

Hot Breakfast Briefing
The Wolf Review
March 21 2011

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Agenda

Introduction

The economic context

The labour market

Analysis of the report

Impact on subjects

Reactions to Wolf

Conclusions

What do you think?

A well trodden path?

Vocational Reviews tend to :

- Follow economic downturns
- Take place in the early years of a Government
- Occur when a current VQ needs re-modelling
- Reflect a belief that others do it better. *“You will also want to take account of good practice in a selection of developed countries”*
- Arrive with the spring

Some noticeable differences this time

The Review faced:

- A tightly defined remit
- A sense of urgency
- A shopping list of givens
- A harsh set of economic conditions
- A political 'pull' towards core knowledge
- A different school system
- A new approach to the delivery of public services
- A different youth 'culture'

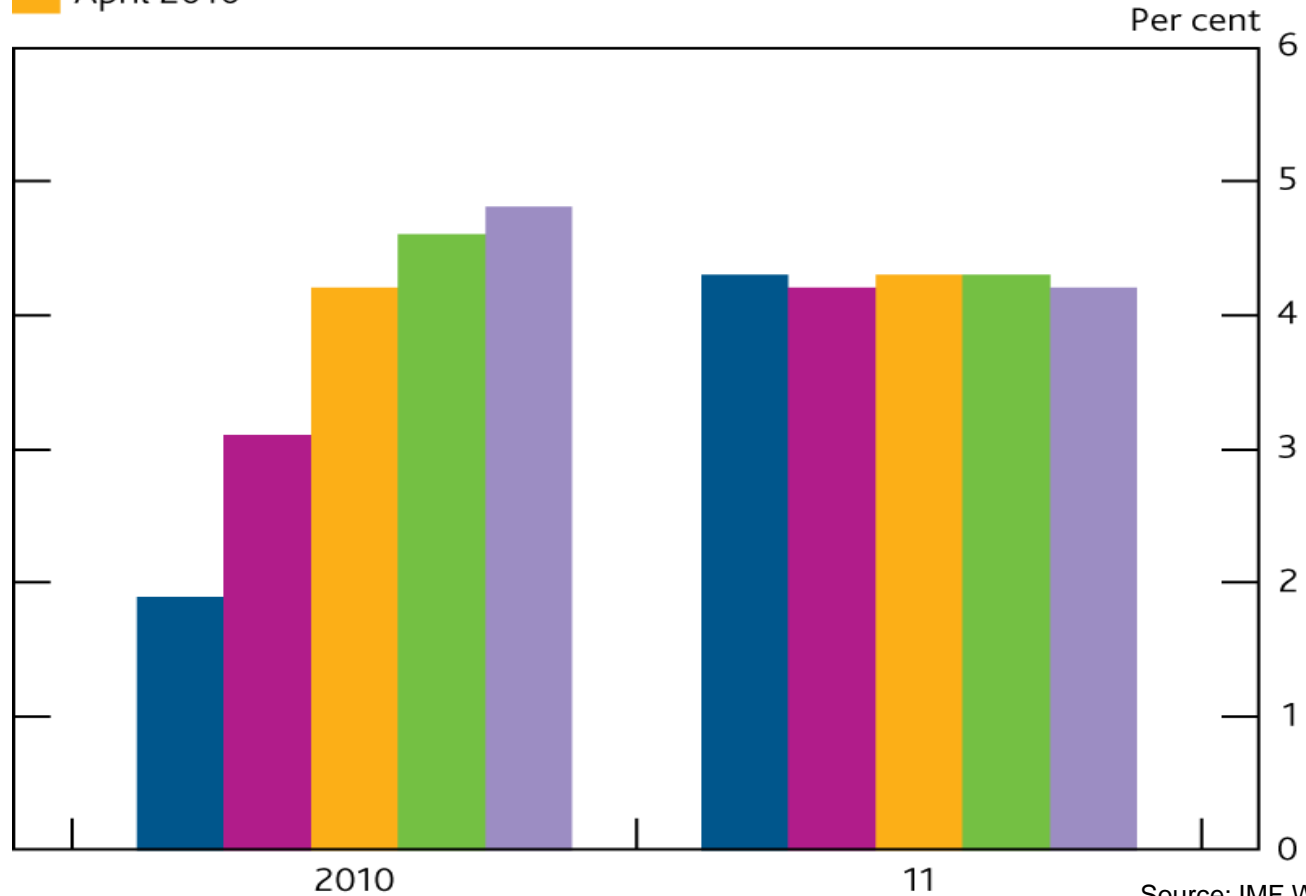
Understanding the mix

- 2 new approaches
 - A focus on the design of the system not re-design of the quals.
“Educational reform of the last 30 years is littered with qualification reforms of which perhaps two have been genuinely successful and many others an expensive failure”
 - A desire to get a better fit between the ed/training system and the labour market
- 3 clear principles
 - Avoid steering youngsters into cul-de-sacs
 - Avoid false equivalencies
 - Avoid micro-management and central prescription
- 4 key themes
 - The need for a broad 14-16 phase built around a strong core
 - Greater flexibility over choice of quals and provider, especially post-16
 - Stronger alignment with the needs of the labour market
 - Better preparation for entry to the labour market

The economic context: still difficult

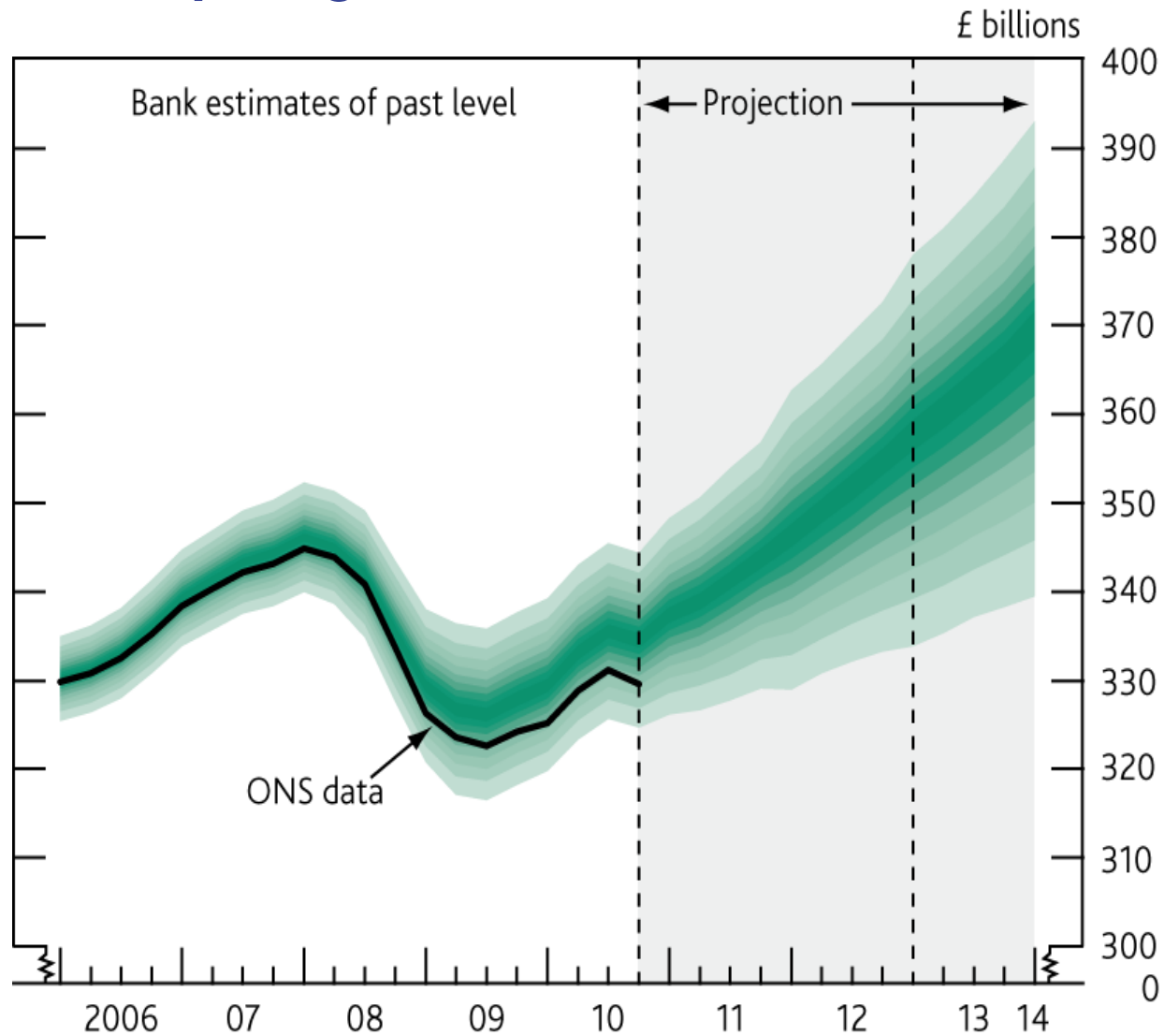
- Growth?
 - GDP projections show slow increases
 - Inflation projections show some concerns
 - Bank rate currently a low 0.5% with the next decision March 10th
 - £200bn asset purchases: Quantitative Easing
 - Consumer confidence still low
 - Chancellor will probably have limited hope to offer in the 23rd March budget

World GDP projections



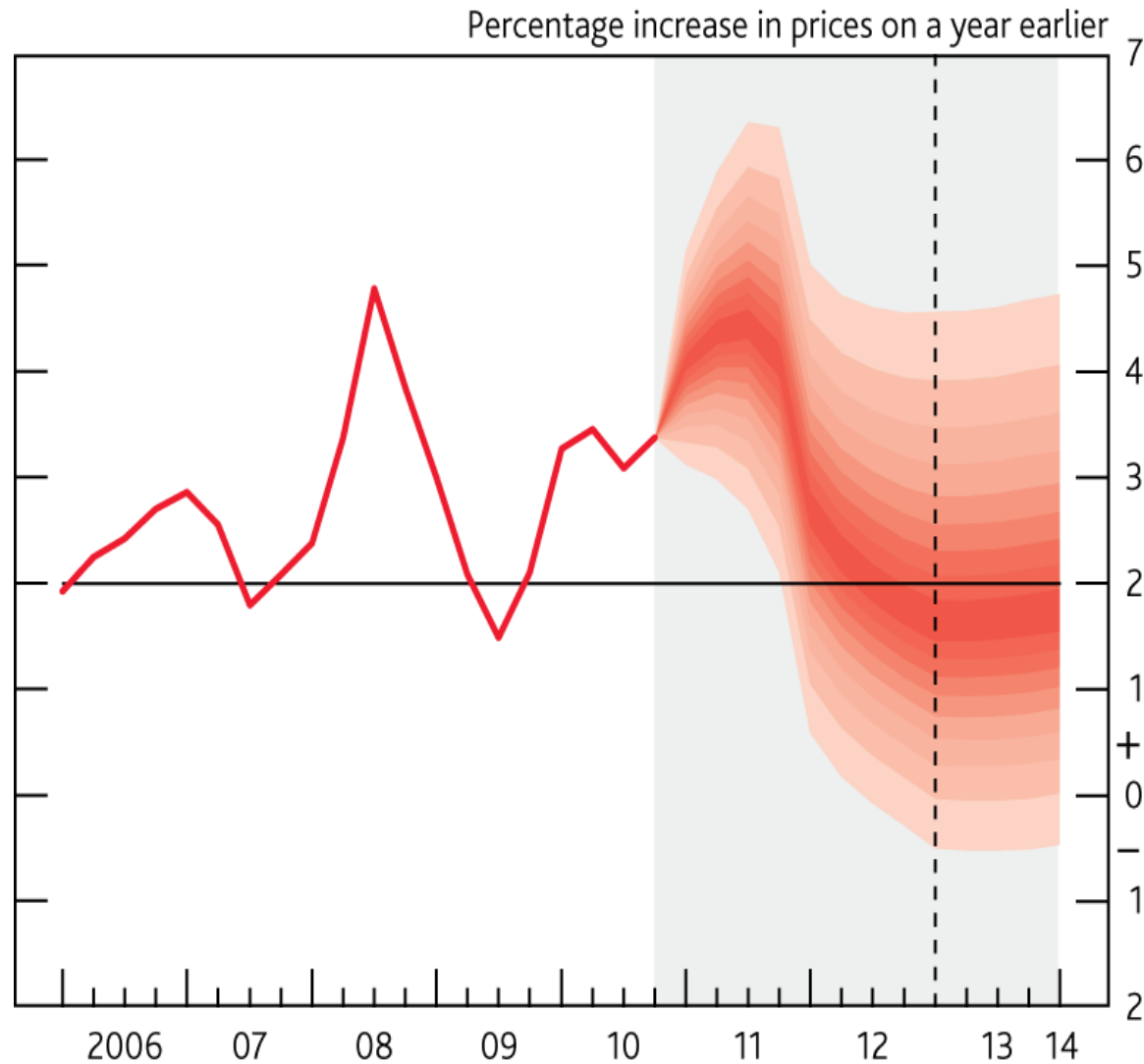
Source: IMF World Economic Outlooks

UK GDP projections



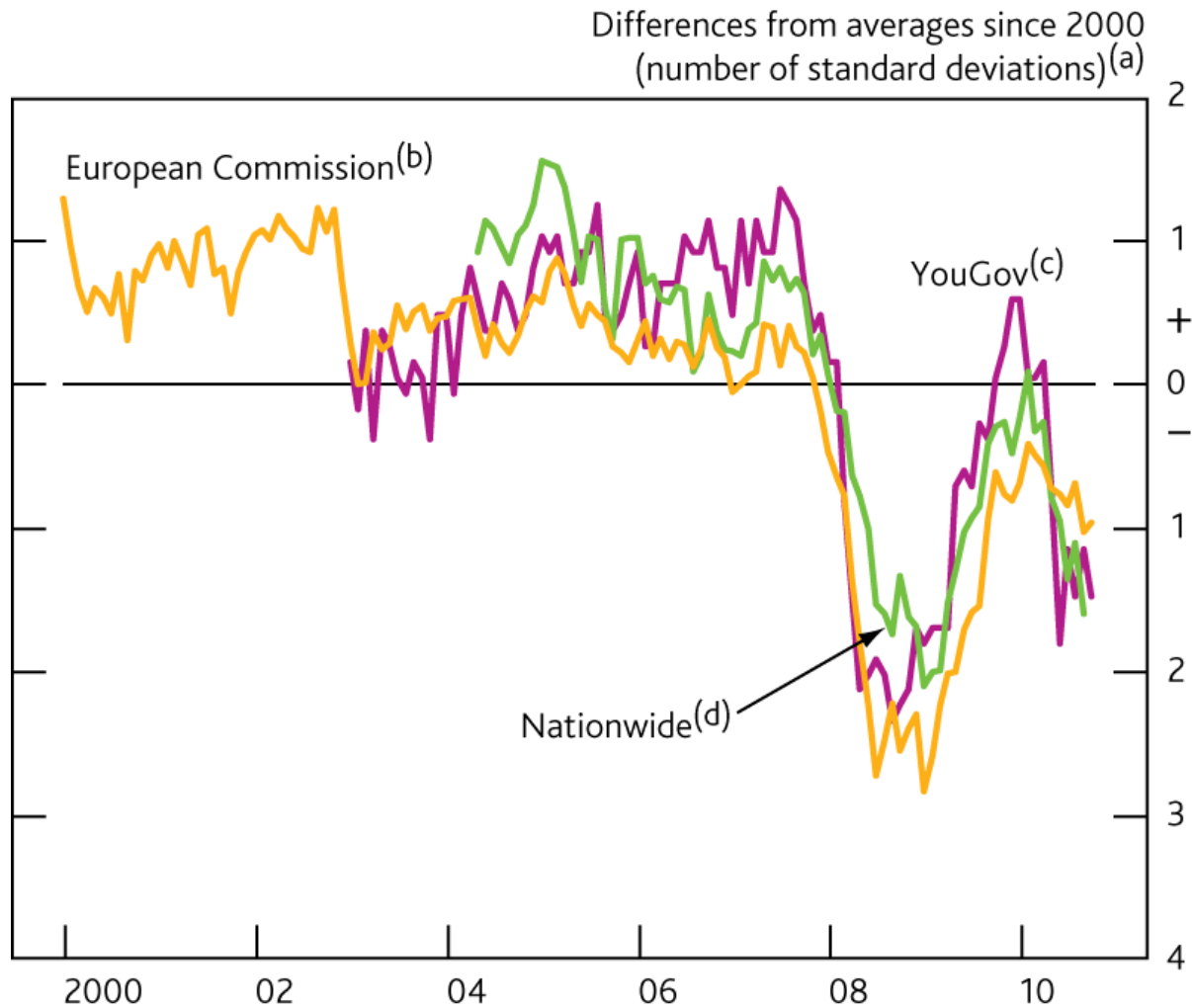
Source: Bank of England

UK CPI inflation projections



Source: Bank of England

UK consumer confidence indicators



Source: GfK NOP on behalf of the European Commission, Nationwide and YouGov

UK labour market: still difficult too

Some worrying top-level data (Source: Feb ONS data - 2010 4th Quarter)

- The overall unemployment rate for 16-64 year olds was 7.9 per cent (0.1 increase), with 2.49 million unemployed people (a 44,000 increase)
- The number of people claiming Jobseeker's Allowance (claimant count) increased by 2,400 between December 2010 and January 2011, to reach 1.46 million

Especially for young people

- The youth unemployment rate for 16-24 year olds was 20.5 per cent (1.5 increase), with 965,000 unemployed people (a 66,000 increase)
- Highest figure since comparable records began in 1992, pushing nearly a million young people or over one in five, a very worrying milestone
- Wolf Review highlights that few jobs are available for 16 and 17 year olds and this will continue as full-time participation shifts to 19, also that many young people are "churning" between education courses and short-term employment

And for women

- The number of employees working part-time fell by 62,000 to 6.69 million, with the fall entirely among women
- The number of male claimants has fallen for twelve consecutive months but the number of female claimants has increased for seven consecutive months

Wolf Review on the labour market

- Above all else her report aims to find a ***better fit*** between what the education and training system offers and what the labour market needs



- It highlights the following key trends:
 - Full-time education or training to 16 now the norm
 - Few jobs available for 16 and 17 year olds
 - Trends to continue as full-time participation to 19
 - Growing importance of work experience, not just formal qualifications
 - Consistently high premium on English and maths qualifications
 - Students need 'general skills' for increasingly mobile/flexible job market
 - many young people "churning" between education and short-term employment

Some key numbers

- 2.5m
- 90,000
- 49%
- 350,000
- 965,000
- 80:20
- 25%
- 3.5
- 133,500
- 27

Some key words/phrases

- Churn
- Nonsense
- Sclerotic
- Level
- Hourglass
- Parity of esteem
- Dual labour market
- Skill shortage
- Serial redesign
- Agency fever
- Work history

Some headline measures (1)

- 14-16
 - Greater freedom over qual offer but within more prescribed curriculum and performance requirements
 - Issue: balance too heavily tilted?
- Performance measures
 - New criteria to be drafted on which quals should count
 - Issue: danger of these predetermining the nature of VQs?
- Low-attainers (14-16)
 - Further review to strengthen progression capabilities
 - Issue: failure to build on good practice leaves continuing gap in provision
- Low-attainers (16-19)
 - Emphasis on 'core' Eng and maths and work experience
 - Issue: availability of 'appropriate' provision

Some headline measures (2)

- Apprenticeships
 - Flexible frameworks to enable progression; greater employer support

Issue: Whether funding will really be available for employer subsidies and how far will this increase YA places?
- FE
 - Opening up expertise

Issue: managing 14-16 requirements
- Assessment
 - Support for external referencing and use of local employers

Issue: would they and how would this ensure national standards?
- Funding
 - Simpler, more flexible, 'tied' to learner

Issue: familiar mantra but need to contextualise within current reviews
- Regulation
 - Need for a simpler, employer endorsed, needs- based model

Issue: fits in with current direction of travel though not necessarily current Ed Bill

So support for

- A 2 stage 14-19 learning phase
- Building programmes around 'core' English and maths
- A differential 'league' table system
- A more flexible qualification market
- A more progressive work experience programme
- Deployment of vocational 'expertise' across 14-19
- Funding the learner not the programme
- Use of employer subsidies for YA programmes
- Wider use of LMI in development of standards
- Decentralisation and deregulation where possible

The gold standard: English & maths GCSE

- The crucial thing is to recognise the central place of English and maths GCSEs in English life, and the duty of post-16 education to prioritise them.
- English and maths GCSE should be the standard eventual destination for all students.
- “There is only one real Level 2. Maths and English A*-C.” (Professor Lorna Unwin)
- In 2005/06, 44.8% of 15 year olds had maths & English GCSE A*-C, and 49% of 18 year olds.
- The UK is effectively unique in not requiring continued mathematics and own language study for all young people engaged in 16-19 tertiary education.

Why are we 'unique in the most dysfunctional of ways'?

- Funding and performance management systems have actively deterred schools and colleges from providing substantial maths and English courses post-16 to those without good GCSEs.
- [This] cannot be explained other than through changes in the funding mechanisms, which made high success rates very important, and the availability of 'key skill' qualifications in these areas in which success was very easy to secure.
- It is shocking that English education should deny rather than promote the acquisition of good English and maths qualifications for those without English and maths GCSE.
- No other developed country allows, let alone effectively encourages, its young people to neglect maths and their own language in this way.

Recommendation 9

Students who are under 19 and do not have GCSE A*-C in English and/or Maths should be required, as part of their programme, to pursue a course which either leads directly to these qualifications, or which provide significant progress towards future GCSE entry and success.

We need to boost STEM skills

- Skill shortages are not identified by employers as a major issue or problem. However, UKCES (the UK Commission for Employment and Skills) do identify a number of specific shortages, which are largely in STEM-related areas.
- The shortage of maths and science skills is apparent in the wage premia attracted by Maths A levels, and by quantitative degrees.
- Funding policies have militated against the growth of qualifications and programmes with a significant maths and science 'loading'. Anything which is difficult puts attainment of qualification targets and funding at risk, even though young people who succeed in STEM-based courses will have excellent progression opportunities.
- Routes into higher technician-level study are directly affected by these pressures.

Recommendation 11

Funding for full-time students age 16-18 should be on a programme basis, with a given level of funding per student. The funding should follow the student.

When should we allow specialisation?

- Developed countries delay specialisation to later stages, with a common curriculum until age 16.
- There is no appetite in the UK for an entirely uniform and traditional academic curriculum. There is overwhelming consensus that all young people in KS4 should have access to some courses that were vocational or practical.
- But most agree that there should be no substantial degree of specialisation before the end of KS4. At this point, what is truly critical is to increase the number who master the basic academic skills.
- “Business does not expect the system to churn out job-ready workers ... employers would value more young people with a strong grounding in science and maths” (CBI)
- Common core curriculum = 80%
- Options, including vocational courses = 20%

What will this do to student motivation?

- There is no evidence that KS4 students (including the most disengaged) attain better as a result of taking more vocational courses.
- There is international evidence that young people drop out of vocational provision as much as they drop out of academic provision.
- “If young people are disaffected, perhaps schools could explore models of pedagogy rather than subjects – it is difficult to see how a person could be disengaged from the whole of a broad subject curriculum.” (Dr Liz Atkins)
- Excellent vocational provision can motivate and excite young people, and teaches them valuable skills. It does not follow that expanding the number of vocational courses at KS4 provides some sort of magic bullet for disaffection and low attainment.

Recommendation 3

Non-GCSE/iGCSE qualifications from the approved list should make a limited contribution to an individual student's score on performance measures. This will safeguard pupils' access to a common general core as a basis for progression. At the same time, any point based measures should also be structured so that schools do not have a strong incentive to pile up huge numbers of qualifications per student, and therefore are free to offer all students practical and vocational courses as part of their programme.

Conor's Commentary

There is much that is good in her eminently readable report, but...

If we leave it until 16 before enabling young people to take a significant number of useful practical courses, they will simply disengage from education.

The Government ... must not lose sight of the need to provide an offer that is attractive and useful for those that would otherwise truant and those who have a more practical aptitude than others.



ASCL strongly agrees that all students need a proper grounding in basics such as literacy and mathematics, but the curriculum must also be flexible enough to motivate them to stay in education and allow them to develop a range of skills. The emphasis of the coalition government to date has been too narrowly focused on a dangerously limited set of subjects.



john dunford consulting

We need high quality, widely recognised vocational qualifications in England. And we need to recognise that they are not better or worse than academic qualifications – they are just different.

It is particularly disappointing that their value is being undermined in school and college performance tables. The equivalences between some vocational or quasi-vocational courses and GCSEs may have been too generous in the past ... but this should be a reason to correct the equivalences, not abolish them.



Vocational education not good enough,
says Wolf report

The Telegraph

Teenagers being failed by 'dead end' courses

guardian.co.uk

Keep studying maths and English until you pass, students told

Mail Online

Now that will be useful... students take exams in how to claim the dole

Any surprises?

- Little sense of history
- Failure to appreciate the wider benefits of voc learning
- New vision for work experience
- The pivotal role for colleges
- The support for a post-19 learning credit
- Not much on IAG

Some of the outstanding issues

- The proposed model for KS4 learning
- Nature of 'collaborative' arrangements between schools and colleges, especially UTCs
- Has embedded learning had its day?
- Where does this leave Foundation Learning?
- The need for a compelling offer below L2?
- Maintenance of standards within an external referencing system
- How far should market economics drive education and training?
- Headline reactions

The critical checklist

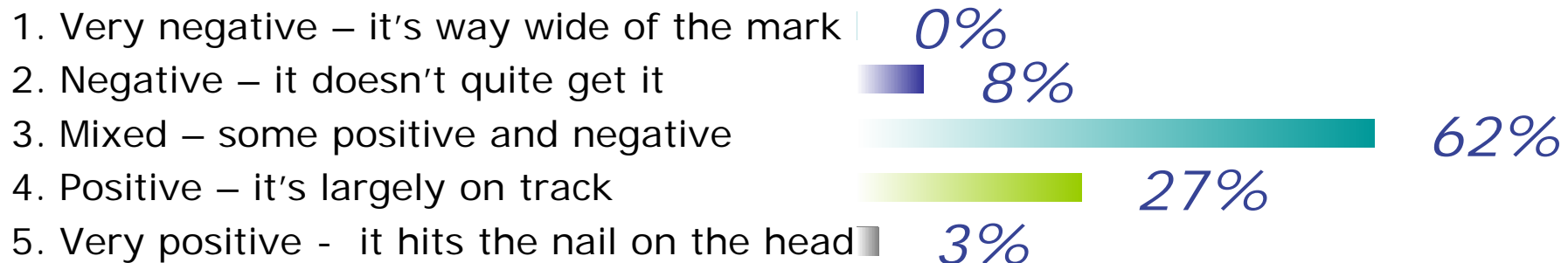
Will it:

- Free up the development of quals to enable a closer link between market need and qual design
- Bring an air of stability to allow currency and familiarity to develop
- Strengthen the general VQ space
- Provide for specific, strategically important skill shortages
- Help young people develop a work history

What happens now?

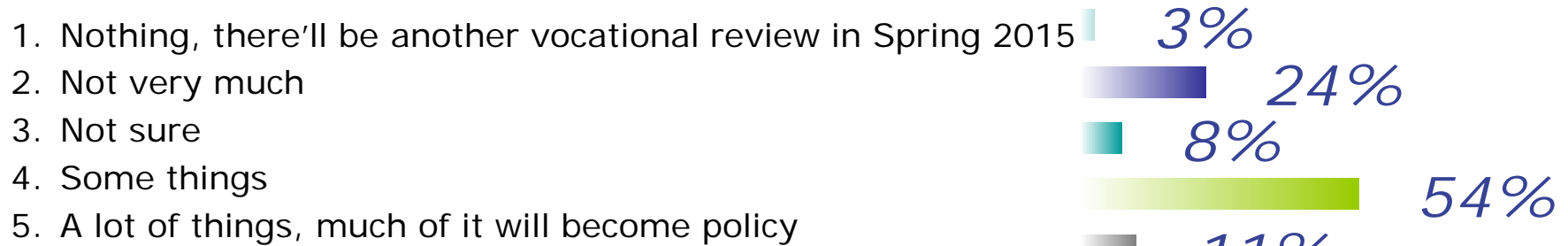
- **The Government has “immediately accepted” 4 recommendations:**
 - Allow FE lecturers to teach in schools
 - Clarify the rules on allowing other professionals to teach in schools
 - Allow any VQ offered by an accredited AB to be taken by 14-19 yr olds
 - Make it easier “to temporarily allow” established VQs to be offered in schools and colleges
- The SoS’s Commons Statement also singled out 7 other recommendations including:
 - Ensuring post-16 learners continue with English and maths where necessary and increasing CPD for maths teachers
 - Removing funding and league table ‘perverse’ incentives for low-level quals
 - Allow 14 yr olds to register in colleges on courses in creative arts, commerce and catering
 - Providing employer subsidies for YA off-the-job training
 - Looking at work exp/internship models for 16-19 yr olds
- A formal response is expected in April/May?
- A range of other developments likely to impact incl: funding reform, accountability developments, EBacc arrangements
- Opposition re-thinking Tomlinson under its policy review

What's your overall reaction to the Wolf Review?



Why do you say that?

What difference do you think the Wolf Report will make?



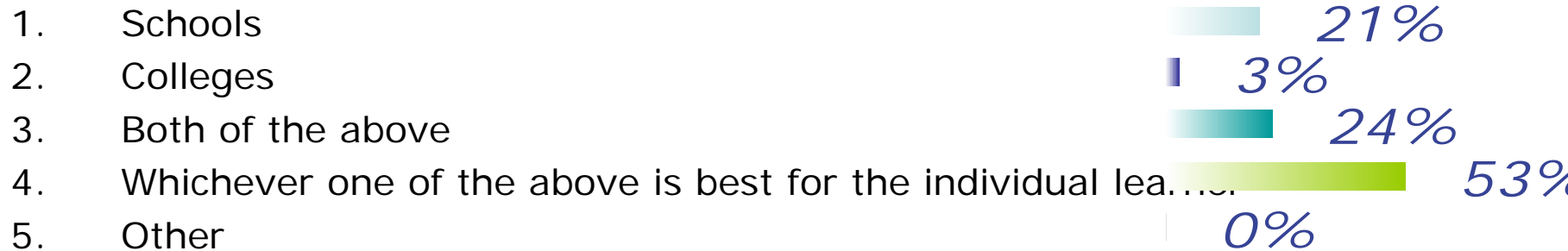
Why do you say that?

Do you think practical learning is better at engaging disaffected learners?



Why do you say that?

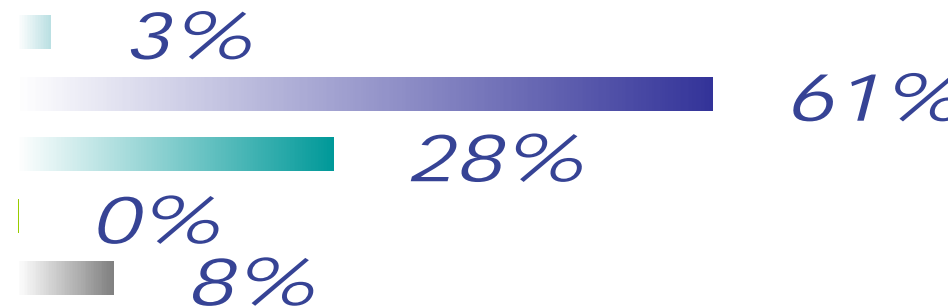
Where do you think 14-16 year olds should study?



Why do you say that?

At what age should learners specialise?

1. 4
2. 16
3. 18
4. 42
5. Other



Why do you say that?

Housekeeping

Please do three things before you leave...

- Put all trays, cups and dishes on the racks
- Complete and leave your feedback form
- Leave your voting pad

Thank you!

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