



FLOURISHING
AN OPEN MANIFESTO

Our ideas as at
January 2024

 **RADIX**
BIG TENT



**EDUCATION FOR THE
21st CENTURY**

“Imagination is more important than knowledge. For knowledge is limited to all we now know and understand, while imagination embraces the entire world, and all there ever will be to know and understand.”

Albert Einstein

“In the past, education was about imparting knowledge. Today, it is about providing students with the tools to navigate an increasingly uncertain world.”

Andreas Schleicher

“There is nothing, except religion, as conservative as a school curriculum. It is drenched in archaic prejudice and vested interest.”

Sir Simon Jenkins

A SYSTEM NO LONGER FIT FOR PURPOSE

The purpose of education is to enable individuals to make the most of their individual abilities, improve confidence and self-esteem, building life skills and the ability to work with others, and to enable them to be successful in their lives, success being understood broadly and self-defined by individuals themselves. Education should also instil a love of learning that encourages us all to seek continued learning as a lifelong pursuit – vital in a rapidly changing world.

For society, education serves as one of many tools necessary to strengthen the economy overall, to narrow the gap between rich and poor, to improve social mobility, to encourage innovation and change, provide resilience, reduce dependency and provide empowerment and real participation in civic life.

EDUCATION HAS BECOME A JOYLESS EXAM FACTORY

Instead, our education system has become a joyless exam factory. Mental health issues among students have increased 450% over the last decade with stressful workloads and financial challenges being two of the most important causes. Suicide rates in England and Wales

increased by 50 per cent between 2007 and 2011 despite student numbers increasing by only 14 per cent.

Yet, rather than looking at itself and changing, the education system has responded by spending yet more funds on dealing with self-created and self-perpetuated problems.

The system also remains largely stuck in an 18th century approach of didactic pedagogy over which has been overlain a sausage-factory approach of

A SYSTEM STUCK IN THE 18th CENTURY

management by numbers.

This is archaic in an information saturated world where knowledge is available at everyone's fingertips; where emerging Artificial Intelligence tools will transform the landscape; where today's 'knowledge' is obsolete tomorrow morning; where businesses continue to complain about hiring students unable to be productive in the real world.

One small example of the archaic way of thinking is that, for a generation that lives on their smartphones, some schools have taken to banning phones from the classroom rather than embracing them as a valuable educational tool.

THE REALITY

BRITAIN CANNOT FLOURISH WITHOUT SIGNIFICANT REFORM IN OUR EDUCATION SYSTEM RATHER THAN THE INEFFECTUAL TINKERING AROUND THE EDGES THAT HAS CHARACTERISED THE LAST SEVERAL DECADES

1. SECONDARY EDUCATION

1.1 Curriculum and Assessment

- We will abolish the national curriculum and set up a system where students compile their own preferred curriculum from a menu of options provided by schools and invest in the use of new AI tools to move towards an individualised, pupil-tailored educational experience
- Practical Numeracy, Communication Skills (including language, grammar, digital communication, etc) and Civic Studies will be

A FLEXIBLE, SELF-DIRECTED CURRICULUM RATHER THAN ONE IMPOSED BY THE STATE

FROM SUMMATIVE TO FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT

the only compulsory subjects

- We will shift the emphasis of student assessment away from exam results and more towards continuous and project-based evaluation, towards formative rather than summative assessment.

1.2 Training

It has been shown time and again that teachers' teaching skills have the greatest impact on

TEACH TEACHERS HOW TO TEACH

effective learning:

- Teacher training courses will be modified to put the main emphasis on 'teaching how to teach' including modules on effective teaching

Educational Needs or Disability)

- Throughout their careers, all teachers will be required to have regular training updates on effective teaching methods for a 21st century world

1.3 Real World Education

- We will introduce a requirement that a minimum of 20% of teaching time will be spent outside the school with visits to industry, cultural institutions and other real-world locations related to the subjects being taught
- Schools will be required to incorporate classes taught by visiting teachers from the real world of work into all their subjects

ENCHANCING PUPILS' OWN PASSIONS AND LEARNING ABOUT THE REAL WORLD

- Schools will be required to build time for students to pursue their own passions and to focus on their own particular skills – as is already the case in some schools

1.4 Abolishing A Levels

- We will abolish A Level exams and merge sixth forms into the tertiary education system as two-year foundation courses with a broader scope and the issuing of a Higher Education Diploma
- The foundation courses will be intended as preparation either for vocational/academic tertiary education, or for the world of work for those who do not wish to pursue tertiary education

1.5 Improving School Performance

- Ofsted has been the source of endless complaints, a stress generator for schools and teachers, and has doubtful performance. It needs fundamental reform as part of reversing the trend towards centralization, management by numerical target and a culture of finger-wagging policing
- We will abolish the one-size-fits-all approach

REFORMING THE REGULATOR TO ENHANCE SCHOOL PERFORMANCE

and encourage schools to devise their own performance measures, ones that suit their own style, their own objectives, and appropriate to their student population

- The regulator's role will be to help schools through that process, to learn from them what might be appropriate measures and to share those insights and ideas with other schools that may have similar approaches and objectives
- The regulator would have a role in facilitating shared learning across similar schools
- The role of the regulator would change from one focused on inspection and scoring box-ticking to that of a mentor, guide or counsellor – helping schools succeed in meeting their own objectives. Regulatory staff will be trained in these skills.
- The regulator's performance will be evaluated by the level of improvement achieved across the secondary education system
- The regulator will have an additional role to evaluate whether children in all areas and across the range of abilities have sufficient

access to an appropriate education and to make recommendations as to how this could be improved.

2. TERTIARY EDUCATION

2.1 Broadening Educational Options

- Much progress has already been made in the last years in broadening educational options beyond academic education to technical education and apprenticeships. We will continue to build on that work

2.2 Increasing Teaching Quality and Incentives

- Although some progress has been made, the incentive system in universities continues to privilege research activity over teaching activity as a route to academic promotion. This needs to change.
- As is already the case in some, all universities will be required to provide a teaching career ladder that is equivalent to the research career ladder in terms of status and prospects

BRINGING SKILLS, STATUS, FLEXIBILITY AND BROADER PERSPECTIVES TO TEACHING IN TERTIARY EDUCATION

on promotion and pay

- Faculty members who wish to undertake teaching activities in tertiary education establishments will have regular training on modern teaching methods
- Tertiary education establishments will be required to incorporate classes taught by visiting lecturers from the real world of work into all their subjects
- We will introduce a requirement that a

minimum of 20% of student time will be spent outside the educational establishment with secondments to industry, cultural institutions and other real-world locations related to the subjects being taught

All tertiary education courses will be structured as a compulsory core module to make up no more than 15% of the curriculum with each individual student then compiling their own chosen curriculum from a set of available modules

2.3 Financial Transparency

We will introduce greater administrative and financial transparency between universities' teaching and research activities with tertiary education establishments required to report finances for the two separately as well as any cross-subsidisation.

About us

At Radix Big Tent we are focused on influencing public debate and public policy through convening disparate voices across the population outside Westminster and across all political affiliations to boost Britain's potential in an ever more complex and uncertain world.

Flourishing is our Open Manifesto project intended to stimulate debate around the political platforms that will emerge in an election year.

Radix Big Tent is the trading name of the Big Tent Foundation, a registered educational charity. Registration Number: 1195014



 RADIX
BIG TENT