

2012/50

8 October 2012

Pocket Watch – Baccing up

Introduction

The last few weeks have seen three new types of Baccalaureate put forward; EBacc Certificates by Michael Gove, a post-16 Bacc by Lord Adonis and a Tech Bacc by Ed Miliband. Traditionally a qualification designed for entry into higher education, the Bacc which has been adopted in various guises in different parts of the UK let alone by different Awarding Organisations, is rapidly becoming a proxy for qualification reform. So what are these latest Baccs and why are reformers so drawn to the concept of a Baccalaureate?

Three new Baccs?

EBacc Certificates, which were announced a few weeks ago by Michael Gove, are primarily aimed at 16 year olds and cover a set of so-called 'core academic subjects,' namely English, maths, separate sciences, history or geography and a language. Strongly knowledge based and subject to more formal assessment and grading, the intention is that over time, they will replace GCSEs. The drive here is to ensure as many 16 year olds as possible take qualifications deemed essential for progression while strengthening confidence in exam standards generally

The **post-16 Bacc** promoted by Lord Adonis in his recent Education Manifesto comes in two forms: an A-Bacc and a Tech Bacc. The former tackles the narrow 3/4 A level package by adding some IB type breadth in the form of a project, contrasting subject and community service. Students would get an overall A-Bacc mark. The latter complements the A-Bacc by proposing a Wolf type alternative framework for 16+ yr olds comprising Eng/maths, a 'reputable' vocational qual and formalised work experience. A higher Tech Bacc would be available at level 3

The **TechBacc** proposed by Ed Miliband last week offers a 'gold standard' qualification for 18 year olds outside A level. As a single qual, it would avoid the problems of the Diploma multilayered approach. All 16-19 yr olds would have to take Eng/maths while 'the 50% who don't go to university' would take an enhanced technical qualification designed to overcome the long-standing structural weakness in the English education system: the bridge between school and work. It would provide an alternative to the established academic offer and build on the Tomlinson approach as developed through Alison Wolf, Lord Adonis and the Baker-Dearing Trust

The Bacc attraction

As a term, the Bacc has obvious appeal: it suggests rigour, international standing and something different from existing qualifications, all obvious attractions to those wanting to reform qualifications. A Bacc can also imply a single qualification as in an English Bacc Certificate or a composite as in a TechBacc, it can thereby encompass a range of forms of learning. The three big challenges the Bacc concept faces if it is to be adopted here is needing to be seen less as an academic alternative and more as a framework for excellence for all, the extent to which it can bring consensus on a balance between knowledge and skills and the fact that we find qualification change hard enough to keep up with as it is



Steve Besley

Head of Policy (UK and International)
Pearson Think Tank

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