

THE SLIDES FOLLOW THE WORDS - SCROLL DOWN

SLIDE 1 – PAULINE COX

Good evening Ladies and Gentlemen. I'm Pauline Cox, head teacher of The Tiffin Girls' School – a state funded local authority school in Kingston upon Thames in southwest London.

877 girls aged 11-18 study at my school. We are a selective school and high achieving school – regularly topping GCSE, A level **and** value added league tables. Parents almost fight to get places. We have a large successful sixth form of 277 with most girls going on to university – many to study medicine and science. We are also a maths and computing specialist school – 1 of the first of such schools in the country.

SLIDE 2

This is the Kelly cohort – the pupils who will be directly affected by the new proposals for 14-19 education. What does the future have in store for them?

I have been invited to put the head teachers' view of the Tomlinson – Kelly debate surrounding the education of 14-19 year olds.

It is a brave person who attempts to represent the diversity of views of the 3,500 secondary head teachers in the country – not forgetting all the colleges and FE establishments also charged with educating 16-19 year olds.

However, with that word of caution, this is what the debate sounds like and feels like from inside the classroom – literally at the chalk face.

SLIDE 3 – TOMLINSON – THE REACTION

The Tomlinson Report on 14-19 education and skills was eagerly awaited this spring. Mike is well respected and admired. Few in the education world have his wealth of experience and breadth of vision. Even fewer have his diplomatic skills! He led an enthusiastic and diverse working party that not only achieved consensus about the future for 14-19 education, BUT also managed to take with them a broad section of educational opinion.

Tomlinson achieved that rare phenomenon in education – agreement! A miracle in itself.

The Tomlinson proposal - an overarching diploma to unite the vocational and academic pathways - was coherent, relevant and revolutionary.

The academic and vocational divide in education is a problem that stems back to at least the 1944 Education Act if not earlier. The perceived inferior nature of vocational education is a problem that a knowledge economy in the 21st century cannot afford. We need good quality and highly regarded vocational education if we are going to continue to be a wealth creating society. However, spring 2005 brought a new Secretary of State for Education -and an election. Tomlinson's timing was terrible in that respect.

In many ways Kelly threw out both the baby and the bathwater. She disappointed a wide spectrum of educationalists in the process – as these newspaper headlines show. Kelly jettisoned the main thrust of Tomlinson – the overarching diploma. In retaining the status quo with A levels and GCSEs as the cornerstone of education for 14-19 year olds, Kelly has been seen to perpetuate the academic / vocational fault line that runs right through education. In fact Tomlinson's vision appeared to be Kelly's nightmare.

SLIDE 4 – THE CHALLENGES

So what challenges were Tomlinson and Kelly trying to address in 14-19 education? 51% of 16 year olds attain 5 good GCSE passes. So you do not have to be a genius at maths to work out that 49% do not. This is the group of young people who are often disengaged from education. 1 in 20 achieve no grades – these could include some children with special educational needs, they also include children excluded from school who disappear from the system and may become even the infamous “hoodies” of our high streets and shopping precincts. But no longer we are assured at Blue Water!

Our educational success rate and staying on rates after 16 are not good in relation to our economic competitors. Kelly is aiming to increase the participation rate for 16-18 year olds from 75% to 90% in 10 years.

The key to this must be high quality vocational education.

SLIDE 5 – KELLY'S WHITE PAPER

Kelly has identified 4 major objectives to address the problem of education and skills for 14-19 year olds.

Functional maths and English

Tackling low staying on rates after 16

Better vocational courses

Stretching all young people and engaging the disaffected. This is possibly the biggest challenge of all.

She has cherry picked Tomlinson – but left out the best cherry in the bunch. The overarching diploma unifying vocational and academic education.

SLIDE 6 – OTHER CHALLENGES HAPPEN

But while the Tomlinson working party debated, my school was burning down.

Here you see the effects of old electrical wiring from the 1950's – and the resultant loss of one third of the school in 45 minutes. The fire broke out at night – fortunately the building was empty.

It was a dreadful Christmas present. However we lost only 5 days of schooling before we were back in session.

SLIDE 7 – When Tony Blair launched his BUILDING SCHOOLS FOR THE FUTURE programme to rebuild every secondary school in the country – I don't think he had this in mind!

Our new school for the future is 23 portacabins on the school playing field – plus portaloos – since all the toilets were destroyed in the fire, as well as all the administrative areas of the school.

SLIDE 8 – RESOURCES AND FACILITIES

Head teachers were disappointed by the rejection of Tomlinson – but are now faced with the challenge of delivering Kelly. Any educational change has implications for facilities and resources. This is too easily forgotten by education policy makers. Teaching any 14-19 year old needs good buildings and modern equipment.

This is especially true of the specialist facilities needed for vocational courses. Kelly will introduce 14 routes for specialist vocational qualifications. The first 4 diplomas in ICT, creative

and media studies, health and social care and engineering will appear by 2008. By 2010 another 4 will be available – all 14 by 2015.

The new Sector Skills Councils consulting with employers will largely be responsible for these.

These vocational diplomas will need good industry standard facilities and capital investment will be vital

However, most head teachers struggle to access capital funding – whether it be from PFI, BSF or LSCs. My local authority has had 2 PFI bids rejected and will have to wait until 2015 for BSF – so we will have to wait another decade for decent facilities - too late - for those Y8 pupils I showed you in the earlier slide. Schools excel in self-help. Our 9 laboratories date back to the 1950's. None had gas and electricity and water. Most had only 2 of the 3 services! Biology labs had no electricity. Physics labs no gas! It costs £60,000 to refurbish one lab. £540,000 in total – plus prep rooms. We have had to raise this money from our parents, receiving very little money from the government.

The UK % spend of GDP on secondary education is very low for a developed country. Poland, Ireland and Turkey all spend higher. This could be the reason we all rely so much on Polish electricians!

However, GCSEs and A levels are cheaper to teach than vocational skills. They need fewer specialist facilities and the qualifications themselves are held in higher esteem. And this is the basic problem surrounding the delivery of vocational courses for schools and colleges.

SLIDE 9 – TEACHERS AND LECTURERS

Both schools and colleges face desperate shortages of qualified teachers. And those teachers are getting older. Let me give you an example. Recently one of my chemistry staff retired after teaching for 30 years – she had been an inspirational teacher – there were **no** applicants for her job. We had one applicant for our second in maths post – and we are a maths specialist college!

We also face a rapid turn over of young staff. In 10 years I have appointed 5 heads of biology and I assure you it is NOT because of the head teacher! But then Tony Blair has got through 4 Secretaries of State for Education in only 8 years as well!

The TES prints 5 pull out sections of vacancies each week, advertising over 5,000 teaching jobs. These shortages continue although teachers have had substantial pay rises.

However, college lecturers receive about 8% less than teachers. And they are the main teachers of vocational courses. Again we have this academic and vocational divide which extends also to funding – schools receive more per student than colleges – and even then it is a financial struggle for us. My school gets £3,960 per student each year. The independent schools nearby charge £12,000 p.a. We would love to get even half of that in the state education sector.

Above all for teachers, we need on going professional development – both in methodology of teaching and also in updating subject knowledge, especially in science and technology. Introducing new courses and qualifications requires training and planning. Both are too easily brushed over.

Kelly is proposing changes that will impact on teaching in every one of 7 year groups in secondary schools.

This means rewriting every scheme of work and many lesson plans. This needs extensive teacher time and planning time. Most teachers see 200-300 children each week. Every hour a bell goes and another 30 children arrive to be engaged, entertained, challenged and given homework! You are expected to know each one of those 200 children as an individual learner – writing detailed and helpful comments on every piece of homework and coursework. Most parents struggle to deal with 2-3 children. Teachers cope with 2-300 every week of the school year!

SLIDE 10 – TOO MUCH TESTING

Do you remember what this feels like?

SLIDE 11 – TOO MUCH TESTING

We have an excessive number of exams at secondary level.

With Tomlinson we had hoped to see a reduction in testing – especially at 16, 17 and 18. Over-testing affects learner motivation, produces bureaucracy, loss of teaching time and above all costs money. We started external exams on the 3 May this year and they continue until 24 June – 8 solid weeks.

The annual exam fees at my school cost **double** what we can afford to spend each year on books and equipment for every pupil in the school. And we have an alphabet soup of vocational exams 3,500 in total, with 123 awarding bodies – BTEC, NVQs, GNVQs, City & Guilds. At least the 14 specialised diplomas will help to simplify the system. However, they then have to be recognised by university admission tutors, parents and employers.

But whatever happens we must have exam syllabuses, specimen exam papers and textbooks **before** we start to teach. We need a lead in time of 1-2 years for any exam change – we must avoid the debacle of the last A level changes of Curriculum 2000 – when we were teaching sixth formers with no syllabuses and no clue as to where we were going for far too long.

Kelly is promising us stretch for more able pupils – we do need more challenge for gifted and talented children. Harder questions at Advanced Extension Award level are to be welcomed. To try to introduce challenge at my school we take some GCSEs and A levels early as Tomlinson suggested and there is no shortage of take up for maths and sciences. The problem is that selecting universities such as the Russell Group do not want GCSE and then A levels taken early. They want 3 A levels taken at one sitting. And increasingly they want additional tests as well as A levels, as so many good candidates get 3 grade As at A level. Cambridge rejected 5,000 of these top rate students last year. Unless we introduce greater differentiation at the top grades, the UCAS system could fragment with more and more universities setting their own entrance exams as in the States. At A level, Kelly proposes that universities will be given the pupils' grades from each module paper. An A*, A** system might be easier to implement.

SLIDE 12

The graph illustrates well the 3 most popular A levels at my school – chemistry, biology and maths – beloved by girls wanting to study medicine! We are less successful with physics producing few engineers. I will leave you to decide whether psychology is a science or not. However, you cannot deny its popularity. It is the new sociology of the 1960's.

SLIDE 13 – ORGANISATION AND COLLABORATION

How do we organise the delivery of 14-19 education and skills? To provide a wide choice of A levels, or the new specialised diplomas, requires large schools and colleges. A sixth form size

of 250 is considered the minimum for viability offering at least 22 subjects at A level. In my local authority with 10 secondary schools, 6 schools on these statistics have non-viable sixth forms.

But parents like school sixth forms. They like the structure, discipline and small size of these schools. In an attempt to be viable, school sixth forms form consortia, as do schools with colleges.

But if both providers are poor then the consortium provision is also poor. Travel time for students and pastoral care and guidance become issues. The wide range of 14-19 provision around the country shows the complexity of providing education for these age groups. The introduction of the LSCs with responsibility for 16-19 education has not brought any degree of rationalisation, as some might have hoped.

One of the biggest issues will not go away. How do you run a coherent, planned 14-19 curriculum where schools are only 11-16 institutions?

Collaboration of any sort takes time and effort. These are not commodities too often available in our stretched education system.

SLIDE 14 – STUDENTS AND PARENTS

It is too easy in this debate about structures, funding and qualifications to lose sight of the students and parents that the system is supposed to serve. With no overarching diploma – the academic / vocational divide will continue. Parents and pupils want the higher status GCSEs and A level route, however inappropriate for their ability and aptitude. Good advice and guidance is vital here – we struggle to provide these at the moment.

Employers also need to be informed. Too many still talk about O levels – how will they ever cope with specialised diplomas?

SLIDE 15 – WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

We have to implement Kelly – however, by the time Y7 leave school in 7 years time, how many Secretaries of State will there have been, how many more education acts and how many more changes of policy?

I am not advocating no change – but constant change is disruptive, tiring and detracts from the main business of schools – educating children. Elements of Kelly are to be welcomed. However, they do not fully address the problems they set out to solve. Tomlinson would have been the choice of most of education. Above all we cannot implement change without resources, teachers and buildings. If you are at school at a time of rapid educational change, then you are a guinea pig for untried and untested ideas.

We must remember – every child has only one education – and every child matters.

SLIDE 16

This is a photo of 12 year olds enjoying their physics lesson. Let's not lose sight of them, or their enjoyment of their education. They, after all, are what this debate is all about.

Pauline Cox Head teacher



Tiffin Y8 pupils- the Kelly cohort

Tomlinson - the reaction

- The Guardian “Why did they pull the plug on Tomlinson?”
- The Times “Divided we fail”
- TES “Still born A level shake up mourned”
- Tomlinson’s vision is Kelly’s nightmare.....

The Challenges

- 51% of the cohort of 16 year olds attains 5 or more good GCSE passes
- 49% of the cohort of 16 year olds attains less than 5 or more good GCSE passes
- 1 in 20 gain no grades- “the disappeared”

Kelly's White Paper

- All young people to have basic functional maths and English and employment skills
- Tackle low post -16 participation rates
- Better vocational routes
- Stretch all young people and re-engage the disaffected
- Kelly has cherry picked Tomlinson and left out the overarching diploma

Other Challenges Happen.....



Building Schools For The Future?...



Facilities And Resources

- 14 routes for vocational qualifications
- Sector Skills Councils
- Need for good industry standard facilities
- Capital investment essential- from PFI, BSF, or LSCs?
- UK low % spend of GDP on secondary education- OECD
- Parity of esteem and status?

Teachers and lecturers

- Shortages of qualified staff
- High turn over of teachers
- Pay issues- FE lecturers receive 8% less than teachers
- Professional development

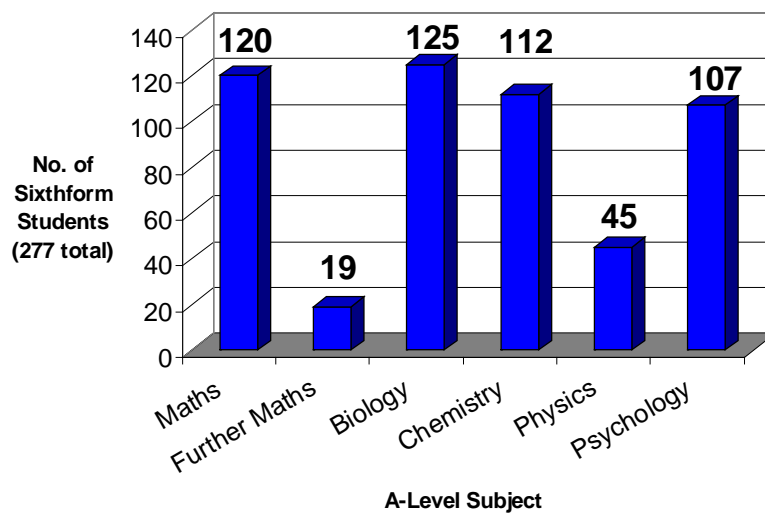
Too Much Testing.....



Too Much Testing.....

- Testing at 7,11,14,16,17 and 18 years
- High cost of testing per pupil
- 3,500 vocational qualifications awarded by 123 awarding bodies
- Need new syllabuses early- unlike Curriculum 2000
- Lack of stretch- harder A level questions

Maths And Science At Tiffin



Organisation and collaboration

- Choice requires scale- large sixth forms or colleges
- Retention of sixth forms for parental preference
- Collaboration between poor providers produces consortia with poor provision
- How do you run a 14-19 curriculum in areas with 11-16 schools?

Students And Parents

- No overarching diploma
- A level and GCSE still the gold standard
- Good advice and guidance essential
- Employers involved and informed

Where Do We Go From Here?

- We have to implement Kelly
- Constant change is disruptive
- Kelly does not fully address the problems
- Resource the changes
- Every child has only one education

