'Children on the Margins':

Comparing the role of school in England and France

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ABSTRACT

Children can be 'on the margins' in school in a variety of ways. The presenting issues are often conceptualised as 'school disaffection' and lack of 'participation' in school, although underlying social and economic inequalities are apparent in the groups of young people most affected. Other specific and related issues are complex and include bullying, learning difficulties, cultural difference and school ethos, as well as problems within the home environment. The paper can only touch on this myriad of issues. The main point of this paper is to compare the debates about school disaffection and lack of participation in school in England and France. It compares the policy response. The paper illustrates the similarities in terms of groups of children most likely to be viewed as disaffected or lacking in participation, but highlights differences in emphasis in ideas about the source of the problem and in some specific aspects of the policy response. Central to these differences is the role of schools and teachers in each country, as well as the nature of and expectations about citizenship.

INTRODUCTION

Children could be said to be 'on the margins' in the school system for a variety of complex and inter-related reasons that are often conceptualised as 'disaffection' and lack of 'participation'. In advanced industrial economies the majority of young people stay on in education beyond compulsory school leaving age and the 'high skills society' has become part of the policy rhetoric (Lloyd & Payne, 2003) children 'on the margins' in a sense become more visible. Processes of marginalisation within the education system operate in a number of ways so that certain groups are moved into relatively powerless positions in which opportunities for normal social interaction and development are denied, or existing social divisions are reproduced by depressing the opportunities open to certain groups (Fergusson, 2004). Disaffection and non-participation are an important concern of governments in much of the world, given more generalised worries about the behaviour of young people and the desire to promote social cohesion. There are also more specific concerns about educational achievement and its connection to the future prospects of young people and the labour force needs of the economy.

Concerns such as these are not new. Throughout history, wherever education systems have been formalised, there is evidence that some young people have been viewed as a challenge by their teachers and some have become disaffected by the process of education or have not been educated in mainstream schools (McManus, 1989; Debarbieux & Blaya, 1998; Glasman, 2000). Carlen *et al* (1992) observe that the various agencies (schools, welfare, criminal justice) that exist to regulate young people have as their main concern '*regulating the children of the poor*' rather than '*containing the delinquent excesses of the offspring of the rich*' (p.5). The tenor of

some of the debate about disaffection has been towards characterising young people as dysfunctional, even pathological, in their alienation from dominant social and cultural norms, reflective of the 'underclass' debate (Parsons, 1999; Fergusson, 2004). Other uses of the term focus on youth sub-cultures (Fergusson, 2004). However, the lack of a suitable alternative means that despite some misgivings 'disaffection' is often used as short-hand to describe young people who make their lack of affection for particular institutions, such as school, obvious. The essential concern of governments is those young people who, because of disaffection and lack of participation in school, are likely to have limited opportunities to take their part as future citizens. Further, the behaviour in school and in the community of some young people demands attention and is seen as a threat to the sense of safety and well-being of others. There are thus debates occurring in a number of countries about the purpose and potential of school to tackle these and related issues of social exclusion (Walraven *et al*, 2000).

Schools have long been recognised as having a broader role than academic learning. Bloom's taxonomy (in Fitz-Gibbon, 2000, p.7) characterises schools as having three broad goals: cognitive, affective and behavioural. Cognitive goals are to do with academic learning. Affective goals relate to happiness, aspirations and satisfaction with school. Behavioural goals include regular attendance, paying attention in class and pro-social behaviour. Fitz-Gibbon (2000) notes how parents are often reported to be equally interested in affective and behavioural goals, as well as cognitive attainment. The ideal school would maximise opportunities for these goals, recognising that one affects another. Many people would argue that the behavioural goals are fundamental to education in school, not least because in order to benefit in

cognitive and affective terms, you have to attend school regularly in the first place. However, if school is an unhappy place for a child, for example because they are having difficulty learning or are bullied, then their behaviour may become problematic and the process of marginalisation might begin. This behaviour may manifest itself through passivity, self-exclusion and lack of participation, or through 'acting out 'behaviour that is aggressive and disruptive. It is the latter behaviours that often receive most attention.

Schools vary in their ability to encourage a sense of connection or belonging amongst their students. American research has singled out the concept of 'school connectedness' as the single most important school-related variable that is protective for adverse outcomes, such as substance use, violence and early sexual activity (Resnick *et al*, 1997). Students who participate in extracurricular activities report feeling more connected to school; they also achieve higher grades (McNeely *et al*, 2002). Interestingly an OECD (2003) study has found differences between countries in relation to what is defined as a 'sense of belonging' and 'low participation'.

SCHOOLS: BELONGING AND PARTICIPATION

The OECD (2003) report that on average one in four 15-year-olds (across 42 nations) has a 'low sense of belonging' at school and one in five admit to 'low participation' through regular absence. The report views these two issues as ways that pupils *become* disaffected (as opposed to being the result of disaffection). Schools that are best at limiting student disaffection include those where students come from the more advantaged homes. However, this OECD report once again confirms that school organisation and ethos can counter social difference in school intake (see for example

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Rutter *et al*, 1979). Overall, schools in the OECD study where students feel a sense of belonging also tend to have lower rates of absenteeism.

Tables 1 and 2 compare findings for students in the UK (figures are not available for England separately) and France.

TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

On average, the UK does better than France (and the average for all countries in the OECD study) in terms of generating a sense of belonging for students. Only 17% of UK students report a low sense of belonging, compared with 30% of French students.

TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

'Low participation' (equivalent to absenteeism in this report) is broadly comparable in the UK and France, although greater differences are found across schools in France than in the UK. Higher levels of absenteeism are found (29% of students) in 5% of schools (the 95th percentile) compared with the UK (19% of students). Thus France bucks the overall trend found in the OECD study by having better than average participation rates in school, whilst having a lower than average sense of belonging amongst school students. The latter finding is in keeping with other comparative work on 'school climate' that would indicate the stronger pastoral role of staff in secondary schools in England (compared with France) is associated with a more positive 'school climate' in which pupils report less victimisation (Blaya, 2001).

TERMINOLOGY AND COMPARABILITY

The opening section has already introduced a range of terms that are largely to do with how students experience school and what schools in turn do to help make this experience positive. Disaffection and non-participation may be viewed as umbrella terms that encompass disparate groups of children and young people, who for one reason or another do not benefit from, nor participate fully in the current education systems in France and England. These two terms are used pragmatically in this article as they are transferable in meaning between the two countries. By disaffection from school we simply mean to imply a lack of affection for school, or aspects of it. Lack of participation might be seen as resulting from disaffection in many cases. There is a range of ways in which we might identify indicators for these concepts. Some forms of absence from school (such as truancy in England) can be seen as a form of non-participation and as indicative of disaffection with school. There is no equivalent term to truancy in French: terminology focuses upon school absence as action not justified by parents. Some types of absence from school do not necessarily relate to disaffection, for example the absence of a young carer or child who is afraid to go to school because of bullying, children who cannot attend school because of ill-health or children who are working because the family needs the help or income.

Children in both countries can be educated in special schools (which include boarding schools) and within young offenders institutions. Some children are educated at home by their parents as an active choice, in both England and France. These latter forms of non-participation in mainstream education are not the focus of this paper. School is not compulsory as such in either country, but the provision of education is compulsory. Parents in both England and France can 'chose' a school on behalf of

their children, with private schools limiting this choice to those who can afford it. Disaffection is recognised as playing a part in the behaviour leading to exclusion from school and thus officially condoned non-participation in both countries.

Comparing the way that another society understands and responds to children's behaviour in relation to school can be helpful in encouraging further reflection and insight into one's own culture. However, there are many potential pitfalls in comparative research, including the possibility of superficially or misunderstanding, as well as the difficulty of interpreting another culture (Hantrais, 1996; May, 1996). Language, terminology and translation are part of these difficulties, although attention to these issues can further a deeper understanding (Solomos & Schuster, 2001). In the field of education policy there is plenty of official documentation but by its very nature this is the *official* view of what is going on. Such documentation thus requires a critical eye and insider knowledge of a range of evidence within a country. As an English and a French researcher we have tried to exchange 'insider views' of each culture. In so doing we have become aware of the misunderstandings and misinformation that can exist between cultures and about the nature of educational systems which serve and help shape them. One problem is the understandable desire of researchers to find evidence that another society is better able to deal with the issues of interest and the tendency of their contacts to show them the more exemplary ways schools respond to an issue, rather than what might be more usual in practice.

NATIONAL CONTEXTS

A key element of any comparative study is to try and identify distinctive features of a society that may have a bearing on the object of study. A number of such issues immediately come to mind when comparing France and England. The Republic in

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France is an important unifying concept which promises 'liberté, egalité, fraternité' (freedom, equality, solidarity). State education thus acts as an initiation into a common culture through a single national curriculum. The system is based on the premise that all citizens are equal, so difference in terms of ethnicity is not actively monitored, as in England (Starkey, 2000). For newcomers to France the expectation is that any prior culture and tradition is disregarded in favour of being assimilated as a French citizen - by becoming French (Solomos & Schuster, 2001). The view of successive governments has been that departure from this single French culture, by recognition of different ethnic groups and belief systems within the school (or indeed elsewhere) carries the risk of fragmentation, which is seen as divisive and politically dangerous. In this context it does not make sense to talk about ethnic minority groups, since everybody is equally French, according to the official discourse (Martiniello, 1998). Inequalities are recognised, but are most often viewed as stemming from family background and as such are irrelevant to the public sphere of schools. Schools are expected to be neutral in respect of politics and religion (Starkey, 2000).

In contrast, England (as part of the United Kingdom) is a Monarchy in which the Monarch is also the head of the Church of England. At the same time,England has been described by Solomos & Schuster (2001) as '*self-consciously multi-cultural or multi-ethnic*' (p.12) with the political mobilisation of different ethnic groups, a situation that would generally be seen as divisive and polically dangerous in France. However, the limits to this multi-culturalism are sharply defined by ongoing concerns about immigration, more recently focused on refugees and asylum seekers. In their comparative research (on migration, citizenship and globalisation) Solomos &

Schuster (2001) found that institutional racism and asylum seekers dominated discussion in England, whereas in France the issues were focussed on the Republic, Algeria and the *Sans Papiers* (without papers). The latter group include overstayers, rejected asylum seekers and undocumented entrants. Hostility to minority groups is well documented in both countries, with this hostility clearly focussed on Islam in France. Although post September 11th 2001 increased feelings of unease and separation for Muslims are apparent in both England and France. In England, there is long running debate and evidence about the underachievement and exclusion of Black children (specifically African Caribbean boys) within the English education system (Gillborn & Gipps, 1996).

Whilst religious education is compulsory in England, secular values are promoted in French schools. Church and state in France were separated by law in 1905. (Blaya, 2001). Over the last decade, this secular role of schools has been connected to arguments about the right of Muslim girls to wear headscarves in school. As of September 2004 students in state schools are breaking the law by the wearing of items seen as 'conspicuous acts of faith', such as headscarves, turbans, large cruxifixes and skull-caps. Although this law is ostensibly promoted as a measure to preserve the secular nature of French schools, it is widely interpreted as being directed at Muslims (Gentlemen, 2004 ; Henley and Gentleman, 2004). Since the early 1990s there have been a series of expulsions and readmissions to schools in France, of Muslim girls wearing headscarves. Teachers have protested, even gone on strike, in protest against pupils wearing headcarves. Support for the idea of *not* wearing headscarves in schools can be found from the Socialist Party leader (Hollande) ; the Education Minister (Ferry) and the moderate French Muslim group, known as the Muslim Co-

ordinating Committee. A spokesperson for this latter committee is quoted as saying that they are : *'shocked by the disgraceful behaviour of those who dared to defy the Republic'* (Faure & Gouge, 2003). On the other hand, some French academics have highlighted the feelings of stigmatisation and rejection that pupils can experience (Debarbieux, 1996); arguing in favour of the right of pupils to respect their religious customs (Lorcerie, 1996) and pointing to the political aspects of French universalism versus cultural difference (Limage, 2000). The issue of the wearing of headscarves by Muslim schoolgirls has also risen to prominance in a number of cases in England. The general focus to date has been about adherance to school uniform and what have been termed health and safety issues. Although, in one well reported case, a teacher was charged with 'religiously aggravated common assault', when she was involved in the removal of a non-uniform coloured headscarf (Fresco, 2004).

Starkey (2000) describes the strong tradition of citizenship education in France, which is *'intended to reduce violence tensions in society'* (p.41) He views English citizenship education as *'more cautious.....stressing diversity, tolerance and thus inviting relativism'* (p.41). Citizenship education in France can be traced back to the nineteenth century, with roots in the Third Republic and restoration of democracy in 1871. In England, Citizenship education is a more recent concept, briefly tried in the 1980s then abandoned and relaunched following the Crick Report (QCA, 1998). The reasons for this new interest in citizenship in England are various but in part can be related to concerns about political apathy, as well as the desire to address issues of diversity and combat the development of racism (Starkey, 2000).

An important aspect of the French education system is that it is centralised; teaching appointments in France are made at the national level, rather than at school level, as in England. Body-Gendrot (2001) characterises the French education system as run by civil servants with their own regulations, in comparison with the United States that tends to have 'programmes' that can be bold in testing new ideas, which '*owing to either a lack of adventurousness or the laboriousness of the procedure, the French administrations cannot be bothered to persue*' (p.104). England has followed the US in the way it has attempted to bring about changes in schools; there have been a plethora of 'programmes' launched since 1997, many with the broad remit of reducing social exclusion and promoting social inclusion through education.

The apparent locally controlled picture of schools in England understates the strong central government control on curriculum, policy and priorities, as well as monitoring and accountability systems. Also, the apparent central control over appointments and curriculum in France exists alongside a more local accountibility system, in terms of record keeping and monitoring statistics. A greater proportion of children go to private schools in France (20%), in comparison with England (7%), illustrating a diversity that is belied by the generalisation about central control. There is a stronger vocational sector in France and it is more common to keep children back a year in school, if they are below the expected minimum level of achievement. However, a higher proportion of French school children leave with no recognised qualification (8%), in comparison with England (5%), although the 'staying-on' rate (beyond age 16) in both countries is broadly comparable (both about 86%). Of most note are the issues about which there is no national (or even local) official data – the French education system does not make available figures on Black and minority ethnic

pupils, the 'mother tongue' of French pupils or levels of special educational need. Since the second world war, French law forbids any statistics or computer files on the ethnic origin of people because of experiences in the second world war and Nazi occupation under the Vichy government (Blaya, 2003).

NATIONAL CONCERNS

Concerns about the school based behaviour of children and young people have been apparent in both countries for some time. These worries frequently encompass wider issues about the behaviour of young people in general and social order. In both countries there is also a strong focus on improving academic standards and the proportion of young people leaving school with recognised qualifications. These concerns are in some ways inter-connected in other ways potentially in conflict.

In England, debates about 'disruptive' behaviour have been in evidence both before and since the Elton Report (DES/WO, 1989), research about bullying in schools (Smith & Sharp, 1994) has an established pedigree. Research on violence in schools is much less prominent in England, in comparison with France, partly because of the different use of the word in England (Charlot & Emin, 1998; Hayden & Blaya, 2001). Instead the focus has been on research on exclusion (Hayden, 1997; Parsons, 1999) and truancy from school (Reid, 2002).

The dominant debate in France has been about school violence (Léon, 1983; Debarbieux, 1990) a term which is used more widely in France than in England to describe behaviour that might include actual or threatened physical aggression, verbal

abuse and bullying (Debarbieux & Blaya, 2001). Montoya (2001) traces the evolution of the debate about school violence in France, noting that until relatively recently research tended to focus on violence in schools within the context of violence in urban areas generally. The 1980s produced a number of studies of school violence in France, especially from psychological and pedagogical viewpoints. A number of researchers then began to highlight the problem as social (Douet, 1987; Debarbieux, 1990) but there was a lack of specific policies and initiatives to deal with the issue – such as anti-bullying policies, as has been apparent in England. Bullying is not a term typically employed in French research (Blaya, 2002). School disaffection, drop out and exclusion are of more recent concern in France. In contrast to the annual figures produced on exclusion by the DfES in England, there is no national data collection on exclusion in France and relatively little is known about what happens to a child who moves from one education authority to another. Although the excluding school is supposed to enquire about a child, it is rarely done in practice, ostensibly because of administrative overload. Local Authorities in France keep records of truancy and absenteeism on a termly basis though, but systems for collecting these data are not standardised as in England (Blaya & Hayden, 2003).

Since 1999, the French government and Education Ministry have focused on the number of children out of school and the ones known as 'lost from sight' ('perdus de vue'); measures have been taken to try and maintain children at school and enable as many of them as possible to leave school with a recognised qualification. However, this renewed interest in school attendance in France has been seen as mainly motivated by the link between being out of school and juvenile delinquency (Lagrange, 2000). Measures taken are not always educative in focus and can be seen

as repressive towards parents, focussing on unmet responsibilities, rather than pupil need.

In England, the reduction of school exclusion and truancy by a third (by September 2002), was one of the first targets set within the broader social inclusion agenda of the incoming Labour administration in 1997 (SEU, 1998; DfEE, 1999). Like France, there is a strong element of concern in England about associations between being out of school and criminality (Audit Commission, 1996; Home Office, 1999; Youth Justice Board, 2002). The target was quickly met for school exclusion; since then targets have been abandoned and the rate of permanent exclusion has fluctuated. Truancy (and related forms of absence from school) has proved a much more intractable problem, with the result that policy is moving towards a more punitive stance in England, there are parallels with some aspects of what is happening in France. For example, a parent was jailed for the first time in England in 2002, for failing to ensure that her children attended school (Passmore, 2002). Since then a fast track prosecution system has been introduced, which gives parents of persistent truants twelve weeks to get their children to school or they will be taken to court. Fines of up to £2,500 can be imposed, or a parent can be jailed for up to three months. A drop in truancy rates has been reported in the areas where these powers are being used (Curtis, 2003).

COMPARISON

The often-quoted estimate for students not in school in England is 50,000 school children (about 0.6% of the school population) *a day* (DfES, 2002); some are known to be working illegally (TUC/MORI, 2001). In France, 100,000 school children

(about 1% of the school population) are estimated to be not in school, through not having attended school for *one month or more* (Blaya, 2003). In both countries it is recognised that there is a variety of children living in very different circumstances who may not be in school. Both France and England have children who never attend school, in some cases this means *never have attended*. As we noted earlier, both countries have a form of home education legitimised and recognised by the state. In England this recognition includes the duty of parents/carers to satisfy Local Education Authorities (LEAs) that they are providing a suitable education. In England, provided parents have not registered a child with a school, there is no obligation on parents to take the initiative in informing the LEA that their child will not attend school (Education Otherwise, 2003). In France, parents have to inform the mayor of the city/area where they live and the Inspection Academique (IA) that they want to educate their children at home (Blaya, 2003).

Asylum seekers and refugee children are a feature of both countries. For refugees and asylum seekers there may be delays in gaining access to schools, rather than a choice not to attend. Research on refugee children in Britain has found that despite government comments about refugee children 'swamping' schools, there have been few complaints from teachers (Rutter, 2002). Indeed major teaching unions in England have not supported government proposals for separate education of these children in accommodation centres (Clark & McGregor, 2002). Refugees and asylum seekers are often referred to as 'new immigrants/arrivals' in France, some remain in the *Sans Papiers* group. Induction classes (Classes d'accueil) are provided for new arrivals in France under the age of 16 years. The emphasis in these classes is learning French prior to 'insertion' into mainstream schools. Research in France would

indicate that there are cases where children do not attend school because their family has entered the country illegally; so parents do not send their children to school for fear of being sent back to their country of origin (Blaya, 2002). In France the dominant political debate is about the 'insertion' or 'assimilation' of these various groups within the dominant French culture; in England it could be argued that social inclusion allows for a limited diversity in adaptive response to the system. At the same time both countries plan and provide for children outside the mainstream school system.

Both France and England have groups of travellers who are often viewed as chronic or poor school attenders. The expectation in both countries is that travellers' children will attend local mainstream schools. Both England and France have also had mobile schools ('Travellers' education services' in England; 'Camions écoles' in France) that have taken education to travelling pupils, although this kind of provision has been criticised in both countries (Blaya & Hayden, 2003). Gypsy traveller children have been identified as the ethnic group most at risk in English schools; they are more likely to be excluded than any other pupils and have been found by Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education) to have the lowest academic results of any minority ethnic group in England (Layfield, 2003). French research has indicated that as many as two-thirds of gypsy children do not attend schools or do so very erratically (Blaya, 2001). There is an overlap between those who have 'dropped out' or are 'lost from view' and those who are chronic non-attenders. Both societies officially try to follow up and bring these individuals back into the system or prevent them dropping out in the first place. Whilst research evidence shows that school drop out is a polymorph problem and that there is no one profile of the child who drops out from school

(Janosz & Le Blanc, 1996; Farrington, 1998) the tendency in both France and England is to focus punitive action on children and families in poorer socio-economic circumstances.

Types of recognised non-attendance in England have become something of an art form or social construction if you like. Truancy is only one form of non-attendance and one very much related to pupil choice either in relation to particular lessons, school days or school in general (O'Keeffe, 1994). A great deal of effort has been exerted in the area of trying to improve school attendance in recent years in England. This has led to complex notation in school registration systems and target setting to reduce unauthorised absence. Yet it is well known from truancy sweeps in England that the majority of children not attending school do so with their parents knowledge (Martin & Hayden, 2001). It may be that parents' disaffection with school in England is as much of a problem as the disaffection of children and young people.

In France, the situation is very similar and non-attendance has become a major focus for the authorities. Legal action has been taken to try and reduce the phenomenon, as in England. Until October 1st 2003 the suspension of family support benefits was possible in France, with benefits reinstated once the child went back to school. This latter measure was possible in France if the child had been out of school more than four half days in a month with no acceptable justification from parents. Withdrawal of benefits was briefly considered and then abandoned by the Blair administration in England. Although withdrawal of benefits has now ended in France the possibility of fines and imprisonment has been strengthened: the parent who is responsible for

his/her child's education can be jailed for up to six months and fined 7,500 Euros in cases of chronic non-attendance (Blaya & Hayden, 2003).

Exclusion from school in England is officially heavily governed by procedures (see DfEE, 1999 and various amendments) and monitored by the LEA and by the publication of figures nationally by the DfES. Schools have to provide records of all official exclusions both to the LEA and on their national statistical returns to the DfES. The great majority of LEAs have the equivalent of an exclusions officer and some level of internal monitoring of patterns of exclusion. Thus a wealth of data exists on patterns across schools and LEAs, as well as in relation to ethnicity, special educational need and other factors. Whilst it is important to have this data, it is known to mask a bigger problem of children who are sent home for short periods to 'cool off' or in various ways not recorded as officially excluded. The (re)growth of various forms of withdrawal unit on school sites means a further group may be in school, but not sharing classes with their peers. In England the onus is upon parents to find another school for their child, a task that can be difficult in practice because some schools can be very resistant to taking on a child who is perceived as likely to be disruptive (see for example Hayden & Dunne, 2001). Once permanently excluded from school in the later secondary school years, many young people do not return to full time school and there is system of provision for these young people, including PRUs (Pupil Referral Units) home tuition, attendance at further education colleges for vocational training and a variety of special projects (see Hayden, 2003).

The situation in France in relation to school exclusion is at once similar and different. The similarities relate to what is known about the likely characteristics and

circumstances of these children and young people as well as some of the out of school provision (see Blaya & Hayden, 2003). Some excluded children in France are educated at home through the Distance Learning Centre (CNED, Centre National d'Enseignement à Distance), others go on to vocational courses and/or work placement schemes. Internal exclusions exist in France (as in England), where children are supervised by ancillary staff in the equivalent of withdrawal rooms or a 'permanence'(ie room under the supervision of ancillary staff). Children report having spent several hours per day and up to several days per month in a 'permanence' instead of attending their lessons (Blaya & Hayden, 2003). A key difference about exclusion in France is that technically it is the responsibility of the excluding school to find another placement for the excluded child, although this does not always happen in practice.

TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE

Both England and France have set up schemes at a local and national level to try and tackle the issue of school disaffection and non-participation. Table 3 details and compares the key target groups and types of provision in England and France. The emphasis in England since 1997 has been on the broader concept of social inclusion, implying the bringing in to the mainstream of opportunities in society and the avoidance and reduction of social exclusion. Although in the main the expectation is that children will be educated in mainstream schools, there is a growth of alternatives in the last two years of schooling. Part-time attendance at further education colleges for a minority of 15 and 16 years olds is now well established, as are a variety of special provisions and programmes (see for example Hayden, 2003).

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In France, the birthplace of the concept of social exclusion, the term 'insertion' is more common – implying the need to adapt and conform to a main culture. In France, 'Instituts de Rééducation' are very much seen as one of the solutions to educating children with what is seen as 'difficult' family backgrounds and 'antisocial behaviours'. The trend in France is to strengthen and widen the possibility for educating children outside of mainstream schools with the creation of special boarding schools. The objective is to provide children with a more structured environment than their families and to keep them away from their peers and 'dangerous' relationships, a move criticised by some French academics (Debarbieux, 2002).

Although research in both France and England has shown evidence of a strong correlation between school achievement, disaffection, drop out and school ethos (Rutter *et al*, 1979; Duru-Bella & Dubet, 1999; Broccolichi, 2000) the response from the two countries is different. In England the focus has mostly been on what schools can do to change, whereas in France there has been a tendency to focus on family responsibility for pupil behaviour and participation in school.

CONCLUSIONS: SIMILIARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

France and England share ongoing concerns about disaffection and non-participation in school. Both countries focus on the association between being out of school, social cohesion and citizenship. A key difference is in the role of schools and teachers in addressing these issues. There is a stronger pastoral role for schools in England and an established expectation that the teaching role goes beyond the delivery of the

curriculum. Furthermore, since 1997 under the Blair administration in England, there is a clear expectation that schools are an important part of the mechanism for reducing social exclusion and promoting social inclusion. In France there is strong resistance from secondary teachers to the idea of extending their role beyond that of subject expert. Schools have a much more limited role in reducing social exclusion in France. There is also a stronger emphasis on family responsibility for pupil behaviour and participation in France, although there is also a strong undercurrent of this view apparent in English educational policy.

England followed France in the debates about social exclusion, yet the interpretation of the meaning of this concept is different in emphasis because of the particular understanding and expectation of governments about what it means to be a citizen in each country. The two countries have a different perspective on the importance of language, race and ethnicity to national identity and citizenship. A crude characterisation might present England as aiming to be multi-cultural and France as trying to retain a single unifying culture. In England, English can be an 'additional language' (EAL) and there is a broad public and political acceptance (indeed expectation) about the need to embrace and celebrate different cultures and religions (not least within the school system). In France, French is the expected language and there is no equivalent concept to that of EAL. Legislation now enforces the secular ideal of French schools in contrast to the uneasy relationship religion has as a compulsory subject within the English school system. Exclusion from school, as a key indicator of behaviour that schools will not tolerate, is apparent in both countries; the difference being on where the responsibility lies for finding a new school. At the

time of writing no published national data in school exclusion exists in France, although there is evidence of growing concern about the issue.

Whether schools justify the stance they take on traditional Muslim dress as to do with the secular role of schools (as in France) or as an issue to do with uniform or 'health and safety' (as in England), the potential for marginalizing some parts of the Muslim community in each country is obvious. Officially 'diversity' in educational provision is an explicit goal in England, with an expansion in faith schools being acknowledged to be part of this (Tomlinson, 2004). However, there is evidence of some back tracking on this latter idea with a Commons committee reported as saying that faith schools could intensify social divisions in some areas in England, in response to a report that state school are failing to meet the needs of Muslim children (Halpin, 2004).

Special schools are more often seen as an appropriate response to strongly disaffected behaviour in France. In England there has been a reduction in special school provision and a desire to separate the issues of special education and disaffection. In recent years in England there has been an increase in the various forms of 'off-site' and 'on-site' provision, variously known as pupil referral units (PRUs) and more recently 'education centres' or 'inclusion units'. Concerns about crime and delinquency and the association with non-attendance and disaffection are visible in both France and England. There have been parallel concerns about special boarding schools and the capacity such institutions can have for amplifying problems. The concept of sanctioning parents for the behaviour of their children is an idea borrowed by England from France. The shift in focus in England to the expectation of more

responsibility from families, in relation to their child's attendance at school and behaviour once at school, also borrows from the French system.

In sum, our analysis illustrates a complex and fluctuating picture in which ideas about and responses to the problems of school disaffection and non-participation are exchanged and recycled. What is clear is that these issues encompass a diverse minority within both school systems. They are a minority that increasingly demand attention, not least because of media coverage of the issues in both countries and political concerns about links with issues of social order and crime prevention. These issues are also illustrative of the fluctuating response to a broader agenda of social inclusion (England) and insertion (France) and what it means to be a citizen in each country. The evidence calls for a stronger debate about the role of schools in each country and the extent to which they can reduce rather than reproduce or enhance processes of marginalisation, that particularly effect young people in the poorest socio-economic circumstances.

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Table 1: Percentage of students in the UK and France with a 'low sense of belonging' to school

Country	Average % students all schools	Average % in 5th* percentile schools	Average % in 95th** percentile schools
UK	17%	14%	21%
France	30%	26%	36%

(Source: OECD, 2003)

*In 5% of schools in each country, *fewer* students have a low sense of belonging

**In 5% of schools in each county, *more* students have a low sense of belonging

Table 2: Percentage of students in the UK and France with low participation' in school

Country	Average % students all schools	Average % in 5th* percentile schools	Average % in 95th** percentile schools
UK	15%	10%	19%
France	15%	8%	29%

(Source: OECD, 2003)

*In 5% of schools in each country, *fewer* students have low participation

**In 5% of schools in each county, *more* students have low participation

Table 3: Policy response and provision (key examples)

TARGET GROUP	ENGLAND	FRANCE
Never attended ; not attending ; dropped out (Non-scholarises ; Déscholarisation ; perdue de vue)	Provision by parents, if chosen. LEA provision : home tuition; 'special projects'	Provision by parents, if chosen. IA provision : home tuition or distance learning materials (CNED).
Disaffected (Décrochage)	In school units Alternative programmes at Key Stage 4 (age 14-16) ; including vocational options ; part-time attendance at college and so on. Mentoring programmes Connexions.	'Permanance' (room supervised by ancillary staff) 'Classes Relais' (special classes -only in last 2 years of schooling : officially focus on resocialising – behaviour. Legally for up to 6 weeks) 'Instituts de Rééducation' 'Association 1901' (special projects) 'Missions Generales d'Insertion' (General insertion units, advice and vocational opportunities) 'Cellules de veille' (Watch units, in school)
Excluded (Exclus)	Pupil referral units (PRUs) , home tuition; numerous special projects and alternative programmes	'Classes Relais' – only in last 2 years of schooling. Officially focus on 'resocialising' re behaviour. (Legally for up to 6 weeks) IA provision : home tuition or distance learning (CNED) materials
Non- attenders (Inassiduité)	Numerous attendance initiatives : truancy sweeps ; various registration and monitoring systems. Prosecution, fines and imprisonment of parents possible.	Parental support units. Prosecution, fines and imprisonment of parents possible.