

# Vocational education review

March 4 2011

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The low-level vocational courses taken by many young people have little or no value in the labour market, suggests an independent review published today by the Department of Education. The report suggests funding should be focused more on high-quality apprentice schemes and that all young people who do not have good English and maths GCSEs should continue to study these subjects. The review was compiled by Professor Alison Wolf, Sir Roy Griffiths Professor of Public Sector Management at King's College London, UK.

Vocational qualifications, such as BTEC Diplomas, City and Guilds and OCR Nationals, are taken by 16-19 year olds as an alternative to traditional academic courses. A majority of over-16s are on vocational programmes. Many lead to higher education and skilled jobs, but many of the lower level qualifications have no [labour market](#) value and young people are getting no benefit from them.

Professor Wolf's review found that vocational qualifications do not always provide good quality workplace training and experience. "The system is complex, expensive and counterproductive," she says. "We have many vocational qualifications that are great and institutions which are providing an excellent education and are heavily oversubscribed. But we also have hundreds of thousands of young people taking qualifications that have little or no value."

The review recommends that all pupils should study a core of academic subjects until they are 16, and if they do not pass GCSE English and maths, they should be made to continue. More than half of 15-16 year

olds currently fail to get good grades in maths and English at GCSE level.

Professor Wolf also highlights the value of quality apprenticeships for young people aged from 16-18, with employers part-subsidised in order to offer the schemes. "Doing a good apprenticeship is worth far more to you in all sorts of ways than going and doing a university degree that doesn't interest you very much, and which often doesn't actually have that much value either," says Wolf. "What they need is to get into the workplace and to get some real skills that will serve them well in life."

Education Secretary Michael Gove, who launched the review findings today with Professor Wolf, reflected on the value of 'high-quality vocational courses,' which he said can provide 'access to great education and great jobs'. He said it was important to 'fix the system' to give all children the chance of these high quality courses. 'We will reform league tables, the funding system, and regulation to give children honest information and access to the right courses. Implementing these reforms will be hard and take a few years but we cannot afford another decade of educational failure.'

**More information:** Download [the full report](#) from the Department of Education

Provided by King's College London

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