



# Creating a better future for our country's Education system – a new approach

## Background reading

See also link to - [FED National Education Consultation Report 2021](#)

## The Foundation for Education Development Proposition

We are advocating for a long-term strategy for education policy in England, shaped by the voices of those who use and benefit from the system. Currently, education policy is decided almost entirely by political considerations and the wishes of successive Secretaries of State. Even though their objectives are always intended to deliver the best possible system and outcomes, they are almost always cut short by the electoral cycle or internal political changes in government. We want a policy that is strategic, evidence based, co-constructed and long term that will provide stability for our system and allow it to become world class.

We have seen the impact of a system where Secretaries of State for Education are in office for an average of less than two years and the resultant short-term changes each seeks to make, with a time frame that means there is just insufficient impact on long term, underlying issues such as social mobility or the need for a modern, technically aware and technically supported education.

We are advocating to create a coalition of voices and inputs from education, business, politics and beyond, to build a long-term policy strategy for education. In 1997, Gordon Brown relinquished the Government's hold on interest rates and granted monetary policy independence to the Bank of England. We believe that now is the time to free education policy likewise so that it can help our country unleash its potential in the long term.



In 2019, therefore, the Foundation for Education Development (FED) committed to a three-year project which will, in the spirit of partnership, provide a neutral space for policy influencers from education, business, politics and beyond to vision the future. We all agree that our children and young people deserve the greatest education system. We have a vital part to play in bringing this to fruition. In doing so, we can empower future generations and unlock the country's potential.

### **Why is this so important?**

The fact that over the past 60 years in England, the average tenure of a Secretary of State for Education has been under two years, has led to constant change and a lack of stability across a system that has itself become fragmented. The irony is that in theory most recent governments have been committed to a 'school led, self-improving system' whereas in practice education policy and practice have become increasingly centralised. We believe that an independent approach to research, development and setting of education policy can unleash the potential of our education system where a joint approach can help solve deep, long-term issues such as too many young people underachieving and too few having the skills required for a modern economy, as noted in an increasing number of recent research reports.

### **Why now?**

We sense that the political climate may be ready for this shift. The impact of the pandemic and the pressures of climate change and the green economy have moved the dial. The needs of a post Brexit economy, the growth of regionalisation and the development of the self-improving school system mean that education, business and politicians need to become active partners in shaping the future.

We hear the strong call from employers for a more relevant system and we look at a growing sense of strength and self-worth among the teaching profession to help deliver a long-term approach to education, helped by a new OFSTED focus on the decisions behind a school's curriculum offer and the quality of education.

We also sense the beginnings of a shift in the political will, with an Education Select Committee report in July 2019 entitled '*A ten-year plan for school and college funding*' and a long-term lens clearly encompassed in the recent 'levelling-up' white paper. Even more recently in March 2022 a further Education Committee Report '*Is the Catch-up Programme fit for purpose?*' addressed the issue of a long-term plan. Section 6 of this report is headed '*Conclusion - A Long Term Funding Plan*'. It stated "*Both the NHS and the Ministry of Defence have long-term plans and secure funding settlements. **It is time for education to have one too.***"

Above all, we know from our conversations and our FED National Education Consultation that there is a growing groundswell of opinion for an approach to education policy that is co-constructed and genuinely strategic in the best interests of the country and its young people in an era of fast paced global change and dynamic competition