Subject tochange



Listening to and empowering young people and the public to set a new direction for education and learning

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Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Joann McPike, Kurt Long, the Blagrave Trust, Esmée Fairbairn and Porticus for their generous support of our work to date. Without it this would not have been possible.

Within IPPR we would like to thank Abi Hynes, Richard Maclean, David Wastell, Robin Harvey, Stephen Frost and Carys Roberts.

Within Big Change we would like to thank the Subject to Change team: Aliyah York, Alex Christopoulos, Eliza Reid-Perks, Eloïse Haylor, Essie North, Jaiden Corfield, Saeed Atcha, Sarah Webster and Thomas Wilson.

We would also like to thank all those who have fed into our research and design work to date.





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Summary

After a period of profound disruption, our education system is at a crossroads. Now is the moment when its long-term direction of travel will be set.

Amidst this uncertainty we have the chance, and a duty, to ensure young people, as well as teachers, parents and employers, are in the driving seat.

The narrative gap in thinking about change in education post-pandemic

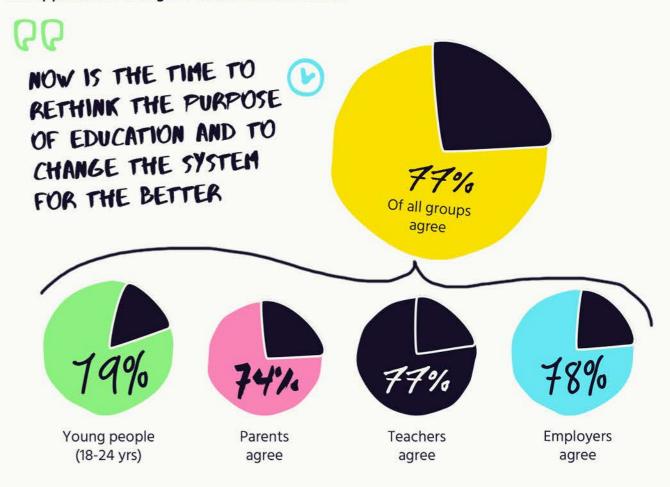
| | Narrative 1: Dominant | Narrative 2: Emergent |
|---------------------------------------|--|--|
| The pandemic has | created some new, temporary problems | highlighted and deepened existing problems |
| And so we need to | introduce small changes to help children catch up and get back to how things were | take the opportunity to rethink what's not working and change the system for the better |
| Ideas and leadership should come from | politicians and (some carefully chosen) experts | young people, parents, teachers and employers |

Source: Authors' analysis

At the start of 2020, Big Change and IPPR set out to understand and shape the public conversation about the future of education and learning.

Through thousands of conversations we have found that a consensus is starting to emerge. Young people, parents, teachers and employers all agree that now is the time to rethink what education is really for, how young people learn and to change things for the better.

The appetite for change in education is universal



Source: Polling by Parent Ping, Teacher Tapp and You Gov

What we heard

MESSAGE 1

It's time to rethink what education is really for

The problems with education are not just about how it is delivered but what it is trying to achieve, for individuals and society.

MESSAGE 2

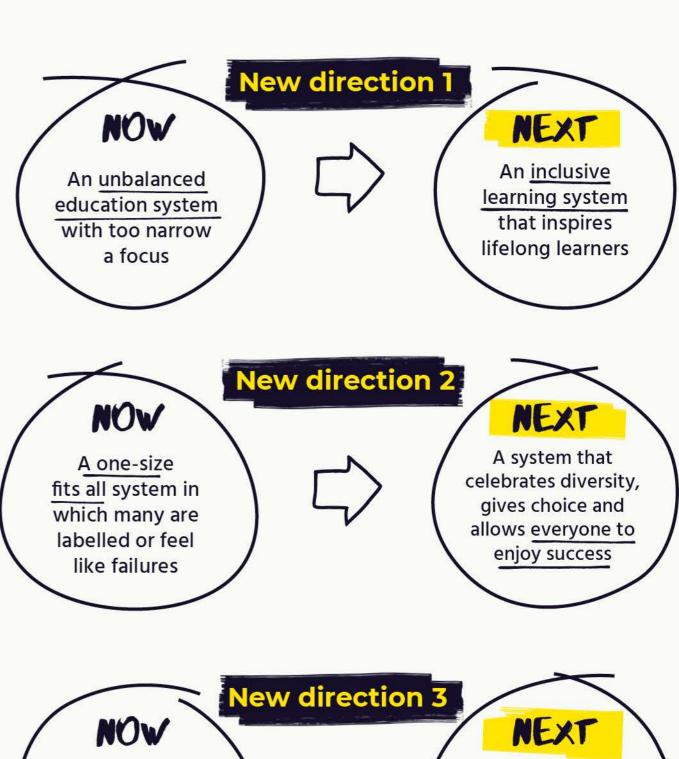
One-size doesn't really fit anyone

The majority feel the current system isn't working for them - even those who are labelled 'successful' because they achieved a good set of exam results at 16 or 18.

MESSAGE 3

It really does take a village

Young people, parents, and employers want to work with and beyond schools to help young people learn and thrive.



Schools hold all the responsibility for educating young people



All young people have support and agency in their learning across school, home and community

Section 1



Covid-19 has the potential to radically reshape our world, but we must not passively sit back and observe what plays out. Now is the time for public deliberation and democratic accountability. Now is the time for intelligent collective action.

International Commission on the Futures of Education (2020)

Covid-19 has been a profound shock and it gives us a chance to press reset

- FOCUS GROUP

As a school leader, am I going to use this as an opportunity to really listen, or are we going to do what we always did?

SCHOOL LEADER,
GUBBS & ASHCROFT (2021)

After a period of profound disruption, our education system is at a crossroads. Now is the moment when its long-term direction of travel will be set.

Amidst this uncertainty, we have the chance, and a duty, to put young people, as well as teachers¹, parents² and employers, in the driving seat.

The pandemic delivered the most dramatic changes to education and learning³ that this country – or the world – has ever seen. The fixed and familiar aspects of education that usually dictate how kids learn and how teachers teach were taken away overnight. Schools closed their doors, exams got cancelled, school inspections stopped and lessons moved mostly online.

Learning and teaching during the pandemic was challenging for everyone. But for some it was far more challenging than for others. Once again a light was shone on the gaps in opportunity and resources between different homes, communities and places.

In 2020

1.5 BILLION

students were locked out of their schools.

OECD (2021)



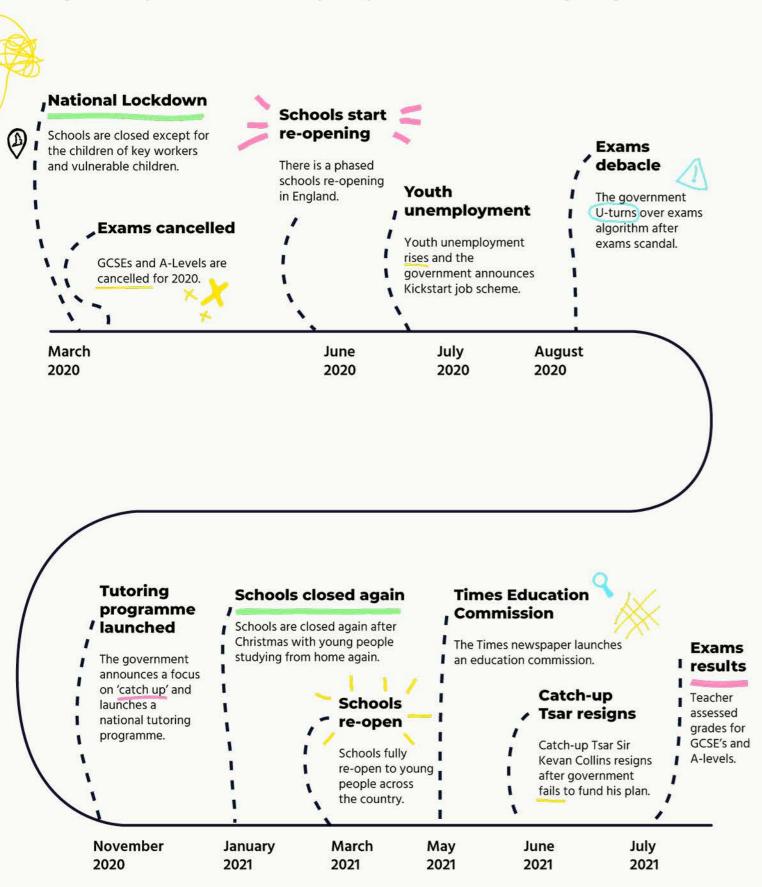
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¹ By teachers we mean teachers and school leaders.

² By parents we mean parents and caregivers.

³ By education we mean the formal system of schooling that occurs in England between the ages of 4 and 18. This activity forms part of the broader concept of learning which takes place everywhere, involves a much wider group of people and continues throughout life.

Figure 1: The pandemic fundamentally disrupted education and learning in England



Source: Authors' analysis

As those who hold the traditional levers of power in the system line up to return it to normal, so they have created a certain narrative about what is needed and set a course to try and get there. And the people to whom education matters the most – young people, parents, teachers and employers – are passive observers without any real say in the direction of travel.

Coming out of the pandemic we have the chance, and a duty, to listen to these groups and provide opportunities for unity to be fostered. To bring their perspectives, insights and ideas together to shape a new shared story and pathway to determine what education and learning should be for our times.

But listening will not be enough and a new approach is required. One that taps into the ingenuity, energy and commitment of the collective. One that puts resources and power in the hands of people, especially the young, and enables whole communities to shape and create the outcomes they need.

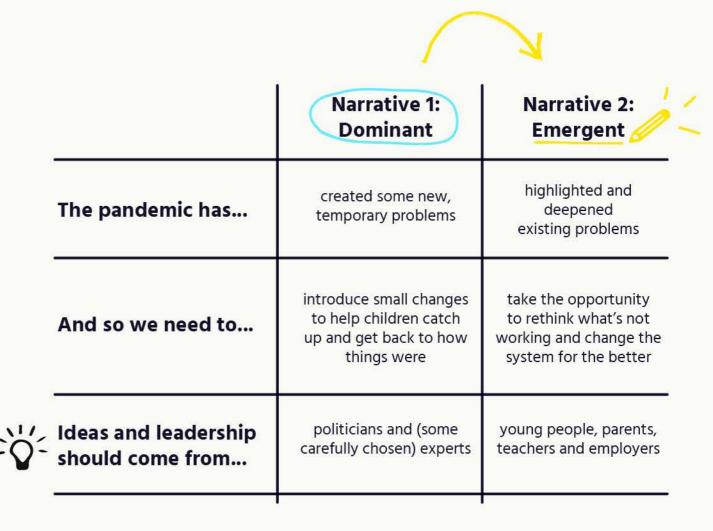


Figure 2: The narrative gap in thinking about change in education post-pandemic Source: Authors' analysis

At the start of 2020, Big
Change and IPPR set out to
understand and shape the
public conversation about where
education should go next.

A consensus is emerging.

Young people, parents, educators and employers all agree that now is the time to rethink what education is really for, how young people learn and change things for the better.

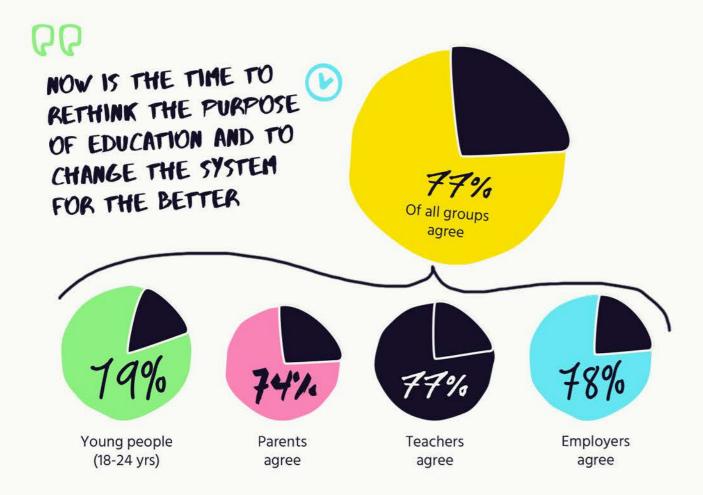


Figure 3: The appetite for change in education is universal Source: Polling by Parent Ping, Teacher Tapp and You Gov

Over the past year, Big Change and IPPR led an ambitious national listening exercise to understand how the public was thinking and feeling about education and learning.

We knew that across the country the conversation about learning had exploded – in the media, in homes and online – and that key issues, like exams, seemed to be galvanising public debate. But what else had changed?

Was the pandemic prompting people to ask any really big questions about how we 'do education' or what's really important for young people and their learning? What issues did they care about and what was the appetite for big changes?

Working with national and global partners, we went both wide and deep, using social listening, digital marketing, and polling to get to grips with large scale opinion, and holding focus groups and a Listening Post study to understand people's experiences, feelings and ideas.

We also launched the <u>Big Education</u>
<u>Conversation</u>: a national campaign to get
more people - especially young people (13-25)
and parents - talking about what education is
really for and where it should go next.

Thousands of people aired and shared their views during this time. As well as anger and frustration, most clearly over exams, there was also hope, aspiration and big ideas for the future.

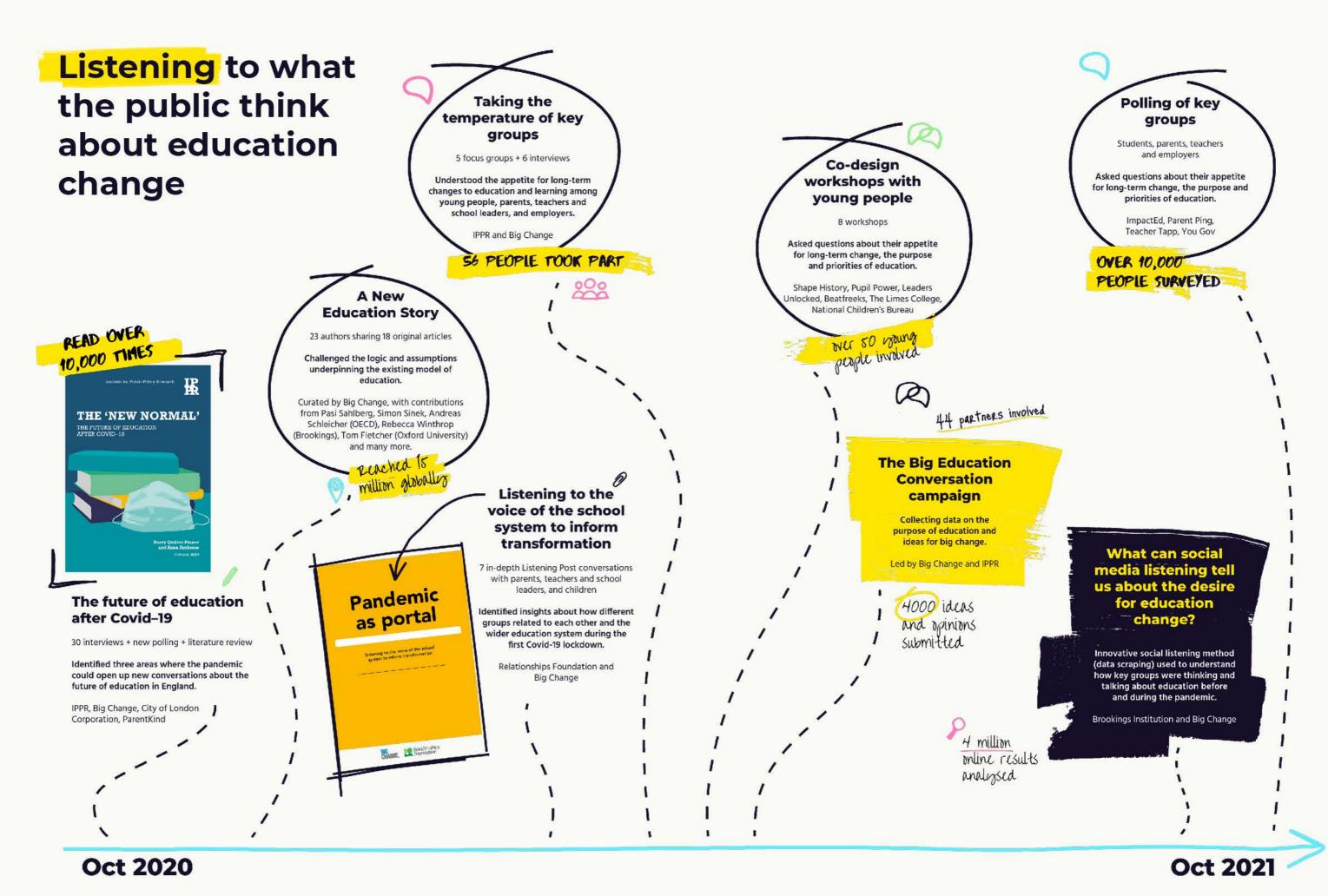


Figure 4: Subject to Change national listening exercise

Snapshot 1: Big Education Conversation campaign

The Big Education Conversation asked young people, parents, teachers, leaders and employers to share...

- · One big change they want to see in education
- · What they think education should really be for in the future

The campaign took place over six weeks during June and July 2021, bringing people and organisations together in conversation about what education should really be for. Analysis shows that the level and quality of engagement was high and data submissions revealed the appetite young people, parents, teachers, and employers have to debate and shape the future of learning and education in this country.

in conversations







Digital reach across all channels



Total conversations (virtual and in-person)



4.600 Digital engagement

(likes, comments, use of #BigEdConvo)



Figure 5: The Big Education Conversation campaign key stats

Source: Shape History and Author analysis

We want to see big changes to exams All groups agree

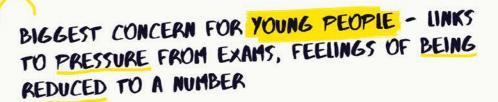
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Ideas and opinions

submitted

Teachers know testing is important, but it shouldn't be prioritised above all else

Parents want their kids to enjoy learning and are worried about their mental health

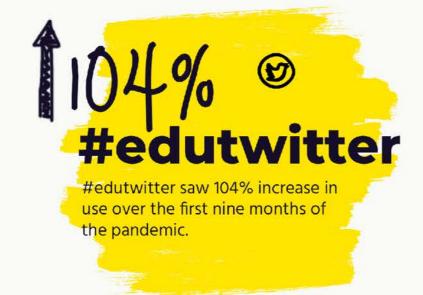


Snapshot 2: Brookings' social listening research

Research by the Brookings Institution used an innovative social listening methodology (social media data scraping⁴) to analyse online conversations both before and during Covid-19 in England. It looked at what students, teachers and parents were discussing, and whether they were talking about the same thing.

Young people have been leading the charge. Young adults between the ages of 18-35 were the most active voices, making up over 76 per cent of all conversations, with 25-35 year-olds making up almost half the users in their study. In particular, the 2020 A-level controversy angered the young people directly affected but it also sparked a wider conversation about the role exams play in education.





⁴ a computer software technique that involves the extraction of information from the internet (social media posts, websites, blogs etc) for the purposes of analysis.

Changes in volume of online education conversations between May 2019 and May 2021

Results over time 4M results

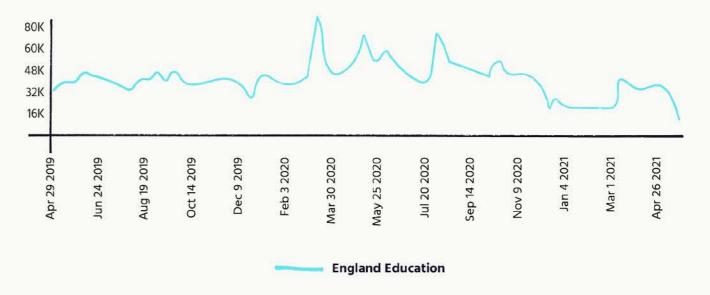


Figure 6: Across the country more people had conversations about education and learning as a result of the pandemic

Source: Winthrop et al (2021)

Number of posts related to exams between April 2019 and May 2021

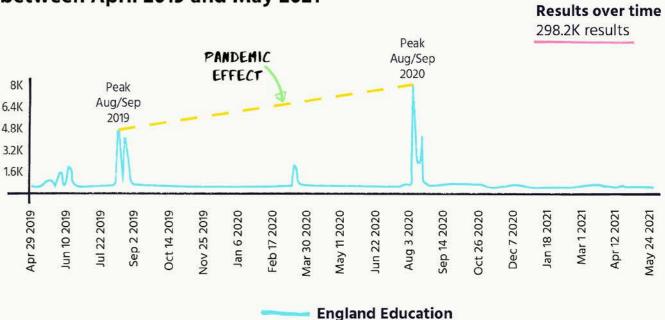


Figure 7: The exams controversy led to a spike in online debate about education and the role of exams

Source: Winthrop et al (2021)

Section 2

Out of kilter: 3 messages to shape a new direction



A lot of people talk about school being a mini-society. If we create school to be a place where it's fair and democratic then that will trickle on to society.

ALIYAH YORK - PUPIL POWER We need a much bigger focus on the skills for life young people actually need, rather than a narrow focus on exam results.

TEACHER

-BIG EDUCATION CONVERSATION

MESSAGE 1

It's time to rethink what education is really for



MESSAGE 2

One-size doesn't really fit anyone

MESSAGE 3

It really does take a village

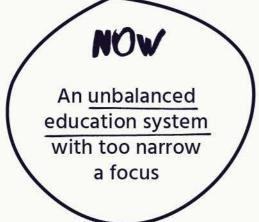


MESSAGE 1

It's time to rethink what education is really for

The problems with education are not just about how it is delivered but what it is trying to achieve, for individuals and society.

New direction 1





An <u>inclusive</u>
learning system
that inspires
lifelong learners

We heard that...



The system as currently designed doesn't reflect what most people value, nor does it support the breadth of young people's talents and potential.

Those we heard from are clear that as a nation we need to redress the narrow focus on "in the moment" academic achievement, and centre learning on what young people and communities need for their future success.



66

I feel like schools are paying more attention to making sure that you pass the exam, than you actually learn some stuff.

YOUNG PERSON - FOCUS GROUP

What for you is the most important purpose of education?

Through polling, different groups were asked to choose their **most important purpose of education** from a selection of five different purposes. The graphs show the spread of responses for the public as a whole and each group separately.

General public Ensuring children enjoy learning and become good learners for life 50 Giving Helping children 30 children a good understand understanding themselves of the world and others around them C D Ensuring Preparing children achieve children for the world academically and get qualifications of work

Our polling and responses to the Big Education conversation show the public appetite for a broad set of purposes for education. Enjoying learning, self-awareness and relationships, understanding society, and preparation for work are all considered more important than academic success. Though not unimportant, every group agrees that learning should be for life, not just exams.

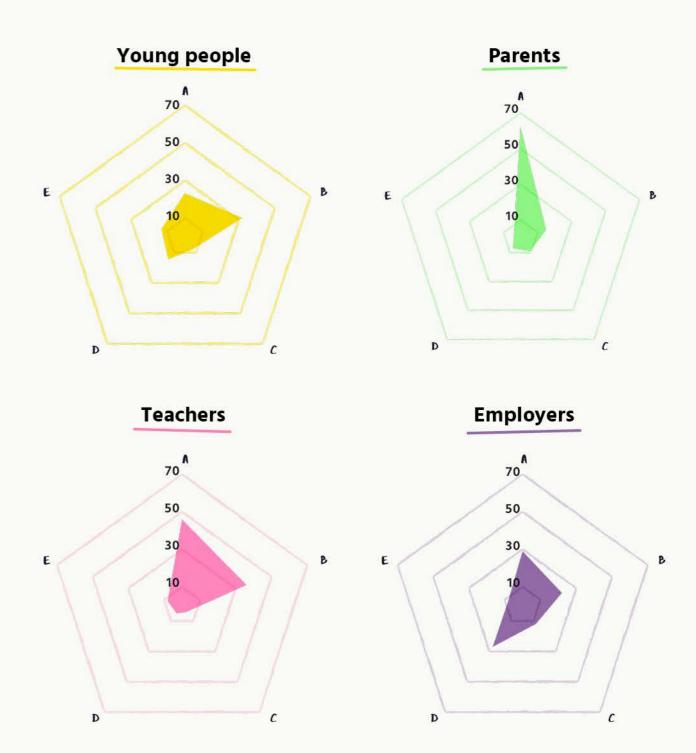


Figure 8: There is a consensus about the need for a shift in purpose in education across young people, parents, teachers and employers

Source: Polling by Parent Ping, Teacher Tapp and YouGov

MESSAGE 2

One-size doesn't really fit anyone

The majority feel that the current system isn't working for them – even those who are labelled 'successful' because they achieved a good set of exam results at 16 or 18.

New direction 2



A one-size
fits all system in
which many are
labelled or feel
like failures



NEXT

A system that celebrates diversity, gives choice and allows everyone to enjoy success

We heard that...



Young people, parents, teachers and employers are all clear that our 'one size fits all' system is not working well enough for anyone.

Our education system has been built to achieve certain things. Essentially, to get as many kids as possible learning a fixed set of things in a fixed way, and then to prove it through tests and exams. What we have consistently heard is that this 'one size fits all' approach does not work for young people or those who support them. As things stand, diversity and individuality are not valued, injustice and unfairness is baked into the system, and teenagers' wellbeing too often comes at the cost of "doing well" in high-stakes exams.

It's not a one size fits all. We are all different, yet our knowledge is being tested the same way. It doesn't work and it doesn't make sense."

YOUNG PERSON, BIG EDUCATION CONVERSATION

27

Mental health and well-being are major topics of discussion related to education on social media... Many teachers are concerned with how to help students handle the stress in their lives, especially as it relates to schooling. Parents care about this too and amid COVID have added their voice to that of the teachers.

Brookings Institution, 2021

Rather than focusing our efforts on making young people fit the mould of an outdated and inflexible system, we need to take a fundamentally different approach that sets out to tackle inequality in new ways. One that starts with the needs and ambitions of the children, families and communities who need education to change the most. Because a system that truly works for them, will work for everyone.

The pandemic has shone a spotlight on how different and often unequal the experience of learning is between young people. As pupils returned to the classroom a huge amount of attention focused on how to 'catch up on lost learning' and tackle the growing 'attainment gap' between young people from worse and better off families.

It can be easy to think that these inequalities impact a small minority of unlucky young people. That it is an important but ultimately marginal issue that can be solved with extra resources to double-down on academic support, rather than a fundamental rethink of the way young people are supported to learn and grow.

Instead, the Big Education Conversation has shown us that most young people – and those around them – feel that our current system is failing them in one way or another. This is even true of those who would be deemed 'successes' by the metrics measured by the system itself.



A THIRD

OF 16 YEAR-OLDS FALL SHORT

of achieving a grade 4 in their

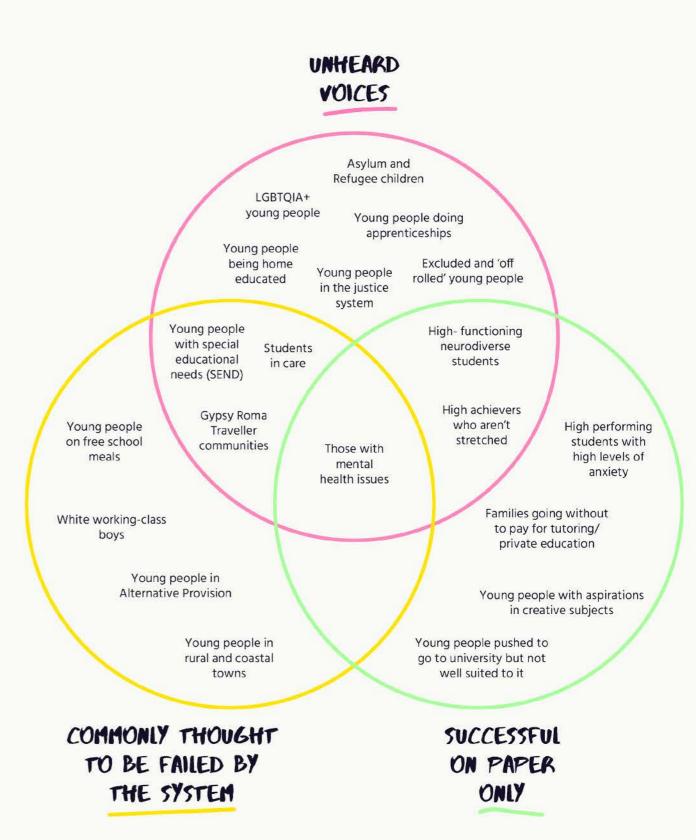
GCSE English and maths.

THIS ISN'T AN ACCIDENT

but is a product of the way our exam system is designed.

ASCL, 2019

Figure 9: Our education system is failing to meet the needs of many more young people than commonly believed



Source: Authors' analysis

MESSAGE 3 take a village

Young people, parents, and employers want to work with and beyond schools to help young people learn and thrive.

New direction 3



Schools hold all the responsibility for educating young people

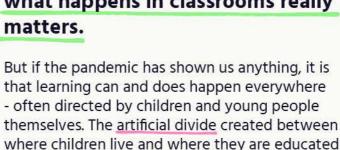


All young people have support and agency in their learning across school, home and community

What we heard...



Young people, parents and employers recognise the value of schools and those who work within them. During the pandemic teachers and school leaders have gone above and beyond the call of duty. Schools are, and should remain, the bedrock of our education system. Because what happens in classrooms really matters.



What, when and how young people learned changed over night. And that presented both challenge and opportunity, with some children thriving and others missing out altogether.

evaporated. The roles of and relationships between teachers, parents and young people

themselves shifted massively.

It seems that all this change may have triggered a realisation. Not only about the great importance of schools and teachers, but about the potential of parents, the wider community, and young people themselves, to play an even greater role.

Around the world, parents and families have emerged as essential education allies amid the pandemic, and developing effective ways of partnering with them that neither ask too much nor expect too little has the potential to not just improve schools but transform entire education systems.



In 'normal' times, a pupil spends over 600 hours in classrooms every year.

we need funding for specialist services rather than expecting teachers to fill the gap.

TEACHER, BIG EDUCATION CONVERSATION

Winthrop and Eshadi (2021) 30 31 To truly change outcomes for young people we need to put them at the centre of vision, ideas and action. Focusing our collective efforts on working with them to understand and then create the conditions that support them to learn, grow and enjoy success on their own terms. Everyone has a role to play in raising the next generation and there is no better time to harness the untapped potential that exists within the broader ecosystem.

I think there is the danger that we just ask schools and teachers to do more and more and things become add-ons...I think there is room for parents, the wider community and employers to support.

EMPLOYER INTERVIEW

GC

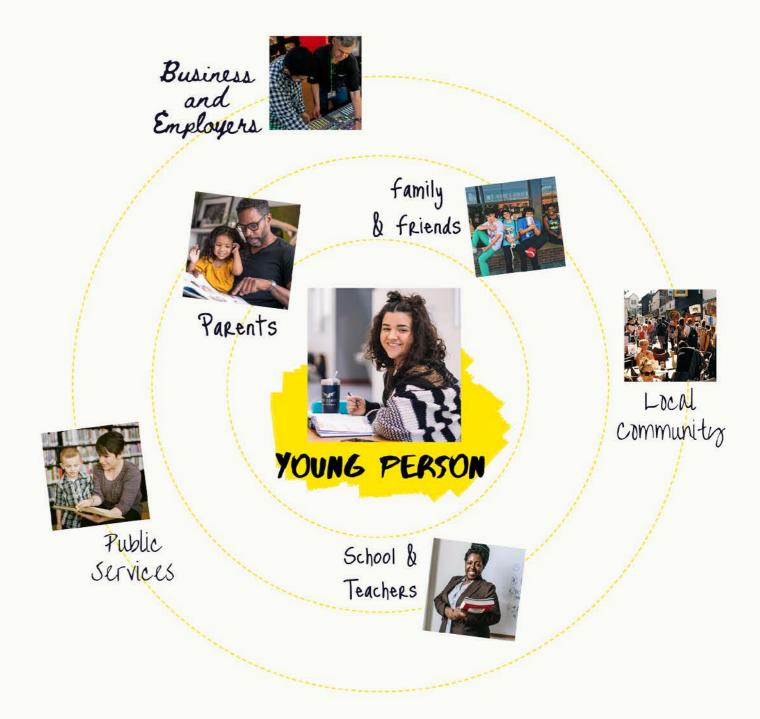
Parents are not the enemy, listen to us. We love our kids, we support them before starting school, during and after when they get jobs.

BIG EDUCATION CONVERSATION

Learning ecosystems comprise diverse combinations of providers (schools, businesses, community organizations as well as government agencies) creating new learning opportunities and pathways to success.

Local Learning Ecosystems, Emerging Models

Figure 10: Young people are the centre of an ecosystem of people and organisations willing and able to support their success



Section 3

An appetite for change: what the people want

Whenever I hear people say that 'change is hard' I think, yeah, change that nobody wants is really hard.

PROFESSOR TODD ROSE, CO-FOUNDER OF POPULACE, FACULTY MEMBER AT THE HARVARD GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

There is a large appetite to connect about education issues, but conversations are siloed and unaligned across students, teachers, and parents. The exception is key moments related to COVID-19 that united conversations.

Brookings Institution (2021)

Questions, ideas and aspirations from young people, parents, teachers and employers...

BIG QUESTIONS TO TEST AND EXPLORE

- What are the <u>outcomes</u> that we collectively care about and should prioritise? With and for young people, and for wider society?
- * What will it take for all young people to get the learning opportunities they want, need and deserve?
- If we took a broader view of success for young people then how might their achievements be recognised?
- How can the energy and passion of young people as agents of change in society be supported as part of their development?
- How could ecosystems of support for young people's learning and development be created and sustained?



Young people, parents, teachers and employers had clear priorities and ideas for change.

The big change I want to see is...

66

We let children explore what to learn and to become what they want to become.

ISABELLA, STUDENT

Celebration of non conformity! Differences are accepted and even applauded.

ERIN, STUDENT

An education system that enables all children to flourish because they learn about emotions, how to regulate them and develop resilience.

CLAIRE, EMPLOYER

A non-whitewashed curriculum that includes all students.

HANNAH, STUDENT

Pedagogy based on practical application of things we need to learn.

DARSHAN, STUDENT

Make education relevant and irresistible for every child.

ALISON, TEACHER

Nurturing young people who understand their own agency, identity, power and responsibility in shaping and contributing to the world.

YUMNA, STUDENT

Less focus and pressure on exam results, and more holistic preparation for thriving in life.

LINDSAY, EMPLOYER

Commitments to social and environmental justice.

RACHEL, TEACHER

Children need to be respected more: both as people and as learners.

ALLISON, TEACHER

Move away from testing, testing, testing to learning, sharing, living.

ANGELA, CITIZEN

Conclusion



With this document we want to inspire and challenge in equal measure. We have undertaken a year of listening to the public, and especially young people, to understand how they are thinking and feeling about education. We have gone deep and broad, using new methods of enquiry to get a real picture of the demand for long-term, transformative changes.

What we have heard leaves us with a clear conclusion: there is significant untapped demand for change in education and learning. Young people, parents, teachers and employers, are willing to ask big questions - about what education is really for and how learning needs to be different. They see what isn't working and want to work together to find solutions, and to set a new direction.

However, amidst the hope and ambition for the future, we have also heard frustration about the past. Tolerance for more top-down change is low, particularly among young people, teachers and school leaders. The new, and only, route to the lasting change we need is to empower and activate people in communities with youth leading the way.

The Big Education Conversation must be the start not the end of the dialogue about how to create new and better ways to support young people and their learning. We can show that a new way is possible; where the commitment, passion and insight of young people, parents, teachers, leaders and employers can be unlocked to support change in their communities and for the country.

In 2022, we will work with an enabling coalition of partners, to launch Subject to Change - a national project that combines powerful insight, collective action and public engagement to create a new direction for learning. This will give young people, parents, teachers and employers the chance to answer the big questions they are asking about where education and learning goes next, and to work together to find solutions.

Society is no longer passing the baton to the next in line in a continuing trend of incremental change. We are witnessing a fundamental departure from politics as usual, as young leaders respond to the demands of even younger activists acutely attuned to the injustices and inequalities of their era.

Time Magazine (2020)

Thank you!

Youth Co-design Partners

Pupil Power Leaders Unlocked Beatfreeks The Limes College National Children's Bureau

Strategic Advisors

Denise Holle, Head of Social Investment, JRF
Halima Begum, Director, Runnymede Trust
Jonathan Slater, ex Permanent Secretary at DfE
Katie Vanneck-Smith, Co-founder and
Publisher, Tortoise
Rebecca Winthrop, Senior fellow and codirector of the Center for Universal Education
at the Brookings Institution

Big Education Conversation Partners

5x15

6th Form Colleges Association

Association of Colleges

Big Education

Blagrave Trust

Bounce Forward

CfEY

City of London Corporation

Coney

DiverseEd

Economist Educational Foundation

Esmée Fairbairn

HeadsUp

Family Links

FEA

Forum for the Future of Education

George the Poet

HeadsUp

Parental Engagement Action Network

London Interdisciplinary School

Meet the Parents

More Than A Score

Our Shared World

Oppi

Parent Ping

ParentKind

Parental Engagement Network

Porticus

Pupil Power

Real Ideas

Reclaim

Rekindle

Relationships Foundation

RestartEd

Schools of Tomorrow

SSAT

Team Square Peg

The Brilliant Club

The Difference

ThoughtBox Education

Tortoise

TybedWales

Whole Education

Yes Futures

Youth Leads

Big Change's Global Insight Network

African Leadership Group - Fred Swaniker
Brookings Institution - Rebecca Winthrop
Dream a Dream - Vishal Talreja
Education Reimagined - Kelly Young and Emily
Liebtag
Enseña Perú - Franco Mosso
Escuela Nueva - Vicky Colbert
Fundacio Bofill - Mònica Nadal
HundrED - Saku Tuominen
Innovation Unit Australia - Keren Caple and
Tom Beresford
ISTE - Richard Culatta

McKinsey - Emma Dorn
OECD - Andreas Schleicher and Michael
Stevenson
People for Education (Canada) - Annie Kidder
Populace - Todd Rose
Radicle - Aman Merchant, Yousra Diab,
Moreen Nazareth
Remake Learning (Pittsburg, US) - Gregg Behr
RewirED and Dubai Cares - Annina Mattson
and Nicola Dean
Teach for All - Wendy Kopp, Alex Beard,
Steven Farr

And to all those who have contributed ideas and/or challenge (long may it continue!)

Learning Creates Australia - Jan Owen

Alison Peacock (Chartered College of Teaching), Amelia Peterson (London Interdisciplinary School), Anthony Painter (RSA), Anne Bamford (City of London Corporation), Anthony Seldon (University of Buckingham), Carl Ward and team (Foundation for Education Development), Cath Murray (previously CSJ), Claire Fenner, Dan Cory (New Philanthropy Capital), Darren Henley (Arts Council England), David Albury, David Gregson (The Gregson Family Foundation), David Weston (Teacher Development Trust), Ed Vainker (Reach Feltham), Ella Cohen, Emma Simms and Freya Trevor-Harris (Step Up to Serve), George Mpanga (aka George the Poet), Graeme Duncan (Right to Succeed), Gwyn Ap Hari (XP School), Hayley Hand (Big Society Capital), Jim Knight (TES), Jo Owen (Future Perfect Education Commission), John May (Duke of Edinburgh International Award), Julie Temperley, Karen Edge (UCL), Kate Gillingham and Rukayah Sarumi (Lego Group), Larissa Demel, Laurie Forcier (Learnit),

Leora Cruddas and Steve Rollett (Confederation of School Trusts), Lewis Iwu (Purpose Union), Loic Menzies and team (Centre for Education and Youth), Louisa Mitchell (West London Zone), Matt Isaacs and Penny Jerram (Polaris Education), Matt Whittaker (Pro Bono Economics), Michael Stevenson, Mick Waters, Molly McMahon (IDEO), Nick Pearce (University of Bath), Paul Drechsler (London First), Paul McCarthur (McConnell Foundation), Paul Roberts (Innovation Unit), , Rachel Sylvester (Times Education Commission), Roger Dennis, Russell Hobby (Teach First), Sam Butters and Gine Cicerone (FEA), Simone Vibert (Children's Commissioner's Office), Stephen Tierney (Headteachers' Roundtable), Tom Fletcher (Oxford University), Valerie Hannon (Innovation Unit).

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BIG Change.

About Big Change

Big Change was founded 10 years ago to rethink how charity could be a catalyst for positive change. We are impact and insight-led, working with and through others to create a society in which all young people are set up to thrive in life, not just exams. In the UK we back pioneering leaders and projects at an early stage in line with our 10 big hopes for change and globally we lead an insight network of leaders from across the education ecosystem who are focused on how to reimagine and transform our education systems. Over the past 18 months we have brought together the learning from this local and global work to scope and design Subject to Change: a new system-changing project that will empower young people and the public to set a new direction for learning in England.



About IPPR

The Institute for Public Policy Research is a registered charity and Britain's leading progressive think tank, with offices in London, Manchester, Newcastle and Edinburgh. Founded in 1988, we are dedicated to the better country Britain can be through better public policy. Completely independent, we work with leading figures in politics, academia, business and society. We give voice to progressive ideas and policies to successfully influence policymakers from all parties and none. We are obsessed with the impact of our work. In recent years we have conducted significant work on education and learning, including setting up the charity, The Difference, which looks to prevent school exclusion in England, and delivering a significant multi-year policy programme called New Skills at Work. We also have a long-track record of running commissions including the influential Commission on Economic Justice in 2018.

