

# Scottish Democratic Alliance

## Education – Executive Summary

Updated 12-06-2009

A high quality education system, which enables both our younger generation and our adult students to develop their practical and mental skills to their fullest potential, is an essential element in the sustainability and growth of our nation. The **Scottish Democratic Alliance (SDA)** is of the opinion that the existing education systems, in their broadest sense, are no longer meeting the needs of Scotland in this century.

**Performance:** Scotland exists in the global economy, where other countries are producing high proportions of fully educated pupils, who on reaching the tertiary stage outperform us on nearly every comparator. Unless this situation is addressed, and soon, Scotland will have little or no prospect of holding her own in this competitive world.

**School Funding:** The **SDA** has become aware of one glaring deficit, the disparity in the ratio of funds reaching the chalk face across the different local authorities. For example, while others deliver £0.84P in the £1.00, one LA achieves as little as £0.48P in the £1.00. This particular LA has seen parents at one secondary school having to pay for private tutors themselves to enable pupils to receive tuition in science subjects. This is utterly unacceptable.

**Relocate Control:** The **SDA** therefore proposes that the overall control of education should be removed completely from local authorities and placed within a system which provides an even allocation of funding per pupil across all of Scotland.

**Shire Education Authorities:** The **SDA** proposes the setting up of Shire Education Authorities (SEAs) reporting directly to the Education Minister, and we suggest that the SEAs should cover approximately the same geographical areas as the present Scottish counties and regional authorities. Each DEA to be managed by a board consisting of a maximum of nine persons with proven educational qualifications and/or management experience.

**Shire Education Authority:** The SEA board members to consist of representatives appointed from serving members on nine of the local education institutions and school boards, rotating through all the local education boards in turn, each SEA board member being required to serve for a fixed period of two years. This system will ensure a flexible balance of experience to meet both local and national requirements.

**SEA Funding:** The funding for the SEAs would be based on a nationwide standard payment for every pupil and student within the local agencies area. There would be a higher payment for pupils with special needs, special courses, remote area transport, etc. An allowance for annual building maintenance would be incorporated into each SEA budget. The SEAs to be directly responsible to the Education Minister for the effective management of all aspects of the education system within their areas of responsibility. The SEA boards also to be held accountable for achieving pre-determined annual targets and budgets within their areas of responsibility.

**Local Control:** Greater authority must be given to head teachers and school boards to enable the provision of flexible curriculums tailored to meet the needs of the pupils in their charge. The school boards to consist of a maximum of nine persons with proven educational qualifications and/or experience in business. The Scottish education system must be capable of providing pupils and students with an education which is suitably flexible to enable them to find employment, appropriate to their abilities and ambitions, within the available local or national work markets.

**Curriculum:** The **SDA** believes that a balanced curriculum must prepare pupils, not only with employment skills but also with a range of social and life skills to build self-awareness and self-worth. Skills such as cultural awareness, social and gender interactive skills, human rights, physical education, sports, and a basic understanding of food and personal hygiene issues. In overall terms we must give them an education to provide them with the skills, the confidence and the self-discipline necessary to understand, to live confidently within the boundaries of, and to be able to contribute positively towards our society as it really is.

**Target University Student funding:** Traditionally, the funding approach has been to see what emerges as far as education and entrepreneurship is concerned. Scotland cannot afford to continue such a lottery style approach. The government should provide course or student funding only for specific courses and student quotas **targeted** towards a national development strategy plan. If universities want to provide other degrees then they should be free to find the funds elsewhere. To ensure that students have the abilities necessary to complete the graduate courses they will be required to have an agreed level of entrance qualifications or alternatively be required to pass an entrance examination.

**Adult Education:** The Scottish education system must also be capable of providing high quality adult education for our multi-cultural society in order to cater for today's ever changing social conditions. We must provide a balanced opportunity for attaining and retraining skills across the full range of qualifications, because it is equally important for Scotland to have persons with practical and technical skills as it is to have persons with academic qualifications. Scotland's economic future relies heavily on a flexible workforce who can contribute to the production of high value products.

**Performance:** Scotland was the first nation in the world to provide public education for all our children. Until recently the Scottish education system was acknowledged as one of the best in the world. Regretfully, political interference has undermined the quality of our education system, lowered morale within the overworked teaching profession, undermined discipline in schools, and brought about a general lowering of performance results.

**Equal Opportunity:** Every child should have an equal chance of an education to develop his or her ability to its fullest potential. This will provide the seeds which will enable the future talents of the Scottish people to grow and flourish in this highly competitive world.

**Healthy Meals:** The **SDA** supports the initiatives by the Scottish government to provide healthy nutritious meals for our children and students. A balanced meal is necessary to

provide the energy and the necessary range of supplements to promote and sustain healthy bodies and healthy minds for our developing younger generation.

**Exercise:** With the growing problem of obesity and the attendant ailments affecting all generations there is a need to return to a more positive attitude in our schools towards physical education. Regular programmed competitive exercise in the gym and on the sports field must be given greater prominence within the school curriculums. A wide range of voluntary extra-curricular activities should also be available in order to minimise the burden on the vital core curriculum.

**Discipline:** A significant factor in reduced school performance is the disruptive effect of a minority of pupils who do not conform to acceptable standards of conduct. A single disruptive pupil in a class can destroy a carefully planned curriculum. The principal underlying cause of this is the loss of effective parental control, mainly as a result of over-zealous action by politicians, who have gone to an excess to protect our children physically without fully considering the emotive and social aspects of their upbringing.

**Role Models:** Children up to their late teens are at an experimental age, when they need to learn by experience and example where the boundaries of socially acceptable behaviour are set. This is of the very essence of education. The former methods of making these limits clear are apparently no longer politically correct and must be replaced by others capable of filling the vacuum that obviously exists at present. Above all, teachers should not be expected to shoulder this burden alone, for it is one that must be borne by society as a whole. Nevertheless, more attention should be paid to the subject in teacher training.

**Parental control:** Effective parental control coupled to acceptable and enforceable codes of conduct at home, at school and in public, will help to prepare our children to understand and accept their responsibilities and accountabilities in society at large. Effective self-discipline helps to build character and self-worth, which is just as important as academic qualifications. After a whole generation of parents has been brought up with little or no personal standards of this nature, their responsibilities in respect of their children will have to be inculcated by an intensive nationwide campaign of education.

The **SDA** seeks a return to effective parental control, with stricter conditions of conduct imposed on the minority of disruptive pupils. The widespread physical and verbal abuse of teaching staff is totally unacceptable and needs to be swiftly and effectively dealt with. The ultimate authority and responsibility for the conduct and the discipline of children, whether at home or in public, must be returned to the parents.

**Policy:** This Interim Policy precedes our fully developed Education Policy. Due to the importance of Education to the future development of Scotland the Scottish Democratic Alliance is researching this subject very thoroughly.

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