



Evolving schooling structures: the contribution of small-scale studies

Report of a meeting of the BELMAS Structural Reform RIG held on 7th June 2018

A meeting of the Structural Reform RIG was held in Birmingham on 7th June after being postponed from 1st March because of the arrival of the 'beast from the east'. The purposes of the meeting were to explore the contribution of small scale studies to our understanding of the continued evolution of the structure of the school system in England in response to Government policy and to enable those engaged in such studies to share their work. Twenty-three people attended from a variety of professional backgrounds, including a number of postgraduate and research students. The presentations of student work were particularly to be welcomed. Multi-academy trusts are now clearly the direction of travel, but other groupings such as teaching school alliances remain significant and many schools, especially in the primary sector, continue to resist academisation. Alongside these school-level developments the roles of Regional School Commissioners, local authorities and other actors continue to evolve. This changing landscape is a fertile field for research and the 10 studies presented provided a range of valuable perspectives. Their foci fell into four groups which indicate some of the key areas of interest of researchers. Three presentations focussed on the ways in which school-to-support structures and processes are emerging locally in the 'self-improving' system; three focussed on leadership roles and relationships, especially in multi-academy trusts; two explored factors affecting the dynamics through which new schooling landscapes are emerging at local level as schools decide how best to locate themselves; and two explored the impact of academisation and the creation of MATs on their staff. The presentations were followed by small group discussions to enable the reported findings to be interrogated and links between the studies made. The presentations will be made available on this website shortly.