



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

News Release

Issued: 22 October 2015

UNDER STRICT EMBARGO UNTIL 00:01 (GMT) MONDAY 26 OCTOBER 2015

Education better and fairer thanks to comprehensives, experts say

Comprehensive schooling in Scotland has helped achieve greater equality of opportunity among pupils since the system was introduced 50 years ago, researchers claim.

Higher levels of academic attainment and a more positive attitude to schooling among pupils are other notable achievements of the system, according to a new book.

Another positive outcome – often overlooked, the researchers say – has been the fostering of an environment in which pupils are more equally valued.

Over the past 50 years, young people have expressed increasingly positive attitudes about their school experiences, for example, in the Scottish School Leavers Survey, the editors say.

Notably, the most marked improvements in attitude have been among pupils with the lowest attainment, the researchers add.

However, the experts – based at the University of Edinburgh – caution against complacency. They add that much remains to be done if the values of comprehensive schooling are to fully benefit all of Scotland's children.

Despite significant improvements in making education better and fairer, equality of outcomes across the social spectrum has been much harder to achieve, the book claims.

The researchers, in the University's Moray House School of Education, say that the biggest predictors of a child's academic success are still parents' economic status and their levels of education.

Although schools can, and should, make a difference, the wider social determinants of inequality must also be recognised, the experts conclude.

One of the editors, senior research fellow Dr Cathy Howieson, said: "Comprehensive schooling has become part of the social fabric of Scotland with the system enjoying widespread support among parents and some 95 per cent of pupils attend comprehensive schools. Although the system has delivered many benefits, our book challenges policy makers to understand, and learn from, the lessons of the last 50 years."

Ranked among the top universities in the world

A conference to discuss the impact of comprehensive schooling will be held at the University of Edinburgh on Tuesday, 27 October – exactly 50 years on from the date of the Government Circular that marked the abolition of selection at the end of primary school and heralded the introduction of comprehensive schools.

Book details:

Everyone's Future: lessons from fifty years of Scottish comprehensive schooling, by Murphy, D., Croxford, L., Howieson, C. and Raffe, D. (eds) (2015) London: Institute of Education / Trentham Books.

<http://ioepress.co.uk/books/schools-and-schooling/everyones-future/>

Conference details:

What have we learnt from fifty years of comprehensive schooling? takes place from 9am–1pm on Tuesday, 27 October in Godfrey Thomson Hall, Thomson's Land, Moray House School of Education, Holyrood Road, EH8 8AQ. Find out more at: www.ces.ed.ac.uk

For further information, please contact:

Danny Murphy, tel 07759 929 5027; email Daniel.Murphy@ed.ac.uk

Cathy Howieson, tel 0131 651 6241 or 07909 928 552; email c.howieson@ed.ac.uk

Linda Croxford, tel 0131 651 6241 or 07752 405 779; email l.croxford@ed.ac.uk

Corin Campbell, Press and PR Office, tel 0131 650 6382; email Corin.Campbell@ed.ac.uk