Teaching Anthropology

2016, Vol. 6, pp. 6-14

In defence of standards or an act of 'cultural barbarism'? Anthropology and histories of A-level Reform

David Mills, University of Oxford
David Bennett, Wolfson College, Cambridge

Introduction

In January 2015, the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA) announced that it was withdrawing its accreditation of several specialist A-levels sat by many British 18-year olds.[i] The list included anthropology. To observers, these qualifications were the latest casualties in a twenty-year battle between politicians and educationalists in the UK over the best way to sustain and improve educational standards, and the role of 'high stakes' assessment within that debate.[ii]

Even before his appointment as Secretary of State for Education in 2010, Michael Gove had announced his determination to 'break up' the English educational establishment and to restore 'traditional' academic values. His antagonistic agenda included challenging the role of universities in teacher-training, promoting academy schools[iii] and reversing previous changes to A-level qualifications designed to diversify the curriculum and promote 'non-traditional' subjects. It was Gove, most commentators felt, who was the ultimate architect of the anthropology A-level's demise.

Inevitably the story was more complicated than this. Whilst Basu pithily summarises the headline issues – from profit margins to political pressure – that played into the AQA's decision (Basu 2016), there is much to learn from placing these events in the longer history of UK educational reforms. In this article we map a consistent policy concern since the 1970s with educational 'standards'.[iv] The anthropology A-level offers a telling ethnographic case through to analyse the consequences of the gradual deregulation of educational provision and centralisation of oversight in pursuit of these standards, and the implications of this agenda for relations between politicians, teachers, educationalists and schools. To fully appreciate these developments we first need to go back to 1976.

Forty years of 'standards'

In October 1976 Prime Minister Callaghan gave a speech at Ruskin College, Oxford entitled 'A rational debate based on the facts' (Callaghan 1976). It not only started what later was called the 'great debate', but also deployed a new language for talking about British education. Mobilising three potent keywords, 'standards', 'skills' and 'employment', Callaghan called for a return to the 'basic purposes of education'. It defined the future terms of engagement. A similar discourse still gets deployed in ministerial rhetoric today. In the space of an hour, education suddenly became a legitimate target for political (and prime ministerial) concern. Strikingly, the speech starts with an apology for a politician even talking about schools and qualifications. He acknowledges the suspicion created by a non-educationalist treading on the 'grass' of the teaching profession (Callaghan 1976). If educational policy was once a 'secret garden' beyond political interference, the lawn was no longer sacrosanct.

His intervention ended an era of pedagogic experimentation in state education. Whilst the 1944 Education Act had been a cornerstone of educational progressivism, opening up secondary education to girls and working class children, it also enshrined existing social and educational hierarchies by creating secondary modern schools alongside existing grammar schools.[v] This was challenged in the 1960s as many Local Education Authorities (LEAs) decided to implement 'comprehensivisation', removing selection exams at age 11, and introducing mixed-ability teaching. The influential Plowden report on primary education had declared that 'at the heart of the educational process lies the child' (Plowden 1967, 7). It championed individualised approaches to learning, whilst

rejecting that 'only what is measurable is valuable'. Legitimating the broader counter-cultural agenda that now characterised educational debate, this language encouraged many secondary school teachers and academics to get involved in curriculum development. Many were helped by the leadership and patronage offered by the Nuffield Foundation. The philosopher Lawrence Stenhouse led the way by promoting the Humanities Curriculum Project, working in conjunction with the Schools Council (Stenhouse 1967). These new programmes challenged the traditional exam-based assessment of academic ability. The Nuffield Science Teaching Project produced a range of inquiry-led O and A-levels, whilst the Schools History Project and the Cambridge School Classics Project were similarly progressive in their outlook and pedagogy. 1967 saw the first O level (in English) assessed entirely by coursework, a model that lasted until the 1990s. There was also a gradual shift to teacher-led assessment.

The supportive role of regional exam boards in this period was key to this efflorescence of educational initiatives. The first English exam boards were founded by the oldest universities - Oxford, Cambridge, Durham and London - in the 1850s. They helped schools administer their own exams to prepare their pupils for university and the professions. Further university-sponsored boards followed, and by the 1960s there was a 'hotch-potch' (Tattersall 2008) of localised examinations, with assessment led by academics in consultation with schools. The creation of the CSE (Certificate of Secondary Education) qualification in the 1970s, complementing academic O levels, led to further regional exam boards being created. Tattersall describes her role on one board that supervised only 160 schools, allowing a closely collegial working relationship. Whilst mostly loyal, schools had some flexibility to choose between boards, and as a result boards were supportive of local initiatives and curriculum innovations. Free from commercial pressures, they were able to accredit qualifications that today would not be seen as financially viable. If an A-level in anthropology had been mooted at that point, accreditation may well have been relatively easy. This level of trust and local knowledge later disappeared as the boards gradually merged, driven by regulatory expectations and commercial pressures.

1960s progressivism fostered an educational optimism that was picked up both by anthropologists and a rapidly growing community of social science teachers. Attuned to the counter-cultural zeitgeist, sociology's appeal meant that three years after its introduction as an A-level in 1964, 1600 students sat the sociology exam. Calls for an anthropology A-level also emerged at an ASA conference in 1964, and led to (abortive) discussions about a joint anthropology and sociology A-level (Mills 2008). On appointment to the directorship of the Royal Anthropological Institute (RAI) in 1974, Jonathan Benthall made the most of this opportunity. Harnessing Prince Charles' enthusiasm to see anthropology in schools (Windsor, 1974), Benthall created an Education Committee, appointed an education officer, and stimulated a raft of educational initiatives. Hurman (1974) describes one conference full of sociology teachers keen to understand the new field of anthropology, whilst the same RAI News describes a schools theatre project playing to enthusiastic Bristol primary schools, involving a spaceman arriving on Earth and trying to communicate with humans.

Not all academic anthropologists were similarly enthused. Edmund Leach was forthright in his opposition to formalising anthropology in the school curriculum (Leach 1973a, b). There was relatively little appetite for expanding the discipline within universities, some even questioning whether the discipline should even be taught as an undergraduate subject. With the exception of a few outspoken disciplinary 'missionaries' such as Paul Stirling and Brian Street, much of the campaigning was left to administrators and teachers (Thorn 1974). Callaghan's 1976 challenge to the educational progressivism undermined these early initiatives. As Benthall puts it in his contribution to this issue, 'every teacher of experimental subjects ran for cover'. Further RAI initiatives by John Corlett in the 1980s were obstructed by RAI Council (Bennett 2011), and the Education Committee eventually disbanded. The promotion of anthropology in sixth form colleges as part of university access courses was left to the newly-formed British Association of Anthropology in Politics and Practice (BASAPP) (Wright 2006).

Opportunities for innovation within the A-level curriculum were not to return for twenty years. The 1980s saw universities (and especially the social sciences) reeling from funding cuts inflicted by the first Thatcher administration. The introduction of regular national research assessment exercises in 1986 narrowed academic priorities. There was limited time for outreach activities with schools or collaboration with secondary examination boards. The traditionalism of successive Conservative administrations culminated in the 1988 Education Act and a standardised 'National Curriculum' focused on the core disciplines. GCSE exams for 16 year-olds, introduced to replace O levels and CSE, were integrated into the last 'key stage' of this National Curriculum. At the same time the 1988 Act included provision for 'Grant Maintained' schools to opt out of local

authority control, setting in motion a trend towards ever more devolution of responsibility, funding and provision. This in turn required central regulation. The creation of a national Office of Standards in Education (OFSTED) in 1992 sought to standardise school inspection regimes, and the appointment of the combative Chris Woodhead as Chief Inspector, marked a nadir in relations between educationalists and the government of the day.

During this period, many of the regional exam boards had amalgamated, under pressure from government, as it allowed merged boards to offer both GCSE and A-level qualifications and to more effectively compete for business from schools. By the late 1990 just three dominated in England: Edexcel (an educational charity later taken over by a commercial company), AQA (also a charitable foundation) and OCR (a syndicate of Cambridge University, the only board to retain its university association). In the pursuit of standards and comparability, this loss of diversity also meant less opportunity for curriculum development. With results increasingly placed under public spotlight and media attention, the examination boards, which now had national remits, were increasingly subject to central regulatory authority. John Major's government introduced school league tables in 1992 as part of a 'Citizen's Charter', facilitating comparability but also providing a tempting national policy lever.

By the end of the 1990s, public demands for improvements in the quality of schools, echoed and amplified by the print media, had continued to rise. The popularity of school league tables based on schools' GCSE and A-level results, allowed ministers to proclaim the arrival of 'parental choice'. At the same time, year-on-year increases in the percentages of top grades generated renewed anxiety about exam standards. Competition among the remaining exam boards for student 'market' was also cited as a cause of supposed grade 'inflation'.

The arrival of the Blair-led Labour government in 1997, amid the promise of 'education, education, education', raised social expectations about a new settlement. Alongside sustained growth in schools funding, implementing the political mantra of 'standards not structures' meant a new raft of oversight bodies and assessment targets. One example was the creation of the new 'arms-length' public body, the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) in 1997, to oversee both the national curriculum and assessment policy. This period of 'Third-Way' policy initiatives and targets led to the accusation that the government was trying to run schools from a photocopier in Whitehall (Coughlan 2007).

Other developments from this period included the controversial new species of 'Academy Schools', legislated in the 2000 Act of Parliament. Funded directly by the Department of Education, these schools were granted significant financial and managerial autonomy, both from the expectations of the national curriculum and from local education authority control (Adonis 2014). Initially each requiring £2 million private financial sponsorship, the first were set up to replace failing London schools. Despite funding sweeteners, significant political opposition meant that by 2010, there were only two hundred such schools.

A more immediate change was achieved through Labour's 'Curriculum 2000' reforms, broadening sixth-form study through a major overhaul of A-levels. The reforms aimed to retain an emphasis on the A-level as the academic 'gold-standard', but to enrich and diversify the curriculum beyond the standard three subject offering. Typically, students would now sit four subjects at an intermediate Advanced Subsidiary (AS) level, of which three were continued to a higher A2 level to qualify as full A-levels. That is, the AS could be taken en-route to the A-level or as stand-alone qualification equivalent to one-half an A-level. A modular structure was applied to all subjects.

Anthropology and the Specification Years

On the initiative of Brian Street and the RAI's new director, Hilary Callan, the RAI relaunched its Education Committee in 2004. Making the most of the opportunity opened up by the A-level reforms, the goal was to finally create an anthropology A-level. With Brian Street in the chair, the Committee brought together a group of scholars and teachers who had been active in earlier campaigns or were involved in new educational initiatives. Together, it combined a diverse range of experience and expertise encompassing secondary and higher education. It was a timely moment, as it coincided with new policy expectations that universities should demonstrate their relevance and 'value for money' through outreach, public engagement and impact. The RAI appointed its first full-time Education Officer with two years of HEFCE AimHigher funding in 2005, and the Committee began the slow and occasionally tortuous process of writing an A-level curriculum (Street 2010, Bennett 2011) and gaining accreditation.

In their account of these years, Callan and Street diplomatically describe 'navigating the project through the multiple levels and sometimes conflicting agendas of the various national level bodies' (2010, 8). Situating these negotiations within a longer history of RAI's involvement in education, Bennett (2011) explains how academics on the RAI's Education Committee had to master a whole new policy language of 'specification documents' and 'subject criteria' in order to meet increasingly complex bureaucratic demands of the regulatory authority. He describes a tense stand-off between teachers, academics and bureaucrats, caused by the QCA's refusal to approve internally-assessed course work (in contrast to Geography, which had been allowed to keep its fieldwork component). The regulatory environment in which they worked continued to morph, with responsibility passing from the QCA to a new Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual) in 2010.

Following an unsuccessful approach to the small but innovative Welsh exam board WJEC, the RAI approached the AQA in late 2007. This time they found themselves pushing at an open door. The AQA was keen to support new educational initiatives in order to justify its charitable remit. During the Blair years it had become an increasingly successful commercial organisation as the largest provider of A-levels. The RAI was encouraged to present its case to the Board, and was surprised to find the AQA agreeing without even needing to be persuaded. Whilst the syllabus was now ready, the AQA assisted both with the development of assessment criteria and with the final stages of gaining approval from the regulatory authority. Forty years after the idea was first mooted, the first students started studying the anthropology A-level in September 2010.

The Gove Revolution

It was fateful timing. The election of a Conservative-led coalition government in May 2010 marked the start of a very different education policy environment. Michael Gove was appointed as Education Secretary, and he lost no time implementing a radical manifesto. In a July conference speech he promised a root-and-branch reform of an increasingly complex mixture of A and AS level provision in order to reintroduce what he called 'deep thought' (Vasagar 2010). With the exception of a highly critical statement by Cambridge University, the story was largely overlooked. Even the Department of Education's 'Importance of Teaching' white paper published in November 2010 only made brief mention of plans for A-level reforms, somewhat hidden amidst a sweeping set of initiatives for further school autonomy, more transparency, increased devolution of funding, stronger teaching and school leadership, and a raft of other initiatives. The accompanying 'case for change' drew heavily on data evidencing the UK's less than impressive performance in international PISA and OECD comparisons.

Gradually Gove's ambition for 'restoring' the A-levels as an educational 'gold standard' – a call that presupposed that there had been a lapse – became clearer, along with his ideological sympathies for a traditionalist canon of knowledge. Amongst his intellectual mentors was E. D. Hirsch, a conservative US philosopher whose influential 'What every American needs to know' (1987) had led to a focus on a knowledge-based curriculum. In a speech entitled 'What is Education For?' in 2009, Gove bemoaned the rise of relativism, an anti-knowledge ideology and 'the denial of poor children's rights to their intellectual inheritance'. His solution? To break up the 'bureaucratic control' that constrained educational 'common sense'. But it was his disdain for educational expertise for which he will be best remembered; his political animus towards the educational establishment was graphically illustrated by his demeaning 2013 caricature of its research community as 'the blob'.

For all the controversy surrounding the Gove 'revolution', some of his deregulatory agenda built on previous Labour initiatives. Ideologically suspicious of statist solutions and centralist welfare provision, the Coalition government dramatically expanded Labour's academy schools programme. By 2015, there were 4,000 schools outside local authority control (and support). Profiting from the devolved financial model, commercially successful academy chains began to emerge, as did controversial parent-led 'free' schools, all enjoying high levels of autonomy and freedom. Gove cared little about his reputation amongst educationalists. The reform timetable was impossibly tight, against all the advice of regulators, exam boards, local authorities, schools and universities. Gove was unrepentant, even when his rebarbative stance became an electoral liability, leading to a sudden demotion in a 2014 pre-election Cabinet reshuffle.

The demise of the anthropology A-level

Even before the formal announcement of plans to reform A-levels, the RAI Education Committee encountered

a series of unexpected challenges. The RAI had expected to retain something of the 'shared ownership' and collaborative ethos that had characterised the development of the qualification. The request that Committee members individually sign over copyright to the AQA of the course specification came as a surprise to some, and presaged a different working relationship. This was not helped by the transfer of responsibility for the A-level *within* the AQA, removing the direct involvement of those senior officers whose support had proved decisive in the earlier period. The speed with which the A-level had been approved now meant that the RAI had to quickly direct effort towards developing the teaching resources and texts that were desperately needed to support the course. This had not previously been prioritised as there had been little commercial incentive for publishers to commission books or readers until the qualification had been approved by Ofqual. Almost three years after the first students started the course, and subject to a long publication process, the first introduction written with the A-level in mind (Hendry and Underdown 2013) and a course reader (Callan, Street and Underdown 2013), were published. A textbook authored by two anthropology A-level teachers and examiners came out in 2015 (Pountney and Maric 2015).

The challenges of using disciplinary knowledge to translate the A-level syllabus outline into a practical course, and to design realistic assessment tasks, became clear. Aware that the A-level might well be taught by teachers without an anthropology background, anthropologists were sensitive to the risks of course content being misinterpreted or mishandled. The RAI was particularly concerned that this might lead to the teaching of inappropriate theoretical perspectives, risking errors of interpretation in the hands of non-expert teachers. On the other hand, teachers began to report difficulties in covering the full content of the course in the teaching time available. The units were of different sizes, and teachers could not cover all in equal depth.

Typically, A-level examiners are expected to have a teaching background at A-level, appropriate subject knowledge and, preferably, assessment experience – a challenging set of requirements for a new qualification. Following its usual procedures for specification revision, the AQA involved its principal examiners in approving a series of minor changes. The examiners also introduced a standard rubric in their mark schemes that students should be able to apply and evaluate relevant theoretical frameworks (a whole range were listed, from functionalism to post-colonialism) in their examination essays. In carrying out these revisions, the examiners were seeking to re-organize and clarify the specification in a more teacher-friendly way. Their goal was both to ensure that teachers would want to use the specifications, and to attract new teachers and students.

Amidst these negotiations, the members of the RAI Committee employed as AQA examiners had divided loyalties: their contractual commitment to the exam board meant that it was hard to act as brokers between the two organisations. Again, some felt that the AQA was implementing changes to the syllabus without consulting the discipline. Whilst most of these concerns were not publicly voiced, they pointed to the challenge facing a small learned society in negotiating with a powerful, bureaucratic and commercially-oriented exam board (or, to use the current idiom, awarding body).

During this period that universities became involved in discussions about A-level reforms. This began quietly, with Ministers drawing on informal advice from Russell Group leaders. Educationalists were not consulted. Gradually the rationale become clear: the reforms were partly a response to university expectations about preparation for degree level study. A smaller suite of 'traditional' academic A-levels would provide more accurate and comparable predictors of quality.

The independent regulator, Ofqual, was tasked with leading the review. It issued its first formal consultation in June 2012 on the reforms of GCSE and A-level qualifications (Ofqual 2012). These received broad support, especially from the old universities. The proposals included replacing courses divided into modules with a traditional 'linear' model, and decoupling AS from A-levels, as a stand-alone qualification no longer counting towards an A-level. Partly as a result of Gove's overtures to elite universities, the Russell Group set up a new A-level Content Advisory Board (ALCAB), funded by the Department of Education, to advise Ofqual on the reform of the eight 'facilitating' subjects most frequently required by the elite universities (Mathematics and Further Mathematics, English Literature, Physics, Biology, Chemistry, Geography, History, Languages-Modern and Classical). Oxbridge-educated, Gove was willing to listen to university pro-vice chancellors, even as he disparaged educational expertise. They conveyed the concerns of subject-based academics about the skill-deficits of undergraduates, caused by a 'tick-box approach' to A-level assessment. As part of this first consultation, the AQA also asked the RAI to canvass the views of academic colleagues for their views of the anthropology A-level. Relatively few responses were received from individual academics. Some of these had realised the outreach

potential generated by the A-level, organising successful local events that fostered links with schools, but others had little contact with the A-level .[vi]

Things gradually took a turn for the worse. In January 2013, an AQA delegation to the RAI set out its concerns about the future of the anthropology A-level, citing the slow growth in take-up by students, that only twenty seven schools taught the qualification and less than one hundred students had taken the examination in 2012 (by contrast, almost 40,000 students sat the sociology A-level). They explained that whilst the AQA was willing to subsidise subjects where necessary, it had already invested tens of thousands of pounds in the qualification, and needed 4,000 students for the qualification to be viable.

The anthropologists felt betrayed, as this target was very different from the broad figure of five hundred casually cited in earlier discussions. Back in 2009 when the AQA had been keen to approve the A-level course, such targets had been downplayed. The lack of a minimum threshold had reassured the RAI. The Committee had worried less about initial uptake, and instead highlighted the steady and consistent rate of increase (there were 252 AS level entries in 2015) and the potential for future growth. Anthropologists had also been reassured by the relatively low numbers taking the long-standing archaeology A-level.[vii]

The outlook for the anthropology A-level seemed uncertain, but with no further news from the AQA that year, hopes of a reprieve grew. Maintaining its support for existing centres, the RAI set themselves the goal of continuing to involve new schools and to broaden the qualification's appeal to get A-level numbers towards more sustainable levels.

Ofqual's next public consultation, entitled 'Completing GCSE, AS and A-level reform' was published in June 2014 (Ofqual 2014). It identified those subjects at each level that were to be considered for reform and those it felt should be withdrawn. The university sector's views on specific A-levels to be reformed were sought, whilst a clear set of educational principles was set out to guide the production of 'core' content for each subject. Anthropology was listed as a course to be reformed, not withdrawn, but its low student numbers (only 96 sat the A-level in 2012) marked it out as vulnerable. The report's foreword was clear that the new qualifications should be 'similar in their level of demand' (candidate uptake) in order to ensure validity within the assessment process. More ominously, it made clear that 'this will inevitably lead to a small drop in the number of subjects available: subjects that attract few students may disappear, with exam boards unlikely to invest in reforming them to the standard we require' (ibid, 3).

Under its new Chair, Paul Basu, and supported by David Shankland, Hilary Callan's successor as RAI Director, the Committee responded quickly by assembling briefing papers for heads of academic departments and senior figures within schools and colleges. Again it sought to raise awareness of the challenges facing the A-level amongst academics and to influence 'educated' opinion, writing articles and letters to the press. But with limited human and financial resources, the Committee was constrained from organising a wider campaign.

When the results of the consultation were published the following December, anthropology was listed as a subject drawing very few responses in support, despite submissions from both the RAI and individual Committee members (Pye Tait 2014). Early in 2015, AQA publicly confirmed its decision to discontinue the anthropology qualification, citing low numbers taking the exam and the consequent examining difficulties of accurately benchmarking candidate performance. The subsequent public protest campaign, discussed by Middlemiss in this issue, failed to reverse this decision.

In retrospect, the chronology points to the challenges facing specialist learned societies, especially those without significant government patronage or financial endowments. But perhaps nothing would have been able to challenge Gove's determination to spin a huge educational policy U-turn. In pursuit of academic 'standards', the A-level curriculum was refocused on preparing students for a specialised university education, a change delivered by the exams regulator, supported by the awarding bodies, and abetted by the universities. The opportunity for greater curriculum diversity was lost for another generation.

Conclusion

So who killed the A-level? In a complex policy environment, ultimate blame for the decision is difficult to apportion and easy to dodge. Responding to criticisms of their interventions, education ministers could assert the

regulatory autonomy of Ofqual and its role in maintaining standards. The regulator similarly deflected public wrath by pointing to the independence of the qualification awarding bodies. They, in turn, could cite the challenge of minimising risks, ensuring validity and comparable demand, given the small numbers of students taking the exam.

Our account has gone beyond the rise and fall of the anthropology A-level to reflect on the policy contraflow that has defined the English educational landscape since the 1970s (Furlong and Phillips 2001, Whitty et al. 2016). Callaghan's 'great debate' speech made educational 'standards' a central concern, ensuring repeated ministerial (and prime-ministerial) interventions in the decades that followed. Policies to devolve responsibility for educational provision were accompanied by a necessary corollary, the centralisation of its regulation.

It took the policy window created by the Curriculum 2000 reforms for anthropology's 'missionaries' to finally achieve their A-level ambition. Yet the subsequent media attention to exam grade 'inflation' and a perceived lowering of expectations fed into the policy focus on standards. The more recent Gove reforms intensified the ideological debate within the framework set by Callaghan in 1976.

The changing post-2000 educational policy environment meant that the timing of the A-level's adoption was far from opportune. In the present context, any appeal to qualification awarding bodies that relies on highlighting the subject's intrinsic intellectual value, transformative potential and broad 'relevance' is unlikely to carry weight. But amidst ever-changing circumstances, anthropology must remain alert to its next opportunity.

References

Adonis, A. (2012). *Education, Education, Education: Reforming England's schools*. London: Biteback publishing.

Bennett, D. (2011). Expanding anthropology: A narrative of innovation in the A-level curriculum *Teaching Anthropology, 1*(2).

Boffey, D. (2015). Axing anthropology A-level is 'cultural barbarism'. *The Observer*. Feb 8th 2015

Callaghan, J. (1976). *A rational debate based on the facts*. Speech given at Ruskin College October 18th 1976.

Callan, H., & Street, B. (2010). Anthropology, education and the wider public. *Anthropology in Action, 17*(2-3), 72-86.

Callan, H., Street, B., & Underdown, S. (2013). *Introductory readings in Anthropology*. Oxford: Berghahn

Corlett, J. (1983). Anthropology in British Education. *RAI news, 59*, 16-19.

Furlong, J. and Phillips, R. (2001). *Education, reform, and the state: twenty-five years of politics, policy, and practice,* London: Routledge

Department for Education. (2010). *The importance of teaching*. London: Stationery Office.

Hendry, J., & Underdown, S. (2013). *Anthropology: A beginners' guide*. London: One world Publications.

Hirsch, E. D., Kett, J. F., & Trefil, J. (1987). *Cultural literacy : what every American needs to know*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Hurman, A. (1974). Anthropology in the Classroom. *RAI news, 1*(2).

Leach, E. (1973a). 'Anthropology in the Classroom' *The Social Science Teacher, 3*(1).

Leach, E. (1973b). Keep Social Anthropology out of the Curriculum. *Times Educational Supplement*. 2nd Feb 1973

Mandler, P. (2014). Educating the Nation 1: Schools. *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, 24*, 5-28.

Mills, D. (2008). *Difficult Folk: A political history of social anthropology*. Oxford: Berghahn.

OFQUAL (2014). *A-level Reform consultation*. Coventry: OFQUAL

OFQUAL. (2014). *Completing GCSE, AS and A-level reform*. Coventry: OFQUAL

Pye Tait Consulting (2014). *Analysis of the Completing GCSE, AS and A-level Reform Consultation: Final Report*. .

Royal Anthropological Institute and ILEA. (1975). *Land and People*. London: ILEA

Shepherd, J. (2010). Cambridge University warns against A-levels reform plan. *The Guardian*, 23rd June 2010

Stenhouse, L. (1967). *Culture and education*. London: Nelson.

Street, B. (1975). Anthropology outside the Classroom. *Journal of Anthropological Society of Oxford 6:1 57-67*

Street, B. (2010). Advancing Anthropology in Schools: The Accreditation of the Anthropology A-level. *Anthropology Today 26*(2), 1-3.

Tattersall, K. (2008). *The Relationship of Examination Boards with Schools and Colleges: a historical perspective*. Cambridge. Speech given in Cambridge 2008. Available at www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/images/126056-kathleen-tattersall-s-speech.pdf

Vasagar, J. (2010,). AS-levels to be scrapped as part of government's 'deep thought' revival. *The Guardian*. 4th July 2010

Whitty, G., Anders, J., Hayton, A., Tang, S., & Wisby, E. (2016). *Research and policy in education : evidence, ideology and impact*. London: Institute of Education Press.

Windsor, C., Prince of Wales. (1974). Why the study of man is so important. *RAI news, 1*, 1-2.

Wright, S. (2006). Machetes into a jungle? A history of anthropology in policy and practice 1981 -2000. In S. Pink (Ed.), *Applications of Anthropology*. Oxford: Berghahn.

Endnotes

[i] (Ordinary) levels and A (Advanced) levels were introduced in England, Wales and Northern Ireland in 1951. They were designed as subject-based exams for academically selective Grammar schools, and replaced a broader Schools Certificate award. The CSE (Certificate of Secondary Education) was designed for the less academically able. CSE and O level awards were replaced in the 1980s by a combined GCSE (General Certificate of Secondary Education) to cater for a broader range of abilities. The A-level continued largely unchanged until 2000.

[ii] The term 'high-stakes' originates in the US, and refers to the significance of the test result for the person involved.

[iii] Academy schools, first set up in 2000, have devolved financial responsibility and significant governance autonomy and are no longer accountable to local educational authorities

[iv] This article draws on a range of primary sources, including the minutes of the RAI Education Committee throughout this period along with email and other personal communications within the Committee. We also synthesise the Ofqual and AQA consultations carried out from 2012 to 2015. We are grateful to all those members of the RAI Committee who have read and commented on this article. Their feedback has been invaluable. All extant errors remain our own.

[v] Mandler (2014) elegantly nuances earlier histories of this whole period, arguing that a concern to develop and improve a standardised and universal education system for the benefit of all has consistently motivated reformers on both the left and right of the political spectrum. In doing so, he criticises analyses of British 'backwardness'. His analysis extends to include New Labour, but not to include Gove's reforms. Prime Minister May's 2016 proposal to restore selectivity in secondary education also postdates his argument.

[vi] Examples here include Peggy Froerer's Brunel collaboration with Tomislav Maric, the work of Jonathan Skinner and James Harvey partnership in organising Biological Anthropology days, and the work of Gillian

Evans and Madeleine Reeves in setting up the Manchester Anthropology days. For more details, see Ford (this issue).

[vii] In October 2016, the redevelopment of the Archaeology, Art History and Classical Civilisation A-levels was also discontinued by AQA.