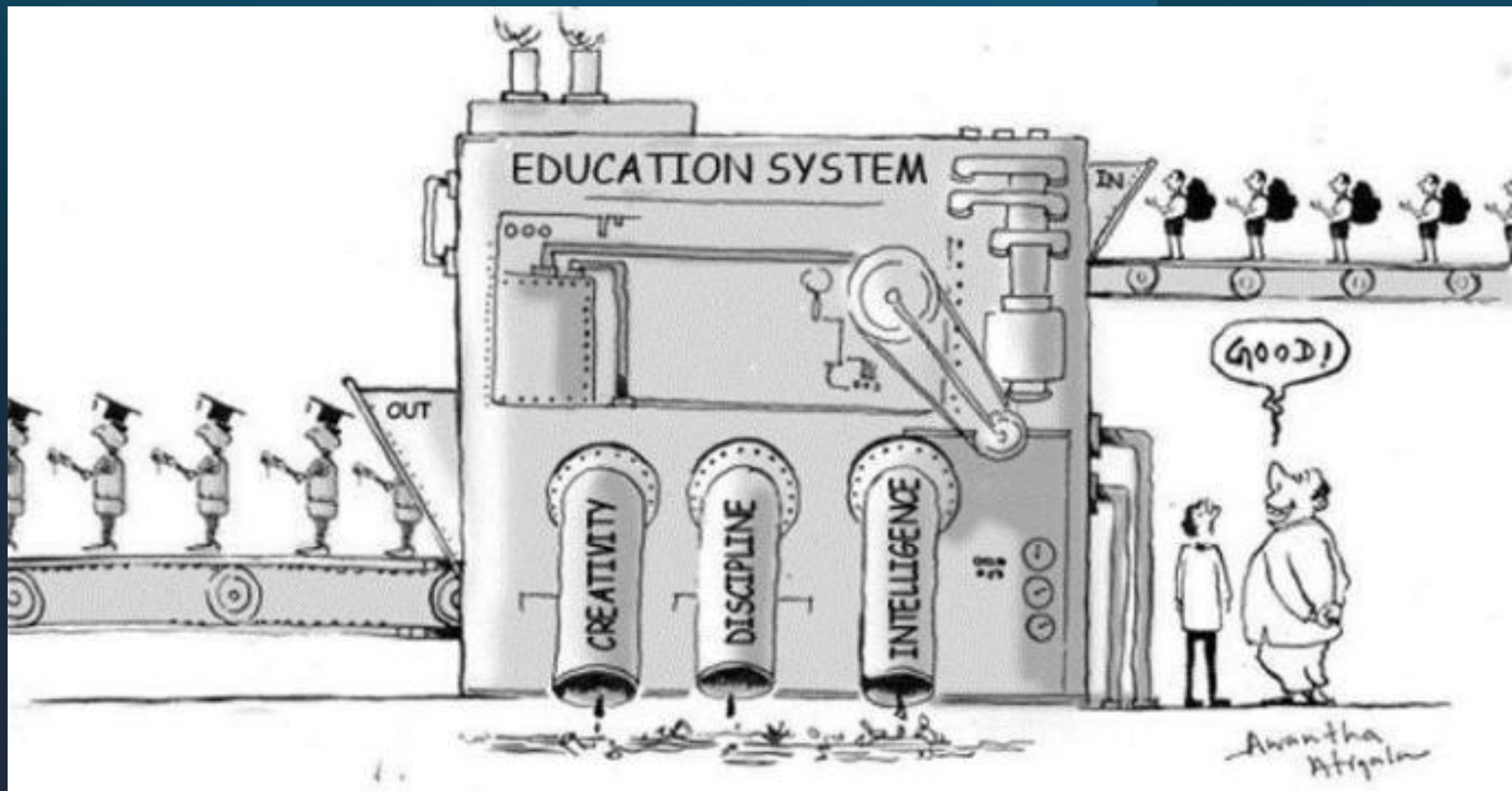


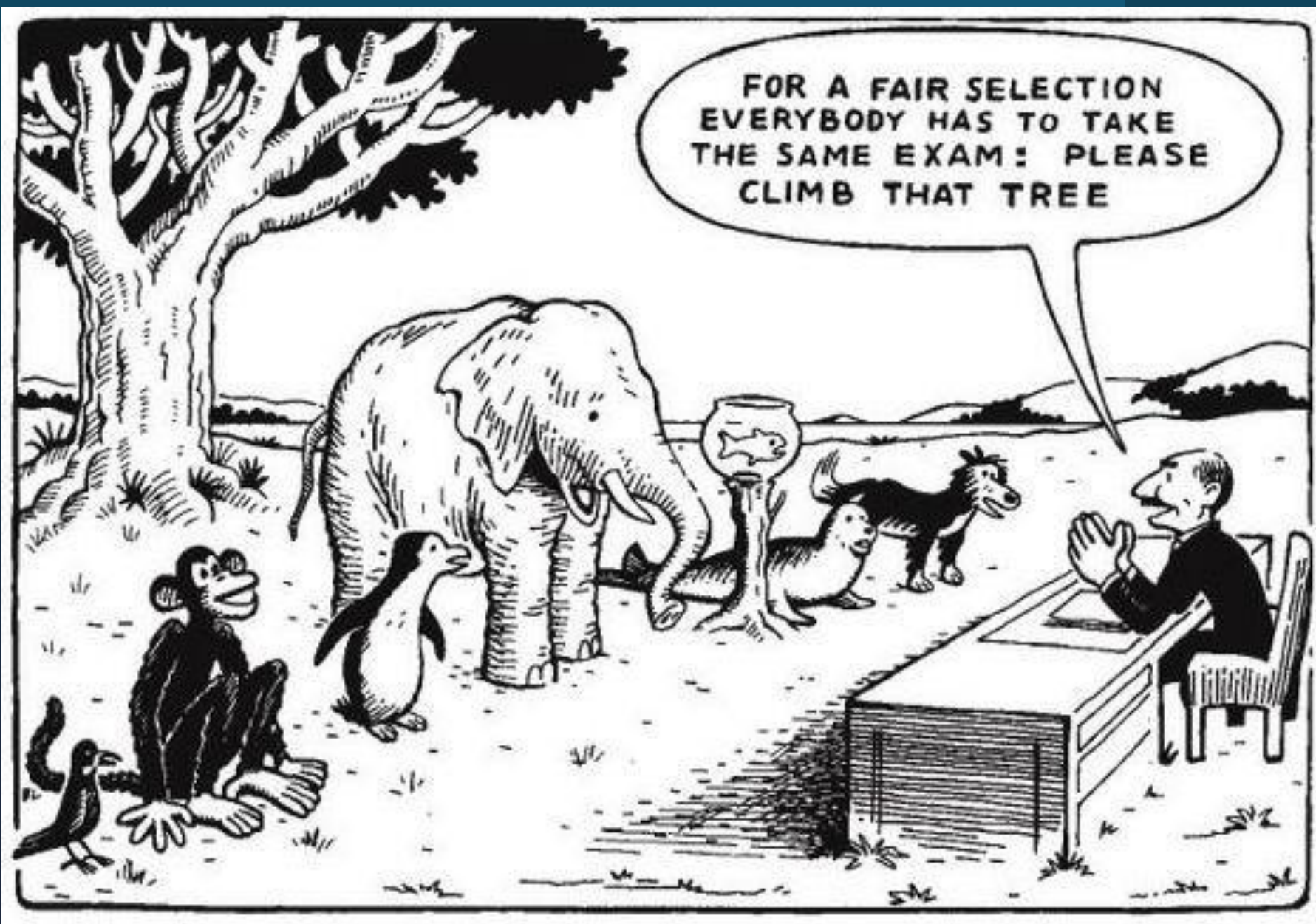


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Ken Robinson on Academic Ability...

'What is education for? Who succeeds? Who are the winners? The purpose is to produce university academics. The whole system is predicated on academic ability, a protracted process of University entrance. Our system has mined our minds for this commodity....'

Ken Robinson on Creativity...

'Schools kill creativity. Creativity is as important as literacy, and we should treat it with the same status. Creativity as I mean it is just a metaphor for multiple talents and intelligences. The education system discourages creativity.'

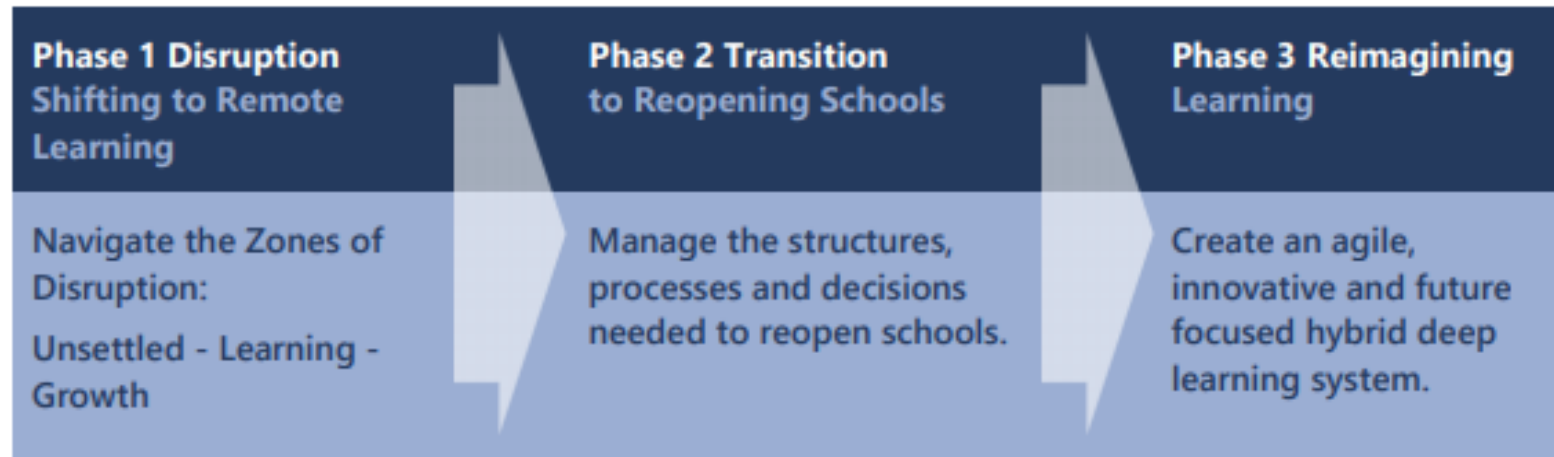


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Re-imagining education...



‘The pivotal question is whether seizing the opportunity to create a whole new powerful learning system is more appealing than slipping back into a status quo that does not work.’

(Fullan et al, 2020)



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Fundamental change reliant on two conditions...

- 1) The old model is palpably failing
- 2) There is an alternative, better model available

'Failure of existing rules is the prelude to a search for new ones.'

'The assimilation of either a new sort of phenomenon or a new scientific theory must demand the rejection of an older paradigm.'

'Once it has achieved the status of paradigm, a scientific theory is declared invalid only if an alternate candidate is available to take its place.'

(Kuhn, 1962)



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The Education Debate



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Making sense of policy...

- What has stayed the same?
- What has changed?



Ball (2021) claims there are two dimensions to this:

Changes in the
organisation and
structure of schools,
teaching and
curriculum

Changes in the
governance of, and
control and delivery of
education



Governance of, and control and delivery of education

- Prescription and direction



- Contracting out and performance management

Organisation and structure of schools, teaching and curriculum

Bureau-
professionalism



Entrepreneurial-
managerialism



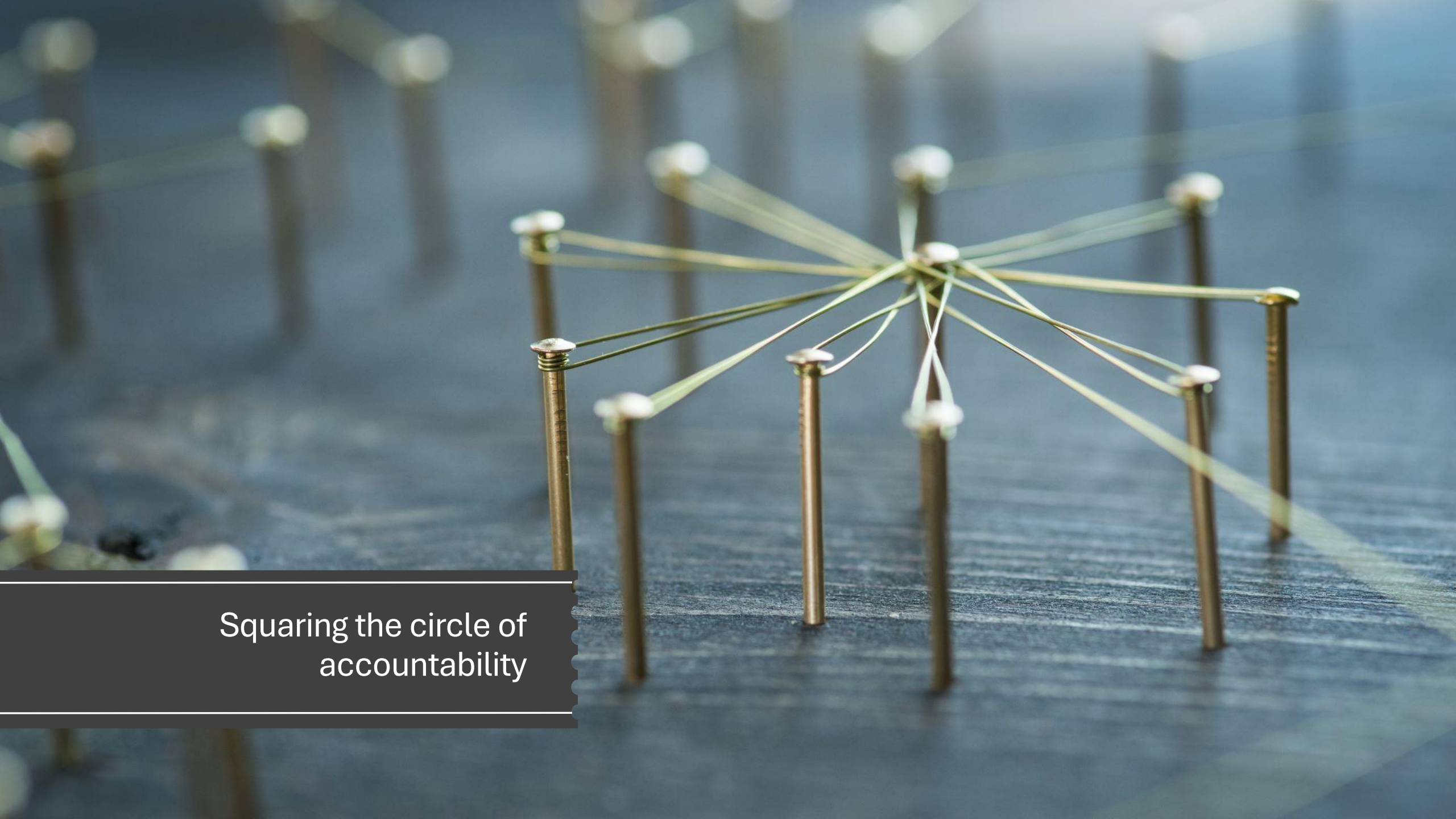
Think...

In what ways might this impact on the working experiences of people working in education?

In terms of your educational policy:

- What has changed and what has stayed the same?
- Why?
- What are the implications of this for stakeholders?



A network diagram is constructed on a dark, textured wooden surface. It consists of several vertical brass pins. A central pin is connected to eight other pins arranged in a circle around it by thin, translucent green threads. These peripheral pins are also interconnected with each other, forming a web-like structure. The background is blurred, showing more pins and threads, suggesting a larger, more complex network.

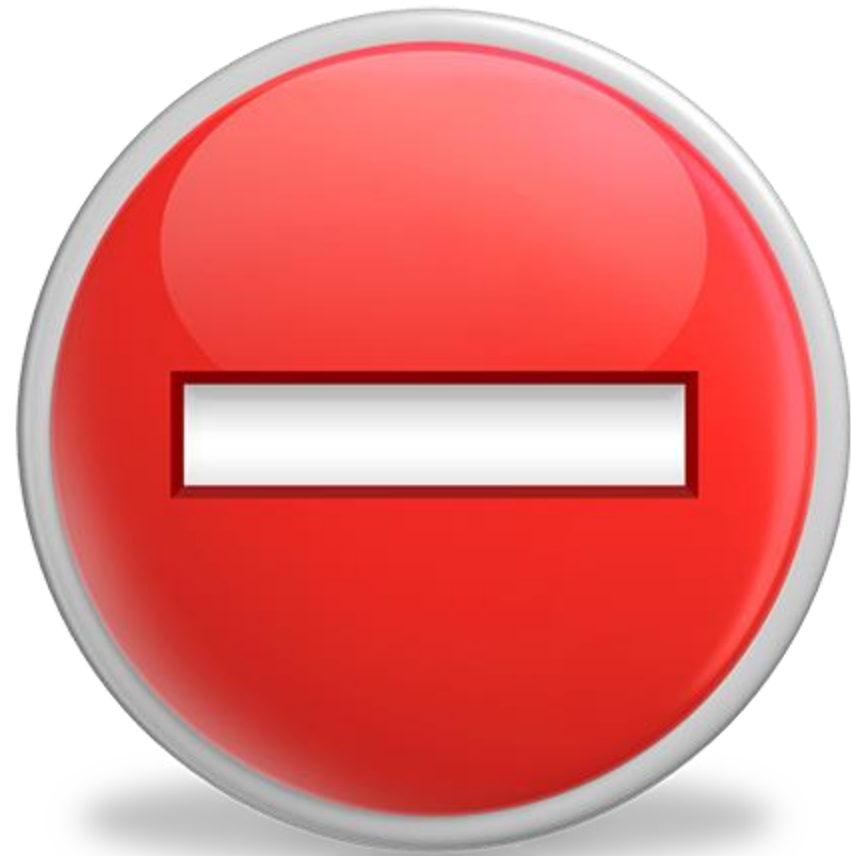
Squaring the circle of
accountability

What do we mean
by accountability?



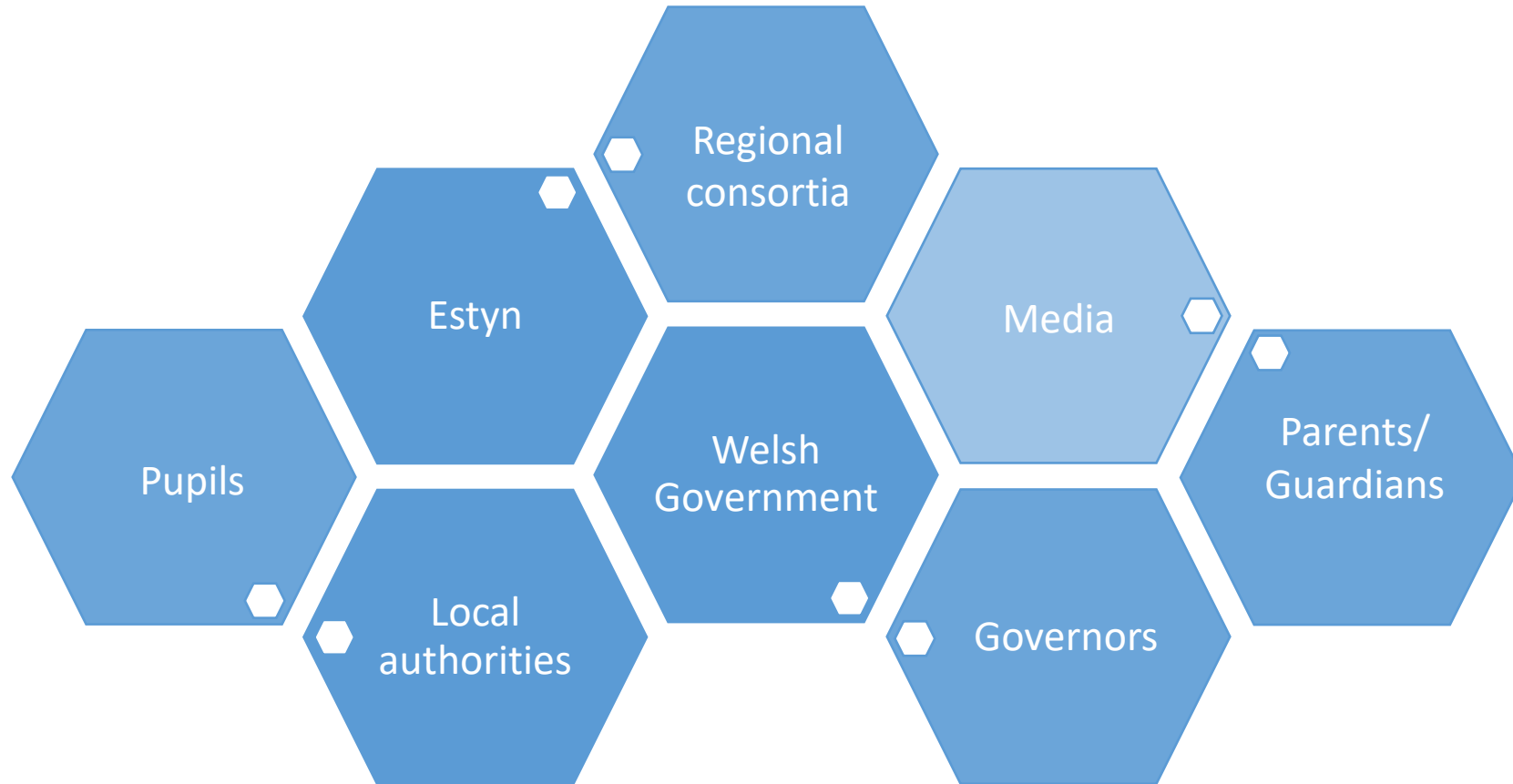
‘At its simplest, the term ‘accountability’ describes a relationship whereby one party – sometimes interpreted as an individual, sometimes an institution – has an obligation to account for their actions or performance to another’

(Brundrett & Rhodes, 2011)



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Layers of accountability



A perspective view of a clean, modern school hallway. On the left and right sides are rows of red lockers. The floor is made of large, light-colored square tiles that reflect the overhead lights. The ceiling is a white grid with several long, rectangular light fixtures. In the background, a whiteboard is mounted on the wall with the word "INFORMATION" written above it. There are also two analog clocks on the walls, one on the left and one further down the hallway. Stairs are visible in the distance on both sides.

Who are schools
accountable to?

Key accountability relationships for schools:

**Pupils and parents/local
communities
(Moral accountability)**

**Colleagues
(Professional accountability)**

**Employers or government
(Contractual
accountability)**

**The market, where clients
have a choice
(Market accountability)**

What drives accountability?

In the field of education there are three main types of accountability system:

(a) compliance with regulations system

(b) adherence to professional norms peers

(c) results driven learners/parents

All of these can be applied simultaneously....

Results driven accountability...

Results-driven accountability systems are based on student performance...

There are three general ways in which student performance can be interpreted and reported:

- 1) status of a cohort of students against a criterion
- 2) change in status of a cohort of students over time
- 3) longitudinal change in the performance of individual students.

(Anderson 2005)



A close-up, slightly blurred background image showing several playing cards (aces of clubs, hearts, spades, and diamonds) and a stack of colorful poker chips (red, white, black, and purple) on a table.

Too often the end result of ‘high stakes’ external accountability is...

‘exhausted, discouraged teachers and leaders, stretched on the rack of contract accountability but not given the capacity – the time, resources or support – to make any of this really work. Policymakers are left scratching their heads, wondering why change is so resistant to their will’

(Munby & Fullan, 2016)

The end game:

‘The challenge is to develop an approach: in which the elements of a devolved system are held in creative tension, with checks and balances to make sure that autonomy does not lead to isolation, that diversity does not become a barrier to collaboration and that accountability does not slip into regulation.’

(National College, 2012)





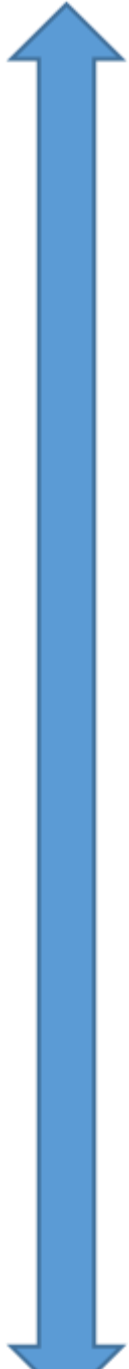
The Brent Primary School

Igniting Ambition Through Learning

**'OUTSTANDING
IN ALL AREAS'**



March 2017



Vertical accountability

‘Under the last government, accountability was all about accountability upwards, either to the local authority or to the Department. We believe that accountability should also be downwards to the community and to individual parents, and that is why we have published far more data than ever before about the performance of schools.’

(Gove, 2012)

Horizontal accountability

‘The majority of the energy and focus in the system should be on delivering school improvement, guided by effective self-evaluation, improvement planning and support in all schools...

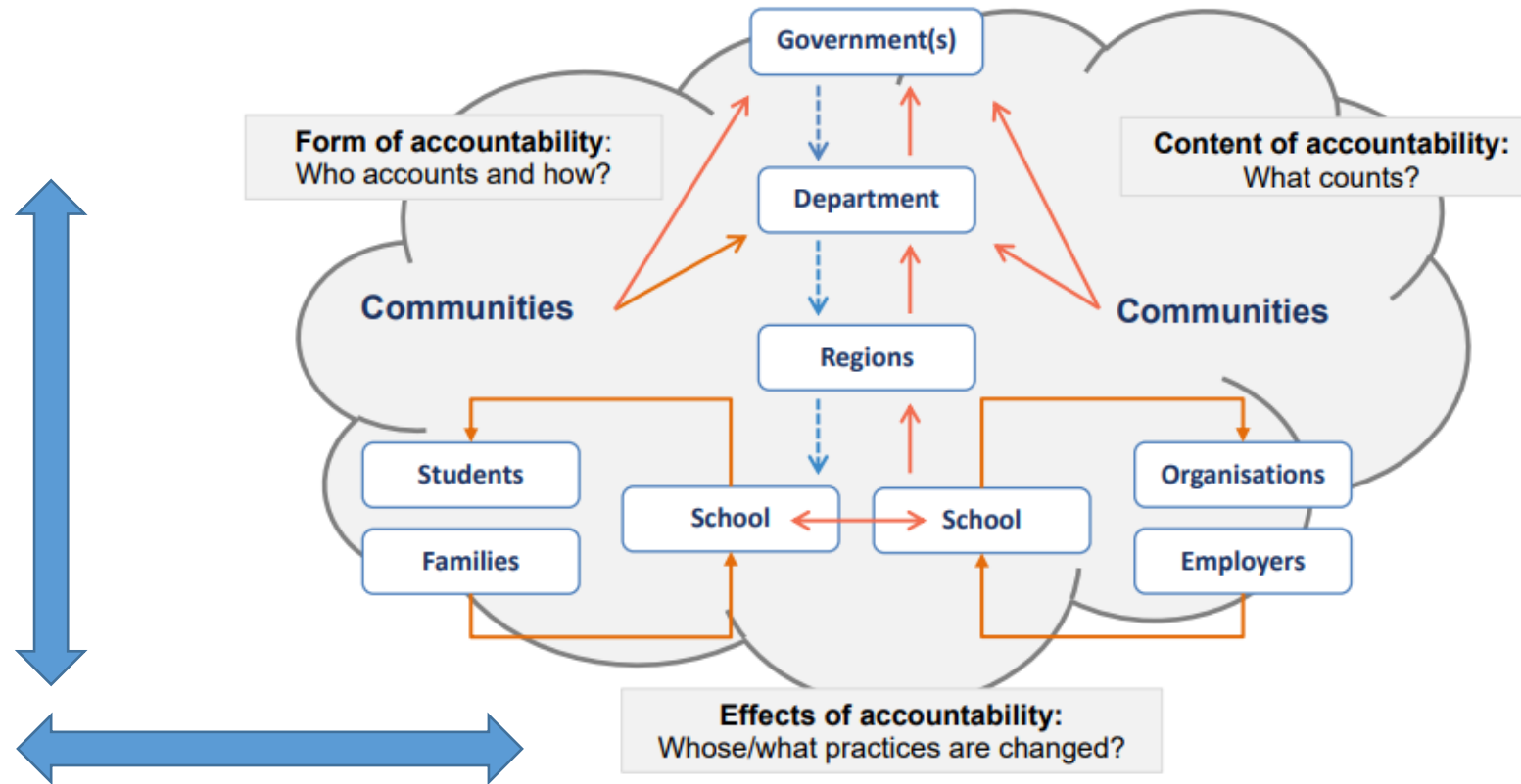
‘With schools’ self-evaluations and development plans as the starting point, regional consortia and local authorities agree with the school the additional support it needs to improve and to build its own capacity...

‘An important feature of the self-improving system is the central role of schools and teachers in supporting other schools, so that strengths are spread across the system and areas for improvement are addressed through collaboration between peers.’

(Welsh Government, 2021)



Rich accountabilities – a new age?



‘While most modes of accountability focus on **being held to account**, rich accountabilities also value opportunities **to give accounts**, thereby changing the relationship between those who give the account and those who receive, and often judge, the account.’
(Lingard & Sellar, 2021)



Key Findings

1. All 13 countries carry out some form of jurisdiction-wide assessment ... but it is only in six countries (including England and Wales) that the assessments are used to hold schools accountable for attainment and progress.
2. All 13 countries carry out statutory external evaluation... Of these, nine (including England and Wales) include inspection.

Curriculum

- Where performance is a measure, schools prioritise parts of the curriculum over others ('teaching to the test').
- Where systems focus on "borderline" measures, targeted teaching limit pupils' experience of the curriculum.
- International benchmarking affects curriculum policy.

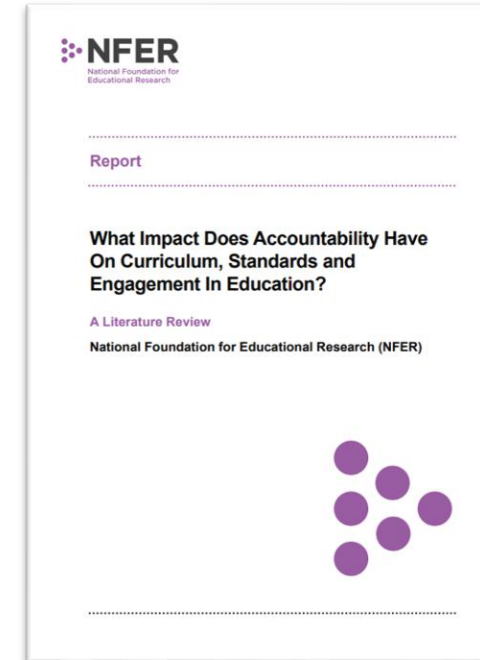
Standards

- Systems of accountability should feature clear responsibilities and aligned objectives at all levels
- Accountability should have a transparent performance assessment criteria.
- Measures of accountability can increase or decrease the achievement gap; it is all in the application.

Engagement

- Teacher education can support teachers' engagement with assessment data to inform classroom teaching and learning.
- The extent to which pupils' experiences of assessments, such as test anxiety, specifically relate to accountability is unclear.
- Placing undue emphasis on the performance of some groups at the expense of others may lessen pupil engagement.

[ED590506.pdf](#)



(Brill et al., 2018)



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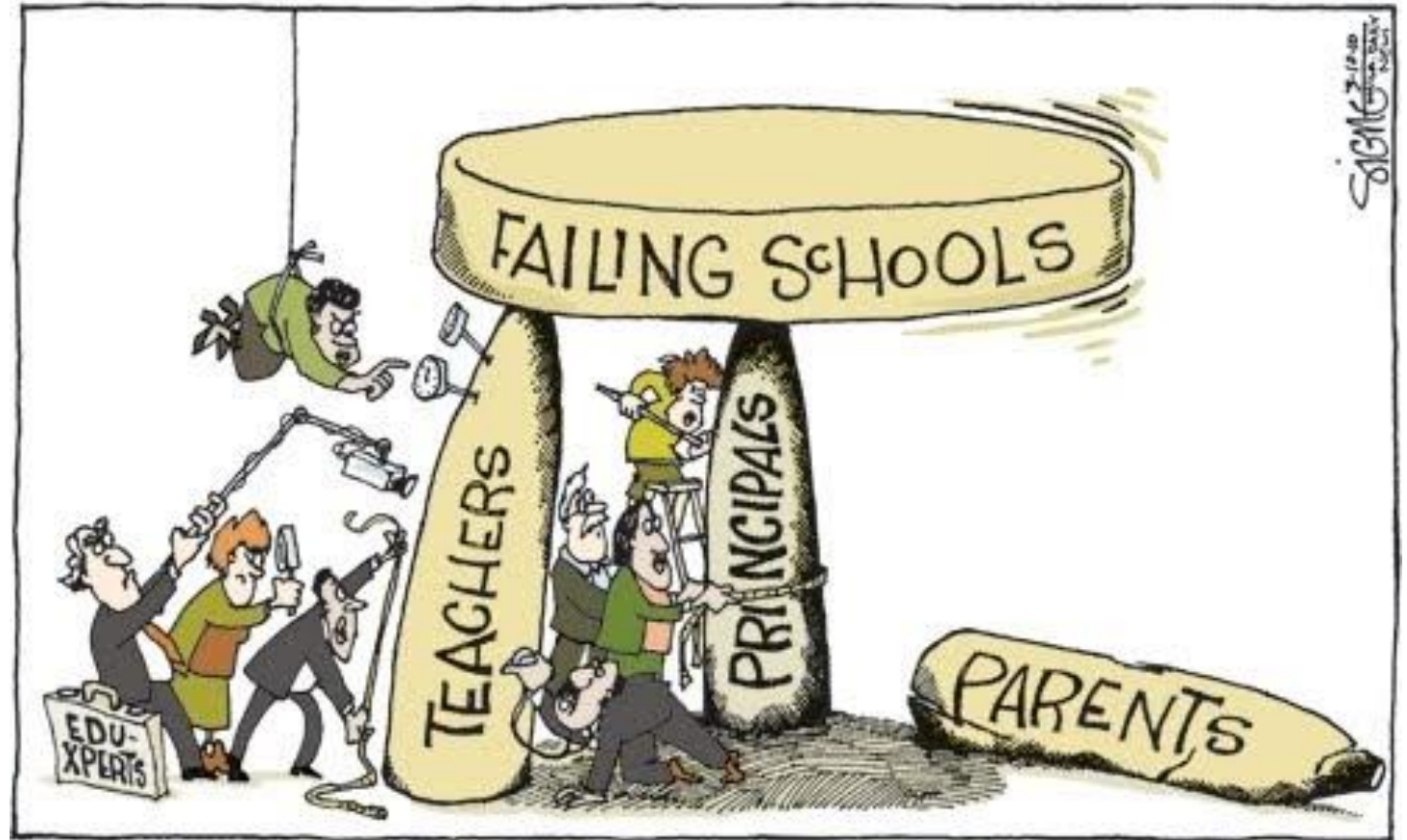
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How is accountability positioned within your policy issue?

You need to consider:

- Horizontal accountability
- Vertical accountability
- Rich accountability

What are the implications of this for stakeholders?





Questions?