



[We should all share Jeremy Corbyn's Vision for Education](#)

by Pam Field @earwiggle

By Naomi Fearon, previously Published here on [Labour Futures](#)

Recently we have seen Jeremy Corbyn announce his proposal for a National Education Service. This proposal is based around what Jeremy sees as the fundamental and underlying principle of education which is, *"A collective good that empowers society and the economy"*. It is worth noting that our education system has undergone some changes these last few years, most of which have included cuts, further privatisation through academies and free schools, more curriculum alterations and a continued rise in tuition fees. It is clear that Jeremy genuinely values education and the profession, stating in a written address to The Socialist Educational Association (SEA), Labour's only educational affiliate, that, *"In a fast changing world where new technology is making new jobs and breaking old ones, and information of every kind is instantly available, we need an education system that opens minds and imagination"*. In this address he also referred to teachers as *"dedicated"* and was scathing of the fact that teaching by some, has not been valued as a specialist skill. With such clear passion and vision for education, it is not hard to see why Jeremy has won the supporting nomination from The SEA.

Through the National Educational Service proposal, Jeremy outlines his belief that like our NHS, the education system should be 'from cradle to grave'. Further education has taken quite a battering over the last few years with the adult skills budget being slashed by 40% since 2010. The Association of Colleges (AoC) has predicted that if the spending cuts continue at their present rate the actual budget outside of apprenticeships will be reduced to zero by 2020 with no public funding remaining for any courses outside higher education and the student loan scheme. In his National Education Service proposal, Jeremy has stated that he would reverse the cuts and would look to significantly expand the adult education service. This would be funded by a 2% rise in corporation tax and would enable anyone of any age regardless of their background or circumstances to retrain or learn something new, opening up a wide range of opportunities.

At the opposite end of the education spectrum, Jeremy is keen to ensure that all children have equal opportunity to pre-school education. A report in 2014 by The Family and Childcare Trust showed that many parents in Britain are paying more for childcare annually than the average mortgage bill. The trust says childcare in England, Wales and Scotland is becoming increasingly unaffordable with a 27% rise in costs since 2009, while wages have remained static. Rightly dismissing what he calls the false dichotomy between early years and adult education, Jeremy argues for free universal childcare recognising that the current system is patchy and rather costly to say the least stating that, *"Some families who are very poor can get a place, those who are well off can pay and everyone in between has to make their own arrangements"*.

Recognising that education is a right and should not be a privilege, Jeremy has called for the abolition of tuition fees and the restoration of maintenance grants. He has proposed that free university should be funded through a higher rate of national insurance on the highest earners and by bringing Britain's paltry rate of corporation tax up from 20% to 20.5%. Both the National Campaign against Fees and Cuts and the Labour Campaign for Free Education are supporting Jeremy for leader and unsurprisingly he is proving popular with university students, many of whom are turning up to see him at rallies. Tuition fees have been a widely contested issue since their introduction in 1998 under New Labour, with continuous demos from students calling for their removal. The abolition would be a welcomed policy by many and ensure that anyone entering Higher Education would not be saddled with a large burden of debt once they left.

Hot on the heels of tackling one controversial issue, Jeremy has been unafraid to take on another; academies and free schools. Academies since their introduction in 2000 have again, like tuition fees, been a widely contested issue. Whilst a few individual academies and free schools may do well, overall the programme has been a failure. In January of this year, the House of Commons Education Committee concluded that

“It is too early to judge whether academies raise standards overall or for disadvantaged children” also stating that “Academisation is not always successful nor is it the only proven alternative for a struggling school”.

Ofsted’s 2014 annual report stated that

“It is too early to judge the overall performance of free schools”.

These findings, along with continual financial scandals and the closures of some free schools has continued to paint a rather grim picture for the already unpopular programme. Jeremy voted against the introduction of both types and schools and has called for them to be taken back under local authority control. As Jeremy puts it *“Why was it believed the ability to run a business, to sell cars or carpets might make you best-placed to run a school?”* Recognising that schools should be accountable to parents and communities and not private market interests and board rooms, Jeremy would seek to rebuild our much fragmented school system.

Amongst Jeremy’s education proposals, it is important not to forget that Jeremy clearly values teachers. Any key element of a successful working partnership should be trust, co-operation and communication clearly something both Michael Gove and Nicky Morgan have failed to comprehend. It is no secret that the relationship between the teaching profession and the government has been anything but harmonious with previous education secretary Michael Gove referring to the profession as ‘enemies of promise’ and a ‘Marxist blob’. With relations showing little signs of thawing, any incoming Labour leader would need to defend our much maligned teachers against such attacks. Government figures from last year show that teachers are working up to 60 hours a week with many leaving the profession altogether. Jeremy recognises that the profession has been highly demoralised stating,

“Let’s thank and value teachers, and try to reduce the stress levels. I talk to a lot of teachers and so many say, ‘I would love to recommend teaching as a career but I don’t want anyone to do what I have had to do. The pressure is too great.’ That should not be so.”

Jeremy is right to address this issue as in order to have a world class education system we need to ensure that teaching is an attractive profession, not one full of over-worked and over-stressed teachers – many of whom are leaving in their droves.

It is clear that Jeremy knows that education should be lifelong and based around creativity, democracy, co-operation and equal opportunity – this is a vision we should all share.

- [Jeremy Corbyn sets out plan for a National Education Service](#)
- [Left Futures: We should all share Jeremy Corbyn's Vision for Education](#)
- [Socialist Education Association \(Labour's own Educational Affiliate\)](#)
- [From Cradle to Grave , Jeremy Corbyn's National Education Service](#)
- [Undeniable Evidence that Academisation has Failed](#)
- [The University without Walls](#)

[Academisation and the Demolition of our Education System](#)