

## TACTYC response to the Labour Party consultation on Education

In the introduction there is a clear vision which starts from birth and continues into adulthood. We would like to see access to high quality universal education as a fundamental commitment for each child's journey from birth to adulthood

The key principles are:

1. Education has intrinsic value in giving all people access to the common body of knowledge we share, and practical value in allowing all to participate fully in our society. These principles shall guide the National Education Service.

*Education entails far more than access to a body of knowledge. It encompasses the important dispositions, skills and habits related to learning, critical thinking and creativity that ensure the continuing development of bodies of knowledge.*

*Society is made up of individuals and if we enable every individual to reach their potential then we create a society where we all feel valued, which increases social cohesion. Rather than 'access to the common body of knowledge we share,' we suggest 'access to shared knowledge, skills and dispositions for life-long learning...' and would also add that participation in society is in itself educational*

2. The National Education Service shall provide education that is free at the point of use, available universally and throughout life.

*Agree; education is an investment in the future. In the early years, education for children is inseparable from care and should be considered alongside work with parents and communities. Investment from birth prevents the need for reactive intervention at a later stage, which is expensive in personal and social as well as financial terms.*

3. The National Education Service provides education for the public good and all providers within the National Education Service shall be bound by the principles of this charter.

*Post policy agreement we would need clarification on who counts as a provider e.g. any setting, school or HE establishment which receives public funding.*

*It would be better to suggest that all providers should be guided by, rather than bound by the principles of this charter.*

4. High quality education is essential to a strong and inclusive society and economy, so the National Education Service shall work alongside the health, sustainability, and industrial policies set by democratically elected government.

*Agree; it is particularly important to develop 'joined up' policies and practices for work with young children and their families*

5. Every child, and adult, matters, so the National Education Service will be committed

to tackling all barriers to learning, and providing high-quality education for all.

*Agree; but how 'high quality' is conceptualised and whether / how it is measured and judged can affect the ways in which education institutions are positioned, governed, operate and so on. Narrow definitions of quality and the creation of competition within the education sector is damaging, and prioritises numerical data over and above a focus on real learners with real-life successes and challenges that are meaningful to them.*

6. All areas of skill and learning deserve respect; the National Education Service will provide all forms of education, integrating academic, technical and other forms of learning within and outside of educational institutions, and treating all with equal respect.

*Agree; but the wider socio-economic, employment and other policies would need to reflect this. Otherwise, a society that privileges particular forms of knowledge and skill and accommodates those within the job market will continue to prevail to the detriment of other forms of learning / knowledge and achievement.*

7. Educational excellence is best achieved through collaboration and the National Education Service will be structured to encourage and enhance cooperation across boundaries and sectors.

*We suggest that new policies and developments should grow out of cross party working groups based on a Select Committee model. There is a need for long-term strategic planning, which goes beyond a single parliamentary term.*

8. The National Education Service shall be accountable to the public, communities, and parents and children that it serves. Schools, colleges, and other public institutions within the National Education Service should be rooted in their communities, with parents and communities empowered, via appropriate democratic means, to influence change where it is needed and ensure that the education system meets their needs. The appropriate democratic authority will set, monitor and allocate resources, ensuring that they meet the rights, roles, and responsibilities of individuals and institutions.

*Agree; Local Authorities are now very reduced. Democratic and professional accountability needs to be returned to this level. Change should be planned over a longer term with a clear vision for the future, and funding incrementally increased over a period of years.*

*The issue of inequality will not be addressed if the 'mixed economy of childcare' continues so that some providers (especially those that wield great economic and political power and resources) can establish settings in affluent areas and charge fees that will be prohibitive for many families and / or (if 'free at the point of service) be selective about their intake. Just as Oxbridge are being challenged to 'diversify their intake', so too should EY settings that currently target their services as predominantly affluent families. I think this would create a more level playing field and, where TACTYC is concerned would have implications for initial education and CPD. I also think that the*

*'democratic' accountability systems sound positive to some extent but might be in danger of creating parents vs teachers scenarios (and reminiscent of Animal Farm, have the potential to lead to a situation in which 'all parents are equal but some are more equal than others') rather than localised, co-operative approaches to education development that might help to foster greater cross-fertilisation of ideas, better understandings of different roles and diverse perspectives and more community integration in the name of children's education..*

9. The National Education Service aspires to the highest standards of excellence and professionalism. Educators and all other staff will be valued as highly-skilled professionals, and appropriate accountability will be balanced against giving genuine freedom of judgement and innovation. The National Education Service shall draw on evidence and international best practice, and provide appropriate professional development and training.

*Agree; however, how these terms are understood and translated will be really important and influential. There is so much published now about 'standards' and 'professionalism' in education that can and should be taken into account. These terms should not serve political agendas. They should be representative of what education is and who it is for.*

*What counts as 'evidence' is debatable and what counts as best practice elsewhere doesn't necessarily make it best practice in all contexts.*

*Suggest clarifying 'The National Education Service, mindful of the importance of context, shall draw on research evidence and international best practice, and provide appropriate professional development and training.'*

*The relationship between government and the education profession is important, and needs to be carefully considered. What role does government expect to play in education? As controller? As supporter? As facilitator, funder, observer, auditor...? What kind of 'contract' is being proposed between government and educational settings? How will government be held to account (above and beyond the polling station) for the part it plays and its responsibilities in that chosen role? Who decides what role it will have? Do those who work in the education sector have a say? Do learners have a say?*

*TACTYC believes that there should be a much more hands-off role for government in terms of dictating pedagogy. An independent panel composed of representatives from professional bodies, institutions, parents and learners should set out long-term strategic direction to guide organisation and funding.*

10. The National Education Service must have the utmost regard to the well-being of learners and educators, and its policies and practices, particularly regarding workload, assessment and inspection, will support the emotional, social and physical well-being of students and staff.

*Agree; the Service should provide the contexts, systems, structures and opportunities for everyone to flourish in different ways at different times.  
See Urban et al (2012) Towards Competent Systems in Early Childhood Education and*

*Care: implications for policy and practice. European Journal of Education, 47(4), 508–526.*

Have your say – give us your thoughts on the questions below:

#### Question 1

What should a National Education Service be for and what values should it and the draft charter embody?

*A National Education Service should support learning and wellbeing for all, offering fulfilling experiences in the present, which can lead to successful futures for individuals, groups and the country.*

*The following values should be central*

- *Lifelong learning*
- *Social mobility*
- *Inclusion and social justice*
- *Access and participation*

#### Question 2

What amendments, if any, should be made to the principles outlined in the draft charter for the National Education Service?

#### Question 3

What additional principles should be considered for the charter of the NES?

- *Universal access to centrally funded high quality early years education*
- *Redefining Early Childhood as birth to 7*
- *Re-establishing the commitment to developmentally appropriate provision as evidenced by international research and as currently defined in the EYFS, including the underpinning principles.*

#### Question 4

What barriers currently exist to cooperation between education institutions, and what steps can be taken to remove them and ensure that cooperation is a central principle of our education system?

*The range of provision which now exists in academies, free schools etc. has led to a fracturing of what should be a public service. This has led to competition rather than co-operation, and the misuse of scarce funds.*

*Means of assessment between transition points in education should not inadvertently undermine cooperation and respect between phases. For example, the current plans for baseline assessment in reception classes risks encouraging schools to downplay the learning and skills children have developed at home, nurseries and preschools in order*

*to maximise the opportunity to show 'value-added' by the school at a later date. Instead, ongoing observation and sharing information about children by and with familiar adults who know them well in familiar preschool locations in partnership with Reception classes into which the children will go, would be a more productive and accurate approach to assessment, and would foster cooperation between phases. There are also increasing downward pressures on the reception year, which should not be seen as preparation for Key Stage 1, but part of the Early Years Foundation Stage. Current and planned forms of national assessment, e.g. through baseline, phonics and Key Stage 1 and 2 SATs testing should be ended: the evaluation of settings should be separated from these assessments so that children are not pawns in competition for resources.*

#### Question 5

Through which channels and mechanisms should the public be able to hold educational institutions to account, and how should this vary across different educational bodies?

*The current approach through Ofsted needs a major overhaul. Ofsted should reclaim its role as a professional gatherer of information about very good practice and be in a position to disseminate this practice. It should ensure that its inspectors are qualified and knowledgeable in the phase in which they are working.*

*The role of local authorities in supporting quality development in early childhood settings has been undermined extensively. This role needs to be reinstated and fully funded. Local authorities are a localised democratic means through which the public can hold the educational quality of early childhood education to account. They continue to have a duty in relation to the EYFS Profile outcomes, despite the majority of provision being outwith the local authority, i.e. academies, free schools, early years providers.*

#### Question 6

What can we do to reduce the fragmentation of the education system, and to move towards an approach that is integrated and promotes lifelong learning?

*Bring academies and free schools back to local authorities, remove the layer of Regional School Commissioners.*

*Fragmentation has been created through piecemeal policy making, underfunding and creating a competitive market in education that creates inequality and a postcode lottery. The focus on metrics and standardised testing has also been divisive and reduced capacity of teachers to focus on the inspiring the children in their care. A cross-party principled, long term and consistent approach to developing the education service for all would help reduce fragmentation*

#### Question 7

How do we improve the quality of early years education, in particular with relation to qualifications and staffing levels?

*Implement the Nutbrown report.*

*Funding of ECEC at an adequate level is essential to enable the employment of high quality staff, the continuing professional development of staff and to ensure suitable indoor and outdoor learning experiences and environments for all children. Adequate funding of ECEC is an investment in the future of this country and its people: a marketplace of private providers can never provide the level of resourcing required.*

#### Question 8

How do we achieve genuine parity of esteem between academic and vocational/technical education? How do we improve outcomes for those young people who do not choose to follow what is seen as the traditional academic route?

*Look at models from other countries (e.g. Germany, Finland and Sweden) to research and understand their success. Many of these countries have excellent early years provision, which provides firm foundations for later learning. Their provision gives children time to develop at their own pace in their early years which creates resilience and greater capacity for formal learning in later stages of education.*

*It is during the first few years of life that children develop lifelong dispositions to learn and to participate in their communities. It is also the 'window' in which to engage new parents with enthusiasm for the education services and how these can work with them to support their child's success and wellbeing.*

#### Question 9

What can be done to ensure that the NES has the staff it needs, in particular with reference to the ongoing crisis in teacher recruitment and retention?

*Re-establish professional respect for staff. Allow them to spend their time outside the school day doing things that directly improve children's life chances. Ensure all staff are well-trained, well-qualified, have funded access to and are expected to undertake CPD; ensure settings have well-trained and well-qualified leaders; then allow staff to do their job without excessive centralised interference by way of arbitrary initiatives, such as national 'checks' or assessments and league tables, which have a tendency to skew educational practices and demoralise staff.*

*The relationship between government and education professionals is important, and should be clarified. Rather than government dictating pedagogy, an independent panel composed of representatives from professional bodies, institutions, parents and learners should set out long-term strategic direction to guide organisation and funding.*

#### Question 10

What steps can be taken, at both the training stage and during continuing professional development (CPD), to ensure that teachers and support staff have the knowledge and resources they need to teach the whole curriculum? For instance, with reference to mandatory, age-appropriate relationships and sex education (RSE) and personal, social and health education (PSHE).

*Ensure that all teachers in training receive a rich and broad input that gives them an*

*understanding of the whole curriculum, and takes into account pupils who have special needs.*

*Ring fence funding for CPD and provide opportunities for all teachers to update their skills, expertise and understanding and to share their practice.*

*Acknowledge that professional learning takes time and, if rushed, is likely to be less effective. A strategic framework for CPD based on international evidence of effective CPD practices should be developed and used to guide training provision. Currently, ECEC settings are responsible for funding and accessing their own CPD, which can be difficult, costly and time-consuming. Settings need support - strategic, financial and localised - to enable them to make the most effective choices. Quality Assurance in CPD is essential.*

*Early Years Teachers need the same time as other teachers to develop their learning and pedagogic skills. In common with all teachers, EYTS should be entitled to an NQT year and mentoring.*

As Labour continues to build on its General Election manifesto in anticipation of entering Government, the draft charter sets out the principles that will structure and guide the National Education Service. Labour will consult on these principles across the education sector and beyond, building a wide consensus on the fundamentals of a cradle-to-grave education system which will support everyone throughout their lives.

*This consensus should take account of the voices of those whose views do not form part of the dominant discourse, so that a 'consensus' does not represent a simple recourse to a majority view, easily reached. Genuine debate would be welcomed; tokenistic consultation would not.*

*Would it be possible to give this service another title, that does not suggest conscription?*

**TACTYC promotes the highest quality professional development for all early years educators in order to enhance the educational well-being of the youngest children.**

Our activities include:

- **advocacy and lobbying** – providing a voice for all those engaged with the professional development of practitioners through responding to early years policy initiatives and contributing to
- **informing** – developing the knowledge-base of all those concerned with early years education and care by disseminating research findings through our international *Early Years Journal*, annual conference, website and occasional publications;
- **supporting** – encouraging informed and constructive discussion and debate and supporting practitioner reflection, the use of evidence-based

practice and practitioner-research through, for example, our newsletter and website.

Contact: Wendy Scott OBE  
President, TACTYC  
Peter House, Braithwaite, Keswick Cumbria CA12 5SY

Telephone 017687 78076  
e-mail [mwendyscott@btopenworld.com](mailto:mwendyscott@btopenworld.com)