

Thank you Alison.

It is, as ever, a great pleasure to be here in Manchester – the second most important city in Britain. After Stoke-on-Trent. A city of ideas.

Chartism, Marxism, the Co-operative movement - you can make a convincing case that Manchester is the true home to all these currents so crucial to the intellectual history of the Labour tradition.

From the Peterloo Massacre of 1819 to the home of the Co-operative movement on Rochdale Road (if only they had stayed there) to Chetham Library in Cathedral Gardens, where Karl Marx and Frederick Engels used to sit at that window-side table to discuss the works of Adam Smith, David Ricardo, and the educational impact of the 1833 Factory Act (2 hours teaching a day).

Yet most pertinently for today's speech, Manchester was home of the proto-feminist Elizabeth Wolstenholme-Elmy and so has an important place in the campaign for a woman's right to an education.

Long before Emmeline Pankhurst and the battle for the suffrage, here in Manchester Lydia Becker was also organising women to get elected onto the new School Boards.

And it was from this ferment of women's rights, social activism and labour organisation in the late Victorian period that the earliest antecedent of this union, the Association of Assistant Mistresses was formed in 1884.

This union has the representation of women in its DNA and it is to its tremendous credit that we see that tradition so vividly embodied by the leadership of Mary and Alison today.

And in that vein I would like to begin this morning by highlighting a point I made recently at the Association of School and College Leaders conference in Birmingham.

One that given your union's particular history may carry extra prescience.

That is: when it comes to the appointment of school leaders - and secondary school leaders in particular - like so many other sectors we have a women problem.

Because despite the fact that 62% of secondary teachers are women, when it comes to heads the figure drops to just a third.

Moreover, the Future Leaders charity have presented shocking evidence of governors explicitly making recruitment decisions based upon an applicant's gender.

We cannot allow this prejudice to continue. After all, how can we possibly talk about giving young women strong female role models, when we don't practice what we preach in the staff-room?

So I am counting upon ATL members everywhere to hold schools and governing bodies to account, making sure that exceptional female teachers have the opportunity to lead schools – and not just teaching unions...

TEACHING NOT TINKERING

Conference, in recent weeks, I have been setting out the vision for education which the Labour Party will put to the nation in 2015.

And I am extremely grateful to Alison, Mary and everyone else at the ATL for giving me the opportunity to share it with you today.

But this is certainly not the first time Mary has heard my views – as I am grateful for the frequent meetings we hold to discuss the future of education.

However, I am not just hearing your concerns - I am also reading them!

Because thanks to Midlands organiser Karl English and all the members of the Stoke-on-Trent branch, many of your 'Shape Education' postcards have been hand-delivered to my constituency office in the Potteries.

This welter of policy suggestions serve as another reminder of your passion for education: a testimony to the commitment, resourcefulness and creativity of teachers in this country.

And let me take this opportunity to put on the record the deep appreciation of myself and the Labour Party for your diligence and dedication as public servants.

Let me thank you for all the unseen, unsung and difficult work you do in educating young people – often from troubled backgrounds - up and down this country.

And having sat quietly at the back of quite a few year 10 classes now, I remain in awe of your ability to stretch the most able, carry the struggling, offer space for reflection, whilst delivering the learning outcomes.

All of which is essential.

Because when it comes to education outcomes, it is your work that makes the difference. Yes, school autonomy matters; yes, leadership is vital; yes, accountability is important; But the global evidence is clear: no education system can outperform the quality of its teaching.

So relentless tinkering with the curriculum, tweaking the accountability framework, unending structural upheaval - in all of this the government is ignoring what matters most when it comes to raising our children's attainment. It is teacher quality that makes the biggest difference. What is more, this is a matter of social justice.

Because we know that for children from disadvantaged backgrounds, without social capital or parental input to fall back upon, what happens inside the classroom has an even bigger impact on their life chances.

Research from the Sutton Trust has shown that teacher quality can mean as much as year's difference to the learning progress of children from challenging circumstances.

So if we accept that teacher quality is the most important element in giving our children the start in life they deserve; if it is to teachers we turn when we want to expose disadvantaged children to the liberating potential of education; then working to raise the standard of teaching even higher must be the number one public policy priority in any responsible, evidence-based approach to education.

So the purpose of my speech today is to demonstrate my party's commitment to action on what matters: raising the status, elevating the standing and lifting the standard of teaching in this country.

CAREERS IN THE CLASSROOM

Therefore, my ambition as Education Secretary in the next Labour Government would be to make sure we have a world class teacher in every classroom, studio or workshop.

And the first step in achieving this, the absolute bare minimum - is to make sure that every teacher in our schools is qualified.

It is bizarre and damaging that the Government's signature teaching policy is to make us the only country in the world that doesn't expect its teachers to have a qualification.

As the latest school workforce statistics revealed last week, there has been a 16% rise in unqualified teachers within the last year.

So under a Labour Government, all permanent state school teachers would have to have qualified teacher status or be working towards it.

However, at times the Government's dismantling of professional teaching standards has threatened to go much further than allowing unqualified teachers into our classrooms.

We see in the Free School programme the imprint of an aggressively free market 'fly or fail' approach to school improvement.

And traces of that philosophy are detectable in the approach to the national architecture for teaching standards too.

In part, that is why we in the Labour Party are following the blueprint for a College of Teaching with particular interest.

We believe that a clearly agreed, independent and ambitious set of standards could be of tremendous benefit to the teaching profession.

But I would argue that the success of that initiative depends on it being both bottom-up and profession-led.

The ghost of the General Teaching Council casts a long shadow.

So if we are serious about elevating the status of teaching, then there has to be a role for government when it comes to strengthening that professional standards architecture.

As you are all discovering, government policy makes a difference – for good or ill.

Speaking to a teacher in Bury last week, he reflected on how in the mid-1990s being a teacher was not regarded as holding much status.

And how during the course of the last Labour Government, the tenor of the conversation turned from 'he or she can't teach' to admiring phrases of 'I don't know how you do it.'

With this government's deregulatory agenda - with more teaching assistants being turned into classroom teachers on the cheap – we have to ensure those hard earned benefits are not lost.

What is more, there is also a clear need to look at new ways of getting the sharpest candidates into teaching, placing the best teachers into under-performing schools and, most of all, allowing the best teachers to carry on teaching in the classroom.

Teachers who want to build their expertise in a particular subject or pedagogical skill should be given the opportunity to progress whilst still practicing the calling that first attracted them to the profession.

They should not feel the need to go into management and leadership just to advance their careers.

So we would work with the profession to create a framework of new career pathways for teachers, taking inspiration from the structured career progression routes in Singapore, one of the world's leading education systems.

And also learning the lessons and building on the best of the Advanced Skills Teacher model.

Because what the Labour Party is interested in, first and foremost, is encouraging teachers to be all they can and should be – professionals whose job is so important it requires the very highest levels of performance.

That is how we raise school standards and give our children the opportunity to fulfil their potential.

A REVOLUTION IN CPD

But QTS is the minimum we should expect.

It is the beginning of a teacher's professional development. But it should certainly not be the end.

Because whilst you should all be very proud of our performance in the OECD's test-run for assessing collaborative problem solving skills, our results on reading, mathematics and science show that we still have a long way to go in our pursuit of excellence.

Furthermore, the traditional policy response - of focusing upon initial teacher training is - is not sufficient to tackling the wider challenge of teacher development.

As research by the London School of Economics and the Sutton Trust has demonstrated, if we could just raise the performance of the least effective teachers already in the system merely to the average, then England would rank in the top five education systems in the world in reading and mathematics.

And it is that tantalising prospect which motivates us in the Labour Party to think about new ways of improving teacher quality across the board.

So under a Labour Government, teachers would be expected to undertake regular professional development throughout their careers and revalidate their expertise at regular intervals.

Because we believe it is absolutely vital that teachers keep their skills, knowledge and practice up to date.

And we also believe that, given the pace of progress, an understanding of the latest pedagogical or technological innovations is sure to benefit pupils.

And we believe that a process of re-validating teachers' expertise would bring them into line with other high-status, mature professions such as lawyers, doctors and accountants.

However, I do accept that there are two road-blocks in the current landscape which could undermine this strategy.

And the first of these is the poor quality, low value and frankly inadequate provision of continuous professional development that currently exists within our system.

Indeed, this is another reason for our revalidation policy - we want to encourage both supply and demand for high quality, peer to peer professional development.

What is more - I know this is an issue is dear to the ATL.

I have seen the quality of your own training in a workshop I attended in North Staffordshire ran by, that man again, Karl English.

So let me begin by thanking you for your persistence in pressing politicians to take seriously the case for better professional development.

Yet I would also stress the importance of making the case to parents.

If we want to build a progressive case for professional development, for ensuring that teachers have the training to be all they can be in the classroom, then we need to take parents with us.

And one of the elements of the school calendar that really baffles them is INSET days.

In my experience, schools inform parents about all sorts of things – from dinner money demands to uniform requirements to recycling rates – but one of the most important elements that boost their children's learning is never explained.

When it comes to CPD, parents are dealing with an information black-hole.

So I am calling on school leaders to explain to parents just what is happening in these INSET days: is it focused on numeracy, or behaviour management, or Special Educational Needs provision?

What has been identified as a weakness, and what is being worked upon?

If we want parents to get behind CPD – and we do – then let's start informing them what it is all about.

And this will help to ensure that CPD is just that: not catching up on back-loads, or getting ready for Ofsted, but the effective focus on the development of teaching skills and the mobilisation of that knowledge across the school.

WORKLOAD WOES

Yet if we are going to engineer a revolution in professional development then you are going to need some time to do it.

As the Institute of Education has argued the 'proportion of teacher time devoted to CPD in England is lower than in the best-performing school systems.'

Indeed, if the recent Teacher Workload survey is to be believed, the average secondary classroom teacher could spend less than 2 hours a week on individual or professional development.

So, I recognise that workload represents the second major road-block to you being able to grow and develop as teachers - every time I talk with teachers it is the overriding concern and our retention rate speaks for itself.

So, again, we need to work together to see where we can strip out the bureaucracy and form-filling – whilst retaining effective accountability measures – which prevent you doing your job.

Because the Workload survey that suggested nearly half of teachers say they waste a significant amount of time on pointless paperwork.

Now, data is important. One of the lessons of London Challenge was that the effective use of data allowed fragile schools to be assisted, underperformance addressed, demographics in need identified.

But we don't want it to kill your ability to function in the classroom.

So, I positively welcome any constructive suggestion that can help reduce the bureaucratic burden, move away from this damaging burn-out model of teaching, and begins to let you focus on what you were trained to do: teach.

LABOUR'S VISION

But what under a 2015 Labour Government would you teach?

What, other than the highest possible standard of teaching, does our vision of the future of education look like?

Here, I think, we have a careful balance to strike between change and churn.

Every week, visiting schools and colleges, one teacher will ask when will you politicians stop coming into office and ripping all the old policies up again?

And the next will ask, when are you getting rid of this, that and other?

So I am sympathetic to many of the concerns expressed about the curriculum and the accountability framework.

And I welcome Ofsted's programme of reform and, in particular, a dedicated focus on the quality and experience of inspectors.

We will not be tearing apart the curriculum reforms, but I will reserve my right as Secretary of State to address some of the potential problems of the current accountability weighting system and perverse incentives.

Because our priority has to be deliver a curriculum which provides excellence in vocational as well as academic pathways.

To ensure that those young people whom Ed Miliband has called 'the forgotten 50%' get the schooling they need.

Driving up the quality of apprenticeships by making them all level 3 and last a minimum of two years; Focusing colleges on local labour markets by ensuring all vocational teachers spend time in industry refreshing their skills; and delivering a sharper focus for Further Education by accrediting the best colleges as new Institutes of Technical Education to deliver our gold-standard Technical Baccalaureate.

Secondly, we need to encourage an ethos of schooling that moves beyond the 'exam factory' model and, alongside the academic and vocational basics, takes seriously the nurture of young people's character, resilience and emotional wellbeing.

Because it seems to me that the managerial, target-driven performance culture that has permeated our education system in recent years is beginning to threaten the very purpose of schooling itself.

Do not mistake me: I am zealot for minimum standards, rigorous assessment and intelligent accountability.

But if we choose to focus upon exam results and league tables to the detriment of everything else, then we are simply not preparing our young people for the demands of the 21st century.

As any employer will tell you - outstanding qualifications, on their own, are no guarantee of the wider aptitudes required for the world of work.

So let me say very clearly: I see absolutely no reason why we need to make a choice between taking seriously academic or vocational rigour and also nurturing a young person's character and wellbeing.

As well as enquiring and reflective learners, we want young people who are confident, determined and resilient; young people who display courage, compassion, honesty, integrity, fairness, perseverance, emotional intelligence, grit and self-discipline.

What is more, I would argue that the contemporary context makes the cultivation of character even more important.

Research by the likes of Professor Avner Offer at Oxford University has argued that such is 'the flow of novelty' in contemporary society, that our young people require greater discipline and self-control in order to balance their long-term wellbeing against their short-term gratification.

It is absolutely vital that the benefits of delayed gratification, attentiveness and patience are more clearly articulated to our young people.

Particularly to vulnerable and disadvantaged children, who are far more likely to deal with the consequences of failure and setbacks in a negative way.

So we want to see schools return to emphasising these broader attributes; to recognise that the supportive, dedicated and aspirational environment they provide can produce well rounded people as well as good test scores.

And, clearly, they will need an accountability criterion which takes account of the nurturing of these attributes and aptitudes.

But, ultimately, again, all of this is dependent upon the human capital – which is you.

More than that, this is a vision of schooling which starts to think of the teacher as more than just the impart of knowledge.

Alongside this the teacher becomes coach, mentor, critic and facilitator.

And the ability to secure this vision begins and ends with a high qualified, motivated and inspiring teaching workforce.

My hope over the next year is to work with you to develop the programmes which can end the relentless churn and party political tinkering with education policy – and focus on what matters.

Ensuring a world-class teacher in every classroom, studio or workshop is there to deliver the education system which a strong society and a growing economy needs.