

# UK INDEPENDENCE PARTY

Education:  
Time to come clean



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**UK Independence Party**



# Education: *The Reality*

**ONE IN FOUR CHILDREN  
CANNOT READ AT THE AGE OF ELEVEN<sup>1</sup>**

**A PASS GRADE CAN BE OBTAINED IN GCSE  
MATHS WITH FOUR OUT OF FIVE QUESTIONS  
ANSWERED INCORRECTLY<sup>2</sup>**

**20% OF SECONDARY TEACHERS HAVE BEEN  
FALSELY ACCUSED OF ASSAULT  
OR INAPPROPRIATE CONDUCT<sup>3</sup>**

**72% OF SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS  
ARE CONSIDERING LEAVING THE PROFESSION<sup>4</sup>**

**SOME UNIVERSITIES HAVE DROPOUT  
RATES OF OVER 40%<sup>5</sup>**

**40% OF BRITISH STUDENTS WILL LEAVE  
UNIVERSITY AT LEAST £10,000 IN DEBT<sup>6</sup>**

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<sup>1</sup> Figure quoted in 2004 by Prime Minister Blair. See also CBI report. (Footnote 7.)

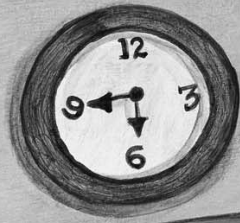
<sup>2</sup> Green, de Waal and Crockett, *Education: Better results and declining standards*, P10. Civitas on-line briefing 2005.

<sup>3</sup> Source: <http://www.sec-ed.co.uk/cgi-bin/go.pl/features/article.html?uid=1215>

<sup>4</sup> ATL press release, 22/03/05.

<sup>5</sup> Sources: <http://www.iee.org/OnComms/Circuit/benefits/dropout.cfm>. See also BBC news item, 19th December 2001 ([http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk\\_news/education/1719435.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/education/1719435.stm))

<sup>6</sup> Source: <http://www.nusonline.co.uk/news/272089.aspx>



# Our education system is failing

There are few areas of national life in greater need of reform than education. Successive Conservative and Labour governments have initiated continual bureaucratic upheavals in our schools and universities since the 1950s, yet for all the much-vaunted claims of improvements in standards, there is nonetheless a widespread and growing scepticism about these supposed successes among the public in general and employers in particular<sup>7</sup>, and even more serious disillusion within the teaching profession.

In this document, the UK Independence Party offers a radical alternative to the status quo in line with what we believe to be the true purpose of education. We recognise that our proposals will result in yet more changes to a profession that has been on the receiving end of far too many government initiatives in recent years, but we are convinced that drastic measures are required if the children and young people of Britain are to be rescued from an educational system which is failing.

Once the measures outlined in this policy document are introduced, the UK Independence Party will give properly trained teachers the independence to get on with the job with minimal interference.

## Two wrong turnings

Both Tory and Labour governments have seen education as the key to turning young people into productive economic units. The UK Independence Party naturally wants to see a prosperous Britain, but does not believe the drive to keep children at school for longer and to send more of them to university will achieve this objective.

Education has now become a tool for indoctrination, with schools becoming crucibles for social engineering. The state has elbowed its way into the “affective” areas of education, which have historically been the responsibility of parents. We do not believe that teaching political correctness or EU propaganda<sup>8</sup> is part of education.

## Putting education back on track

The goal of Education is to bring out the best of the talents and abilities of each individual child. This involves parents and schools working together to pass on a body of knowledge, both factual and cultural, from one generation to the next. It should be done in a way that will lay the foundations for genuine independent thought. Suitably equipped, students can then go on to use the skills and knowledge they have acquired at school and university to master any training needed for future careers.

The UK Independence Party believes it is the responsibility of the state to ensure that a quality education is provided for all - regardless of income, age, aptitudes or ability - with a full and unashamed emphasis on the three R's in the early years.

The UK Independence Party believes in giving equal status, esteem and resources to all forms of school from primary schools to grammar schools and special schools.

The UK Independence Party believes that the right of parents to select a school is pointless unless schools are free to differ from one another. To be free to differ they need to be free to choose their pupils based on their suitability for the education provided.

## Choice, Independence and Quality

The UK Independence Party believes that the Government should not attempt to micro-manage education, which is bound to restrict real choice. It is right and proper that the state should provide the bulk of funding for education, but should not, in a democracy, have a monopoly on delivering that education. The UK Independence Party acknowledges the quality of education in the independent sector, especially the historic public schools, and believes that, their presence should be used to stimulate rather than threaten publicly-funded schools. Within the state sector too, schools must be given the freedom and independence to develop their own individual ethos and excellence.

We therefore believe that the National Curriculum must be reformed to become less prescriptive and that schools must be allowed a greater say over the subjects taught, although certain core subjects must remain. For instance, we consider it vital to ensure that children reach certain standards in reading, writing and arithmetic at the primary stage.

We also believe that the driving force behind the comprehensive system - equality of outcome, whereby there must be no élite and no losers - is dangerously mistaken, and in practice fails pupils of all abilities. Equality of opportunity, albeit tailored to the individual strengths of individual children, is the key to quality education. Children without an academic bent are frequently better served by a more practical curriculum.

Education in Britain should prepare children for life as British citizens. It is therefore important that children know something of the history and culture of the nation in which they live, including an awareness of our great literature and heritage. As language is an essential component in a nation's culture, we will also insist that all lessons be taught in English with only the following exceptions:-

- i) In areas of Wales and Scotland<sup>9</sup> where Welsh or Gaelic are widely spoken, they may be used instead of English.
- ii) Foreign language tuition.
- iii) Special private schools for the education of children of foreign diplomats or businessmen.

For children arriving from other countries who cannot understand English sufficiently to be educated in that language, we will prioritise additional language teaching, so that they can take their place in an English-speaking educational system and integrate into British society as soon as possible.

Within these parameters, we will encourage schools to specialise, be it in terms of ethos, structure or subject. Choices in these areas, along with any procedure for the selection of pupils, should be left to the discretion of the individual school.

We will, however, replace the current funding policy, which favours specialist schools, with one where funds are shared equally regardless of the degree of specialisation.

As far as possible, parents will be allowed to choose the school at which the funds (currently an average of £5,000 per year<sup>10</sup>) available in the form of a voucher for their child's education are spent.

## Discipline

The UK Independence Party is committed to repealing the 1998 Human Rights Act and withdrawing from the European Convention on Human Rights.

The legislation these acts superseded was far more balanced in protecting the innocent whilst allowing for proper disciplinary measures to be taken against unruly pupils. We will implement the recommendation in the Steer Report (on learning behaviour<sup>11</sup>) that legislation be passed establishing beyond doubt that schools have the right to discipline pupils when their behaviour is unacceptable.

Now we have the ridiculous situation where teachers can be disciplined or even dismissed for restraining violent children, and appear to have lost the right of self defence. When accusations are made against teachers, we will insist that those accused be treated as innocent until proven guilty. Equally, where genuine cases of misconduct or incompetence are proven against teachers, we will not shrink from ensuring that head teachers have sufficient power to discipline individuals and to dismiss them if necessary.

Furthermore, we will allow head teachers the ultimate say in decisions regarding the exclusion of unruly pupils.

## Less bureaucracy

We believe that the teaching profession should be allowed to do its job with minimal external government interference. We see no need, therefore, for Local Education Authorities (LEAs) to control policy. Their powers will be given to the school governing body, with schools co-operating in the provision or facilitation of services in schools, such as cleaning, maintenance and school meals.

We will also initiate a review of the school inspection régime, bringing in new legislation whereby parents might require the school's governing body to arrange for an inspection if 10% or more of parents were unhappy with the school's performance.



We acknowledge that school inspections are valuable tools for checking the quality of teaching, but believe that OfSTED is now too concerned with the implementation of central government procedures and control processes. We will replace it with an independent inspectorate of experienced teachers who are concerned primarily with improving teaching standards.

The UK Independence Party would investigate the benefits of a ‘franchising’ arrangement for schools. Franchising is the transfer of public assets to private sector organisations to manage for specified periods without ownership of the assets changing, and after which the franchise would be re-tendered. The franchisor in this case would be the local council who would manage a ‘bidding’ process to franchisee companies. Many franchisees would be not-for-profit companies or charitable trusts, so for example, a company set up by Eton College or Bradford Grammar School could take on and turn round a failed comprehensive school by injecting their own ethos.

The British curriculum and examinations system has lost much of its credibility. The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority must therefore be replaced by an independent body which will monitor educational content and standards.

Examination grades must be awarded in line with a series of pre-determined standards for each grade. Current concerns about grade inflation will be eliminated if the right criteria are in place. Ideally, grading for GCSEs, “A” levels and degrees should work as well as the Associated Board music exams, for instance, where the standard required to achieve, say, a merit in grade 5 piano does not appear any easier or harder to obtain now than it was thirty years ago.

We will publish league tables, but ensure that they encompass balanced and fairer criteria. We believe that more importance should be attached to each school publishing complete data in its annual report of examination results, attendance and disciplinary records, including the number of suspensions and expulsions.

What these reforms will mean for the different sectors is set out below:

## 1) Primary Education

**Less paperwork.** We are committed to reducing drastically the amount of paperwork which primary school teachers have to complete, abolishing the plethora of centralised targets with their associated reporting data and the over-complex and unhelpful child profiles. We will remove other badly thought-out initiatives dreamt up by theorists, educationalists and social engineers, which are foisted upon schools by central government. These initiatives should enable all children to be taught at all times by qualified teachers, unlike the present situation where teaching assistants are occasionally in charge of classes.

Under the UK Independence Party’s proposals, there will be no nationwide testing of children until the age of 11 (Key Stage 2), when some assessment of ability is required in connection with the choice of a secondary school.

This test will be much more broadly based, covering not only English and Mathematics and academic skills, but also artistic and practical ability. The test will be more of a streaming exercise, thereby removing the pass/fail criteria of old, with the resulting social stigma.

Children who do not obtain the required grades for grammar school entry would be able to sit similar exams during their secondary school career which would allow them to transfer to a grammar school if they reach the required standard. There will be no compulsory nationwide testing of children at the age of 7 (Key Stage 1).<sup>12</sup>

We believe that, until Key Stage 2, individual schools should be free to undertake the level and type of assessment they deem appropriate, and to determine for themselves how much record-keeping is necessary. We will also allow schools to determine for themselves how much teachers need to evaluate their own lessons. Only in the event of an external inspection would a school's records and its assessment of children be subject to outside scrutiny.

**Emphasis on Reading...** We believe that at primary level, education should revolve around the inculcation of basic facts and skills, and that the recent emphasis on children being allowed to "discover" for themselves is misguided. At this age, skills are taught, not discovered.

We therefore welcome the recent renewed emphasis on the teaching of phonics, believing that it is the best foundation for teaching children to read. We support the recommendation in the (Rose Report into the teaching of early reading<sup>13</sup>) that children should be introduced to phonics as soon as they start learning to read.

We also believe that children should be taught to understand the structure of English grammar once they have a sufficient mastery of reading. We believe that this will lay the foundations for a general improvement in the standard of written English and also that it will address a difficulty faced by many British students when they come to learn a foreign language - namely that they struggle with grammar because they have not been taught the grammar of their mother tongue.

**...and Arithmetic.** Likewise, we believe that it is important for children to be able to undertake simple calculations without the aid of a calculator. We support a return to the teaching of arithmetical tables, and believe that by the age of 8 or 9 at the latest, children should know all their tables up to 12x, and be capable of performing long multiplication and long division without the use of a calculator.

**Cutting back on "Life Skills".** We will abolish "Circle Time" discussion groups and scrap Sex and Relationships Education in schools completely for children under the age of 10, except in the context of biology. We will make it optional for 10-11 year olds - with parents choosing to opt their children in rather than having to opt out.

The Party's educational reforms will improve the standards of literacy and numeracy in primary schools. In spite of claims by recent ministers for education that standards are rising, Professor Peter Tymms of Durham University suggests in a study going back to 1989 that there has been no improvement of standards since then<sup>14</sup>. Mr Blair had to admit in 2004 that 1 in 4 children aged 11 still could not read<sup>15</sup>. He rightly called this a scandal.



## 2) Secondary Education

*This paper is UK-specific, but where the Scottish education system is significantly different, for instance with “Highers,” this will be dealt with in a separate paper.*

Secondary school will form the final phase of some pupils’ education, whereas others will continue to universities or colleges of further education. We are committed to offering equal opportunities to all pupils, but believe that in practical terms, securing a variety of different types of secondary school and tertiary institutions provides the best way of catering for the varied range of abilities and ambitions exhibited by secondary school children.

Our proposals will reduce both the number of qualifications obtained by students and the number of top grades. We nonetheless believe that the combination of the dumbing down of examinations and grade inflation have reduced the value of examinations as true indicators of ability to the point where they serve little purpose apart from that of propaganda trumpeting the “success” of Government education policy.

Our reforms revolve around five main proposals, set out below:-

**Reform the National Curriculum.** We will invite teaching representatives from the universities and other academic institutions to design a replacement for the current National Curriculum. This will restore the prominent role played by the universities in determining the shape of secondary education before the National Curriculum was introduced. We will abolish compulsory Sex and Relationship education, compulsory Citizenship and Personal, Social and Health education immediately. There must be no behavioural conditioning in our schools.

We believe that children should continue to be taught at least one science subject up to the age of 16. However, we are concerned that standards in maths and science at GCSE have dropped compared with examinations a generation ago, handicapping those who are seeking to pursue further study in the science disciplines<sup>16</sup>.

Higher standards will be restored by replacing the current general science GCSE with examinations in the individual science disciplines (Physics, Chemistry, Biology) with all pupils having to choose at least one.

We will make religious education optional, and allow schools liberty to teach it in accordance with their particular religious ethos, if they so desire.

We will retain compulsory physical education and competitive games until the age of 16, and prevent any further sale of school playing fields and seek to create new ones.

We will accord a more important role to English Language and Mathematics, recognising concerns from employers, university admission tutors and the Association of Graduate Recruiters about poor spelling, grammar and numeracy<sup>17</sup>.

**Selection by Ability.** Schools have been given some freedom to specialise under recent government initiatives; but, without being able to select by suitability, these freedoms are meaningless. If parents are allowed to choose the most appropriate school for their children, it is only right that the schools should have a say as to which pupils they feel are most likely to benefit from their teaching.

The UK Independence Party favours the introduction of a “voucher” scheme, whereby educational funds equivalent to the average cost of state schooling follow the child to the school of the family’s choice - including private schools, where if necessary the fees would be topped up by the parents. This will ease the burden on the growing number of parents with modest incomes who have nonetheless opted to send their children to private schools because of dissatisfaction with the state school(s) in their area<sup>18</sup>. Where such schemes have been in operation, such as in Socialist Sweden, and in parts of Canada and the USA, they have resulted in pressures on less popular state schools to improve their standards<sup>19</sup>.

We will also reintroduce the Assisted Places Scheme to provide more opportunities for children from underprivileged backgrounds, recognising how successful this scheme proved until its abolition in 1997<sup>20</sup>.

Children learn better in groups of similar ability, interests and learning styles. We believe that grammar schools have a vital role to play in the education of academically more able children, and not only are we committed to the survival of existing grammar schools, but we will encourage the creation of new grammar and other specialist schools, aiming to restore a network of publicly-funded grammar schools across the country.

We recognise the popular support that grammar schools enjoy in the areas where they still survive<sup>21</sup>. Two thirds of mothers interviewed in a recent survey thought that grammar schools were “a good idea.”<sup>22</sup> Grammar schools have demonstrated a consistent and enduring quality of education that should be emulated, not destroyed.

We believe this would especially benefit bright children from poor families, as currently the presence of a successful state school often causes house price inflation in the catchment area, pricing poorer families out. In other words, at the moment, the process by which children end up in a given school can be something of a postcode lottery. Social and economic mobility has decreased over the last forty years<sup>23</sup>, and we believe that the reintroduction of grammar schools with wider catchment areas will help reverse this trend.

Admittedly, a single comprehensive school may still remain the only option for some rural communities. Some of the best comprehensives are to be found in these areas, as there has been more will by the communities concerned to make them work. Nonetheless, where there is sufficient demand for the return of specialist education, every effort will be made to facilitate it. The expansion of selection in secondary education will not lead to a two-tier education system. We are firmly committed to the principles of the remarkable 1944 Butler Education Act, which had widespread cross-party support at the time, even for its grammar schools, and which sought to ensure a quality education for all. Mixed ability teaching is not the best environment to achieve this goal with children of secondary school age.

The overall examination pass rates in areas which retain grammar schools and secondary moderns consistently surpass those with a fully comprehensive policy.<sup>24</sup> Some fully-comprehensive LEAs have actually produced results below the national average for secondary modern schools in spite of the advantage of having the most academically able children on their rolls. In the fully-comprehensive Bristol LEA, for instance, the percentage of 15-year olds achieving 5+ GCSE grades A\*- C was below the national average for secondary modern schools - 35.1% in 2004 for the Bristol comprehensives compared with a national average of 42.3% for secondary modern schools,<sup>25</sup> i.e. 35%.

We do not deny that there are very successful comprehensive schools, including some former grammar schools, but believe they are successful *in spite of* the current system, rather than *because of* it. Their success cannot mask the failings of the comprehensive ideology. We believe that greater specialisation, as outlined in this document, will improve the quality of secondary education for all, and that Ellen Wilkinson, minister for education in the post-war Labour Attlee Government, was speaking the truth when she remarked in 1946, "There are differences in intelligence among children as well as among adults. There are distinctions of mind and these are imposed by nature. I am afraid that this is a fact which we cannot get over. Children will be different in bent, and in intellectual capacity. There is a purpose in education and that is to draw out and develop the best in every child. Because children differ in their intellectual makeup, it seems to me that different provisions must be made by the Ministry of Education."<sup>26</sup>

The UK Independence Party believes that these proposals will lead to the building of a number of new purpose-built secondary schools. We will insist that these should cater for no more than 800-900 pupils. Schools of all types function best where all the pupils know all the staff and all the staff know the pupils.

Finally, we will reverse the policy of closing special schools. We believe that children with major behavioural problems are in most cases better catered for outside the main educational system. We totally agree with the recent National Union of Teachers (NUT) report<sup>27</sup> that the policy of including these children in ordinary state schools has failed.

Likewise, we believe that children with learning difficulties or severe physical handicap should be educated in special schools with suitable facilities and specialist teachers to meet their particular needs. It makes far more sense to concentrate these resources rather than trying to integrate these children into mainstream schools, which lack sufficient funds to provide the physical aids and special attention they need without depriving other pupils.

**More rigorous Examinations.** Every year when the results of GCSE and "A" levels are announced, the percentage both of passes and top grades shows an increase on the previous year. There are four possible reasons for this:-

- a) Children are working harder.
- b) Children are becoming more intelligent.
- c) The examinations are becoming easier.
- d) The expansion in higher education is requiring entry standards be lowered to ensure more students enter higher education.

In spite of government denials, strong evidence exists that the third and fourth possibilities are the real reasons. Increased parental pressure alone is not a sufficient explanation for the increase in proportion of “A” grades at “A” level from 12.8% in 1992 to 22.6% in 2005 - almost double<sup>28</sup>. In these circumstances, it is no surprise that Oxford and Cambridge Universities, which abolished their own entrance examinations during the 1990s are having to bring back some form of entrance examination for certain subjects because of a lack of confidence that a grade “A” pass at “A” level is a sufficiently reliable indicator of a student’s ability.

With GCSE’s, the situation has become very disturbing. According to Jeffrey Robinson, a senior examiner in GCSE maths for the OCR (Oxford, Cambridge and Royal Society of Arts) Board, it was possible in 2001 to gain a C grade with a score of just 20%, whereas such a mark required 45% in 1988<sup>29</sup> - in other words, a pupil can now achieve what is regarded as an acceptable pass in spite of getting four out of five questions wrong!

The problem with the GCSE is that it is a single exam trying to cope with too wide an ability range. The old “O” levels in the 1970’s had nine grades, of which 1-6 were regarded as passes. This changed later to five grades with the first three being passes. This examination was only designed for the top 20% of the ability range, whereas the GCSE is aimed at something like 90%. As “O” level examinations are still being produced in Britain, albeit for use overseas in countries such as Singapore, Brunei and Pakistan,<sup>30</sup> we will immediately restore the “O” level’s status as an approved qualification and allow British schools to reintroduce them if they so desire.

If the GCSE is worth retaining in anything like its present form, the grades need to be reassessed, being divided into different categories of “pass”, and the bottom grades being unambiguously called “fail”. We will initiate a study as to the feasibility of returning over time to the “O” level system alongside more practical NVQ-style examinations, which would offer a more realistic test of ability for less academic children.

We will ensure that modular coursework is rapidly eliminated from GCSEs and “A” levels, except where essential such as music, art and drama. Coursework creates opportunities for plagiarism, either from more able fellow-students or the internet, not to mention help from well-meaning parents. In consequence, these modules do not allow an accurate assessment of an individual pupil.

We believe that traditional examinations are more reliable indicators of a pupil’s merit. Furthermore, they are impartial. With teachers marking their own pupils’ coursework, there is a possibility of bias, whether intended or not, for or against individual pupils. In addition, some counties have issued guidelines to teachers that in “continuous assessment” (i.e. modular work), they were not to discriminate and were to award full marks to most candidates.<sup>31</sup> The abolition of coursework may result in some recently-introduced subjects disappearing altogether.

While it will never be possible to ensure that any particular grade in one subject will indicate precisely the same level of academic ability as the same grade in every other subject, we will aim to ensure that as far as possible there will be no subjects, either at GCSE or “A” level, which are seen as being easier than others. The fact that between 1997 and 2004 the number of “A” level entries for physics, maths and modern languages fell, in some cases by over one third, whereas the entries for media & TV studies increased by over 200% casts strong suspicion on this being currently the case<sup>32</sup>.

We are firmly committed to retaining “A” levels, believing that, divested of the coursework component and grade inflation, they will continue to provide a good test of ability. We recognise the esteem in which the International Baccalaureate is held, and are happy for schools who have opted for these examinations instead of “A” levels to continue so to do. Likewise, if the proposal by Cambridge International Examinations for an alternative to “A” levels (to be called “Pre-U Qualification”) comes to fruition, we will also allow this also to be recognised as an alternative to “A” levels.

**Earlier Exit.** Whilst we are committed to providing free secondary education up to Sixth Form level, we are prepared to consider alternative forms of education or training for 15-year olds who find school life alienating. Early leavers will have the option to return to mainstream state education after experiencing the world of work should they so desire. In this regard, we will replace classes based on age with classes based on attainment. We believe this will motivate those children wishing to leave full-time education as soon as possible, as in order to leave before the age of 16, they would have to pass examinations in basic English and Mathematics.

This change must be coupled with a major expansion in traditional apprenticeships of a high standard and trade skills training for these children who come into this category.

**Restoring the role of parents.** Parents delegate to the school certain areas of their children’s education - principally the cognitive aspects. However, the introduction of Personal, Social Health and Citizenship education and Sex education has allowed the State, via the school, to intrude into areas which parents rightly feel belong to them and which in most cases they would manage better themselves.

A generation has grown up with the view that morality is a private matter, with there being no absolute rights or wrongs, and these erroneous views have been foisted on teenagers at school through “values clarification” - with parents being kept quite deliberately in the dark as to what is being taught. As for those who are aware, obtaining an opt-out for their children can be very difficult.

As with primary schools, we will still want to offer sex education (along with drugs education) but on an optional basis<sup>33</sup>. Although the objectives of current sex and drugs education are supposedly harm reduction and prevention, the result has been the opposite. Based on the assumption that children will experiment, they supposedly encourage them to do so safely. Pupils should be taught the value of self-respect, as they cannot respect others until they respect themselves.



We will insist that if contraceptives have been prescribed to under-age girls that schools and health professionals inform either the girl's parents or a responsible family member in whom the school has confidence. We note the growing support for abstinence education in the United States in both the main political parties and among the public at large, and are interested in whether such an approach in Britain could help reduce the number of teenage pregnancies.

The UK Independence Party will also make it a statutory requirement for explicit parental consent to be given wherever information such as biometric registration is demanded of pupils.

In conclusion, we believe that these policies, with their much more "hands-off" approach, will result in a considerable restoration of confidence in the public education system. We will nonetheless guarantee that those wishing to educate their children at home will still have this option available to them.

### 3) Tertiary Education

We believe that those who really should be at university should be supported financially by the state according to their need through to the completion of their bachelor's degree. To make this possible, we propose the following changes:-

**Cutting back on the number of universities.** University education is about the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake, and should only be available to those with a genuine thirst for knowledge and the acumen to handle it. A target of university education for 50% of school leavers is harmful for universities and students alike. It is a fallacy that a obtaining a degree will inevitably result in a successful career and guaranteed prosperity.

In 1962 there were only 250,000 university students. The current figure (2005) is just over 1,000,000 - some 43% of all 18-21-year olds<sup>34</sup>. This percentage is only slightly less than the 47% of students who gained 5 or more GCSE grades A\*-C (and it is possible to gain a grade C with a score of only 20%.) The only possible conclusion, even allowing for an increase in the population and in the popularity of university education, is that a significant number of students are being awarded degrees when their academic performance clearly does not merit it. This country simply does not need this over-supply of graduates.

We will therefore review the Conservative Party's "Comprehensivization" of higher education, which converted perfectly good polytechnics into third rate universities. The simple fact is that many jobs do not require qualification to degree level, and that degrees from some educational establishments are recognised by the students themselves as worse considerably less academically than those from the older universities such as the Russell Group<sup>35</sup>. We will institute a nationwide review of higher education with the intention of distinguishing between those institutions that deserve the title of university and those that do not, and between those courses which merit degree status and those that do not. We will encourage the redeployment of former university premises that no longer merit the title to technology and higher skills-based training.

The party will also address the blurring that has occurred in recent years between academic education and vocational training. While it is true that certain historic university courses do have a vocational element (e.g. medicine, law), these subjects are serious academic disciplines. The same cannot be said about tourism or media studies. The touchstone for an academically respectable vocational course is whether it is essential to have a degree in that subject in order to pursue a career in it.

This is definitely the case with medicine, but not with working in the media or a travel agency. Training for such careers should either be financed and regulated by the professions themselves or else undertaken through NVQs. The UK Independence Party will revise the NVQ courses, emphasising their distinction from degree courses in that they offer practical rather than academic training.

**Revising the Admissions policy.** Universities were masters of their own admissions policies until recently, when they caved in to unsubstantiated government accusations that their policies discriminated against candidates from poor backgrounds.

So now, following the 2004 higher education review, chaired by Professor Steven Schwartz of Brunel University, which stated “that it is fair and appropriate to consider contextual factors as well as formal educational achievement”,<sup>36</sup> universities have been encouraged to select pupils with lower “A” level grades if they come from a disadvantaged background.

The Office of Fair Access (OFFA) was established as a consequence of this review. It is no more than an official government bully, meddling in university affairs. The UK Independence Party will scrap OFFA immediately, and allow universities once again to be masters of their own admission policies. Concrete evidence of discrimination by the universities themselves in the pre-OFFA era has been very hard to substantiate.

Merit and academic ability must be the sole criteria when it comes to university places, especially if our most prestigious universities such as Oxford and Cambridge are to retain their world-wide reputation. A recent study by academics at Oxford<sup>37</sup> has found a strong correlation between “A” level grades and the class of degree obtained at these universities, regardless of the type of school attended.

**Restoration of Student Grants.** The introduction of tuition fees and loans has been a retrogressive step. How many of those of us who benefited from a grant would have had second thoughts about further education if we had known we would be saddled with a large debt on leaving university? The UK Independence Party intends to restore student grants.

Our proposals will result in fewer students than at present spending so long in full-time education. Therefore extra funding will be available which, over a period of time, will enable the student loans scheme to be replaced by grants.

Considerable additional finance will become available when Britain leaves the European Union, and no longer has to fund large numbers of continental students at British universities. It is estimated that there will be some 91,000 students from EU member states in British universities in 2007.

Instead of having to pay the full overseas student fees of between £8,000 and £20,000 per year, these students only need to find the £3,000 top-up fee. Like British students, they are eligible for a student loan to cover this, and so far, little attempt has been made to trace foreign students, once they leave the UK, to recover these loans. A recent estimate of extra revenue gained by leaving the EU and thus being able to charge the full overseas fee to students from the member states produced a figure of at least £50,000,000 per annum<sup>38</sup>, and with fees averaging £10,000 per annum, the figure for 2007, if the EU student intake increases as anticipated, the savings would be in the order of £900,000,000.

Furthermore, extra funding will be available by considerably slimming down the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) reducing the school inspection budget, reduced student costs along with a £500,000 annual saving by abolishing OFFA.

**De-politicising Overseas Study.** Although the UK Independence Party will insist on charging a fee from all overseas students, regardless of whether they come from the EU member states or not, we recognise the value of students having the chance to study in another country - both overseas students studying at British universities and British students studying overseas.

However, we are unhappy with the ‘Bologna Process’, to which Britain is a signatory. This builds on the Sorbonne Process which commits its signatories to “harmonising the architecture of the European higher education system”. We strongly disagree with this, and oppose Bologna’s emphasis on there being a European dimension to higher education. If within the UK alone there is such diversity in the academic quality of courses at different universities, there is inevitably going to be an even greater diversity within the different nations of Europe with their different academic traditions. “Harmonisation”, as always, means dumbing down to the lowest common denominator, and accepting politicised EU models of university education.

We will therefore withdraw from the EU’s Socrates and Erasmus schemes and initiate new student exchange schemes which are neither politicised nor driven by a goal of EU harmonisation.

We will abolish all lectureships and courses in European studies, including the 357 Jean Monnet projects in British universities. These are funded by the European Union, and are little more than avenues for pro-EU propaganda.

We strongly believe in opportunities for education in later life, and fully support **adult learning**, both through organisations such as the Open University, and through adult education classes. We therefore deplore the recent 4% funding cut for adult education, which is estimated to have reduced the number of places available on such courses by 500,000<sup>39</sup> and will seek to reverse this.

Finally, on the subject of higher education, we will initiate a complete review of **teacher training**, in order to eliminate any element of political indoctrination in the courses. Student teach-

ers are free to espouse any political views they wish personally, but the ethos of colleges, PGCE courses and schools must be free of any politicisation.

We will also separate teacher training colleges from universities. Their role is to train teachers for their vocation. The desire for academic respectability - namely a degree at the end of a teacher training course - must not in any way allow the vocational element to be compromised. We nonetheless will insist on high academic standards for secondary teachers in particular. The UK Independence Party will ensure they are appropriately qualified academically, namely that teachers must have a degree in any subject they teach at “A” level standard and at least an “A” level in any subject they teach at GCSE or “O” level.

## **5) Conclusion**

There is no argument for ignoring the widespread call for the reform of our failing education system. The reason for its survival in its present state is that it suits the dogmatic mindset of Westminster that the state must control everything and that everyone must be equal and think along certain politically-acceptable lines.

The damage that this approach has done over the years is incalculable. Besides the decline in standards of literacy and numeracy, the failure of education policy has contributed to the problems all too visible on our streets - drunkenness, drug abuse, soaring teenage pregnancy rates and a general lack of respect for authority among young people.

The education system which Britain urgently needs should not be afraid of fostering independent thought and informed debate, and must acknowledge and respect the vital role that parents have in the transmission of culture and values to their children.

It must also acknowledge the innate differences in levels of ability between different pupils, with examinations restored to once again providing a realistic challenge for different ability groups.

We believe that these proposals by the UK Independence Party will greatly improve standards in schools and universities and significantly benefit our people and nation.

**REFERENCES:**

- <sup>7</sup> A recent report by the CBI claims that thousands of young people are “unemployable” due to failings in the education system, and one in four children have inadequate reading and numeracy skills. See <http://www.cbi.org.uk/ndbs/press.nsf/0/c6cdc612ae041ced80256f6b0046be6e?OpenDocument>
- <sup>8</sup> In spite of section 406 of the 1996 Education Act forbidding the promotion of political indoctrination in schools, European Parliament Working document 2006/2041 (NI), recommends “instruct(ing) teachers on how to incorporate the European dimension” and the rapporteur, Tory MEP Christopher Beazley, when challenged as to its legality, simply said, “The Council of Ministers wants this.”
- <sup>9</sup> A full education policy to deal with Scotland’s different system will follow later.
- <sup>10</sup> Source: Gordon Brown, Budget speech 22nd March 2006
- <sup>11</sup> [http://www.dfes.gov.uk/behaviourandattendance/about/learning\\_behaviour.cfm](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/behaviourandattendance/about/learning_behaviour.cfm)
- <sup>12</sup> We nonetheless believe that regular testing of children’s abilities in English and Mathematics is good and helpful, and that schools should be encouraged to use short, simple proven tests such as the Holborn Reading Test or nfer Nelson *Progress in Mathematics*.
- <sup>13</sup> Jim Rose, *Independent Review of the Teaching of Early Learning*. HMSO March 2006.
- <sup>14</sup> Peter Tymms, *Are standards rising in English primary schools?* British Educational Research Journal Vol 30, No. 4 August 2004.
- <sup>15</sup> On 7th July 2004. See also CBI report. (Footnote 7.)
- <sup>16</sup> The culprit here is the GCSE combined science (Double Award) exam, a poor replacement for the old Physics, Chemistry and Biology “O” levels. For a review of the Chemistry and Physics components, with analysis of their knock-on effects on the “A” level syllabus, see <http://www.cre.org.uk/chemistry.html> and <http://www.cre.org.uk/physics.html>
- <sup>17</sup> See articles in *The Times*, 7th February 2006 and *The Daily Telegraph*, 9th February 2006.
- <sup>18</sup> See article in the *Daily Mail*, 22nd March 2006, which states that nearly 25% of children attending ISC-affiliated private schools come from households where income is average or below average.
- <sup>19</sup> See Harry Phibbs’ article in <http://www.socialaffairsunit.org.uk/blog/archives/000541.php>
- <sup>20</sup> See Sarah Cassidy’s article on a report by London University’s Institute of Education in *The Independent*, 10th July 2006.
- <sup>21</sup> Many Grammar schools have 10 or more applicants taking the voluntary 11-plus for each place on offer - such is their popularity. Source: <http://www.cre.org.uk/choice.html>, P2.
- <sup>22</sup> Sarah Womack, *Daily Telegraph*, 28th June 2006. The survey was conducted by *First* magazine.
- <sup>23</sup> A study by the Centre for Economic Performance at the London School of Economics concluded that the incomes for those born in 1970 was far more likely to be determined by their parents’ income than for those born in 1958. See report in the *Financial Times*, 17th June 2002. See also BBC news report from 11th May 2006.
- <sup>24</sup> Kent is an interesting study, as part of the county has a differentiated system whereas another part does not. In 2004, the differentiated sector (grammar + secondary modern) saw 59.7% of 15-year olds gaining 5+ A-C grade GCSE’s as opposed to 48.4% in the comprehensive. See DfES achievement and attainment tables for 2004.
- <sup>25</sup> Fred Naylor and Roger Peach, *The Truth about Grammar Schools*, National Grammar Schools Association, Brackley 2005, p25.
- <sup>26</sup> Quoted in Naylor & Peach, *Op Cit*, p4.
- <sup>27</sup> See report in *The Times* 17/05/06
- <sup>28</sup> Green, de Waal and Crockett, *Education: Better results and declining standards*, P14. Civitas on-line briefing 2005.

<sup>29</sup> Green, de Waal and Crockett, *op cit*, p10.

<sup>30</sup> By Cambridge International Examinations among others. See also article in the *Daily Telegraph*, 7th June 2006, which points out that they are marketed overseas as a “premier product”.

<sup>31</sup> Fred Naylor and Roger Peach, *The Truth about Grammar Schools*, p20.

<sup>32</sup> Campaign For Real Education, Spring 2005 Newsletter. p2.-

<sup>33</sup> We still recommend teaching the bare mechanics of sex as part of biology. Dr Brian Clowes, an American researcher, conducted a poll on teenage sex in 1986, and found that 46% of those given sex education on the lines described above had engaged in sexual intercourse, as opposed to 26% who had only been given biological sex education. The figure was higher (32%) for those who had no sex education at all. (Quoted in Fred Naylor, *The Family Way, The Case for Abstinence Education*, CRE. York 2000)

<sup>34</sup> Stephen Bush, *University Admissions and Fees*, CRE, York 2004. p12.

<sup>35</sup> The Russell Group is a self-selected group of large research-led British universities. 18 of its 19 members are in the top 20 in terms of research funding. It contains many of Britain’s top universities.

<sup>36</sup> <http://www.admissions-review.org.uk/downloads/finalreport.pdf> p7

<sup>37</sup> See article in *The Times*, 30/05/06.

<sup>38</sup> See article in *The Times*, 10/08/05

<sup>39</sup> <http://www.natfhe.org.uk/?id=adedcamp>

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