



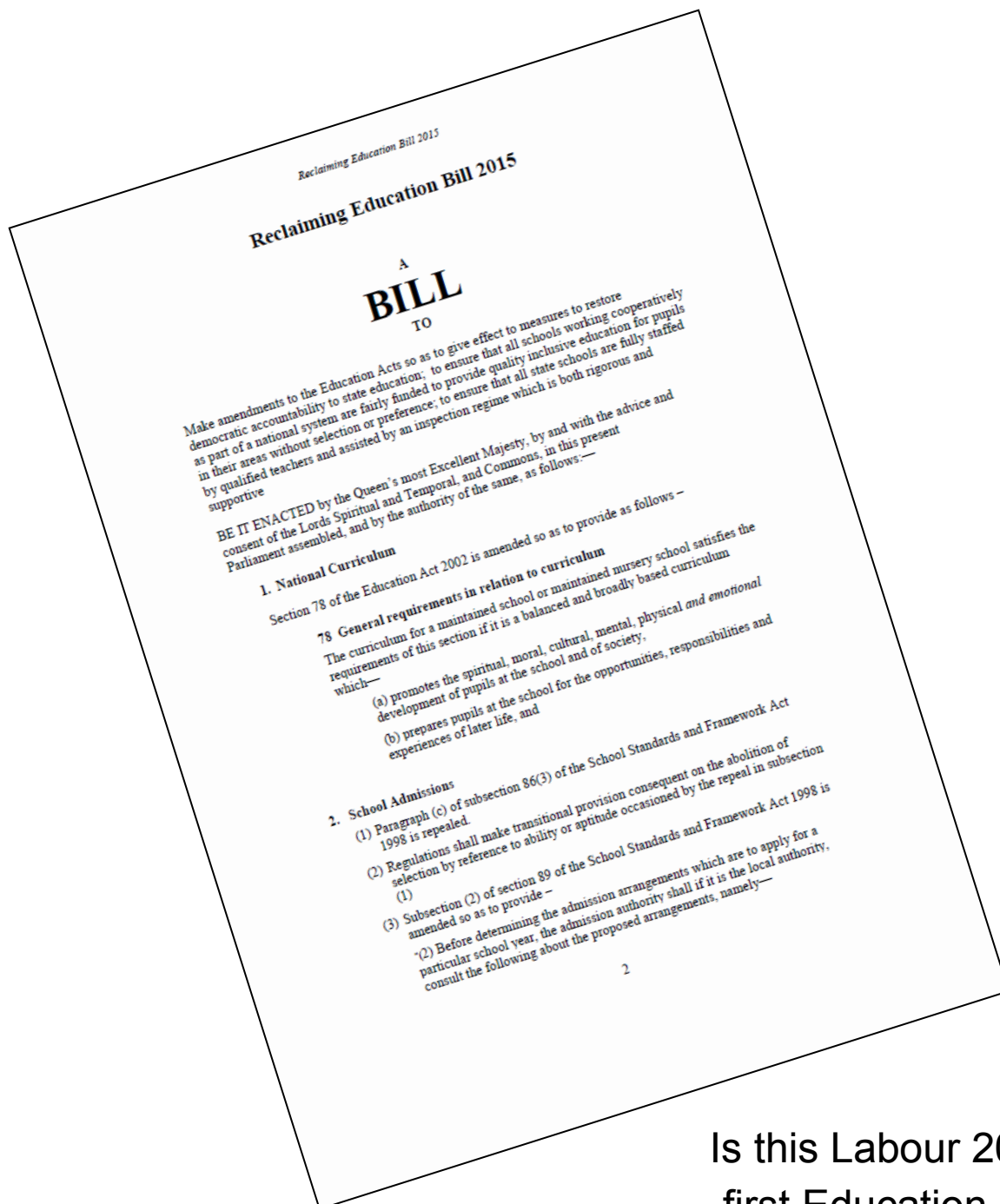
Education Politics

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Is this Labour 2015's
first Education Act?

see page 16

Editorial

If Cameron wins today, will the last person to leave Britain please turn out the lights. It was a joke when the Sun possibly turned the 1992 election. On the 8th May it will be no joke if Ed Milliband is unable to form a government. Those of us who believe in a more equal, more compassionate, more caring society will be deeply depressed, and many will be thinking of seeking to live somewhere where we do not have to feel daily shame for our government. And millions more, without the luxury of mobility, will be anticipating public and private misery on a scale not experienced in Britain for the best part of a century. A quarter of a century ago, Conservative governments were associated with private affluence and public squalor, but now the private does not look as good in a stagnating economy. Another Cameron government, or perhaps more accurately an Osborne government, will intensify the class war it has been waging for the past five years with a slight drag from its Coalition partner. Osborne's explicit ambition for historically low public spending amounts to a declaration of that war.

What has this to do with the politics of education? Everything. The collapse of the public realm which will result from Osborne's spending plans will not only create an uglier, meaner society for all; it will make learners' lives more difficult and teaching more challenging. On pages 10-11, a group of academics argue that equality is a key principle for a modern education system.

And what future for the education service? It is a scandal in itself that so little notice has been taken of the decision to cut FE funding for post-19s by 25 per cent for next year, except for apprenticeships. 'Second chance' routes for adults are being cut off. For a more academic review of the government's record, see pages 14-15.

The under fives will also suffer from another Tory government. And what kind of school system would we have in five years time? It is a tribute to the public service ethos of most of our school leaders that despite the destruction of local authority capacity and the brutality of current accountability mechanisms they have continued to seek to work together for the good of the whole locality, but the continued privatisation and fragmentation of the school system would place even more strain on such values. See pages 8-9 for another idea about how to resolve this.

Most damaging of all would be the crackpot whims of Tory education ministers about what should be taught in our schools and how it should be assessed. England's youngsters are to be subject to a ruling class curriculum which was out of date

when our present ministers were apparently enjoying it. The whole world is moving on. Those far eastern countries with super PISA scores have recognised that they are not producing young people with the flexibility and creativity needed in the modern world – and this raises questions about their rigid societies. Many countries review their national curricula starting from first principles, and involve lengthy public debate and development of a national consensus on what youngsters need to learn. England is now the odd one out within Britain, with the forward thinking of Professor Graham Donaldson being transferred from Scotland to Wales (see pages 12-13). Within Wales, its government must resist the temptation to make its 'great debate' a relatively truncated exercise, and should seek to make the debate truly national. It should be building support for a curriculum outline to last half a century.

Is Labour's education policy everything that might be desired by the left? Certainly not. Is it better than the only possible alternative? No contest. Little of this will be unfamiliar or unpopular for readers of *Education Politics*. Millions of people in England share an aspiration for a fairer system of schools and a more appropriate curriculum. And they want to be confident that the children in their families will benefit from good teaching. The only possible conclusion these millions can come to is that they must do what they can to rid the country of the Etonian clique running it. In an uncertain election scenario one thing is certain. Either David Cameron or Ed Milliband will be the Prime Minister when the dust settles. That choice is not popular with everyone on the left, but no-one can deny that it is the choice.

But what do we find? As usual, there are plenty of candidates to the left of Labour to choose from, including in constituencies which are marginal for Labour. TUSC and their like could well be responsible for another five years of the Tory hammer. Some of these candidates may be highly principled – their principles are so large they obscure any view of political reality. The only possible solution to this threat is the old-fashioned one. Do not let the best be the enemy of the good. Few readers will live inconveniently far from a Labour marginal. It is up to everyone who wants better education policies over the next five years to get out on the doorsteps for the next seven weeks.

We started and end with Neil Kinnock: on 7th June 1983 he said, 'If Margaret Thatcher is re-elected as prime minister on Thursday, I warn you... I warn you not to be ordinary; I warn you not to be young; I warn you not to fall ill; I warn you not to get old.' You ain't seen nuffin yet.

My hopes for education from the next Labour government

Education Politics invited people from a variety of interests to tell us what they hoped for from the next Labour government. Prominent amongst them are a number of Prospective Parliamentary Candidates - people who are working flat out, day in, day out, seeking supporters to knock on doors in all weathers, making those personal contacts which convert various voting intentions into Labour votes in the ballot box. All of the candidates featured here are from Labour's 106 target seats, and particularly deserve our support. Leaders of education unions and local government also have their say.

The local government leader



Labour's three priorities in 1997 were famously 'education, education, education'. They should remain at the forefront for the next Labour Government. The Tory-led Government has centralised decision-making and oversight over academies at the DfE while maintained schools' funding is squeezed under pressure to convert. A two-tier system has emerged which is creating fracture locally, with accountability weakened and schools encouraged to operate in isolation from each other rather than cooperate.

The answer is not 'structures, structures, structures'; but too often the debate gets stuck on this point. Though it has been the entire premise of this Government's education reforms, the cross-party Education Select Committee has concluded that there is no evidence academies have raised standards. On secondary school performance measures, academies do no better than maintained schools (they perform worse for primary schools). Analysis by NFER for the LGA found that pupils in converter academies progress at the same rate as pupils in similar maintained schools.

Labour should not allow itself to accept the Tories' anti-state narrative as its starting point for reform. Councils have not "controlled" schools for decades and they do not seek to now. Caricaturing the need to separate councils' "commissioner and provider" roles as the premise for setting up a new structure outside of the council to provide oversight is not helpful. Creating a new "middle tier" will further

undermine the school improvement work local authorities are still carrying out against the odds. It will create a parallel new structure that itself is unaccountable and lacking in transparency when these are the very elements we need to strengthen in our education system.

Labour needs to decide whether or not it really believes in devolution and localism with local government sitting at the heart of it. While we have seen some very encouraging signs it is evident that the proposals so far leave many unanswered questions.

State-funded schools are public institutions for good, not private operations for profit, and need to be held robustly to account as such. Failure and weakness need to be overcome wherever they emerge, in any type of school or institution and at any level. To ensure this can happen effectively the next Labour Government needs to ensure a system of strong, local accountability led by local government as democratic institutions with a mandate to improve outcomes for all children. Their role would respect the operational autonomy of all schools but ensure school improvement partnerships and a wider system of school-to-school and local support networks are in place. These would need to be effective at preventing, identifying and intervening in problems, and working proactively to foster healthy, collaborative local schools systems that can drive constant improvement.

My challenge is this: if the answer is further fragmentation, less direct accountability and spreading limited resources even thinner, then you've got to wonder what the exam question was.

Choice is great and any decent education system should welcome innovation. But let's also be clear that parents and communities have the right to expect that their local school performs well and that those who are elected to represent their interests - councillors - are empowered and given the resources to get on with the job.

Then we can really focus on what matters most for our children and their future: quality, quality, quality.

Cllr Jim McMahon is Leader of the LGA Labour Group

The Prospective Parliamentary Candidates

There is a major problem with education currently and Labour must address it. Put simply, the Coalition has shown a lack of drive or know how to address social and economic inequality through the education system. Poorer families are slipping behind. This inequality can be seen in three areas: early prevention, the lack of reform to vocational learning routes and the tripling of tuition fees, which has been expensive to the state in the long term and has been a burden to many families in the medium term.

The cuts to **Sure Start and early intervention** by this government have shown their lack of understanding of the power, which a universal, easily accessible early years approach, can have in providing all children with a good start in life. From pregnancy, through to age five, Sure Start and other high quality interventions at neighbourhood level have brought the importance of early years learning and education to the fore. Cutting back on these crucial programmes is short sighted and shows a fundamental misunderstanding of the crucial pre-school development which can mean a child is ready to learn or months behind others in the first year of formal schooling.

It is well documented in the Wolf and Tomlinson reports that our system is still not producing highly skilled individuals, who do not go on to university or

who wish to work and study at the same time. Once again the significant reductions to the higher education sector and the mass lay off of experienced staff in colleges has set us back. Labour must redress this imbalance and work quickly to develop the German style **technical education** approach which many, particularly workplaces, recognise to be missing.



University fees have tripled since 2010 and recent research has shown that many graduates will never earn enough to pay back the debt which has been incurred as a result. According to the Bank of England, The UK has the fourth highest level of personal debt in the OECD. It is much simpler for the government to pay the fees up front and help young people and their families when they need it-at the time of enrolment. That investment can then be clawed back as the economy improves and provides better paying employment and more income tax

take over the long term.

What is the Labour movement for if it is not to improve the life chances of all our children not just a privileged few?

Catherine West is the PPC for Hornsey and Wood Green

Rob Marris

Education has been treated as a political football by the Coalition government. Alas, to undo the damage done in the last 5 years, an incoming Labour government will have to make yet more major changes. Below, in no particular order, are some changes which I would like to see.

Schools

Ofsted: there must be accountability for the huge sums rightly spent on education. It is too late to change Ofsted's ingrained culture. So it must be abolished, to be replaced by something like the former system of LEA inspectors. They developed constructive, long-term relationship with schools in their area. Because of schools' devolved budgets, the new Inspectors would access accounting expertise from their LEA's Finance Department.

"Free Schools": happily, abolition is official Labour Party policy. The failed one in

Wolverhampton South West cost £1.8 million for 20 primary pupils.

Academies: as many of us predicted, all too often there are wrong-doings, in finance, pedagogy, admissions, and conflict-of-interest. It is time to bring academies back into the LEA family of schools, for better accountability.

Admissions: for fair admissions, state schools must all be within the LEA family.

LEAs: in each education area (urban or county), LEA representatives should be elected separately from councillors; as is the case with School Boards in some jurisdictions in North America.

Pay & Conditions: the national scheme for teachers' should be restored. The fragmentation encouraged by the current government is wasteful and unfair.

QTS-only: school classes should only routinely be taught by qualified teachers, not by solo TAs.

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the next Labour government

Our education system is increasingly unfair, flawed and fragmented. For too long politicians have failed to address the need to bring essential stability to the sector, or to support properly qualified and experienced teachers in their struggle to provide a good, accessible, rounded education for all our children.

David Cameron's latest election gimmick – threatening thousands of schools he considers to be 'coasting' with new leadership – is just another attempt to damage staff morale and undermine public confidence in the sector. The emergence of unqualified teachers in free schools and some academies was an insult to professional, trained teachers. Once upon a time the private education sector was awash with unqualified teachers. It now promotes a proper academic skills-based background for its staff. So why in the state sector – and particularly in some of the most challenged schools in the most deprived areas – is it suddenly acceptable not to have a teaching qualification or experience record?

Children are individuals. They learn in different ways, at different rates, and often elect to learn different things. We should be enabling – and celebrating – these differences.

My hope is that the next Labour government will address these wrongs and start by giving the education profession a breathing space, to more accurately assess what does or doesn't work and to develop evidence-based policy, not knee-jerk

responses. Consultations with education providers and parents must be meaningful. We must have no more forced academisation of schools at the whim of Whitehall and against the wishes of local people. There is a moral seam of indignation amongst school staff who see taxpayers' money bypassing the schools it is meant for to line the pockets of consultants and incompetent Trusts, such as Prospects Academies Trust which recently pulled out of education in Gloucester and folded.



Every teacher should be a qualified teacher. Infant school class sizes should be capped – and we can pay for this by stopping the free schools gravy train in its tracks. I would like to see a much more rounded approach to educating our children and young people – including compulsory relationship education – and a properly developed, quality careers advisory programme for every secondary school. And as an enthusiastic

advocate for a high-tech, skills-based future for Gloucester, I am particularly keen that vocational qualifications should receive due recognition and not be downplayed. Why remove vocational qualifications from the government's league tables, for example, when so many children choose to take them, and society will benefit from their practical skills development?

Sophy Gardner is the PPC for Gloucester



FE and Sixth Form Colleges

Equal funding: for FE students studying for NVQ Levels 2 or 3, the funding should be equivalent to that paid for such students in secondary schools.

EMAs: one of the great gains of the last government was abolished by this one. EMAs should be restored.

Universities

Fees: £3,000 "top-up fees" were unfair and, as I predicted, hardly raised university incomes. £9,000 fees are worse. It's time for a Graduate Tax.

Rob Marris is the PPC for Wolverhampton SW

My hopes for education from

The education trades unionists

The NUT Stand Up For Education [manifesto](#) is striking a chord with teachers, parents and the wider public. It is gaining recognition because of academic and celebrity endorsements from such luminaries as Tim Brighouse, Julia Donaldson and Mark Rylance and because thousands of NUT members have helped to discuss it on street stalls or lobbies of MPs.

A new government must act on questions of child poverty and inequality. This isn't a 'schools' policy but is vital to any meaningful strategy for reducing the education attainment gap. It must also reverse the decline in priority for arts subjects and ensure high-quality vocational options that older students can take alongside academic subjects. The best way to achieve this is to return to Mike Tomlinson's proposals for an overarching certification.

An incoming government should take urgent steps to cement real democracy into the school system - and to do that in such a way as insulates it from the vagaries of party political vandalism such as we have seen during the last five years. We could do with a curriculum council with teacher and parent (and even business) representation - and rights for parents, teachers, and local authority nominated governors to sit on all school governing bodies.

The eroding middle tier urgently needs to be rebuilt - to hold the ring on school admissions, open new schools where needed, and to provide services and support to schools. The failure of the Durham free school confirms this cannot be done from Whitehall. In the NUT we haven't given up on local authorities as the route to do this. But these local authorities should genuinely engage parents, head teachers and other school staff. Rejuvenated authorities should collaborate over area initiatives like the London challenge which the coalition closed. We wouldn't want Directors of School Standards to be mini Michael Wilshaws - instead Tim Brighouse should be the model.

For teachers the most pressing concern is an urgent reform of accountability and Ofsted. The increasing problems from the number of teachers and heads leaving their posts and the reduction in the number of applicants for teacher training can be traced back to this. A poor accountability system and a discourse based on teacher and headteacher failure instead of support is leading to stress and

massive overwork.

The NUT's survey in September saw 16,000 returns over a weekend. The individual comments we received were heart rending. Take these examples:

- I have been teaching for nearly 40 years and it has never been this bad before!

- I have 3 young boys who I barely spend time with anymore. Just writing that sentence upset me deeply.

-Data! Data! Data! No one is interested in teachers and pupils anymore, just numbers on a piece of paper!

The demands of accountability have reached absurd levels; not only time consuming but undermining of teachers as professionals.

Teachers speak of having to take photographs of practical maths sessions to prove they were undertaken, of having to record all oral feedback given to students so school can prove to Ofsted that teachers do give oral feedback. This is a system with a profound lack of trust in teachers.

This accountability does not lead to exciting lessons for our children but to a demoralised and exhausted work force. The exact opposite any parent, pupil or society would want from their educators.

If we want to avoid a huge teacher shortage there must be urgent change: these two steps really are a minimum:

Firstly, accountability must be reformed so it is based on trust, respectful professional dialogue and proportionality. High performing jurisdictions give teachers 'agency, moral purpose and autonomy', and have accountability systems based on trust.

Secondly, the introduction of performance related pay has also led to a significant increase in the demands for evidence, a reduction in trust and even further increase in working hours. A return to the national pay scale would save time and restore a level of fairness and openness that does not exist under PRP.



Kevin Courtney is the Deputy General Secretary of the National Union of Teachers

the next Labour government

Governments across the UK need to encourage integrated, comprehensive, community-facing education systems responsive to individual and societal needs. All learning environments up to 18 and youth transitions should be treated as one piece and there is a good argument for them to sit under the same ministerial roof.

A period of stability with a moratorium on tweaking curricula, qualifications and systems would be welcome. Vocational pathways in particular have been chopped and changed with the swing of politics. Young people need access to general education, core vocational content, optional elements and employer engagement to achieve learning outcomes that translate to life-chances. They need support from a proper independent national careers service and via financial support, much needed since the abolition of the EMA. Beyond transition, all-age learners whether they are late to learning or retraining need government and employer support.



Academies and college corporations were introduced to 'provide independence', but government agencies directly hold the purse-strings and have politicised inspections. The system in England in particular has been fractured and should be re-built around co-operation, with an increased role for local authorities and communities. To deal with growing conflicts of interest and inflated pay at the top there is a need to reassert the Nolan principles of standards in public life: selflessness,

integrity, objectivity, accountability; openness, honesty and leadership and public sector equality duties should be reinvigorated.

The revolving door of funding agencies and policy change has led to incoherent and unfair distribution, with selective ring-fencing of funds. There needs to be a comprehensive rethink on how we match resource to need across the UK.

Staff should be valued, adequately trained and rewarded, as they are the key to success. The national school support staff negotiating body for England should be re-instated; we welcome the fact that the Labour Party has promised to do this if elected. Similar bodies should set up in the devolved nations and there should be improved collective arrangements for staff in other education sectors.

Education staff should have job security with an end to poor employment practice such as zero-hour contracts and involuntary term-time only pay. Support for continuous professional development for all staff should be an entitlement and the danger of excessive workloads should be understood. The TUPE regulations need to be amended as we now deal daily with botched attempts to outsource staff, notably academies trying to get out of their pension obligations.

UNISON believes that a new government's attitude to education and its workforce will reveal how much it cares about the future. Learning is the engine of personal and collective success, with the potential to deliver better social cohesion and justice.

Jon Richards is Head of Education & Children's Services for UNISON

Joint education boards - seventy years on, has their time come?

Graham Clayton

5th June 2010 was a momentous day for education in England and Wales, though almost everyone involved in education believed that the change which took place on that day had actually occurred four years earlier. They had long since accepted the change in their conversation and discussion. It was the day on which a statutory order came into effect legally turning local education authorities into simply 'local authorities'.

The purpose of the order was blandly described as 'to provide greater clarity by bringing the terminology used in primary legislation into line with current practice and policy'. By 2010 that was true but much had happened in the meantime to erode a structure first created in 1902 and consolidated in the Education Act 1944 under which the public education system in England and Wales was administered for 44 years.

There are those who now advocate a restoration of local authority administration of education, but in fact they look to a past that never really existed. The local authorities which were identified also as local **education** authorities were required to establish statutory education committees normally to include non-councillor co-optees. The authority was legally obliged to appoint a chief education officer, and except in emergency, the council could not act in an education matter without first receiving a report from its education committee. The administration of education was in fact not the responsibility of local authorities as such but rather that of the education committees with their own chief officers - education specific local authorities with indirect democratic accountability and education focused staff expertise.

Then in 1988 everything changed. The Education Reform Act 1988 gave statutory force to the school autonomy experiments which had been in operation for a few years prior to the Act and rolled out 'local management of schools' as a national structure, giving individual school authorities much more control of their own affairs but accompanied by a nationally overseen quality control system. Over the ensuing 22 years, the role of local education authorities was gradually reduced by further legislation almost every year until in 2010 it was statutorily confirmed to be no more than just another function of local authorities which had otherwise generally lost much of their former status and power.

Educationally, individual school autonomy is generally considered a success by those who run schools directly. Most school leaders now in post know no other way, and few who do remember local education authority administration would wish to return to it. However, their preference, and that of many leading educationalists, for individual school autonomy has rather tended to obscure the fact that as conceived by the legislators of 1988, many aspects of local management of schools are just plain daft.

Legally, employment relationships are a mess and this is not an obscure observation of a pedantic lawyer. The need to 'deal with' allegedly incompetent teachers is an often repeated refrain of politicians, journalists and other commentators who suggest ever more draconian and expensive means of tackling a much exaggerated problem. They seem to ignore the fact that for almost everyone else this is a relatively straightforward employment issue. For teachers there are no clear employment relationships so that in many cases no-one has sufficient confidence in their own authority to act.



For very good reasons it is a convention of legislation that individuals, particularly employed individuals, are rarely burdened with statutory duties. In general these are placed on 'bodies' which have their own legal identity created by an act of Parliament. We have ended up, as a result, with a situation in which our maintained schools are supposedly managed by groups of volunteers who meet together a few times each term, often on dark evenings after work with the responsibility of discharging duties of volume and complexity that clearly require the full time attention of trained experts.

Of course the reality is that almost all this work is done by school leaders and other teachers. The law is a fiction. Meanwhile teachers complain constantly of bureaucratic overload, and one in ten school governor posts is left unfilled.

It is quite remarkable that despite almost 30 years of trying since 1988, no government yet seems to have got it right, certainly not in the opinion of their opponents, and it seems not in the opinion of many of their own supporters in the press and amongst the electorate. The big issue is of course 'standards'. Local management for all its virtues, and there are many, was never going to be able to achieve and maintain raised standards of performance and output. Alongside the empowerment of individual school authorities came a highly centralised, sometimes aggressively punitive, system of quality control. The recently hustled out Secretary of State Michael Gove took to extremes the practice introduced by his Labour predecessors of settling the rules for school management not by the democratic process of legislation approved by Parliament but by contracts between two parties of which he himself was the more dominant.

It is clear in all this that something is missing and has been missing for a long time. We can look back to the wisdom of R.A. Butler and James Chuter Ede, politicians of different parties who achieved consensus as architects of the 1944 Education Act, to find out what it is. It's the absence of strategic management.

This is no plea for a return to a past viewed through rose coloured glass. The 1944 Education Act was out of date long before 1988. A return to reliance on local authorities to deliver together the national education service we need would not work. In the words of a Labour politician who has spent a lifetime championing local government in education, they are not now 'fit for purpose'. It's the role they played that matters, and it is something that was understood by Butler and Ede.

There must be authorities, created by laws approved by Parliament, with democratic legitimacy and accountability positioned between local communities and national government. They must be education specific and they must have the power and status to work together to ensure the delivery of a national education service which on the one hand gives satisfaction to the hope and

aspirations of young people nurturing and developing their skills and talents and on the other turns out contributors to our national life, culture and economic well being. We have made the serious mistake of combining autonomy in the management and the professional practice of education which is properly the concern of trained professionals with strategic management of the service as a whole. We need to realise how these things are quite distinct and separate, and restore strategic management. It is good sense.

Hidden within the Education Act 1944 is a scheme envisaged by the legislators but only once implemented. The 1944 Act allowed the created of 'Joint Education Boards'. With the agreement of the local councils affected, the Secretary of State for Education could create joint boards consisting of members appointed by those councils, and the board would then become the local education authority for the areas of those councils. There is the model for a 21st century education structure. Regional Education Boards like this can rescue education from squabbling national politicians. They can respond to the many stakeholders in education. They can enfranchise and liberate the professionalism of teachers and give them the status that so many commentators say they should have but fail to provide.

What then of Labour's 'Directors of Schools Standards'? The title too narrowly defines the role. But, that apart, the proposal could be well matched with the idea of Regional Education Boards. Someone has to appoint and employ these 'Directors'. To have them as office holders appointed by central government would do nothing to improve democratic accountability in education. It would not satisfy the growing clamour for a greater sense of participation in decision making. So let the Directors, by this or any other name, be in effect the chief education officers of the Regional Education Boards, not interfering in the running of individual establishments but working for the Boards to restore coherence and strategy to the national education system. It's an old wisdom for a new future.

Graham Clayton is an education law specialist and member of the New Visions for Education Group

The Fair and Equal Education manifesto

Ruth Boyask

On the 10th March 2015 the British Educational Research Association (BERA) launched the Fair and Equal Education manifesto. This is the culmination of the work of its Respecting Children and Young People project. Since September 2013 members from six special interest groups (SIGs) have been drawing together educational research that helps to address the challenges of global change and widening social inequalities that diminish the lives of many children and young people. The six SIGs involved represent hundreds of educational researchers and supporters who share a commitment to using the extensive evidence-base on educational inequalities to inform public debate and include in discussions on education policy.



We have come together because, like many other voices at the present time, we are concerned. We are concerned about the growing wealth inequalities in society, recognised by everyone from the Church of England to the World Economic Forum. We are concerned about the discord between different cultural communities, illuminated by the intense spotlight of transnational conflicts and movements of mistrust. We are concerned about inequalities in identity politics where despite the gains made by social movements like feminism, the labour movement and disability rights, able-bodied, affluent white men continue to dominate positions of privilege.

Most of all, we are concerned that children and young people bear the brunt of many of these inequalities. For the last 40 years educational research has been documenting some of these inequalities, recognising that while education has the potential for social transformation, research has shown it oftentimes reproduces and entrenches inequalities.

The purpose of this project was to step aside from the systematic documentation of inequality, and instead draw upon our research to help inject a

discourse of hope into discussions on education policy. The manifesto we have developed makes recommendations about how the government, educators and the wider public can work towards a more equal society.

We recognise there may be similarities between our document and other recent [manifestos](#) and [report cards](#). Our project is not intended to supplant these initiatives, but to add new dimensions to these and other discussions on education, equality and social justice. We think given the evident problems of our increasingly unequal world, it is essential to now reinsert the word equality back into discussions about the futures of children and young people, and recognise that we need to do more than offer ladders for social mobility to a few.

A distinctive feature of our project is our commitment to developing a document that has a robust evidence-base, but in the spirit of participation and equality that we wish to promote is not limited to a [narrowly defined notion of evidence](#). We have developed policy advice from robust empirical research as well as rigorous and critical theory to approach from multiple perspectives the challenges of overcoming inequality.

In our manifesto we highlight four guiding principles underpinned by a number of possible actions, and recommend future Governments develop policies which promote:

Four immediate steps towards fair and equal education

01

Fair and relevant curriculum and attainment that leads to meaningful opportunities, like employment and further study;

02

High quality, research-informed professionals to work with children and young people;

03

Education that recognises and appropriately responds to the differences that make substantive differences in children and young people's lives; and

04

Education that is developed and evaluated fairly and rigorously, and is accountable to children, young people, their families and the communities in which they live.

Each principle is developed into a number of statements. For example, within principle 01 the manifesto asks for policy which 'takes a longer term and broader view on what success means so that children and young people are valued for their effort as well as their long-term achievements within and outside formal education.'

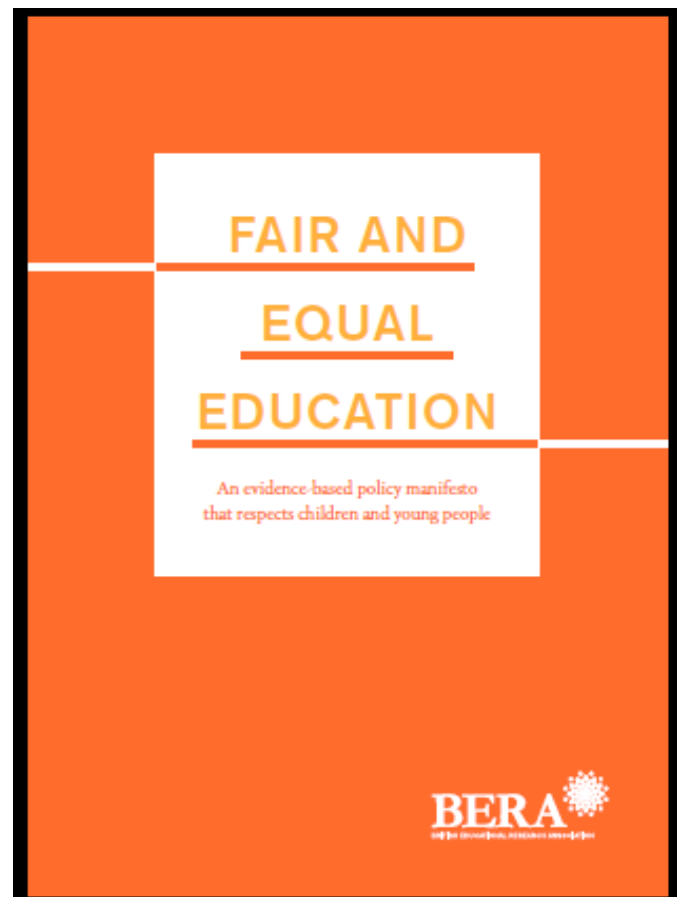
We think given the evident problems of our increasingly unequal world, it is essential to now reinsert the word equality back into discussions about the futures of children and young people, and recognise that we need to do more than offer ladders for social mobility to a few.

Within principle 02 we seek 'professional education for pre-service and in-service teachers that makes them aware of the hidden ways in which inequalities of 'race', ethnicity, gender, class and fixed ideas about ability play out in the classroom and affect the outcomes of children's learning.'

Principle 04 calls for policy which 'is informed by research reflecting a broad view of what counts as evidence, where evidence includes knowledge formed from different types of research and practice and is used as a base to inform and guide more effective, fairer and ethical policy decisions for children and young people.'

The participation in this project and support from varied members of the six BERA SIGs and other enthusiasts, who have many different interests and agendas, has been astounding. The public face of the project has been our very active blog, where you can now read 56 blogs posted since June 2014, which have directly contributed to the development of our manifesto. This blog has also attracted thousands and thousands of viewers from around the world.

Behind the scenes the six SIGs have held multiple meetings of BERA members and guests, including a joint SIGs event hosted by Staffordshire University. We have had guidance and advice from our critical friends Professor Becky Francis, Kings College London and Dr Carol Robinson, University of Brighton and BERA council members (with especial help from President Ian Menter and Vice President Gemma Moss). The BERA office has supported us enthusiastically with publicity and event management, and we have had astute policy writing advice from external consultant, Sharon Walker.



The editorial team has worked with SIG convenors to ensure SIG members have been consulted throughout the process. We think that through this process the document we present to you truly draws upon the best educational research to outline a clear and succinct vision for a fair and equal education that we think is imperative for a fair and equal society.

You can download a copy of the manifesto from from [our blog](#) and the [BERA website](#).

On behalf of the editorial team:

Social Justice:

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Race, Ethnicity and Education

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A National Curriculum for the 21st Century

Mike Newman

On 25th February the Welsh Government published the Donaldson report on the school curriculum in Wales. Graham Donaldson was Chief HMI in Scotland and thus free of the taint of Ofsted and the DfE. The report was based on a wide consultation, visiting 58 schools and receiving 713 responses (including one from SEA Cymru). It was broadly welcomed by the teacher unions in the following terms: 'extremely positive' (NUT), 'game changing' (NAHT), 'potential to make a profound and positive difference' (ASCL), 'very thought provoking' (ATL).

He proposes **four curriculum purposes**, something that the discredited national curriculum never did. Children should develop as:

- ambitious capable learners, ready to learn throughout their lives,
- enterprising and creative contributors ready to play a full part in life and work,
- ethical and informed citizens of Wales and the world,
- healthy confident individuals ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society.

These statements are elaborated into a coherent curriculum philosophy.

'It is about liberating a school from subjects and timetables and encouraging more connections across different areas of learning.'

Graham Donaldson

An advance is the abolition of national curriculum subjects, always controversial, with eternal arguments on what can't be left out. They are to be replaced by a return to the HMI **areas of learning and experience** in alphabetical order to underline their equal status, to be taught in an integrated way.

There will be choice available in the later secondary school years, but balance will be achieved by ensuring that the choices address all six areas of learning and experience.

Assessment

Among the Donaldson report's good points is the ending of Key Stages, always an artificial construct with national curriculum levels not commensurable between different key stages. Donaldson proposes their replacement by progression steps relating broadly to expectations at ages 5, 8, 11, 14 and 16. Assessment is to be proportionate and formative; teacher assessment is to be the main vehicle. Reliability will be achieved through moderation,

Areas of Learning

Expressive arts: encouraging creative appreciation, artistic and performance skills, personal and cultural identity (art, drama, music, dance, film and digital media).

Health and well-being: (PE, mental, physical and emotional wellbeing, sex and relationships, parenting, healthy eating and cooking, substance misuse, work related learning, teamwork and citizenship).

Humanities: (historical, geographical, political, economic, business & social studies, including ethical beliefs, religions and spirituality). Donaldson encourages local studies, links between the humanities and for the first time the integration of Religious Education in the broader humanities.

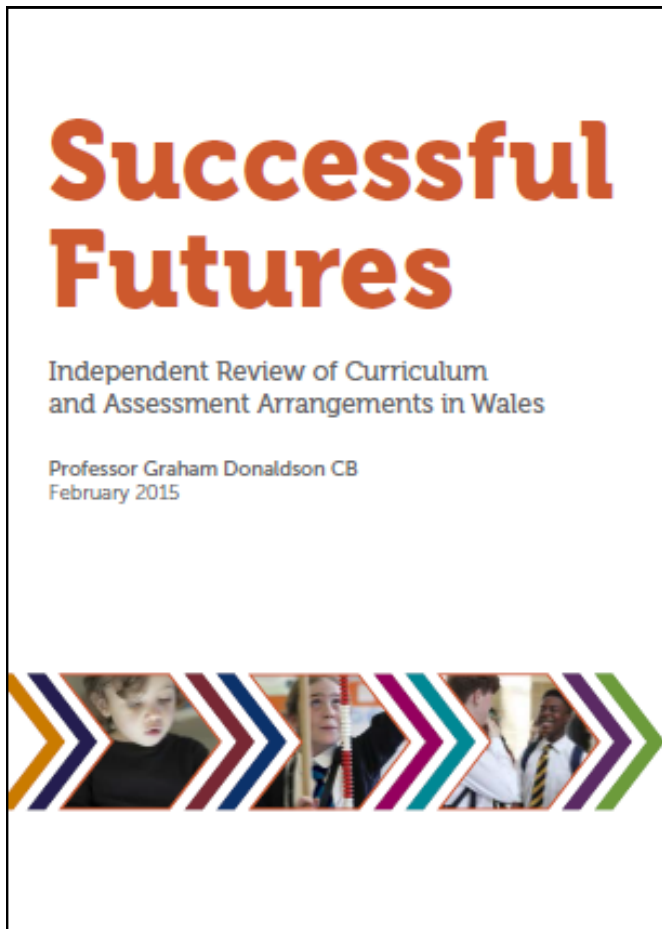
Languages, literacy and communication: Multiple language learning is to be encouraged. Welsh language teaching remains a priority and a good basis for future learning, with other languages introduced at least as early as year seven. The SEA agrees and supports the notion of Welsh medium schools acting as hubs to support learning in other schools.

Maths and Numeracy: Developing broader mathematical and numeracy and financial skills.

Science and Technology: Again there are huge advantages in linking the two areas. Practical skills will be encouraged and science studied in the light of its real world validation through technology. Computer science will be seen as a specific component within science and technology.

Three cross curricular responsibilities are literacy, numeracy and digital competence, and all teachers will be invited to consider how their teaching can promote these vital skills.

- but not in England



although when assessment is directed to the next learning steps on a pupil by pupil basis there will be less need to ensure reliability between schools. The Welsh Government should establish a comprehensive assessment and evaluation framework and ensure that reporting to parents includes self and peer assessment, face to face discussion with teachers and pupil portfolios of work and achievement.

There will be a need to ensure system capacity with the DES, regional consortia, Estyn, Qualifications Wales and universities all conscious of their roles and cooperating to fulfil them. Interestingly Donaldson in this section doesn't mention local education authorities. Possibly he knows something that the rest of us don't. He calls for legislation to cover a broad set of duties rather than a detailed prescription of content. This was one of SEA Cymru's points in the consultation that led to this report. Teachers must be free to use local history and environment to shade their curriculum content.

The minister described it as 'a compelling, exciting and ambitious vision' and will shortly launch a Great Debate on the curriculum to ensure that the people of Wales engage with the issues. The document, although long (120 pages) does not contain the prescribed list of content and targets that we were used to in the old national curriculum. Instead it invites teachers and educationalists to accept the philosophy and translate it into a living curriculum through specification of areas of experience and achievement outcomes across the five progression steps and each area of learning and experience, including the cross curricular themes.

Accountability

Inspections should examine how well a school embeds curriculum purposes in their day to day work. The school categorisation system, already improved by the ending of banding into quartiles, should be further adjusted to reflect the recommendations in the report. Splendidly, the Welsh Government will no longer gather information of performance on a school by school basis 'but should monitor performance in key aspects of the curriculum through annual testing on a sampling basis'. This, at a stroke, removes one of the major constraints on education under the present system and unhealthy approaches in many schools.

We must participate in this process to ensure that debate does not allow the strong points of the Donaldson report to be buried nor to be undermined by the accountability and inspection regimes. The new Welsh curriculum should adopt and use the philosophy of the Donaldson Report.

You can read the report at:

<http://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/schoolshome/curriculuminwales/curriculum-for-wales/?lang=en>

Mike Newman represents SEA Cymru

The Coalition's record on schools

The Coalition's Record on Schools: Policy, Spending and Outcomes 2010-2015 by Ruth Lupton and Stephanie Thomson was published in February by the Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion, based at the LSE. It is a contribution to the series *Social Policy in a Cold Climate*, which is a record of social policy in the context of austerity. Reports on the record of the previous government were published in 2013.

This report, which is at <http://sticerd.lse.ac.uk/dps/case/spcc/wp13.pdf>, is a must-have reference for anyone who cares about the facts around schools policy in England. It does not cover pre-school or post-16, for which there are other reports in the series. This is an academic report in which the facts are left to speak for themselves. If you want a record of the 2010 coalition agreement set against the manifesto commitments of the partners, it's here. There's a comprehensive account of all the reforms, funding including the effect of the pupil premium, the inputs in the forms of schools and staffing, and the outputs in terms of class sizes and school quality, as well as the attainment and wider outcomes for pupils.

The report examines inequalities of outcomes largely in terms of socio-economic strata. Other groupings covered by the Equalities Act are analysed in another report.

The Coalition's Record on Schools: Policy, Spending and Outcomes 2010-2015

The Conclusion in full

The Coalition's term in office from 2010 to date has been remarkable for the speed and scale of reform that has been enacted. In relation to its first objective, the government has certainly broken up the 'state monopoly' on schooling. The majority of secondary schools are now autonomous institutions outside the remit of the local authority, and there have been other radical reforms – of curriculum, assessment and accountability measures. Some elements of this policy programme [what might be described as its neoliberal elements] show some continuity with those of the previous government – most notably the emphasis on choice and diversity in school provision. However, the scale of these changes eclipses anything Labour enacted in the thirteen years previously. Other [neo-conservative] elements have taken policy in significantly different directions to the one Gordon Brown's government was taking from 2007. Most striking is the move towards a narrower concern with cognitive outcomes (away from concerns with wider childhood), as well as a more traditional curriculum and linear assessment. The academic/vocational divide has been maintained. Other major reforms have been initiated throughout the education system: to teacher training, pay and conditions, school funding and accountability measures.

Reform on this scale has created its own difficulties. These have included: unanticipated costs of academy conversion and establishing free schools; the emerging difficulties of managing an autonomous school system; and a declared loss of confidence in government by the teaching profession. Apparent contradictions within the policy programme have also surfaced: a more rigorous national curriculum, but an aim to grant all schools independence from it; higher qualifications for teachers but more freedom for schools to hire unqualified teachers; greater localisation and school autonomy, but an increasing number of powers for the Secretary of State.

We thus head towards the 2015 General Education with a system in the midst of rapid change, key issues of system design and management to be resolved and a high degree of contestation within the education community about some key issues, such as who should teach, what they should teach, how this should be assessed, who should run schools, how they should be overseen, and what the Secretary of State should be in charge of.

These debates will need to proceed without any clear answers about whether the government's changes have been better or will be better for children's outcomes, nor even whether they have delivered on the Coalition's goals of more robust standards, better teaching, and a system in which poorer students get to go to better schools. It is simply too early to tell the effect of system change which has not yet in any case bedded down, while reforms to curriculum and assessment have not yet



fully been implemented. In this situation of rapid change and data time lags, learning from historical and international comparisons, from qualitative studies, and from practice, will be as important in policy-making as scrutinising the quantitative evidence in the UK to date.

Early indications from the data we have are mixed. According to Ofsted there are more good and outstanding schools, but also more inadequate secondaries, with a particular increase in disadvantaged areas. Up until 2013, before the curriculum and assessment changes and with the implementation of the Pupil Premium, attainment continued to increase and socio-economic gaps to narrow, but with no break in the existing trend. The 2014 GCSE results give a clearer indicator of the likely direction of change under the Coalition's curriculum and assessment reforms. In this latest year, there were overall small declines in attainment, when changes to counting rules are accounted for, which the government might well defend with arguments that slightly fewer GCSE points is something worth trading for academic

qualifications which will have higher value in the labour market. Overall results were still higher in 2014 than 2010 on comparable measures. However, bigger declines after the assessment reforms were experienced by lower attaining students, especially those from poorer families. Some outcomes for looked-after children have also declined under the Coalition.

Appropriate caution should be exercised about drawing conclusions from one year's data. Nevertheless, this development should raise concerns for the Coalition and for the parties who seek to replace it in 2015. At a time of austerity, the current government has protected spending on schools in real terms. This meant that system resources have remained broadly stable, although with some additional pressures in the primary sector where spending did not quite keep pace with demographic change. Moreover, backed by widespread political consensus at the time of the 2010 General Election over the need to reduce educational inequalities, the Coalition has continued and extended the distributional shift in resources that Labour began. As overall system resources more or less flat-lined, schools with more disadvantaged intakes gained money in real terms, while schools with more privileged intakes have lost. There has also been an important change in the way in which these resources are targeted and used. Schools must now direct them specifically at disadvantaged students, rather than on school-wide improvements. These are policies with clear progressive intents. It may be too early to judge the effect of the Pupil Premium, and certainly too early to say that it has failed. However, the fact that, despite these efforts, outcomes seem to be getting worse for some of the most disadvantaged students at the end of secondary schooling, and remain very large throughout the system, should certainly raise questions about whether initiatives of this nature can deliver greater equality and/or social mobility in the context both of increasing family poverty and the broader suite of educational reforms which has been enacted.

Whichever government is elected in May 2015 therefore faces much the same situation in terms of socio-economic inequalities as the Coalition did when it took power in 2010, as well as a system in flux. The continued protection of school funding cannot necessarily be guaranteed. In this situation, system management challenges may well be the new government's first priority, but bigger questions about outcomes and equity remain to be resolved.

The 2015 Reclaiming Education Bill

A draft 'Reclaiming Education Bill 2015' was launched at an event in the House of Commons in February organised by the Reclaiming Education Alliance. The Bill shows how the seven principles adopted by the Alliance last year (see EP September 2014) could become law. Amongst its provisions are an end to selection, a return to a broad and balanced National Curriculum for all, and a democratic local education service to support schools and plan places.

RECLAIMING EDUCATION

IMPROVING SCHOOLS 2015-20

Reclaiming Education recognises that improving children's classroom experience is essential if standards are to rise. But we believe that this cannot be done adequately if we do not have the right systems in place to support schools, teachers and children. The assumptions made by the Coalition Government need to be challenged because too many of them are damaging children.

Reclaiming Education has been promoting seven key principles that we believe should underpin policies for schools. This leaflet shows how following these principles will make a real difference to the opportunities we are providing for young people.

Too many children do not have access to a broad and balanced curriculum, for example because of the downgrading of the arts and practical subjects.

The curriculum and exams are not giving enough attention to children's personal, social and emotional development. As a result too many don't have the skills needed for university, work and adult life.

There needs to be a broad and balanced curriculum entitlement that applies in all schools. Practical and arts subjects should have equal status with others. This curriculum also needs to cover personal, social and emotional development. Exams should not just be a crude test of memory but should test the kinds of skills young people will need in adult life.

All the international evidence says that separating children according to test scores at 11 leads to lower standards. Selection at 11 does nothing to improve opportunities for disadvantaged children.

Too many supposedly comprehensive schools find ways of keeping out children from disadvantaged backgrounds. This matters because children do less well in schools with an unbalanced intake.

All secondary schools should be comprehensive, with no academic selection. They should all be expected to take a fair cross section of their local population. Admission arrangements should be agreed and co-ordinated across whole areas rather than being set by individual schools in their own narrow interests.

Disabled children and those with special educational needs find it hard to get the right support and provision to meet their children's needs because their legal rights have been undermined including the right to a mainstream school place.

Many disabled children and young people with SEN are not getting the support they need to participate in mainstream education because of budget cuts.

The law needs to guarantee the right of disabled children and those with special needs to have their educational needs met in line with their own and their families' wishes and without discrimination in line with the Equality Act 2010. This needs to be backed up by the appropriate level of funding and support.



CASE

Comprehensive
Future

FORUM



newvisions
for education group



IMPROVING SCHOOLS 2015-20

Having separate systems for managing local authority schools and academies is confusing and a waste of money. So is having schools with different rights and responsibilities.

The differences in the amount of money that different schools receive to educate similar pupils are much too great.

There should be one set of regulations covering all state funded schools. There should be a single funding system that properly meets the needs of all pupils wherever they are in the country. There should be one administrative system (mostly locally based) covering all schools - this would be cheaper and easier to understand.

There is no proper system for making sure that there are the right number of school places in an area and money is wasted opening schools that are not needed. Local communities have too little say in what their schools are like.

Too many schools are isolated and have too few opportunities to learn from others. Too much emphasis on competition and league tables means that children's education is narrower than it should be.

Money for new schools should only go to where there is a need for new places. Decisions about opening or closing schools should be taken locally. Those making these decisions should be elected locally to do so. All schools should have governors from their local community. All schools should be expected to work with others to share their expertise.

The current inspection system has lost the confidence of many teachers because it's seen as unreliable and confrontational. This is one reason why it is getting harder to recruit and retain teachers and headteachers.

Current systems for making sure schools are efficient and effective are inadequate, leading to too many cases of falling standards and an improper use of public money.

Schools do need to be monitored and poor performance or management addressed. This should be done first by working with other local schools and then by a locally managed inspection and advice service who will get to know their schools well. Ofsted should make sure local systems are working. The emphasis should be on helping schools to improve rather than on confrontation.

There are not enough new teachers being recruited and too many are leaving the profession.

Unqualified teachers are being allowed in the classroom and arrangements for teachers to improve their skills and knowledge are haphazard.

All teachers should be properly qualified (or be working towards this). All school staff should undertake regular in service training throughout their career. Politicians need to respect teachers and let them decide how best to do their job. The excessive workload teachers face needs to be reduced.

Follow Reclaiming Education at www.reclaimingeducation.org.uk

Find there our seven key principles and our draft Education Bill showing how to put them into practice.

The Reclaiming Education Alliance comprises: Alliance for Inclusive Education, Campaign for State Education, Comprehensive Future, Forum Journal, Information for School and College Governors, New Visions for Education and The Socialist Educational Association.

The education lawyer Graham Clayton, who drafted the bill, explained that the Bill would need to be amended to iron out some details, but the event participants were delighted to discover the practicability of legislating for the aims of the Alliance. No-one could doubt the necessity of legislation after hearing Guardian journalist Warwick Mansell describe the current system of private undemocratic contracts between a minister and school providers, often signed in the face of overwhelming local opposition. In terms of three key principles, equality, inclusion and democracy the current administration had comprehensively failed, he concluded.

The Alliance plans that the Bill and a new leaflet (see these pages) is used by campaigners to challenge election candidates on their education policies. As we go to press, education is rapidly rising up the election agenda following a flurry of announcements from the parties.

cont p18

The 2015 Reclaiming Education Bill

(cont)

Reclaiming Education's seven principles for

A Better Future for Our Schools

1. The National Curriculum should be what it says.
2. No school should be allowed to choose its pupils.
3. Inclusion and equal opportunities need to be at the heart of education provision.
4. All schools should be treated equally.
5. All schools within the same area should work together.
6. The inspection system should be replaced by one which is supportive, as well as rigorous.
7. All those whom we employ to educate our children should have qualified professional status.

Campaigners point out that none of these principles are currently implemented in full. The Shadow Secretary of State's priorities suggest that an incoming Labour government will act on them.

Labour is committed to a requirement that teachers are qualified, and to a review of Ofsted. Tristram Hunt has been making increasingly strong statements about the importance of schools working together and being treated equally, although the details of how that is to be achieved remain to be worked out. Even the admissions code has come under scrutiny under the pressure of the election campaign, and with the publication by RISE (Research and Information on State Education) of a review of research findings on school admissions.

On schools' policy, the electorate has a clear choice. A Conservative led government would extend market principles by fragmenting provision and allowing the insidious penetration of schools by for-profit providers. It would rely on highly centralised regulation for accountability. A Labour led government would rely on local collaboration and support to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

Perhaps most important for learners, under Labour there would be hope for a reversal of the movement towards an out of date elitist curriculum, with a measured review of the skills and knowledge needed by youngsters.

Nominations for Officerships and membership of the National Executive 2015-16

Nominations (including self-nominations) are invited for the following roles in the SEA. Under the constitution officers may not serve for more than 5 years. This year that applies to the Chair, Vice Chair, Treasurer and Organising Secretary. The exception is that if more than one officer has served for 5 years, one of them may serve for an additional year. New officers take up post at the AGM on 27th June. We would be delighted to see new candidates coming forward for both officerships and membership of the National Executive. If anyone would like to find out more about what is involved, please give me a ring on 020 8452 9657 or e-mail socialisteducation@virginmedia.com

John Bolt, General Secretary

Chair: The Chair presides at NEC, Finance and General Purposes meetings, the AGM and at SEA Conferences.

Vice-Chair: The Vice-Chair shall act as Chair in his/her absence or at his/her request.

General secretary: The General Secretary is responsible for the organisation and administration of the Association.

Deputy General Secretary: The Deputy General Secretary shall deputise for and assist the General Secretary as appropriate.

Treasurer: The Treasurer shall be responsible for the Association's income and expenditure and for keeping the finances of SEA in a sound condition.

Membership Secretary: The Membership Secretary shall maintain an accurate list of members and affiliates and issue appropriate letters and information to new members.

Recruitment Officer: The Recruitment Officer shall be responsible for the promotion of the SEA with a view to increasing the numbers of members, affiliates and branches.

Organising Secretary: The Organising Secretary shall be responsible for the minutes of SEA meetings. He/she may also assist the General Secretary in the execution of other duties.

Editor of Publications: The Editor shall be responsible for the production and issuing of Education Politics.

Website Officer: The Website Officer will be responsible for maintaining the association's website and promoting its use.

Membership of the National Executive: 8 Men and 8 Women in addition to the above officers. The NEC meets six times a year at different locations round the country. Travelling expenses can be paid.

SEA NOMINATION FORM 2015

(Nominations can be made by post using this form to the SEA General Secretary, 160 Melrose Avenue, London, NW2 4JY. Alternatively they can be made by e-mail to socialisteducation@virginmedia.com)

The deadline for nominations is 10th April 2015.

Post and current holder	Person Nominated
* denotes 5 year term of office completed	
CHAIR (currently Sheila Dore):*	
VICE-CHAIR: (currently Eddie Playfair)*	
GENERAL SECRETARY: (currently John Bolt)	
DEPUTY GENERAL SECRETARY: (currently Martin Dore)	
TREASURER: (currently Mike Newman)*	
MEMBERSHIP OFFICER: (currently Paul Martin)	
RECRUITMENT OFFICER: (currently Chris Newman)	
ORGANISING SECRETARY: (currently Richard Sidley)*	
EDITOR OF PUBLICATIONS: (currently Martin Johnson)	
WEBSITE OFFICER: (currently David Pavett)	
NATIONAL EXECUTIVE MEMBERS	

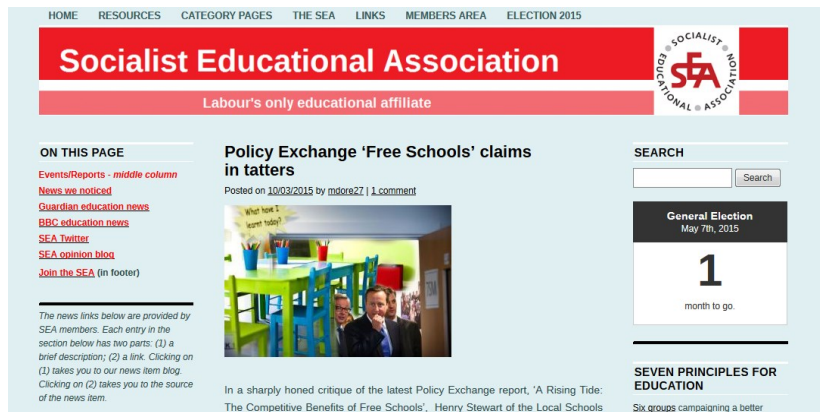
SIGNED

DATE

Have you seen the SEA Website? www.socialisteducationalassociation.org

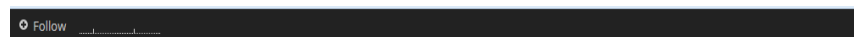
The SEA has redesigned its website. The purpose of the change was to:

- provide a good flow of up-to-date information;
- give links to current educational debate on various media;
- provide easy access to important educational documents;
- enable members to exchange views on the materials given;
- provide a space for members to discuss issues among themselves.

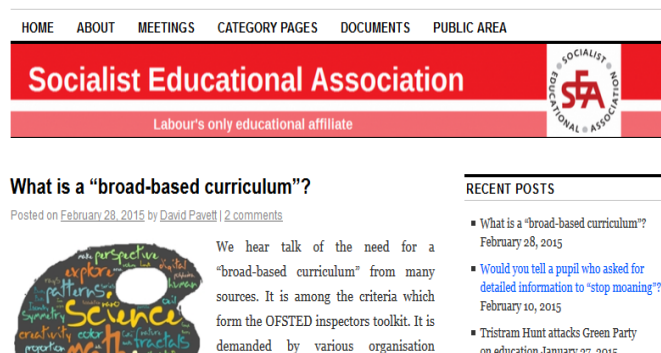


The site has been running in its new form for some months and feedback has been good. The more people who use it to obtain information and express their views the more vibrant the site will become. The main part of the site (starting from the homepage) is open to anyone who wants to use it - just enter the address at the top of this page. If you have items that you think would be useful then please send us your views (there is a feedback form). Also you can add your comments to items appearing on the home page with no need to provide more than your email address.

A special feature of the site is its **Members' Area**. This is only accessible by SEA members and provides a means for them to share their views on any topic. All contributions are open to comments by other members. To access the Members' Area you will need a WordPress account which can be obtained by providing your name and email. Full instructions on how to get started are provided; start by clicking the Members Area tab at the top of the page.



SEA members discussion area



Discussions are already under way so if you haven't already signed up ...

Forthcoming events

23 March 6 pm What's next for education? New Visions Group Forum, UCL Institute of Education, London
7 May Don't forget to vote!
16th May 1 pm, Cardiff: SEA NEC
27th June 10 am, London, SEA AGM and Annual Conference
28th June 11 am, London, SEA NEC

Education Politics (issn 1354-2028) is the journal of the Socialist Educational Association. The articles reflect the views of their authors and not the SEA unless indicated otherwise.
Editor: Martin Johnson (anothermartinjohnson@gmail.com)
SEA General Secretary: John Bolt. email: socialisteducation@virginmedia.com
Join the Labour affiliated Socialist Education Association. Details from the General Secretary – membership £20 per year