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Target-driven education : Is the English education system denying children their right to an education that develops their full potential?

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English schools, it could be argued, are speeding down the highways of a pressurised target-driven system where “schools futures...are shaped by the performance of their students in assessments” (Mansell, 2014), rather than students futures being shaped by their participation in the school community. Disregarding children’s rights and with its focus on international competition, the education system finds within it children who are suffering from mental health issues, behavioural difficulties and a growing disinterest in learning. And therein lies the problem discussed here. Article 29 1. (a) of the UNCRC clearly states, among other things, that “the education of the child shall be directed to: the development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential” (United Nations, 1989) yet the policies of current and previous governments could be seen to have overlooked this directive. Successive Education Ministers have steered schools away from providing a “child-friendly, inspiring and motivating [education for] the individual child” (UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2001, p5) and instead have encouraged the “type of teaching that is focused primarily on accumulation of knowledge, prompting competition and leading to an excessive burden of work on children”, which according to the Committee for the Convention on the Rights of the Child “may seriously hamper the harmonious development of the child to the fullest potential of his or her abilities and talents” (UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2001, p5).

Despite this warning, the English school system could be described as a place where knowledge is key and competition between individuals is the aim – children are judged by exams, schools by league tables and teachers by OFSTED; pressure and

stress is high and many students are leaving without 'acceptable' GCSE results, considering their time at school to have been wasted and themselves to be a failure.

Yet statistics show a year-on-year improvement in GCSE grades since they began, with at least 80% pupils now gaining 5 good grades (House of Commons, 2012) and the number of NEETs decreased between 2012 and 2013 with an additional 2% 16-18 year olds engaging in education or training (Department for Education, 2015). If we take these as a measure of educational success, then the Government's targets for improvements in educational outcomes and engagement could be said to have been successful.

This essay, then, while accepting the increases and improvements outlined above, will examine the intersection of the target-driven nature of the English education system and the right of every child to a broad education, considering whether this prioritisation of targets and competition, in the English system, actually breaches a child's right to a broad education in the areas of the development of personality and talents, mental and physical abilities, as set out in article 29, UNCRC. It will also surmise education has not changed in England as a direct result of considerations of article 29 and that therefore the government should be subject to challenge by the UNCRC committee.

1. Target-driven versus rights

Even as far back in history as 1215, people understood the concept of rights for human beings, but it took 750 years longer before we understood that these rights should also apply to children – that children are human beings, not just “human becomings” (Freeman, 2012, p30). While there is much debate about when a child’s rights begin, and despite common law’s insistence that children are the property of parents (Arden, 2003, cited in Freeman, 2007), the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (*completed* in 1989) opened the world’s eyes to a new way of viewing children – as rights-bearers. The UNCRC is conveyed upon children of all ages, recognizing infants as vulnerable individuals and while it could be considered to accentuate the social construct of childhood, actually provides a way for children (of all ages) to be active participants and decision-makers in their own lives.

The UK ratified the convention in 1991 with the consequence that due consideration must be taken of the UNCRC in all areas of society, however, while consideration of children’s rights is referred to in many laws, the UK is still a long way from enabling the UNCRC to provide these as living rights, those that actually exist and matter on the ground, making a difference in their everyday lives. Article 28 gives children a right to a primary education and urges governments to promote education to the highest achievable level (United Nations, 1989). The UK Government clearly enables both rights, with 8.3 million pupils enrolled in UK primary schools in 2014 - over 100% due to early starters (databank.worldbank.org, 2015) – and the recent introduction of continued education or training until 18 years old for English students (Gov.uk, 2015). This clear commitment to education

as a right for every child, however, appears to fall short of a rights-oriented education, ignoring the Committee for the Convention on the Rights of the Child's advocacy that "children [should] not lose their human rights by virtue of passing through the school gates" (UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2001, p3). In reality, by placing pressures on schools for their cohorts to achieve ever better test scores and memorize an over-stretching national curriculum, government educational policies have led to an over-emphasis on written formal assessment and teaching to the test resulting in a narrowing of the curriculum, streaming of children, didactic teaching styles and less time for student participation. So, despite evidence that "schools that encourage the active participation of their students...[are] happier places for staff and children alike" (NCB, 2011) these policies lean towards the converse, with "this relentless regime, testing children more than anywhere on the western world, (is) associated with a high fall-out rate" (Williams, 2009) - children are subject to a worryingly target-driven system that has increasingly tightened to the point where, this essay argues, it's now too narrow to be able to satisfy a child's right to full education.

Education in the UK is recognised as central, not only to children's lives, but also to our economy, however some policies appear to prioritize the latter over the former. Living in a neo-liberal (or individualistic), globalized society where competition acts as the lynchpin, we are required to compare ourselves to others in all walks of life, always striving to be the best and prioritizing self - the world appears to have shrunk with the advance in communications and travel making comparisons worldwide – and regrettably it's no different for education. Each consecutive

government rightly wants to create an education system in which our children can be the best in the world considering the “accountability regime” (Mansell, 2014) as the best method to achieve this. The OECD, through their PISA tests, encourage this approach, requiring 15-year old students to test in maths and reading in order to rank the countries that take part. Inside the English schooling system, at 7, 11 and 16 years old children are required to undergo ‘standardised’ tests designed to show how much they know or can do in a set of subjects. Together with the pressure of OFSTED and performance-related pay, some schools allow testing to “affect the balance of the curriculum” allowing “teaching to become narrowly focused” (OFSTED, 2008, cited in educationbynumbers.org.uk, 2008). While this construction may serve to identify which country or schools achieve best in the set tests, it does little to allow a child’s participation in their education (required by Article 12 of the UNCRC) or assist the individual student in developing their distinctive personality or talents.

2. The right to development of personality and talents

The facet of education where the target-driven system could be seen to have the greatest negative impact is in the right of every child to have an education that is “directed towards the development of a child’s personality and talents” (United Nations, 1989) If we are to provide education “in a way that respects the inherent dignity of the child and enables the child to express his or her views freely” (UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2001, p3) due consideration must be given to a child’s individuality. William Butler Yeats, a 19th Century Irish poet declared that “education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire” thus pre-empting

their right to develop individuality in the context of education. With a clear “goal (is) to empower the child by developing his or her skills, learning and other capacities, human dignity, self-esteem and self-confidence” (UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2001, p2) the Committee for the Convention on the Rights of the Child clarifies personality and talents as the aptitudes exhibited by, or inherently deposited within individual children together with a child’s self-efficacy and disposition.

Klein argues that there is a problem with the current methodology of educational targets – they are extrinsic, set for them by way of exams or levels instead of aiming towards intrinsic goals coming from a personal development ambition or desire. He surmises that this “obsession with ‘levels’, ‘targets’ and ‘outcomes’, has created a culture in which creativity and original thought have no place” (Klein, 2009) - leaving individual talents locked inside. Governments have tried to improve the outcomes of an individual’s school career based on a belief that more challenging exams will raise ‘standards’ in education, yet Coram conclude that “test themselves have not necessarily been shown to raise (the) standards” (The Children’s Legal Centre, 2008, p47) and Robinson challenges governments to transform education “not [by] standard[ising] it, but [by] personal[ising] it, to build achievement on discovering the individual talents of each child” (Robinson and Aronica, 2009, p238). The UNCRC also highlights the importance of children’s individuality being at the heart of all the rights detailed within it, stating that the ‘best interests of the child must be the primary concern in making decisions that may affect them’ (United Nations, 1989), yet, while the Children’s Commissioner role goes some way to

gathering opinions on matters concerning rights-based education, the long-established emphasis on standardized tests and curriculum could betray a child's right to their best interest being considered for the development of their personality and talents through education, unless children are consulted in the process.

In 2014, Nicky Morgan (Secretary of State for Education) tried to counteract the narrowing curriculum by announcing grant funding for initiatives that "instil character in pupils" (Department for Education, 2014), recognizing "schools that develop and build character, resilience and grit in their pupils" with character awards. In tune with a focus on academic standards, the coalition government are finally reaching towards article 29 1 (a) by recognizing development of personality as a right – they've expressed their desire for children to "develop the character and resilience they need to succeed in modern Britain" (Department for Education, 2014). With its aim "to allow pupils to emerge from education better equipped to thrive in modern Britain" (Department for Education, 2015) it is billed as a benefit for future society rather than recognized as a foundational aspect to the pedagogy and assessment in the educational system that will enable development of the individual's personality and talents now. This rejection of a child as a human being, diminishes their value, as once again they are labelled as of future importance - a human becoming.

To give true credence to children's educational rights we cannot view Article 29 in isolation - articles 13 and 14, which call for freedom of expression and thought, also need to be embraced. However, the time and space required, and the "time demands of preparing (children) for tests" (Mansell, 2014) can often result in a cut to those very subjects, like drama and music, that give significance to these rights. Ken Robinson continues to discuss this entitlement for children to freely express and develop their talents in his book 'The Element', citing a story of 8 year-old Gillian who had bad handwriting and "tested poorly", causing a "disruption to the entire class". When her Mother took her to see a psychologist to see whether Gillian had a learning disorder, she discovered something amazing – her talent. Leaving her alone in the consultancy room with music playing, the mother and consultant watched "transfixed by the girl's grace" as Gillian moved freely around the room to the music with an "expression of utter pleasure on her face." This event transformed her education as she *then* began attending a dance school and discovered others like her who "had to move to think" and continues to this day as she works as "one of the most accomplished choreographers of our time" (Robinson and Aronica, 2009, p3). Now, while not every child will become an accomplished dancer, or famous choreographer, every child has a right to find their element, to develop their talents through freedom of expression and thought.

Forcing children through this pressurized target-driven system, could be comparable to planting an orchard using seeds from different fruit trees and expecting them all to produce apples of uniform shape and size – using a standardized frame of reference with which to judge their quality. In nature,

though, a plum tree should be expected to bear plums, and in a free society a child has a right to bear whatever personality or talents grow from within. Forcing nature to grow in a standardized way requires artificial farming methods and creates waste and disease – standardizing children’s growth also requires artificial methods and creates problems. This is highlighted particularly in the increase of children ‘diagnosed’ with SEBD (social, emotional and behavioral difficulties) – not just those with medical diagnoses of ADHD, but those who, like Gillian, are seen as disruptive in class. The system, via the pedagogy seen as prerequisite to completion of the required curriculum, and the consequential narrowing of curriculum content to ‘core’ academic subjects, with less time for individual development, has fashioned an incubator for behavioural problems and social and emotional issues. Children exhibiting disruptive behavior are the most likely to be excluded from school, (Department for Education, 2014) and as a result of exclusion, are often provided with a token education that focuses only on the personality of the individual enabling them to ‘fit’ back into the required school mold they were trying to escape from.

Exam results, league tables, performance-related pay can create blinkers for both students and teachers, focusing all their energy on the target-driven results ahead, rather than allowing individuals to flourish naturally in their own way. It’s no wonder, then, that in this structure both “winners and losers are apt to lose interest in the learning itself and to learn less effectively” with studies showing that a “competitive learning environment causes students to dislike school and show less interest in a given subject” (Kohn, 1999, p38) and that many children leave school

because of the “inhospitable and toxic environment” explaining that they felt that the system did not “car[e] about them or respect(ing) their lives, backgrounds, experiences or aspirations for the future” (Smyth, Down and McInerney, 2014, p2). By focusing then on the educational goal of ‘good’ exam results education has become not about nurturing the development of the child to his or her full potential but about prioritising the attainment of high grades at the end of their school career. Even the Chief Executive of the OCR examination board admitted corruption of the system due to the pressures, while examiners are concerned about the competitive nature of the system breeding unjustifiable expectations to raise achievement (Hasan, 2011). Most in business still use exam results as a measure of competence when employing young people, justifying the existence of such a system and generating backing from key players for the recent GCSE reforms, as higher standards and solutions to the current skills shortage are anticipated (Paton, 2013). Exam targets though, only provide a narrow outcome for students and ultimately focus on mental development, breaching their right to an all-embracing education.

3. The right to development of mental abilities

Children’s mental development is one of the government’s core educational aim, with subject knowledge the priority and most children, up to 16 years old, have a choice from a variety of subjects to study. Governments, and many schools within the system, however, often limit ‘mental abilities’ to knowledge retention and with Gove pronouncing schools as “academic institutions” where teachers should

“actively pass on knowledge” (Department of Education, 2013) educators are expected to focus on the memorisation of facts. Using Daniel Willingham’s research in cognitive science to back up his vision of education, Gove quotes Wallingham - “knowledge does much more than just help students hone their thinking skills: It actually makes learning easier.” Memory is a key cognitive skill “central to cognition and cognitive development” (Bauer & Pathman, 2008). The ability, then, to memorise curriculum content and refer to it at a later date guides a child’s ability to make decisions (based on that knowledge) and “process information more efficiently” (Neath & Surprenant, 2003, cited in education.com, 2009). Knowledge and the memorisation of facts (particularly through constructive methods – those that encompass active learning) is essential to a child’s right to develop their mental talents.

However, while all in education would agree that the acquisition of knowledge (acquired information or skills) plays a part in the mental development of a child, the requirement for such a pressurised method of infilling and proof of retention of said knowledge is in dispute - it is not the sum of all cognitive development. Educationalists also need to progress a child’s other cognitive skills, not just memory – every child has the right to develop their perception, attention, motor, language, visual and spatial processing and executive functions too (Michelon, 2006).

Attention and executive functions defined as the “abilit[ies that enable us] to manage competing demands in our environment [and] exhibit goal-oriented behaviour ” (Michelon, 2006) are also essential for every human playing its part in a democratic society – they enable critical thinking, social agility, emotional literacy and encourage self efficacy. In fact, they are significant in removing the view of children as being in a preparatory state and empowering them to “form(ing) his or her own views” enabling their “right to express those views freely in all matters affecting [them]” as required by Article 12 UNCRC (United Nations, 1989). Yet the target-driven system where students are pitted against each other in regular testing and levelling competes against these cognitive abilities, inhibiting the right to their development, with achievement rather than growth, being the goal. Children whose backgrounds find them starting school at a disadvantage often require increased focus on the development of attention and executive functions (together with language skills), yet intense curriculum expectations can encourage didactic teaching rather than the constructive learning opportunities required for the development of these abilities - directly denying them their right to development of their mental abilities to their fullest potential.

Stephen Ball gives further insight into why the system may alienate some and make others anxious as “the learner sees only the tasks and the tests which they must undertake and the ‘result’, position, ranking and category” removing any concept of learning as a process in which they are valued as individuals and minimising the significance of schooling to its end result rather than learning as a life-long education (Ball, 2014) – thus causing an increase in drop-out rates. The DFE’s

prescriptive national curriculum, whose end game is the child's ability to prove the retention of its contents via "at least 70 tests and exams before leaving school" (The Children's Legal Centre, 2008, p47) can add to the uneven focus on final results, rather than on lasting personal gains. A Cambridge University study reported that "testing in our schools causes anxiety and stress" (The Children's Legal Centre, 2008, p48) contributing to the increase in mental health issues amongst children. In March 2015, BBC news reported that "about 500,000 children and young people say they are unhappy and dissatisfied with their lives" which has resulted in growing levels of mental health issues in children. Anxiety, bullying and family issues all contribute in part, but the target-driven education system (where children spend at least 6 hours a day in school) plays a major part, as pointed out by Sarah Brennan, Chief Executive of YoungMinds citing "the increase in the number of calls to our Parent's Helpline this year about exam stress also demonstrates the difficulties we are creating for young people in our school system" (Leaman, 2011). Even children themselves are stating the stress of tests and exams as "the cause of self-harming and breakdowns" (The Children's Legal Centre, 2008, p48). In light of this, surely no Government can say current assessment methods contribute to a rights-based education. The cognitive ability to self-regulate emotions and other executive functions necessary for full development are also inhibited by the unnecessary pressure placed on children at school and the lack of enjoyment that ensues.

As previously mentioned, education of our children is a central piece of the economic puzzle, with children (in the current social order) viewed as future contributors to it. In order to develop as a nation, to be ahead of the game, we

need innovators, people that are willing to take risks to try new things. Without innovation we couldn't boast this age of technology, but in order for innovation to occur children need to learn how to develop their hidden sense – imagination, the skill of visualizing connections between objects or concepts, or the “power to bring to mind things that are not present to our senses” (Robinson and Aronica, 2009, p58). Imagination needs space, time and collaboration to go from being a simple thought to the conception of an innovative product, theory or service that can change lives. Putting target-blinkers on teachers and students is at risk of blocking imagination, restricting time for children of all ages to play, explore and collaborate limits imagination, innovation and potentially our economy. Einstein understood that intelligence is dynamic and often used music to inspire him, discovering that “his success came not from the brute strength of his mental processing power, but from his imagination and creativity” (Robinson and Aronica, 2009, p50). More than the lack of time in the school day, though, and despite the Government's commitment to a high-quality education for all, current artificial education methods also restrict children's entitlement to article 31's insistence on time and space for recreational activities and article 13's requirement that children have choice in the way they express themselves. The Children's Commissioner's response to this is to propose that as part of a rights-based education system children should not be limited in their ability to take part in external activities or play by the time spent in school (Office of the Children's Commissioner, 2014), leaving time in each day for pursuing other rights as well as for developing physical abilities limited within a classroom.

4. The right to development of physical abilities

Children are entitled to an education that develops their physical abilities, including motor and perception skills. Current pedagogical methods used to achieve the expectations of the target-driven system, however, can deny the full potential of many children. Gove insisted that “direct instruction” equates to teaching (Department of Education, 2013), encouraging a lessening of group work and discovery as suitable pedagogy, advocating that didactic methods were the most successful - what he didn’t consider, however, is that a child will find it hard develop their physical abilities when sat in a classroom for an excess of 4 hours a day. It may enable teachers to cover the curriculum or train children for upcoming tests, but cannot, by its very nature, progress perception or motor skills.

The cognitive function of perception develops “recognition and interpretation of sensory stimuli” (Michelon, 2006), and is encouraged by a rights-based education. The established method of educating children in England, however, is through the construct of school - a place where children are gathered to be educated together with the common aim of achieving good exam grades before adulthood. When children are considered as a separately constructed group to adults, like this, Holt argues that it allows the very nature of schooling to oppress the children it is designed to empower (Mayall, B., 2015) The confines of a classroom and constraints of detailed curriculum content, can limit full immersion in learning – children using all their senses to observe, listen, smell, taste and feel the concepts and knowledge they are learning – and therefore development of perception. Perception is hard to

measure, like many of the other developmental areas mentioned in this essay, and consequently contributes little to a teacher's performance-related pay review or school league tables, leaving it as a low priority for many. Children with SEBD and those with language difficulties often choose to express themselves in ways other than words, but the sedentary life of a student favours written and verbal as the primary means of communication often with resultant frustration and consequent disruptive behaviours. Sedentary pedagogy also fashions an obstruction to these children's right to freedom of expression (United Nations, 1989, Article 13) within their experience of education, and can quickly lead to a reduction in engagement and desire to be part of the system.

The UNCRC requires teaching not to be abstract, but for children to be taught a curriculum "that is of direct relevance to the child's social, cultural, environmental and economic context..." (UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2001, p4).

Spatial processing, another facet of physical development, improves through understanding the spatial relationships between objects (Michelon, P. 2006), relative to the way each individual perceives the world and the contexts they live in. Time restrictions (created by curriculum expectations, exam pressures and didactic teaching) can, however, limit exploration of each child's experiences of the social order and the world around them, restricting each individual's right to develop fully in this way. Didactic teaching, however, does have its place and can be "highly appropriate to the learning situation" as part of teacher's repertoire (McKimm and Jollie, 2003). This essay is not arguing for its dismissal, rather it is questioning firstly

its ability to provide a rights-based education, and more importantly, the reason its use has increased – the target-driven system it serves.

While early years settings are expected to allocate timetable for children to developing both fine and gross motor skills, once they reach key stage one it is greatly reduced. The entitlement of children to develop mobility in their muscles and bodies is often limited to statutory physical education lessons that take place each week in schools. Once again it becomes about the specific sporting techniques stated in the fixed curriculum, rather than an individuals' developmental requirements.

Subjects such as Art, Drama, Dance, Music and Design Technology also contribute to the development of children's fine motor skills together with potential discovery of their "unique characteristics, interests [and] abilities" (UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2001, p3) and exploration of their culture. Yet, since the introduction of the English Baccalaureate, in 2014, students at age 14 are influenced towards choosing subjects to study at GCSE that do not naturally lend themselves to development of motor skills. The EBacc gives an incentive of extra kudos to those children that choose history, geography or a language (in addition to the core of Maths, English and Science) in preference to less 'academic' subjects and consequently those establishments whose students achieve the EBacc are given greater significance. This only serves to further the segregation of children, not only reinforcing the social construct of childhood itself (until they have taken exams or finished school), but creating groups within that construct of those who have had a

successful childhood and those that have not. The Children’s Commissioner states that “education should be for the benefit of the child, should be broad and balanced and should give them an understanding of how to prosper in the world” (Office of the Children's Commissioner, 2014) yet this target-driven system could be seen to limit these rights.

Lastly, the sedentary style of education in place due to the outcome-driven system restricts a child’s right to “develop healthily” (United Nations, 1989, Article 6) by contributing to the unhealthy lifestyles children adopt today. Children’s right to education should not jeopardize their entitlement to any of their other rights, including the right to relaxation and play or their right to develop healthily (UNICEF, undated). While innovative methods like Forest Schools encourage children to be more active and despite evidence to show it assists in the development of confidence and self-esteem, with children with SEBD actually showing an increase in engagement when it’s incorporated into school life (University of Plymouth, 2006), teachers find there is little time for its implementation.

Conclusion

In 2014 the UK Government reported back to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child stating its progress in relation to, amongst other things, Education. They communicated their desire for education to create a “highly-educated society in which all children have the opportunity to do well, regardless of their background or family circumstances” (HM Government, 2014), but they make no mention of how they have improved the education of children in relation to “the development

of [a] child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities" (United Nations, 1989, Article 29, 1 (a)). Children in England, it's true, all have access to free education, but the UNCRC itself agrees that this is not enough – to "participate fully and responsibly in a free society" Governments should see all rights as indivisible and the UK Government's "failure to promote an understanding of the values" (UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2001, p5) or to incorporate them in educational policies, as laid out in article 29 is a failure to uphold the rights of a child.

It is clear that, while some progress has been made, the rights laid out in article 29 1a are not being met within our current educational system. The development of children's personality and talents is limited by the Government's obsession with measuring children, comparing them against each other, producing facts that while they may "reassure and vindicate" do not reflect reality (TES, 2009) because what "teachers and students do cannot be measured". In particular, personality and talents, which by their very nature are individual, cannot be standardized and as such are of no value to school managers or governments, and are therefore often pushed aside.

Mental abilities could be considered to being attended to if one takes the narrow definition of memory skills. However, the attention and executive functions necessary for children taking their part in a free society are equally important yet not included in the prescriptive national curriculum most schools need to adhere to this leaves many children without the ability to think critically and with little

emotional or social literacy – it's no wonder so many leading business figureheads exclaim that young people are not ready for the ever-changing, communicative world of work when they leave school. Even more worrying is the resultant pressure exams and competition brings to the emotional health of children – with self-harming and depression on the increase in children across the country, our education system is giving them only limited rights to survival and healthy development.

The right to play is not the only aspect of the UNCRC that declares children should be entitled to physical development, article 29 1a also points clearly to the provision governments must make within education to promote development of children's motor, perception and spatial processing potential. The current focus on results-driven education though, has caused an increase in more didactic teaching methods, which are largely sedentary. With concerns over a growing generation of obese children, government could encourage other pedagogical methods to ensure physical exercise increases amongst the young. In fact, though it's the reverse – teachers whose pay is linked to their students' performance are panicked into didactic teaching - teaching to the test - led to believe this is the most effective method of children reaching the grades needed. Unfortunately what it actually achieves is a generation of children uninterested in learning, disconnected with their own senses and with limited motor skills.

The Children's Commissioner for England has a mandate to promote and protect children's rights in England and should therefore be called upon to ensure that the

State undertakes a full review of how article 29 is applied in education, including curriculum, pedagogies and assessment and performance measurement systems, to ensure that “the necessary steps are taken to formally incorporate these principles into their education policies and legislation at all levels” (UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2001, p6) as recommended by the Committee themselves.

Whether children’s rights existed before the UNCRC would take too long to debate in this essay, but what appears evident is that despite this clear mandate for how a rights-based education should be outworked, the government in England has made little or no reference to it in its policies and practices, resulting in a denial of the importance of the rights of children in this regard. My challenge to Nicky Morgan, current Minister for Education in England, then, would be to scrutinize our target-driven education system and transform it so that it truly has the best interests of the child as its primary concern.

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