

1. Gordon Brown, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom (2007-2010)

Biography

Gordon Brown served as Prime Minister of the United Kingdom and Leader of the Labour Party from 2007 to 2010. Previously, Brown served as Chancellor of the Exchequer from 1997 to 2007.

Brown's commitment to improving education systems was proven in the 2000 Spending Review which outlined a major expansion of [government spending](#) in education with annual increases of 6.1% of GDP in real terms over four years to April 2004 exceeding even the previous Labor government's 5.4% figure by 2004. The share of education had in fact fallen from 5.2% in 1992 to 4.6% in 1999.

Since the start of 2011, Brown has co-led the Global Campaign for Education's High-Level Panel, and is a passionate advocate for global action to ensure education for all. He is in fact an advocate for the creation of a Global Fund for Education (GFE) "that draws on the experience of the global funds in health, and that serves as a focal point for a renewed drive toward getting another 68 million children into school by 2012. The GFE would engage the business sector, and have the flexibility to make grants to NGOs and private companies, as well as national governments and multinational agencies."

2. Andy Hargreaves, Professor of Education, Boston College

Biography

Andy Hargreaves is the Thomas More Brennan Chair in the Lynch School of Education at Boston College. In this capacity, his mission is to promote social justice and connect theory and practice in education.

Andy Hargreaves is the Thomas More Brennan Chair in the Lynch School of Education at Boston College. He is Editor-in-Chief of the Journal of Educational Change and leading editor of the first and second International Handbooks of Educational Change. His books have achieved outstanding writing awards from the American Educational Research Association, the American Libraries Association, the National Staff Development Council and the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, and are translated into many languages.

Andy Hargreaves' current research is on high performing schools and school systems and on whole school changes that benefit students with special educational needs.

3. Mary Hanafin, Former Minister for Education and Science, Ireland (2004-2008)

Biography

Mary Hanafin is a prominent Educator and Legislator. She spent 11 years as Minister in the Irish Government during times of great success and challenge. Mary successfully delivered as a Government Minister in several portfolios across an extensive range of Economic, Social and Cultural Responsibilities.

Mary has also had a highly successful earlier career in education. As a second level teacher for 17 years, Mary specialized in the teaching of the Irish Language, literature and History.

Mary Hanafin held Ministerial Office in Ireland in Government from 2000-2011. As Minister for Children 2000-2002 her achievements included the development of the National Children's Strategy, a 10 year plan to coordinate the services for children and to give children a voice in issues that affect them. This resulted in the establishment of The Office of The Ombudsman for Children, the development of the National Children's Parliament, and of School Councils.

As Government Chief Whip, and Minister in the Department of the Taoiseach (Prime Minister) in 2000-2002 she was responsible for the management of legislation through the National Parliament.

In 2004-2008 Mary was Minister for Education and Science. Key achievements included the introduction of National Standardized Testing of Literacy and Numeracy Standards Publication of School Inspectors Reports to enhance transparency of school performance; establishment of the Teaching Council on a statutory basis; development of a Strategic Innovation Fund for Higher Education; development of an Action Plan for Educational Inclusion; launch of a campaign to attract men in teaching; curriculum changes in Maths and Technology.

From 2008-2010 Mary managed the largest budget of Government in the Department of Social and Family Affairs. Here she introduced Welfare to Work Linked Payments for Young People, and developed the National Pensions Strategy.

From 2010 to 2011 Mary was Minister for Tourism Culture and Sport where she developed strategies for promoting Irish Culture and Tourism abroad and was also a partner in the Government's Economic Strategy.

During all this period, Mary participated in Economic Trade Missions to China, India, United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia. She has also chaired meetings and seminars of the European Council of Ministers, the Council of Europe and the OECD. Mary has spoken at a number of international events,

including the League of Arab Women, the Special Olympics, and Graduation Ceremonies in India and Jerusalem.

In the past year, Mary has been Vice President of the Fianna Fail Political Party, has lectured in Education Policy Making in a teacher Training College and presented a 10 part television series on promoting the Irish Language.

4. John Dennehy, Former Secretary General, Dept. of Education and Science, Ireland (1998-2005)

Biography

Mr. Dennehy was Secretary General of Ireland's Ministry of Education and Science from 1999 to 2006. During this period he had overall responsibility for managing a large Government Ministry, implementing and monitoring policy and delivering outputs. As Secretary General and as the Ministry's Accounting Officer, Mr. Dennehy was directly responsible to the Government and to Parliament for an annual budget in excess of eight billion euro.

An important part of his role as Secretary General was the provision of high-quality policy advice and briefing to successive Ministers and, as head of the Ministry, agreeing with each Minister outputs for the Ministry in the implementation of policy.

During his period as Secretary General, John Dennehy provided the strategic leadership and direction required in order to ensure that Ireland's education system at all levels was delivered to the highest international standards. This was critical to the Irish Government's overall strategy for sustained economic prosperity and international competitiveness. In support of this strategy, Mr Dennehy was actively engaged in a wide range of activities covering the key elements of policy planning, quality assurance, resourcing, regulation and evaluation, as well as ensuring the provision of a broad range of support services for all levels of education.

During his statutory term, John Dennehy, working closely with successive Ministers, initiated and implemented an unprecedented program of change and development, both within the Ministry and in the wider education sector, aimed at raising the quality of education and significantly improving customer service and accountability. This included the most significant program of structural, administrative, legislative and curricular reform undertaken in the history of the Ministry. He prioritized close cooperation with Education Ministries across the world and successfully concluded many bilateral agreements.

Before his appointment as Secretary General, Mr. Dennehy held many key, senior positions within the Ministry. He served as Assistant Secretary General, Assistant Chief Inspector of Schools, prior to which he was a Divisional Inspector of Schools, a Principal Teacher and a teacher. He was Chairman of Ireland's Teacher In-Career Development Committee, Secretary to the ground-breaking Review Body on Irish Primary Education, and was a member of the National Council for Curriculum and Development.

Mr Dennehy has represented Ireland, at the highest level, at a wide range of international education conferences, meetings and seminars. From 2000 to 2006, Mr Dennehy was also Chairman of the Education Committee of the OECD (Paris). During this period he was centrally involved in the restructuring and reorganization of the work of the OECD in education and also chaired education review meetings in a range of countries.

Mr Dennehy has been Director of IDIs Educational Services Division since 2007 and since then International Development Ireland (IDI) has been involved in the establishment of Private Schools and Universities; Curriculum Design and Evaluation; Teacher Education and Continuing Professional Development; Special Needs Education; Quality Assurance, and General Consultancy on all aspects of education across the world.

From 2007 to date, Mr Dennehy has acted as a visiting international education expert/advisor for the Abu Dhabi Education Council (ADEC) on the preparation and implementation of its Strategic Plan for Education. He has also participated in a number of workshops on education reform strategies, quality control and inspection of schools for ADEC.

Since leaving the Ministry, he has also served as an independent expert/advisor on education reform to a number of Education Ministers and Ministries in the Middle East, Asia and Eastern Europe.

5. Tarja Halonen, Former President, Finland (2000-12)

Biography

Tarja Halonen was the 11th President of Finland and the country's first female Head of State, serving from 2000 to 2012. **Tarja Halonen is also co-chairman of the United Nations Panel on Global Sustainability, supporting sustainable sourcing, access to education, and improving maternal health in low-income countries.**

From 1970 and throughout her political career (which began in 1974) she worked as a lawyer for the Central Organization of Finnish Trade Unions. In 1971, Tarja Halonen joined the Social Democratic party, and in 1974 was appointed Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister. She was elected to Parliament in 1979, and subsequently re-elected four times. In parallel, Ms. Halonen served five terms on the Helsinki City Council (1977-1996). During her time as Foreign Minister (1995-2000), Finland held for the first time the Presidency of the European Union from July to December 1999.

Tarja Halonen is a strong believer in the power of education to promote gender equality: in 2009, she convened the first International Colloquium on Women's Empowerment, gathering almost a thousand female leaders to brainstorm ways to educate and empower women worldwide.

Tarja Halonen has built her political career on promoting human rights, social justice and equality. Under her presidency, Finland became the first country in the world to make broadband access a legal right.

6. Muhyiddin Yassin, Deputy Prime Minister & Minister of Education, Malaysia, 2009-Present

Biography

Tan Sri Muhyiddin Hj. Mohd Yassin was sworn in as the new Deputy Prime Minister as well as the Education Minister of Malaysia on 10 April 2009. Prior to these new portfolios, he served as the Minister of International Trade and Industry of Malaysia from 18 March 2008 to 9 April 2009.

Tan Sri Muhyiddin Hj. Mohd Yassin has been a Member of the Parliament of Malaysia since 1978 and has since then been holding several posts in the Government, which include, Parliament Secretary of Foreign Ministry (July 1981 - April 1982), Deputy Minister of the Federal Territory (May 1982 – May 1983), Deputy Minister of Trade and Industry (June 1983 – August 1986), Chief Minister of Johor (August 1986 – May 1995), Minister of Youth and Sports (May 1995 – December 1999), Minister of Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs (December 1999 – January 2004), as well as Minister of Agriculture and Agro-based Industry (January 2004 – March 2008).

In the recent elections of the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) i.e. Malaysia's largest political party and a founding member of the Barisan Nasional ruling coalition, on 26 March 2009, Tan Sri Muhyiddin Hj. Mohd Yassin had won the party's number 2 post, which is the Deputy President of UMNO. Muhyiddin joined the state public service after graduating from university. He later took up management positions at various state-owned companies. He joined politics in the 1970s and was elected as [Member of Parliament](#) for [Pagoh](#) in [1978](#). During his term as MP, he was appointed Deputy Federal Territories and later Deputy Trade and Industry Minister. As Johor UMNO chief, he became [Menteri Besar \(head of the executive branch of government\) of Johor](#) from 1986 to 1995.

7. Zaid Al Siksek, CEO, Health Authority Abu Dhabi, UAE

Biography

Mr. Zaid Al Siksek was appointed as Chief Executive Officer for the Health Authority – Abu Dhabi in January 2008. Previous to this, he held the position of Director, Health Policy and Regulation for the Health Authority – Abu Dhabi from September 2005.

As part of the Executive Team within the Health Authority – Abu Dhabi, Mr. Al Siksek has been integrally involved with the development and implementation of the strategic directions and change agenda for development of the Abu Dhabi health system into a modern decentralized system with an independent regulatory function, universal health insurance, and a maximum of private sector involvement to ensure the delivery of world-class health care to present and future generations in the Emirate in line with the ambitious vision of the late Sheikh Zayed and the present government of Abu Dhabi. His executive responsibilities include Committee Chair and overseeing the process for outsourcing of public healthcare facilities in the Emirate and strategic capacity planning for the health system, including private health care providers and investors.

In his role as Director of Health Policy and Regulation, Mr. Al Siksek was responsible for all aspects of program development of the independent regulatory function for the Emirate. This included planning based on key indicators, development and implementation based on evidence based practice and evaluation for:

- Public Health, including prevention and health promotion
- Healthcare Professionals – standards of practice, regulation, examination and licensure
- Health Care Facilities – standards for buildings and health care provision, inspection and licensure of facilities
- Pharmaceutical and Medical Products – standards and regulations for Abu Dhabi based manufacturers and businesses