



Baker, K., Tomlinson, M., Smithers, A., Schwartz, R. B., Halls, A., Brandon-Davo, D., Harbourne, D., & Watt, N. (2013). *14-18: A new vision for secondary education*. New York, NY: Bloomsbury Academic.

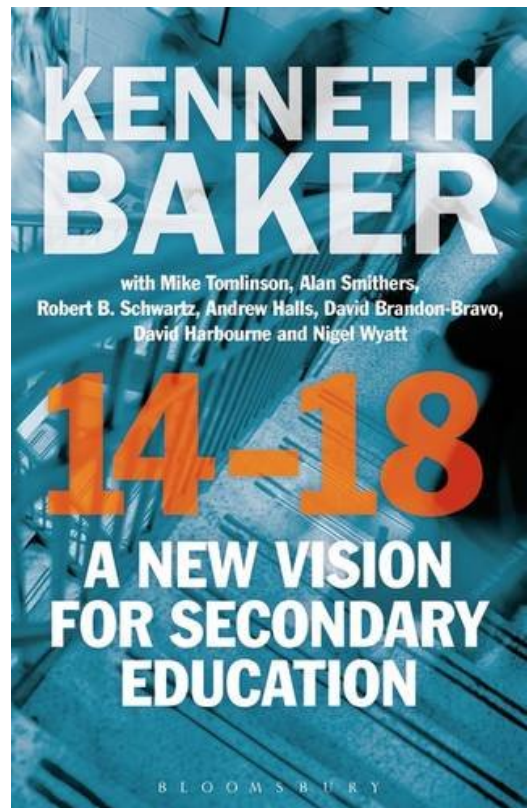
Pp xvi +168

ISBN: 978-1-7809-3844-8

Reviewed by Alan Ruby
United States

Kenneth Baker was education secretary in the Thatcher government. He was a contemporary of Bill Bennett and Lauro Cavazos in President Reagan's administration. Baker is credited with introducing a national curriculum and school choice to England, features that by and large endure. Lord Baker of Dorking is now advocating some further structural changes in the education system as compulsory schooling extends to age 18 this year. This bi-partisan policy advanced initially by the Labor government has been fully implemented by the Conservative led coalition government.

Baker and colleagues propose a change in the structure of schooling by creating middle schools to make a three-tier system with primary, middle and secondary schools. Students in the four years of secondary education – ages 14 to 18 – would have a choice of four pathways: liberal arts or academic pathway, a technical pathway, a sport and creative arts pathway and an apprenticeship pathway akin to the Germanic dual system. The array of qualifications would also change with the introduction of a graduation



certificate to summarize an individual's achievements. The school day would also increase in the final four years to eight hours and the school year would increase by two weeks to around 200 days. There was a fulsome and slightly disrespectful interview in the U.K. issue of the Guardian soon after the book was released (Aitkenhead, 2013).

It is a slim volume, 159 pages of text, references, glossary, and appendices from eight authors. Baker contributes the first 41 pages and seven others contribute chapters and appendices. It is also a slight volume. Baker cites three pieces of research (pages 12 -14), one of which is published by the foundation Baker chairs and one is an essay on different forms of intelligence. The third piece is a small study of changes in teenagers' verbal and non-verbal IQ and changes in brain structure published in "Nature." There is more substantial data in the chapter by Bob Scwhartz, which gives an American perspective on the value of pathways and draws on work with his Harvard colleague Ron Ferguson and outputs from Georgetown's Center on Education and the Workforce, USA.

There is a good survey of practices in other countries by Alan Smithers from the University of Buckingham who concludes that Baker's proposal to treat education of 14-18 years olds "as an integral phase" has three basic advantages. It enhances people's lives, connects them with employment opportunities and gives "shape to an inchoate education system" (p. 65). The third proposition is the most pertinent. Since the introduction of the national curriculum 25 years ago, English schools have "enjoyed" a plethora of reforms and refinements in policy, programs and assessment and credentialing opportunities. Most of them have been additions to the existing framework of assessment so that as Tomlinson, a respected commentator on educational credentials, observes in this volume that there was "not a coherent system of qualifications" (p. 48) that acted as milestones for students as they progressed to employment or further study. Parents, teachers and employers

struggle to comprehend the “multiple initiatives and reforms” (p. 48).

Combined, the essays expose readers from other nations to a distinctive approach to aligning a national school system to a rapidly changing economy. But the notion of extending the compulsory years of education sits uneasily with notions of choice and individual responsibility. The differentiation of pathways in secondary schools has usually been seen in the USA as code for “tracking”, limited opportunities for social and economic mobility and a planned economy. Yet as Schwartz points out “career pathways” are effective elements of educational provision in Finland and Germany and elsewhere.

There is little reference in the essays to costs of either the creation of a common entitlement to more secondary schooling or to the infrastructure costs of creating four pathways other than an acknowledgment that “transforming the school estate...will not be easy” (p. 24). This omission and the skimpy research base make Lord Baker’s essays interesting but less than useful.

References

Aitkenhead, D. (2013, January 20). Kenneth Baker: 'People told me to abandon Thatcher but I stood by her'. *The Guardian*.
<http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2013/jan/20/kenneth-baker-abandon-margaret-thatcher-stood-by-her>

About the Reviewer

Alan Ruby
Senior Fellow, Alliance for Higher Education and Democracy

alanruby@gse.upenn.edu


Alan Ruby is a senior fellow at the Alliance for Higher Education and Democracy in the Graduate School of Education, university of Pennsylvania. He was Deputy Secretary with responsibility for education in the Australian Government in the 1990’s, served a chair of the OECD’s Education Committee and led the human development team

for East Asia at the World Bank. He has written on numerous aspects of education policy and reform including public policy choices in educating young people for tomorrow's economy in Laura Perna's edited volume *Preparing Today's Students for Tomorrow's Jobs in Metropolitan America*.

**education review // reseñas educativas**

a multi-lingual journal of book reviews

editors: **gustavo e. fischman /
melissa cast-brede / gene v glass****Supported by the Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College, Arizona State University**

 *Education Review/Reseñas Educativas/Resenhas Educativas* is supported by the edXchange initiative's Scholarly Communications Group at the Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College, Arizona State University. Copyright is retained by the first or sole author, who grants right of first publication to the *Education Review*. Readers are free to copy, display, and distribute this article, as long as the work is attributed to the author(s) and ***Education Review***, it is distributed for non-commercial purposes only, and no alteration or transformation is made in the work. More details of this Creative Commons license are available at <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/>. All other uses must be approved by the author(s) or ***Education Review***. ***Education Review*** is published by the Scholarly Communications Group of the Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College, Arizona State University.

Please contribute reviews at <http://www.edrev.info/contribute.html>.

Connect with *Education Review* on Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Education-Review/178358222192644>) and on Twitter @EducReview