

Vocational education



Have your say!

Vocational education is currently high on the political agenda. Here's what just a few politicians and public sector bodies have got to say about it.

“Our education system should reflect, not resist the real world. I want business to be more involved in shaping courses, funding courses and creating qualifications – with a much more co-operative approach across the sector – between colleges, local employers and voluntary organisations.”

Alan Johnson, Secretary of State for Education and Skills

Source: Alan Johnson's speech to the QIA's summer conference on 7 June 2006.

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“If Britain is going to succeed in today's global economy, it is vital that we are world leaders in education and continuously develop the skills of our workforce. That is why we want to give every schoolchild the opportunity to learn a trade and get practical work experience so they are ready to enter the jobs market when they leave school or college. And we want to give every adult the opportunity to learn new skills or train for a new career. Working together, government and business can create the high-tech, high-wage and high-skills jobs of the future, and ensure we have the people ready to fill them.”

Gordon Brown, Chancellor of the Exchequer

Source: www.traintogain.gov.uk


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“The curriculum underpinning vocational education in schools should be one that is verified by industry. Of course, the programme taken by 14 or 15-year-olds will come nowhere near making them job-ready, but the introduction must be real. It must be founded on a curriculum that is as rock-solid as that which teaches you to appreciate Shakespeare. That means that industry must be drawn into shaping the school curriculum in a range of vocational areas, just as universities have been the genesis of the curriculum in other areas.”

Dr Ken Boston, Chief Executive of the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA)

Source: www.qca.org.uk

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“Students involved in vocational courses add real value to any workplace. Students from a vocational background are using their business skills to hit the ground running when they start work. This is something that SMEs in particular value very much.”

Stephen Alambritis, Head of Parliamentary Affairs, Federation of Small Businesses

Source: Direct quote

“For far too long vocational education has been desperately undervalued. We have to turn that around and in the process open up new routes to learning for all those our system has been failing. If we can make that difference, new generations of learners and our economy will both derive immense benefit.”

Brendan Barber, TUC General Secretary

Source: www.dfes.gov.uk

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“For too long the vocational route has been seen as inferior to academic studies but succeeding in the skills sector takes just as much dedication, determination and hard work.”

Chris Humphries, Director General, City and Guilds

Source: Direct quote

“Businesses need to ensure that they have a skills-based selection process that looks at the applicant's competencies and ignores their age.”


John Lewis, Chief Executive Officer, Rotherham Chamber

Source: Direct quote

“Vocational education is extremely important because South Yorkshire is an economy that's gone through a transformation. There's still a long way to go ... but students who have been through business courses are leaving [Kirk Balk School] to work in the real world. They are bringing an understanding that is going to help employers and they are going to be an asset to employers who are helping the regeneration of the community.”

Michael Clapham, MP for Barnsley West and Penistone

Source: Direct quote



“Vocational qualifications are a highly relevant route into employment for many young people. Businesses of all shapes and sizes should be encouraged to work in partnership with local schools and colleges, helping them to identify and provide young people with the skills they'll need to enter the world of work.”

Roger Nunns, Chief Executive Officer, Barnsley Chamber

Source: Direct quote

“Vocational education ... should be a real option for those on course for Oxbridge; vocational education is for the student who wants to be an architect as well as the student who shows an interest in becoming a builder.”

David Bell, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools, Ofsted

Source: www.ofsted.gov.uk

Developing a Coherent 14–19 Phase of Education and Training

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