

Education Committee

Oral evidence: [The future of post-16 qualifications](#),
HC 55

Tuesday 8 November 2022

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Members present: Ian Mearns (in the Chair); Caroline Ansell; Apsana Begum; Miriam Cates; Anna Firth; Andrew Lewer; Angela Richardson.

Questions 220 - 255

Witnesses

[I](#): Alice Barnard, Chief Executive, Edge Foundation; Tom Richmond, Founder and Director, EDSK think tank; Richard Markham, CEO, IB Schools and Colleges Association; and Kate Greig, CEO, Coastal Academies Trust, King Ethelbert School.

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Alice Barnard, Kate Greig, Richard Markham and Tom Richmond.

[This evidence was taken by video conference]

Q220 Chair: Good morning, everyone, and welcome to the Education Select Committee. Can I thank our witnesses today for joining us? For those of you who do not know me, my name is Ian Mearns and I have the privilege to be acting Chair or caretaker manager of the Education Select Committee for this week. A new Committee Chair will be elected by the House a week tomorrow.

Thank you all for coming along. We have a number of witnesses in front of us today to talk over and give us evidence on the future of post-16 qualifications and introducing a baccalaureate model. Could you introduce yourselves, starting with you, Richard, please.

Richard Markham: Good morning. I am the CEO of the IB Schools and Colleges Association, which is an association representing the interests of the 144 UK schools that offer one or more of the IB programmes. We are independent of the IB itself, but we work very closely with them to advocate on behalf of our schools and then to offer training and support to those schools.

Kate Greig: Good morning, everyone. I am the CEO of Coastal Academies Trust in Thanet. We have four schools in our trust at the moment and we just have another one joining in January: one grammar school, three non-selectives, and a primary school. One of the non-selectives is joining us in January.

Tom Richmond: Good morning. I am the Founder and Director of EDSK. We are an education think tank. We conduct research on a whole range of education issues, and last year EDSK published two major reports on the future of assessment and accountability in secondary education in England.

Chair: Thank you very much. We are also joined online by Alice Barnard. Alice, please?

Alice Barnard: Hello, good morning and thank you for the invitation to attend. I am the Chief Executive of the Edge Foundation. We are an organisation interested in education, right the way through from four years of age to 24. That is our specialism. We are interested in seeing a much broader and more balanced curriculum, improved career advice and guidance, and better pathways into multiple forms of education, whether that is further education, higher education or indeed BTEC, to ensure that young people are able and fit for the world of work.



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Chair: Thank you very much indeed. Can I take it that you are all happy to be addressed by first names?

Richard Markham: Yes.

Kate Greig: Yes.

Chair: Excellent. That is very kind of you.

Q221 **Caroline Ansell:** Thank you to the panellists and welcome to Parliament. I am an educator myself, although I confess I have had very little direct experience of the IB programme. I am keen to learn more. We have heard as a Committee a good deal about the benefits of the programmes, not least in the knowledge base, in the performance of students and in their prospects. We have heard about some of the soft skills that are inherent in the programme and that connection to the world of work. There seem to be very many excellent reasons why this is a good way forward, and yet the uptake does not seem to reflect that. I understand that of all the entries in 2021, there were 3,500 entries for the diploma. That is versus over 700,000 applications to A-level studies. Could you speak to some of the barriers as to why the uptake does not seem to mirror the positive benefits that are told around the IB story?

Kate Greig: Do you want to start?

Richard Markham: I might talk generally and then Kate is very well placed to talk about it from the perspective of the schools within her trust.

There are a number of barriers and the barriers vary by school and by region. To try to generalise a little bit, first and foremost there is the question of not only recognition but also reward. There is the notion of the reward granted by universities for students who are applying for a specialist degree subject and are going with the depth and breadth of knowledge within that specialist subject but—say they are applying for physics—are also going as a linguist, with their maths and their humanities subject as well. Unfortunately, the universities are typically offering like-for-like equivalence with a specialist, narrow A-level programme for the students who have studied six subjects. They are not getting favourable offers; they are getting equitable offers. That is one factor.

A second and very important factor is the problem that is facing all schools—and I am sure that you are all aware of this—and that is finances are very tight. Funding for post-16 qualification has not really gone up in real terms since 2010 and the IB is expensive to run. It is not impossible to run but it is expensive. You are asking a school to provide guided learning hours for six subjects and it is funded as the equivalent of five A-levels. It is funded for five subjects, not six, and that does not take into account the core and all the other skills that are requirements of the programme.



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You have the recognition and the reward, you have the finance, and third, it is lacking a little bit of understanding. It is a small qualification in a very large pool. Typically, people are very aware of and very knowledgeable about A-levels. Typically, if parents have post-16 qualifications they are A-level qualifications. IB is very rare among parents. A small number of graduates are IB graduates. Consequently, there are myths and queries. Will this provide my child with the skills? They are reliant upon the case studies that we or the IB produce. It needs more of an endorsement.

The surge in uptake for the IB coincided with Tony Blair's, "Education, education, education", and the idea of an IB school in every district. That explicit governmental endorsement saw numbers of IB schools in the UK peak at 200-plus. Unfortunately, when the funding dried up and the endorsement was not continually expressed, those schools steadily, with regret, returned to what they had traditionally offered, which was A-levels.

Kate Greig: I endorse all of that. I want to start by saying that the IBCP has had a profound effect on the schools in our trust. It has all the things that we want to talk about in terms of education and politics: skills, knowledge, a flexible curriculum, and then being able to develop different pathways for the students that they can go through to prepare them for university, work or apprenticeships. It has had a massive, absolutely huge and profound effect on our Coastal schools.

Why do more people not do the IBCP? I do not know. It is such a brilliant programme. It is about knowing something about it and it is about money, because it is expensive. It is. The IBDP and CP take up a lot of curriculum time. There are not the free periods that you might have in your A-levels, for example. It is fully staffed and there is a lot of expense within that.

Why do we do it, when we are in state schools that do not have a massive amount of money? We do it because it is the right thing to do. One of the big draws for that is also saying the independent schools have traditionally offered the IBDP. It has been seen by many as being a more elite subject. We have to make sure that our state schools can offer it.

People do not do it partly because of finance, partly because there is not enough known about it and partly because it has not been around for that long. I think we are in the ninth year of offering IBCP, and you could take the pandemic years out as people were loth to swap curriculum choices. We were on a roll with developing and delivering the CP. Kent County Council has been hugely supportive to the IBCP and there are 24 schools in Kent that offer it.

At the moment we are all worried about funding for the individual diploma subjects, about which there is some doubt, and about funding for BTECs. Schools who would like to offer it are saying, "We need some



more clarity. We need to wait and see how the funding agreement comes out in terms of the individual diplomas and the whole qualification”.

Q222 Caroline Ansell: In terms of the reward and recognition previously cited by Richard, has the reward and recognition come to you and your cluster of schools through Ofsted for the profound effect you described, the change in culture, and engagement? Has it been recognised?

Kate Greig: Yes. We have had two Ofsted inspections in the last year. One of those was at Dane Court Grammar School, which got an Outstanding for its sixth form. Ofsted came in, looked at the curriculum and said it is an outstanding curriculum for the sixth form because it does everything we want them to do: skills, knowledge, and preparation for work, university and wider life.

One of our schools, Hartsdown Academy—which has traditionally been a school with huge levels of deprivation and a high level of SEN and pupil premium disadvantaged students—has struggled because of that for all sorts of reasons. You all know the stories of coastal deprivation. It got a Good from Ofsted in December last year. There were other things as well but when they went into the curriculum in the sixth form they said that the curriculum in the sixth form is exactly what a curriculum should be: skills, knowledge and so on. Of course, whatever you do in the sixth form has a profound effect on Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 as well.

Q223 Caroline Ansell: I take your point that it is more expensive. If it is the equivalent of five A-levels that immediately speaks to the contact time and expertise you need to have in your school. You have clearly managed it within your funding envelope. What trade-offs or compromises have you had to make to achieve that?

Kate Greig: Specifically, in terms of what we have had to do, we have had to make sure that we are very, very tight with everything that we offer. It means that we might have fewer resources or whatever, but we have made sure that it has worked. We should offer it because it is so good in terms of what we are having.

Richard Markham: On the question of how schools manage it, I think it goes back to my previous point about the peak and then the decline that we have experienced. Where Kate’s schools and others have found it achievable is where they have been solely IB. What we have seen disappear is the wonderful model that operates very successfully in the independent sector of the dual IB and A-level school. That is quite a typical model in the independent sector. In the state sector it is less typical because it is just too expensive. By specialising in either A-levels or IB you can then make it affordable or manageable.

Tom Richmond: I echo the points around funding and familiarity, which I am sure we will pick up in other conversations today.

The reason that EDSK did a report on the 11 to 18 system, rather than just looking at the 16 to 18 system, is that it becomes very clear you



have some huge disparities within that journey that pupils have to go on. From 11 to 16, per-pupil funding tends to be around £5,500 to £6,000 per year. That drops to about £4,200 for those last two years of secondary education. For us, a concern is that you might want to expand out—we have just heard some of the challenges around that—but the funding envelope at 16 years of age is such a cliff-edge that you have to make some enormous trade-offs. It is concerning because it means that you are not necessarily building the programme that you think is right for the pupils; you are building a programme that you can just about manage to deliver, as close as possible to what you want to do. In terms of the future of 16 to 19 education, that is a very powerful driver for decision-making within schools and colleges.

Q224 Caroline Ansell: One barrier that I thought you might raise is around the prior attainment in English and maths. My understanding is that 40% of 16 year-olds do not have the requisite level 4 at that stage in their career, and obviously continuing study in English and maths would then be a very challenging programme. In your experience, has that not proved to be an issue? I noted there was quite a mix of schools under your banner.

Kate Greig: For the IBDP you carry on with English and maths all the way through to 18 and it is part of the programme. The CP does not have that as part of its curriculum. You do not have to do English and maths. However, if somebody does not have the English and maths qualification when they do the IBCP in the sixth form, they would do additional learning in English and maths in order to get that grade of a 4 or a 5.

Chair: Can I just interrupt? We are using an awful lots of initials and while members in the room might know, our watchers on Parliament TV might not understand what all the acronyms and initials stand for. Carry on.

Kate Greig: Sorry. For the IBCP, if they do not get their English and maths qualification at the age of 16, they would carry on studying for that over the next two years alongside the curriculum that they already study.

Q225 Chair: Alice, is there anything that you want to add? You are joining us remotely.

Alice Barnard: Thank you very much, Chair. I would echo a lot of points that have already been raised.

One of the key issues around this is the fact that the curriculum is very tight pre-16. It tends to concentrate on a very knowledge-rich curriculum and then a linear end of assessment exams. That does not necessarily encourage an environment where young people, or indeed teaching practitioners, feel that an International Baccalaureate style of qualification leads from that. We need to look at education pre-16 to understand how we open up that element and make that more flexible,



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so that young people and teachers are ready for something more dynamic, more open and more flexible post-16.

It has been picked up that career education, information, advice and guidance is going to be critical to that. At the moment you are not seeing adequate provision for that in schools. It is very difficult to see how you can create demand when people are not aware of what the possible pathways may look like. We know that take-up of new qualifications is always tricky. It has been raised already that it is about people understanding what is available. As an example, with T-levels the Government know that take-up is pretty poor and they are using blunt instruments—like trying to shut off the choice of other qualifications—to increase uptake. If the Government are struggling to increase uptake in their own pride and joy, you can see why that might be difficult for qualifications that are less well-known and do not have the same sort of power base that a Government-pushed qualification might have.

Needless to say, I would say it is absolutely wrong to shut off other qualifications to increase T-level uptake. If T-levels are good enough they will thrive and survive. If they are not good enough, they won't. That is the market dictating what is right for young people, teachers, schools and—very importantly—employers.

We talk about schools being important for learning and the love of learning but most people, unless they are in an incredibly fortunate situation, are going to have to work. Whether they work after they have been in HE or after FE it does not matter, we all need to work for a living. School needs to be in a position to be able to provide young people with the skills and knowledge to be able to adapt to the ever-changing world of work. An International Baccalaureate provides the kind of environment that allows young people to thrive and survive in what is going to be a very competitive world.

Q226 Caroline Ansell: Alice, on that, we talked about recognition of the IB by universities and Ofsted. Do employers recognise this qualification? May I also ask one last question? That is around reform fatigue. As you talked about, it needs to work for teachers too. Do you think our teachers are looking at a new qualification and everything that means around resourcing? Is that a problem also?

Alice Barnard: Yes, I think it is. Often when you survey teachers they are very reticent about change. That is because there has forever been tweaking around the edges that has not shown any dynamic and real change to the outcomes of young people. I think people are fairly fed up with the fact that things are constantly evolving without having any real impact on the life chances of young people. That must be incredibly frustrating.

We need to be much more radical about what we are looking at, and we need to bring teachers along on that journey and provide them with the scope and framework to be confident that, whatever the change is, it is



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going to have a huge impact on the outcomes of young people but also allow them the freedom and dynamic environment to be able to do what they love doing, which is teaching—and not teaching to the PowerPoint, not teaching to the test. It has to be about the love of the profession again, and we need to be able to support teachers to see that initially any change will be tough but the long-term gains would be worth that evolution.

On the point about employers, I think employers recognise the qualifications that have been around for a long time, things like BTECs, A-levels and GCSEs. There is real name recognition around that. However, the great thing about employers is that they learn pretty quickly. If they are presented with evidence that this provides young people who are work-ready, then I think uptake from employers in terms of brand recognition would be quite quick. Of course, the problem is that largely employers know what exists because of the volume of young people who come through with those qualifications. If we want an International Baccalaureate style of qualification, it would require effort and promotion both from institutions but also from the Government.

Q227 Anna Firth: I have a natural bias towards the IB diploma. I have been the governor of a grammar school in Kent that offers the IB diploma and I have had two children go through the programme. I am completely sold on it being a top-rate qualification and it going way beyond the remit of A-levels with the TOK, the extended essay, the community service skills and all the other things that you have mentioned. However, one cannot get away from the fact that, when we look at the evidence, the average size of a secondary school class that offered the IB last year was 22 students. That begs the question: is the IB diploma more suited to smaller class sizes? Does that mean that, almost by definition, it is going to become the preserve of the more elite schools that can cope with that funding model?

Richard Markham: It is a very good question. I do not think that treating it as an average necessarily captures the true picture because, when you are talking about a curriculum of six subjects, there are a myriad of possible combinations of subjects that you can put together. Certainly, the school I was head of would have typically quite large classes for the subjects that were relatively common, such as mathematics and English, but then if you are offering Italian ab initio or Italian A, which is for a native speaker, you could have classes of two or three. The overall average would appear relatively high but when you got down into the detail it was not quite that blunt.

It goes back a little bit to a point I want to make in terms of Caroline's question. The preparation of the students for that sort of class size, or the preparation of a student to do English and maths beyond, is aided in an IB school. Because it is not just what you do at sixth form, it affects the ethos and the atmosphere of the whole school. You cannot just bolt IB on to the top end of a school. It has to affect how you approach



education in general, how you would approach character education and skills education. A number of our schools also offer the pre-16 qualifications, either the primary years programme or the middle years programme.

It also speaks to what Tom was saying. We should be looking at the whole continuum of education, almost three years of age to 19. It does not work just to change something at 16 to 19. It has to be prepared for, provisioned and implemented earlier.

Q228 Anna Firth: As we go through—I would be interested to hear everyone's views on this—could we add in the additional point that is often thrown at the IB diploma, that it is better for higher-attaining students?

Kate Greig: To be clear, the IBDP, the diploma and the one that you are talking about, Anna, has been around for 50 years. Probably most people in the room will know about it. On the question of class sizes, we have some bigger classes than others. That depends on the popularity of the course and—going back to what Richard said—it depends on what you are doing. It has always been the case with post-16 education that the more popular, bigger subjects fund the smaller subjects. That has always been the case, whatever subjects or curriculum you offer.

The CP came about because the IB said the DP is a more academic route. It is tough. You have a number of diploma subjects. As well as doing that, you have to do your English, maths and a language. It is great but it is quite academically challenging. Originally, the IBCP was created in order to prepare students for work. What can we offer that has the IB world-class education, those skills of work, people and dealing with things beyond the curriculum for the future but is not quite so academically challenging?

The CP was created in 2011. King Ethelbert School—which was where I was headteacher before I got my current job—was one of the first schools in the world to offer the IBCP because we wanted to start at sixth form. King Ethelbert is a non-selective school, and there would not be enough children academically able enough to do the DP. We do have some very bright students, but not all of them are able to do the DP. A-levels again were too academically challenging but, for me, the BTECs on their own do not give enough breadth to what you are offering. You get some sixth-form colleges offering maybe one or two BTECs and it is almost like a part-time course. What do you do for the rest of the time?

That was how I started becoming involved in it. What can we offer that has the rigour of the IBDP but is also accessible for students with a wider range of abilities? The IBCP does exactly that. It has a BTEC at its core. Everybody does a BTEC or vocational qualification. They can do a single one, a double one or a triple one, depending on their ability and where they might want to go next.



The second part of it is that you then have to choose at least two diploma subjects. They can be at standard level, which is more your AS-level, or it can be at higher level, which is more your A-level. The diploma subjects follow exactly the same curriculum and are examined the same as for the DP students. For the DP they might do six diplomas; for the IBCP they do one BTEC and at least two diplomas. You can do three, four or five.

You can see how that can then be made bespoke for the ability of the students that you have in your school. In my non-selective schools, we have some students who do a triple BTEC—which is worth three A-levels—and might do two highs. They have a real academic range there. We also have some students who do one BTEC and maybe two standard levels. Across the non-selective schools 20% of our students are SEN students, vulnerable students with special educational needs. We are catering for the whole range here.

Alongside both the knowledge and the skills of the vocational and the academic, we then have all these skills that you need to do in order to achieve the IB diploma. All of the students who do the IBCP have to do personal and professional studies. What does that mean? It is about how you learn and research. We do lessons on politics: why politics is important and why you should be involved in it, things that are important when you have left school. We do a reflective project where they have to take an ethical issue connected with their BTEC. For example, that might be genetic engineering, how businesses make money or pay taxes—all sorts of relevant, pertinent things in the news at the moment—and research, analyse, give both sides of the argument and then come up with a conclusion. They have to do that.

Q229 Anna Firth: Thank you very much. I think you are illustrating very well how the IBCP does work for less high-attaining students, which is really helpful. Could we just go on and find out what Tom and Alice think as well?

Tom Richmond: The question of high attainment is very pertinent for the IB but, when looking at the 16 to 19 system, it is important to bear in mind that that applies to a lot of the other options that are available. For example, if you look at A-levels, it is very common for a school or college to set minimum entry requirements in terms of GCSE performance to get in to those subjects. A lot of students simply will not be able to study A-levels. In fact, they might even have to leave their 11 to 18 school at that point because, “I am sorry, your GCSE grades were not good enough”.

If you look at T-levels—although the Government have recently changed this—when they originally brought in T-levels, colleges and schools were able to set minimum entry requirements because they knew it was a demanding programme. They knew a lot of students might struggle with that level of depth and intensity of learning. What that meant was that about half the students in that very first T-level cohort got put on this transition year, for want of a better phrase. That to me was a horrible



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education version of some kind of holding pattern at an airport, where you just go around and around for a year in the hope that you might then be able to go on to a T-level, with no guarantee you would ever be able to get on to that course.

Do you want to make a qualification exclusive and demanding and, therefore, only allow certain students to go on to it? That is very different. It will look very different from an inclusive programme where students can start at different points, in different places, which some baccalaureates do allow you to do. That goes before age 16, perhaps building up from age 14 or 15 as the IB allows you to do as well. In terms of this question: do you want exclusive or inclusive qualifications? We have different answers all across the system, and to me that is the worst of all worlds.

Some people like the idea of an inclusive 14 to 19 whole baccalaureate where you can work at different levels. That point you just mentioned around studying the same subject at different levels is important because A-levels do not allow you to do that. It is a single qualification. You study it or you do not study it. Lots of other countries allow you to do something like an ordinary or a standard level, let's say roughly equivalent to an AS-level in old money, or do it at a higher level. We do not have that flexibility at all.

When you look at what the future of 16 to 19 qualifications might be in this country and you may be worried about the narrowness of A-levels—as Alice and others have already rightly mentioned—there is a question: do we want these very significant, two-year, sometimes single-subject qualifications, or can we take that same amount of curriculum time and use it more intelligently perhaps?

Alice Barnard: There are quite a lot of points to think about. One that has already been picked up is what you do pre-16, because the teaching and learning that happens pre-16 shapes the ability of that young person to be able to learn post-16. Some of those characteristics that we have already talked about, understanding how to be able to research and form independent thought, are incredibly important.

If we have a tight, knowledge-rich curriculum pre-16 that teaches to the test, we are definitely not encouraging those sorts of attributes in young people. That makes it much harder for those people to thrive post-16 in an International Baccalaureate style of education. It is very important that we look pre-16 to understand how we feed in to a more varied, broad and balanced curriculum post-16.

There is a very important point around stage, not age, and being given the opportunity to be able to build up the portfolio of learning and understanding so that you are ready to be able to give your best. At the moment, we have this very fixed curriculum that concentrates primarily on the age at which you take an exam, not the stage that your learning is at.



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Then the question around elitism. We do have an education system that believes that A-level and higher education are the standard and the way to be successful, and we know this not to be true but it is very much embedded in our system. When you look at the Continent that is just not the case. We have skills shortages that are growing year on year. There was some recent research stating that by 2024 that is going to cost the economy £39 billion.

We know that our “elite system” is not working. We need to open our eyes and think about the way in which we apply our teaching and learning in schools, and it definitely has to start earlier. It was brought up earlier that we need to focus on three through to 19 instead of thinking about this cliff-edge at 16.

I would just challenge everyone to think about that point. Our current “elite system” is not producing young people who are able to thrive and survive in the economic situation that we find ourselves. It is going to be tougher. It is going to require more resilience and a better understanding of the world of work and the labour market, which will inform young people’s choice. We need to enable that, both of young people but also their parents and those people who are guiding them in school, and also support employers in understanding how the system works.

Q230 Chair: Alice, that is a major challenge. You are calling into question the appropriateness of the curriculum for 100% of the students. I would guess that, if you did a rough rule of thumb, you would say the current curriculum is probably inappropriate for 40% or 50% of our students. How do we get around that and make sure that, in the first instance, the 11 to 16 years curriculum is preparing young people for where they need to be at the age of 16 for that transition, or even a younger transition from 14 onwards?

Alice Barnard: One of the starkest things I ever read was the fact that our current curriculum—the standardised curriculum that most young people study—is one that mirrors 1904. Here we are in 2022 asking young people to study formulaic subjects that were basically Victorian. No wonder the system isn’t working. What do we need to do? We need to be full of enthusiasm that change is possible. Tweaking around the edges is no longer viable.

What we need is a curriculum that is broad and balanced pre-16, which allows young people to investigate creative subjects, allows them to develop their knowledge and skills alongside each other, does not create a false dichotomy between academic and vocational, and allows real world learning, which incorporates businesses and understanding of the world of work into subjects and curriculum areas, and does not imply that young people are there just for the love of learning.

School should be about the love of learning but it must also be a practical environment for young people to be able to pick up the skills, knowledge and attributes that will make them employees of the future. It is naive to



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think that that is not what school is preparing us for. It is. We need to be in a position where we enable students to have those attributes that allow them to be flexible in the world of work.

The global economy is growing vastly in the areas of AI, in digital skills. You are going to move from industry to industry, sector to sector, and we need to be able to give young people the ability and skills to be able to do that effectively. You might work in 12 different roles throughout your life, whereas maybe 15, 20 or 25 years ago you would work in one organisation, you would work up the ladder and you would get your gold watch at the end.

That is not the economy we now face. We face a challenge like no other. We need to have an education system that is fit for purpose, and currently it isn't. The International Baccalaureate provides light at the end of the tunnel, but we need to think about the structure of school pre-16 so that we can allow young people the environment to benefit from their learning post-16.

Q231 Chair: Thanks very much. We do need to move on but, before we do, I think there is a crucial question that comes out of this question. Richard talked earlier on about financial restraint and how expensive the International Baccalaureate can be for some schools. Given the financial constraints, is it possible or even practical for schools to run International Baccalaureate courses alongside A-levels and BTECs? We have talked about the different models within the baccalaureate. Is there not a danger that schools will be tempted to use their 11 to 16 funding to subsidise their 16 to 19 funding?

Richard Markham: It is: what can schools do? What should schools do? The schools that we represent are very much in the 'should' because it is right to give students this breadth of opportunity, to find the means to fund the programme that best suits the students and provides them with the best preparation for beyond school.

I thought what Alice said was absolutely spot on. The one thing I would add about the 3 to 19 years programme is that it has to be coherent. You cannot have testing for English and maths at age 10 or 11, then have a leaving qualification at 16, and then have a vocational and academic model at post-16. You have to have a coherent model right the way through that has certain themes and certain approaches stitched in and woven through that age range.

To directly answer the question: schools do find a means of providing excellent educational opportunities both in A-levels and in IB. All schools are struggling financially. They make it work because they have to and because it is the right thing to do. Endorsement and support from the Government, in terms of increasing that funding, I know would be very welcome.

Q232 Chair: I understand the tensions. I am a school governor myself, but



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only in a primary school, and I have some experience from being a governor of secondary schools over the years. Sometimes there are difficult decisions that headteachers and governors have to take regarding, "If we try to put these programmes on it might be at the cost of opportunities for some other youngsters who would not be on those programmes". How do we get around that?

Kate Greig: You are absolutely spot on. I don't know how we get around it, apart from having more post-16 funding. It is a real worry. It has been cut over the last few years and, while we have an increase for 11 to 16 education, there is not enough money in education. We all know that. The 11 to 16 funding has been improving a little bit but the 16-plus has been just staying where it is with very little movement forward. It is a real worry because, you are right, we have to offer the right curriculum for our students but within the costs that we have.

Going back to the question about A-levels, I would not offer A-levels because the IB diploma subjects have the same content as A-levels. Why would you not then do the skills-based work that everybody has been talking about today?

Q233 **Chair:** Given the challenges of the workforce of the future in terms of the skills and problems that we have heard being mentioned, it seems a bit perverse that we have had a real-terms cut in funding from 10 or 12 years ago.

Kate Greig: Yes.

Richard Markham: Absolutely.

Kate Greig: That is a major, major problem.

Q234 **Chair:** We do need to move on, I do apologise. We have heard concerns about the Department's proposal to withdraw funding for a number of level 3 qualifications that would impact applied general qualifications, such as BTECs and funding for the International Baccalaureate Careers Programme. Could the witnesses expand on these concerns and what action would you like to see from the Department?

Alice Barnard: It is a huge concern and I would say that it should simply be dropped by the Department. It is clear to see that this is absolutely motivated by the lack of take-up on T-levels at the moment. We need to see T-levels succeed and we need to see a number of young people taking up T-levels, going through the process and coming out the other end, making sure that the qualification is fit for purpose before we start shutting down qualifications that we know work and have brand awareness. I think it is a backdoor way of shutting out the competition.

My appeal would be: stop that process right now. Be honest about why you started that process, and let's come together collectively to think about what is best for young people, instead of trying to make a success out of a policy that already shows serious signs of fracture.



I am not against T-levels as a concept and when the process started there was a lot of information-gathering. What worries me is that information-gathering, that reliance on good evidence, was completely ignored when they put the qualifications together. It worries me that T-levels cannot be studied alongside other qualifications in the way that the IB, A-levels and BTECs can be. It is riddled with mistakes and pitfalls. The work experience element has not been thought through very well, and I think if you get a big take-up, if they do shut down funding on applied generals and other qualifications, the pressure on that work experience module will be huge. They have not really thought it through and they do not have an answer.

Q235 Chair: Thank you, Alice. Tom, are we in danger of the baby being thrown out with bathwater here?

Tom Richmond: We are. I probably have a bit more sympathy with the Department's position than some others, in the sense that it is absolutely wrong, as Alice said, to close down a qualification just because I am trying to get another initiative off the ground. However, it is really important we have a system that young people understand.

This is a point in our EDSK research that we really dug into because there are qualification reviews going back 20 or 30 years bemoaning the overlap that we have between A-levels, BTECs, other applied generals and maybe an apprenticeship in that same subject. If you are a young person trying to navigate this system or teachers who may have only been down a graduate route themselves trying to advise students on where they go next, a complicated system with overlapping qualifications is potentially a problem.

To give you an example. We found that, when you look at the list of approved applied general qualifications, the labels that are attached to them by the different awarding organisations that designed them include awards, certificates, applied certificates, technical certificates, national certificates, extended certificates, diplomas, introductory diplomas, national diplomas, foundation diplomas and extended diplomas. Put all of that alongside an A-level and you can see that we have a big problem in terms of just being able to navigate the system.

I agree with Alice that there is no justification in saying, "We are going to push out these qualifications just because we want this one to thrive", but if young people simply cannot work out what they are supposed to be studying and why, we do have a problem.

Q236 Chair: To a certain extent is that also exacerbated—I am going to ride a hobby horse for a moment here—by the lack of a comprehensive information, advice and guidance system across the board that is ongoing, to help shepherd young people through the myriad opportunities that they have in front of them?



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Tom Richmond: Indeed. As other witnesses have said, the fact that the landscape is not stable makes it even more complicated. The surveys of employers, teachers and partners around T-levels are not encouraging. We know that the Government tried to push them through very quickly against the advice of Department officials at the time. They have tried to push it through. There is low visibility. The Department starts to worry that there is not very high take-up and then it starts trying to interfere with other qualifications to boost T-levels. It is not a good cycle.

That word I think Richard used, “coherence”, is one of the four objectives that we set at the beginning of our EDSK research for the whole 11 to 18 years system. It has to be a coherent journey even if there are inevitable trade-offs, as you rightly say. If that journey is not coherent we simply cannot get good careers advice across.

Q237 **Chair:** Richard and Kate, is there anything you would briefly like to add to that?

Kate Greig: The main point for me is that, if we lose BTECs completely, we lose the IBCP. The IBCP has had a massive effect on our schools in all the criteria that we want to do something about, in terms of coastal deprivation and low aspiration. We are doing the CP and the students are thriving. If we get rid of BTECs it is a massive problem because that course goes.

Having said that, they need tightening up. There are too many that are too wide with too many labels attached to them. We need to have a shuffle to make sure that these are the BTECs and these are the subjects, to make it simple and, as Richard said, coherent.

Richard Markham: “Coherence” and “rationalisation” are probably the two words I would use. I am proud to say that we have a very good current post-16 model in place because it is varied and there are a number of pathways. It is complicated, as Tom has said. Going to a blunt, binary choice of academic or vocational seems to be a retrograde step.

Maintaining the breadth but simplifying it, understanding it and explaining it better must be a better solution than this black and white system where, at the age of 16, you are being consigned to one path or another. It is much better that you have the ability to navigate, to switch paths at various points in your life and, therefore, meet that requirement of having 13, 14 or 15 different careers during your lifetimes.

Q238 **Chair:** Richard, for you in particular, your Schools and Colleges Association has submitted written evidence that highlights the frustratingly limited information and communication from the Department regarding proposals to withdraw funding for the International Baccalaureate Careers Programme. Can you expand on that, please? We have touched on it but just for the record, as it were.



Richard Markham: For the record, we are delighted that in the consultation feedback the Department for Education recognised and explicitly assured the funding for the Diploma Programme. In the initial funding it was stated that the IB Diploma Programme would continue to be funded in its entirety as an alternative to A-level. Unfortunately, there was then the slight sting in that this does not cover the IB Careers Programme.

At the moment, the IB Careers Programme is not funded as a programme. Schools receive the funding for it through the funding for the individual subjects that go to make up that qualification: two diploma courses and a BTEC. We would ask that the IB Careers Programme is, like the diploma, recognised as a coherent programme—because it is—and that it is funded accordingly. That would probably also mean some increased funding to cover the core elements that Kate described, and that schools are provided with a degree of certainty as to the future of BTECs.

I would go back to the point that has been echoed. The BTEC picture needs to be rationalised. It needs to be simplified, but we still need that form of qualification because it serves a vast number of students.

Q239 **Chair:** What do you think the educational rationale was for the Department's original decision to go down the route that it has started to take?

Richard Markham: Alice and Tom have provided one view on that. I think the notion of simplifying and rationalising was taken too far. The notion that it is either an A-level or T-level and nothing else was the rationale and it was misguided, I am afraid.

Chair: Would everyone agree with that, by and large?

Kate Greig: Yes.

Chair: Yes. Lots of nods, for the record.

Q240 **Miriam Cates:** I just want to go back to Richard. I think you made the point about needing this kind of breadth and skills-based approach all the way through education, and that just tacking it on at the end is not sufficient. I used to be a science teacher and I remember particularly teaching the bottom set at GCSE, who were not particularly interested in science and could not wait to drop it, knew that they could drop it at the end of year 11 and therefore did not bother, quite understandably. I have also heard children say, "When can I give up French?" and things like this. Apologies to any language teachers present.

In the current model, how would you persuade a 16 year-old, who perhaps has already decided where their talents lie or has decided that they are inadequate in particular subjects, sadly, to take a broader range of subjects? Or is it the case that, until we reform the whole of the education system and make it broader and more skill-based so that kids



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know that they are going to have to continue these subjects, we are fighting a losing battle before then?

Richard Markham: In the studies from other countries around Europe in particular, where they are required to study more subjects, that is a conversation that does not take place because they cannot give up. It seems rather sad that you go into a subject knowing that you can come out of it at the earliest possible opportunity. "When can I give this subject up?" is the wrong way of approaching it.

What I would add to that idea about a coherent programme from three to 19 is that that gives incredible flexibility to adapt those subjects and you start talking about teaching them in an interdisciplinary fashion: yes, you might be struggling with your sciences but can we talk about environmental issues? Can we pair our science with maybe one of our social sciences, geography or economics, and talk about the environment? Can we have that as a meaningful general qualification that provides a pathway through, rather than this rather narrow, specialised idea that, if you are studying maths you are studying calculus?

Businesses say that they want students who are well qualified with statistics. Few students take the statistical options at post-16. Could you not then weave in a programme where you put a couple of subjects together, taught in an interdisciplinary fashion? There is your maths provision through to your movement out of school.

Going back, the simple answer is: if you cannot give the subject up you do not have that conversation. You do not have that mindset.

Kate Greig: It is a challenge but, if we beat the challenge, we have the nirvana of education where people say they want to do as many things as they can to get that knowledge and those skills and be ready for anything they go on to next. It is a great point.

There are two things I want to say. First of all, we have a challenge at our grammar school because we offer the IBDP and the school down the road offers A-levels. It is easier to do A-levels and get three very tight, knowledge-based subjects than it is to do the IBDP, which develops the skills and the knowledge. Nobody who has ever done it has regretted it but it is a challenge because A-levels are an easier option.

That goes back to what we have said all the way through: how do we teach people within schools that developing knowledge and a view of education that means that they will want to have as many skills and knowledge-based opportunities as they possibly can?

Just to add to that, the other thing is that in the sixth forms that do the CP and the DP, the subjects are based around skills. What you hear is the biology student having a conversation with the English student about the skills that they are learning, which are very similar. That is a huge benefit of the IB, both at CP and DP level. If we can get that feeling from



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students, pre-16, that what they are studying has links with each other, we have sorted it. In my head, education is then completely sorted.

Q241 Miriam Cates: That would be great. Tom, a question for you. One of the challenges we have in this country is a low level of maths and English skills in the adult population. I notice in the briefing document it says that we are the only western country where the skills level in our 50-year-olds is higher than in our 18 to 24-year-olds. That is quite a frightening prospect.

One advantage of the bacculaureate system would be to keep students studying English and maths for longer, potentially, but is that dodging the issue? By the age of 16, after 13 years of formal education, what are we doing wrong if so many children still do not have these basic levels?

Tom Richmond: It is a great question. In our EDSK bacculaureate that we designed in our work we did have compulsory English and maths to 18. I think the Prime Minister has talked about the same thing recently.

What I would say to that is that it could mean an awful lot of different things to different people when you say, "English and maths to 18". If you say, for example, as we did, that you are going to have core English and core maths up to 18, that is much more of a literacy and numeracy focus. As Richard was saying, that may be a bit more on the business skills or real world application side.

That is a very different thing from the GCSE curricula that we have now for English and maths, which were redesigned about six or seven years ago and made incredibly demanding. The maths GCSE that was introduced a few years ago is about 1.5 times the size of its predecessor qualification. These were designed to be benchmarked against the best qualifications in the world from the highest-performing countries in the world on things like the PISA rankings.

You have competing aims here. If you want to increase what they measured in the PIAAC study that you mentioned, that is more on the literacy and numeracy side. We said in our work that students should be required to study literacy and numeracy up to 18 unless they reach a certain level of proficiency beforehand, in which case they can say, "I'm done". We would have English and maths as subjects, your A-levels and GCSEs running alongside that instead. That is a very different model. In other countries they just study English and maths all the way through.

From where we are now, if you said to every student in the country, "You are going to be studying A-level maths or even GCSE maths up to age 18", that is going to be too demanding for many of them. I think a lot of businesses and universities might say, "What value are you adding to the system?" At the risk of pointing out the obvious, the extra investment you would need to get the staffing time and the contact hours from 16 to 18 to deliver that extra English and maths—in whatever form you want



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it—I think would be several billion pounds, even though I think it is the right thing to do.

Q242 Miriam Cates: Finally, coming to Alice, you made a fantastic point earlier that a significant purpose of education has to be to give children the skills for employment, because that is what they are going to be doing for most of their lives. Are there any longitudinal studies on students who did the baccalaureate and how they are getting on at age 30 or 40, in terms of job satisfaction, improvement in skills, earnings and things like that, or is too small a cohort to measure meaningfully?

Alice Barnard: That is a great question. Longitudinal research is massively underrated, particularly in education. The trouble is that certainly the IDCP is too new to have that sort of data.

What is interesting is that we now have the LEO data, the Longitudinal Educational Outcomes data. That is available via the Government through HMRC records and allows us to more readily track the outcomes of young people post-school. Rather than measuring the success of a school on how many young people go into HE at, say, 18, this looks at their earning potential and also understands what their transition was post-HE. We could use that to start to track what “good” looks like.

We know that schools will generally do what is being measured, and the tighter that is measured—either via Ofsted or through metrics like Progress 8 or the anomaly that is the EBacc—the more they will tend to try to deliver against those so that they can tick the correct box. It seems to me that the opportunity to be able to measure what young people do post-18 is incredibly important.

The only thing I would say we need to be aware of, when we look at some of these longitudinal studies, is that income is one evident factor of how “well” a young person is doing. However, there are lots of jobs that might provide immense satisfaction and huge amounts to the economy that do not necessarily have the pay packet attached to it. I am thinking of social care and some of the creative industries, which are incredibly important to the British economy, both socially and economically, but perhaps do not have the big pay packets attached to them.

I do not want it to become something where a large salary is good and a small salary is bad, because that would not take in the nuances. It is important with any of these studies that we try to counter that. I do not have the answers to all of that. Getting away from measuring that success looks like knowledge-based exams in a linear fashion, and whether you go into HE as being the key metrics of success, if we could dump those and be much more nuanced about what we measure and what “good” looks like, that will help significantly.

Richard Markham: Prior to this Committee meeting, I think I shared a survey that the IB did in January 2020 about the employability of IB careers programme and diploma programme students. That was just one



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of a much needed number of research projects to provide that. The skills that IBDP and IBCP students are perceived to come out with very much map to the skills that we are predicted to need in the workplace. That is talking not only about knowledge but, most importantly, about how you use that knowledge.

Something that perhaps we have not talked about this morning is character. Talking about skills, like resilience, kindness, those are exactly the things that Alice was talking about and those are the things that we should be measuring, and the IB has. It has been seen as being very favourable and very rewarding.

Kate Greig: They are the eight principles of education that the IB says to put all your studying around, resilience, open-mindedness, all those things that you want to develop in a human being. Again, it is difficult to map the success of students. Our success in our students is not just whether they have something to do at the age of 18. It is whether they enjoy it. Whether they are resilient and they stick at it, and whether there is some feeling that they will go on in the future. That they will have paths that they can take and feel confident enough to make changes.

It goes back to what we were saying earlier. Very few of our students now do what we did, which was to do a degree and then have a job and stay there forever. They will change pathways. That is why having those qualities is so important, the qualities of being able to be resilient and being able to be open-minded and being able to be knowledgeable, and to be confident about saying, "I can make different choices and pathways in my life because I have something to offer". That is what we want our young people to have.

Chair: I remember having debates with Government Ministers—probably about 25 years ago when I was on the Local Government Association's Education Committee—about what we wanted from our young people. It was all about making sure that they were the well-rounded human being with interpersonal skills and capacity to learn independently but, also, the capacity to work in teams, to lead, to follow, to do all those things that are necessary in the workplace. It is quite interesting and vitally important.

Q243 **Caroline Ansell:** I was going to ask about how you saw the relative weaknesses and strengths of the current post-16, but I think that we might have covered the weaknesses quite handsomely. I am keen to understand what you see as some of the strengths going forward, those aspects of post-16 that you would want to see safeguarded in any reform. I guess my ultimate question is: in the Government's initiative on T-levels, clearly trying to bring some cohesion and some clarity to quite a complex, convoluted post-16 scenario, clearly trying to raise up the standing of vocational qualification, why at that point, then, did they not look at the IB landscape and think, "Here we have the obvious way



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forward to champion the academic and the rigorous and the broad and balanced curriculum offer and the vocational pathway through"? Why did they not take that route when there is such strong evidence behind it?

Tom Richmond: I will kick off on the strengths point. When we look at the current 16 to 19 landscape, it is important to bear in mind that a lot of that is shaped by what happens after the 16 to 19, particularly the demands of universities. A standard bachelor's degree in this country would be a three-year, very intensive, single-subject programme.

To get that done in three years—which is quite a lot shorter than a lot of other countries have done—you need to have not only intensive study in those three years but intensive study before those three years as well, which is why in what a lot of people think is a very narrow curriculum of three A-levels, only 5% of A-level students now do four subjects. It is much more common to do three, potentially because of funding concerns.

That narrow specialism allows you to accelerate quite a long way in those subjects so that you are ready to then make quite a quick leap to a three-year degree. Whereas in other countries, yes, you may study a broader curriculum at 16 to 19 but there is a trade-off because their higher education programmes then tend to be longer.

I cannot see this Government offering to stump up huge amounts more money to expand every degree course from three to four years any time soon. That means that if you start expanding out what our universities would say is a strength of our current system, if you start expanding out that 16 to 19 offer, and students do not get as far in their academic studies at the very least, that could then potentially have some knock-on consequences.

In terms of the strengths and weaknesses, it does depend on who you ask. I think that universities would generally say for students on that academic path—and, of course, that is not necessarily more than half of them, maybe a bit less than that—a lot of them are well served by the current 16 to 19 system and any change to that—

Q244 **Caroline Ansell:** By implication, though, those who are not going to pursue a university degree, is their post-16 education experience limited or compromised because of that upward pressure?

Tom Richmond: Yes, potentially, and this is the thing, because that GCSE A-levels, three-year bachelor's degree is a very well-trodden route. A-levels have been around for 70 years, GCSEs 30 years. This is a very well-understood route for employers, universities, parents, teachers and so on.

Of course, teaching being a graduate profession—I was a teacher myself—I understand that very well, too. We have that channel but at the same time we cannot afford to leave behind or give a poor experience to those other students. As soon as you start moving away from that narrow specialism, if you said, "We want students to do four subjects", what we



used to have as AS-levels, that is probably doable, albeit with some more funding, but if you said five subjects, six subjects, how much less content could you potentially deliver?

I would be interested to hear the IB experience on that. How much may have to be removed from that curriculum to make the extra space and then: what is the trade-off going forward? Like I say, universities would probably say the system is working broadly quite well at the moment, for those academic students anyway.

Richard Markham: To directly answer Tom's point, the research that has been undertaken suggests that IB diploma programme students, who go in with six subjects rather than three, perform better than their A-level counterparts. They are more likely to get a first-class degree. They are more likely to stay with their degree choice. They are more likely to get an upper second-class degree. I do not think that the breadth comes at the expense of depth. The content of a higher-level qualification is equitable to that of an A-level.

Remember that A-levels are very different. There are multiple examination boards providing A-levels. If you talk about A-level maths, there is the options that a school or an individual student can pick. Somebody presenting to university with an A-level in maths can be very different to a student presenting with an A-level in maths that has been taken with a different board and comprises different subjects.

To the question of why they did not look at the International Baccalaureate, over time there has been various points where Governments have been advised and have looked at the International Baccalaureate. I mentioned Tony Blair's speech. I think that the Conservative Party commissioned Sir Richard Sykes to look at education. He recommended a baccalaureate style heavily influenced by the International Baccalaureate.

I do think that it comes down to that ever so slight hesitancy, that moving completely to outside of Government control, Government influence, to an independent examination provider is a bold step. One of the strengths of the current system is that there is the option for A-levels, IB diploma programme, IB careers programme, T-levels, BTECs. It is nice and varied. There are multiple flexible pathways. That is the strength. Changing it to a binary model makes it a very weak and certainly not a gold standard post-16 experience.

Kate Greig: I completely reiterate all that. When you say "the strengths" I am like the broken record. For me, as a head teacher, as a CEO of a trust, it is the IBDP and CP. I said at the beginning the profound influence it has had on our students because it exactly deals with those students who are not naturally university goers.

A lot of our students are first generation university goers. What you will be even more pleased about, I think, is I was delighted when the first



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student about four years ago said to me, "I am using university as my back-up option". A bright boy, really able; you do not have to go down the same routes. He had the confidence. He had the skills. He had the academic qualifications to choose what he wanted to do, and he chose to go into an apprenticeship. He now works in London. He is a stockbroker. He did the CP. Those are the stories we have.

About 40% to 50% of our students are first-generation university goers. They are making the choices from having that broad and balanced curriculum: skills, knowledge and pathways. That means that you can direct where you want to go from there.

Alice Barnard: I would echo Kate's sentiments there. It is that opportunity to make the right choice, and university can be that choice but apprenticeships are another great choice. FE can provide a lot of support to take people on the right pathway to get the career that is going to be aspirational. Going back to the Chairman's point, it is about good people and communities. Social cohesion is so important.

There is an interesting thing around HE here, but I realise that is taking us slightly off the point. Of course, HE and degrees can be offered in a compressed environment. You can get a three-year degree in two years, but that involves not having elongated holidays, a whole new discussion point there. I would signpost you to the Edge Hotel School, which, as the name would suggest, is something that we have been involved with, which allows young people to have qualifications in hotel management, which they fast track in two years to be able to get straight into an industry that is severely lacking in both quantity and quality of staff.

Why is the DfE not looking at the International Baccalaureate and other alternatives? Honestly, I think it has a lot to do with dogma. Sadly, being a Secretary of State for Education I don't think is seen as aspirational anymore and that is heart breaking. It is always a stepping stone to another career in another Department. The DfE should be pride of place. If we can get education right, we can get everything else right. We can take the pressure off the DWP, the national health service, justice and crime. We just need to get education right. There is a panacea. It is just that, sadly, those people who can change the system are not listening.

From my point of view, it has become something where countless Secretaries of State just want to make a name for themselves and, if it is not something they have thought of, they are not really that interested. I think that is incredibly sad. We have some amazing examples of brilliant schools doing great things and you are hearing about some of that today.

I think that we need to knuckle down. We need to be open-minded and we need to challenge our politicians to come up with some sensible, cross-party, long-term policies that will have the outcomes that young people need but that the economy must also have, unless we are going to slip further behind all the other developed nations.



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Tom Richmond: Briefly, picking up on what Alice and Kate mentioned, which was apprenticeships, the debate around the 16 to 19 system has been dominated by the concerns around the future of BTECs, the narrowness of A-levels, where the International Baccalaureate fits in, and so on. Our research at EDSK showed that only around 3% of 16-year-olds are now doing an apprenticeship.

That does not quite strike me as in tune with the Government's ambitions, which they have been expressing for many years now, about trying to make this a more attractive option for young people. In fact, the number of 16 to 18 apprentices has not really budged in 20 years. Successive Governments, Prime Ministers and Education Secretaries have struggled to make an impact and the expansion we have had in the apprenticeship system has actually been for adults, not for young people at all.

When the Government are working hard to get T-levels off the ground, they are now messing around with the BTECs landscape, they are trying to protect A-levels, they have all these things in place. However, they are not talking about what could be a potentially very powerful option for 16 to 18-year-olds, which is expanding apprenticeships. At the moment, that is not where the political antennae are pointed.

Kate Greig: Yes, it is a real struggle to find apprenticeships for 16 and 18-year-olds.

Chair: For an awful lot of young people in schools and educational institutions, it is very difficult for them to find out about the opportunities for apprenticeships as well.

Kate Greig: Yes, absolutely.

Q245 **Chair:** I would also add, though, that I do think that there needs to be a cultural shift among the business world in terms of what they do about their attitude and their input into teaching or training their own future workforce. There does need to be a culture shift there. We talk about the German model, but the trouble is that the German model is backed up by a legislative framework. That is not the case in this country.

Tom Richmond: Yes. In our work on secondary education, we looked at the evidence on employers' recruitment activities. Going to your point, Kate, a lot of employers are becoming increasingly nervous, particularly because of the rise in the number of graduates you have in the labour market. They are getting more and more nervous about taking on a 16 or 17-year-old because they just do not have to. Someone else has paid to put a graduate through university, they are much older, they tend to be a bit more mature than a 16-year-old—I was not a particularly mature 16-year-old myself so it is in no way a criticism at all—so, from a recruitment perspective, it does not make as much sense any more to take on a 16-year-old.



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In a separate report for EDSK, we promoted a bit more workplace experience for 14 to 16-year-olds to build those relationships with local employers and local communities. When you then say to an employer, "Would you like to offer an apprenticeship?" they do not look at you blankly because they understand what their responsibilities are and what the options are. Again, that is why we deliberately looked at the 11 to 18 system in our work at EDSK, not just the 16 to 19 system, because it is about pipelines. It is about pathways and it is about progression routes. We think that there is a strong case on that technical side to maybe look at the 14 to 16 space again.

Q246 Chair: Can anyone think of a golden bullet as to how we incentivise 16 to 18-year-olds to get involved in apprenticeships, or for institutions to think about giving that as an option?

Kate Greig: We just need more information from the apprenticeship programme. We have lots of students who want to do apprenticeships and we will certainly give them advice to go and do it. Again, it goes back to the fact that universities should just be one of the choices that they have and to have the confidence to pick what is right for them. We do find it difficult in the education sector to unravel where these apprenticeships are, who is offering them and how we access them. It goes back to that myriad of confusion over what is out there and how we apply for them.

Alice Barnard: Those are all important points. Access into apprenticeships is quite difficult unless you are going through a big organisation, like Rolls-Royce or BAE Systems, who signpost their apprenticeships really well. They are keen to take on young apprentices, 16 to 18 and 18-plus, because they want to model them in a way that will drive their business and drive their business success.

Interestingly, a lot of those big companies also, rather than selecting on the back of exam results, do their own interview processes, which includes psychometric testing, teamwork, resilience, working among others, taking leadership roles, practical testing, and they have whole-day sessions working out those young people's skills and attributes alongside their knowledge.

On the apprenticeship side, we have UCAS that navigates the HE landscape. We do not have an equivalent for apprenticeships. You can go on to the national apprenticeship website but it is very difficult to see the wood from the trees. We need a much clearer method for signposting apprenticeships that are available. A lot of them also require young people to be pretty independent. Unless you have more freedom in school and are able to self-study, it is a big ask for a young person to go from a narrow knowledge-rich curriculum that tests in a linear fashion out into the real world, into the workplace, where they have to organise their own time and they are going to get day release into college to do their academic work alongside their practical work. We need to give them the



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support and the tools to be able to do that effectively, otherwise you will have multiple dropout rates.

Q247 **Chair:** Isn't there also a problem, though, Alice? You have talked about big companies and big companies have the capacity and the economies of scale to do all this stuff, but so much of the employment base is in SMEs. How do we get them involved in that process of youngsters in apprenticeships?

Alice Barnard: You are exactly right. SMEs are the powerhouse of the UK. Big companies get it right because they have the resources and the departments to underpin it. A return to ATAs, apprenticeship training organisations, would help. They help to facilitate young people into apprenticeships but they also support the employer, particularly around things like pastoral care.

Additionally, a lot of SMEs might not necessarily have the capacity to be able to give the all-round experience. They might need to work with several employers to get that experience. Again, you need someone to centralise and to support and help on that because SMEs simply do not have the capacity or the money or the capability to offer all that on their own.

Q248 **Chair:** Do you think that it is something like—I am not sure where these would be placed, possibly in local FE colleges—apprenticeship support hubs in every locality, which would support students but also the employers?

Alice Barnard: Yes, you need a brokerage. These were a thing but they seem to have died a natural death. You need a brokerage service that can help the employer to understand what the requirements are, signpost the young person but also help with finding the right FE provider or right independent provider to do the knowledge side.

Apprenticeships are complex because you have three parties to it. It is also important to have the pastoral care element to ensure that young people get through the apprenticeship and are able to do the endpoint assessment, which is a whole other can of worms that I know the previous Chair was quite interested in.

There is so much to like about apprenticeships and there is so much positivity around what a young person can get, not just getting straight into the world of work but reducing debt because, of course, they do not have to take on HE debt, learning while they earn. There is also the capacity to earn a huge amount of money. There are some interesting statistics out there, which looked at level 5 apprentices and what their earning capacity was after three years. They were already earning more than a typical graduate, without the debt. This is good for the economy; this is good for individuals and this is good for social cohesion.

Chair: Thank you very much indeed. We do need to move on. I am conscious of time, so Miriam, please.



Q249 Miriam Cates: It has mostly been answered. It is about the soft skills and the characteristics that you were talking about. Briefly, how could we embed those soft skills earlier in the school career of a student? I will pick you, Richard, to answer that.

Richard Markham: You have a coherent programme of education from three to 19, which is underpinned by key principles, one of which is a learner profile of 10 attitudinal and cognitive abilities that during that progression from three to 19 the student gains increasing competency in and mastery of. That is the International Baccalaureate primary years programme, middle years programme, diploma programme and careers programme.

It has that underpinning ethos of that document of 10 qualities that are then explicitly referenced by the course content of the subjects. They are explicitly referenced by the assessment requirements. They are explicitly referenced by the challenges that a student is asked to do. If you are asking a student to be reflective, you make sure that one of the examined components of the 4,000-word extended essay for the diploma programme is a part of self-reflection of how they have learnt from the process that they have undertaken. That is how you do it.

Q250 Angela Richardson: I should declare that I was raised in New Zealand and educated in New Zealand and was able to do five or six subjects at the equivalent of A-level. I have also raised three children, who are now 20, 18 and 16, in the English system and have been able to compare and contrast between the two. It has been fascinating. I think this has been a really interesting session today and there is quite a lot to take away from it.

I want to talk about funding and my question is around funding, but we have covered that almost all the way through the session and right at the top today, because funding seems to be the biggest barrier, I suppose, to being able to roll these out. The Times Education Commission said that there would be a cost attached to the baccalaureate model. It said that equalising the per pupil funding of the 16 to 19-year-olds with the budgets of the 11 to 16-year-olds would cost about £1.2 billion a year, according to the Institute for Fiscal Studies.

A regular witness to our Select Committee, Andreas Schleicher, told the Committee he thought that the UK was favourably positioned when it came to resourcing in IB. He said, "Many other countries deliver those IB programmes with a lot less resource. I think it is more a question of effectiveness of resource utilisation, so I don't see that that should be the barrier. That the IB is inherently more expensive than the A-levels I find hard to understand". Kate, right at the beginning you talked about what you had been able to do in order to deliver this within the current funding envelope. Who is right and who wants to start?

Chair: I will add something, Angela. Andreas Schleicher talks about the comparison between ourselves and other countries, but at the time that the youngsters in other countries start the International Baccalaureate



what preparation have they had up to that point? Isn't that a factor as well? That is the question.

Richard Markham: The demands placed on schools, in terms of maths and English GCSE, do mean that we have a wealth of teachers who are able to teach to quite a high pre-16 level. The upskilling of those might not necessarily prove to be as challenging as naysayers have maybe suggested. Where you might see issues is in the upskilling in shortage subjects. If you are talking about the languages or if you are talking about the sciences, that might prove more of a problem. If it is only £1 billion, spending on education is not spending, it is investment.

Q251 **Angela Richardson:** Can I go back to my experience? The teachers who were teaching at that sixth form level were also teaching the subjects all the way down. In terms of managing the school and the curriculum and trying to slot everything in, there was already the skill base and the time of the teachers right from 13 all the way through.

Kate Greig: Yes, and that goes back to the question that we were talking about earlier, about how you have all those skills lower down the school. We keep coming back to that: how post-16 education goes back to three years-plus to 19. Having those skills and competencies of the teacher, again it goes back to what I keep repeating about our schools being very heavily influenced by the IBCP because it is the same teachers teaching in the sixth form that are teaching our 11-year-olds. By studying the IBCP and learning the curriculum of that, they are then seeing the skills, they are seeing the learner attributes and they are putting that into their curriculum as they go further down the school. You have a positive influence on your own teaching as you have gone through.

Tom Richmond: I would add that a lot of this comes down to the structure of the education system we have in this country. Although 11 to 18 is the most common type of secondary institution that we have in this country, there are hundreds and hundreds of 11 to 16 providers. That means there is also a large number of only 16 to 18 providers who cannot do that cross-subsidising that you mention. It is perfectly sensible. If you have a maths teacher who can teach across all the age ranges, it is absolutely fantastic. If you can only get funding for those 16 to 18 pupils at, say, £4,200 a year, £1,500 to £2,000 less for every single pupil than a secondary school can get for that lower age range, it is going to be a real struggle for those sixth form colleges.

I was teaching in a sixth form college in 2016 and 2017 and their whole environment is completely different as a result of this. They just cannot find as easily that extra funding for the extracurricular, for the broader subject groups. As most colleges have now done, they have shrunk from four subjects to three subjects because of the tight funding environment. I simply cannot see how they can reverse that trend across the entire country to expand out to four, five or six subjects, get the staffing in, get the recruitment right, and change their timetabling, of course. To do all that within the existing funding envelope, or even within an extra £1



billion, I think is very optimistic if the Government took that approach, to be honest.

Kate Greig: That is going back to what Caroline said at the beginning. It goes back to what Caroline was saying about why more people might not do it, because they are worried about the funding. We are in a position where we have seen post-16 funding in real terms getting less and less over the last few years. It really worries us. I cannot drop the IB curriculum with our schools, because then what somebody is asking me to do is to drop what you believe and you know and you see as being absolutely the right thing to do for the 16 to 18-year-old students, or worry about money. It worries us but we have to carry on with the right thing for the students. We are just hoping that we will get more money to be able to fund it. That is why more people do not do it.

Alice Barnard: The other element of this is that schools are not just about delivering teaching and learning. They have all these other additional pressures on them. I am thinking of all the non-teaching responsibilities, things around looked-after children and mental health care. If you are a school in an area of social and economic deprivation your resources are spread so thinly that all the things that you would love to do are taken up in many of these other elements. I am thinking of school refusers and those young people who are at possible risk of being excluded. These are all additional pressures and the money has to be found from the entire budget. You have a lot of competing pressures on schools to try to deliver the very best they can.

The tinkering around the edges has not helped schools in thinking about how they best utilise the money they have and we are asking them an impossible question. Against the backdrop of what we are looking at in the next year to two years around the pressures of being able to heat your schools, being able to feed your pupils, it suddenly becomes less important. That is not because it is less important, it is because you have to get your kids in through the door. You have to make sure they can eat something. You have to make sure they are warm before you even start to deliver education. This is going to be tough.

Everything we have talked about today is absolutely critical but my plea is that we have to make sure that we allow schools the breadth to be able to tackle this problem. At the moment, I feel that they are being handcuffed at every available opportunity.

Richard Markham: I would summarise the question of saying it is not that the IB or a baccalaureate programme is more expensive, it is that 6th form funding is inadequate. That is the point. Every school leader, every school organisation, ourselves, are pointing this out. Until the reduction in funding in real terms since 2010 is addressed and the Government do invest in the future of its population we will be continuing to have discussions like this.

Q252 **Apsana Begum:** I have a couple of questions on T-levels. We have had



several submissions to the Committee raising questions whether T-levels could fit within a baccalaureate, with some, such as the Royal Society and Youth Futures Foundation, saying T-levels are already large and demanding and equivalent to three A-levels. Could T-levels in their current form fit within a baccalaureate system and what changes might be needed to enable students to take a T-level within a wider baccalaureate programme?

Alice Barnard: It seems to me that T-levels are incredibly chunky, so they are already the equivalent of three A-levels although the guided learning hours can vary rapidly between different types of qualifications. Qualifications, like early learning teaching and teaching assistants, have guided learning hours of just over 800. Then engineering and manufacturing guided learnings hours of about 1,300-and-something. You have real differentials within T-levels, but at the moment they are being seen as the standalone qualifications that cannot be taken alongside either BTECs or A-levels.

I struggle to see how that would fit in with the International Baccalaureate because it feels like the ethos is so different. As we have heard today, the International Baccalaureate is all about trying to bring knowledge and skills together to be able to drive independent learning, to be able to have variety and create dynamic, independent thought. At the moment, the T-levels seem to be something that is trying to replicate A-levels but in a more technical form. We talked earlier about this holding group that we have of students that are not quite ready to do T-levels, being in this perpetual cycle before they can go on to a T-level.

The structure of T-levels suggest that they would not incorporate happily into an International Baccalaureate. I am not saying it is impossible but it does not feel like the same structure that we have for BTECs, which allows much more flow between the learning and allows for them to run alongside A-levels. I think Kate was talking earlier about how the structure of the IBCP particularly worked with the BTEC at the heart of it. I cannot see how T-levels would mirror that. It would take quite a lot of work to be able to see that happen.

Would it change the take up of T-levels if they were able to be incorporated alongside other qualifications? Yes, I think it would. But how you would incorporate that and give young people the opportunity to study those alongside other subjects when they already count for three A-levels I think would be quite a big ask, but maybe Kate and the rest of the panel are best placed to answer that.

Richard Markham: As they currently exist, they are too large and too focused. It is conceivable that a school might choose to offer a T-level pathway alongside an IB Career Programme pathway. That would not be the same student being able to take both but it might be within the same school, so you might get the benefits of cross-fertilisation. If the T-levels are reduced in content then they just become BTECs again. BTECs, as we



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have proven, work very effectively within the Careers Programme IB model.

Kate Greig: Ditto. The T-levels for me, because you are putting somebody into one direction, it loses that flexibility—the IBCP that we were talking about—so we could not do a T-level and have the diplomas and have the core and teach all those skills to the students at the same time. That is what worries us about the fact that if there are only A-levels and T-levels as an option, what about all those students who have not made up their mind at 16 what to do? What about developing those skills? What about having that flexibility of both academic and vocational, which is what the IBCP can offer? In its current form the T-levels would just be one subject. That is what you would be doing.

My other worry about that is because they are very costly to run, because they are such big programmes, looking at where they would be offered in my area, for example, coastal towns, there is quite a lot of travelling even practically to get from where the students live to the area that offers the IT T-level. The students will not do it. They just won't. They are too vulnerable. We have SEN students; they will not do it. They will not go that far. The other problem is the lack of industry in areas such as Thanet, where I work. Again, that work experience—and it is supposed to come with the T-levels—is a problem. I am not saying T-levels will not work completely but what I am saying is that they have limitations.

Tom Richmond: On that point, around the 16 to 19 system as a whole, that labelling problem we have with applied general qualifications with this absurd mix of different labels, one of the reasons we have that is because the qualifications are different shapes and sizes. An award or a certificate would be a smaller-sized qualification than a diploma, so you can do a BTEC that is so big it is equivalent to three A-levels. You can do one that is the equivalent of two A-levels and also an equivalent of one A-level, which is why you can mix and match.

Again, you look across the system and you say that A-levels are fixed, rigid, two-year programmes. Then you have this complete mish-mash of general qualifications with labels and sizes and shapes all over the place. Then you have T-levels, which are a fixed, rigid, two-year programme. That is not a coherent system. That is why the baccalaureate that we designed and published at EDSK was on a credit basis, whereby you just accumulate credits as you go up the system. You can mix and match where you get those credits from so that everyone is moving forward in one system.

There should be larger and smaller qualifications available, which again raise that conversation of AS versus A-levels. Should we be looking at going back to that kind of model so that students can say, "I don't want to do the whole thing but I would like to do half". I did three A-levels and one AS level, quite a long time ago now but that is how I did it. That



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option is rapidly becoming very hard for students to access because AS levels do not count towards performance tables.

To me, it is a question of coherence across a system. Rather than worrying about T-levels specifically, I would say that we have a problem across all different channels and pathways.

Q253 Apsana Begum: What is your assessment of the rollout of the T-level so far more broadly? What policy reforms might be needed, if any? Does anybody have any strong opinions on that?

Tom Richmond: I know Alice has been tracking this at the Edge Foundation a lot. T-levels has the potential to be a very rigorous and demanding programme. If you can get that work experience placement, which is compulsory within T-levels—it is only optional within BTEC—I can see that being a very powerful programme. That needs to secure so many work placements. We are going to be talking about tens of thousands of T-level students across the country, everywhere from deprived coastal areas to inner city urban areas, to get that mix and across the whole span of all the different T-level subjects as well. That would be nothing short of a stunning achievement if any Government could pull that off. I would love them to pull it off but I don't think that is realistic.

The T-level work placements were always going to be the biggest challenge. They are proving to be the biggest challenge. I am not sure that, without some very significant financial incentives and support for small businesses, we are going to get anywhere near the volume of work placement.

Chair: That is, given the limited rollout of T-levels so far.

Tom Richmond: Indeed. Only a few pathways and a few qualifications are available. If you push that forward to two to three years from where we are now—and you are looking at the number of pathways and occupations within those T-level pathways—again we go back to the point around apprenticeships. It is not easy to get apprenticeship placements either. Some of the early research that the DfE did, which we quoted in our EDSK report, show that there is potential the two might start to cannibalise each other.

Employers have openly said to the researchers, "I would love to offer a T-level placement, but you do realise as a result I am going to offer fewer apprenticeships because I am a small business. I only have one manager or mentor to look after these kids". Do not forget that T-level students are not even employees. They are just work experiences. Therefore, in lots of industries health and safety issues will obviously be overcome if you have taken that person on.

Therefore, that interaction between T-levels and apprenticeships, as we said in our report, we don't think it has been explored in anywhere near



enough detail. That is why work experience, getting those placements, is going to be an even bigger challenge in future.

Alice Barnard: I could not agree more with your sentiment there. The challenge has already been great and there have only been about 3,000 starts on T-levels. Once you multiply that across many sectors, the challenge is huge.

My worry is that the opportunity will be about what is available in your local area. Thinking that we have representation here from coastal areas, does it mean that the T-level that you can take part in has to be something that is based on your local economy? Are you going to be looking at things like travel and tourism and agriculture, rather than, say, farming or engineering? If this is about levelling up, my worry is that T-levels will become geographically focused and that will not allow young people to have the choice that they purportedly have.

The work experience element is tough. They do not have it right on a small cohort and there is no plan to underpin how to roll that out better in future. It feels like it is destined to fail. I don't say that with glee because T-levels could represent something quite exciting. It is just that the concept and the application are very far apart. The concept in itself is a good one, the application is incredibly poor.

Q254 **Chair:** I have found this an interesting, fascinating and informative session. I can honestly say that I have thoroughly enjoyed it. Can I thank all of the contributors and ask one last question: is there anything that we have not asked you about that we should have?

Tom Richmond: The only thing I would add into the mix is that one of the biggest concerns we have at EDSK—and we opened our report by saying this—is that we have a participation age of going up to age 18 now. However, we have an assessment, accountability and funding system that still treats the system as 11 to 16 instead. We have never got over that artificial barrier that was created at age 16, largely because it was historically the school leaving age.

Until we get over that hurdle and start looking at it as a system—and I appreciate that this inquiry is obviously about 16 to 19 qualifications—that journey up to those 16 to 19 qualifications will probably be an entire inquiry in itself, if you wanted it to be.

Looking at the way the Government have it set up, the Labour party obviously pushed that participation age up but they were talking about diplomas; 14 to 19 qualifications. They were talking about education and maintenance allowance for students—that £30 a week to help them stay in education, which has now been scaled back. Very broadly, at a high level, 11 to 18 versus 11 to 16, I think we still feel the echoes of that today and that is a big challenge for the future of the 16 to 19 system.



Kate Greig: Thank you for inviting me and it has been great to talk about the IB, both CP and DP. The two points I want to make go back to post-16 funding. We do manage but only just. If we do not get more of an uplift post-16 to do the IB in the 6th form, it is in jeopardy, which morally is an impossible decision to make. Do what is right or do what you can afford. For a headteacher that becomes an impossible position and I do not want to be in it.

Secondly, what I want is for people to recognise that there are programmes out there—the IB and the CP—if nothing else, to put it into people's minds that this programme does exist. It has been recognised. We have had a huge amount of success. We have had students, who would never have had the opportunity, who have the skill basis who have gone on to be successful. I see my ex-students coming back with those skills that they have been explicitly taught in school, not just picked up because of their background or where they come from or the people they happen to hang around with, but from school. We explicitly teach these skills, as well as the knowledge for them to go on to their next qualifications. They come back to see us as successful human beings.

The curriculum we have chosen in the IBCP has had a significant effect, not only on post-16 but how we have taught 11 to 16 as well. It is recognition of that: recognition of other qualifications other than just the A-levels and T-levels, and recognition that we need the post-16 funding so that we can carry on with that to give our young people what they deserve.

Richard Markham: Thank you for the opportunity to present. You have asked us some quite searching questions and it has covered a huge amount of ground. The schools that we represent are advocates of the International Baccalaureate. They recognise that it provides a broad and balanced curriculum post and pre-16, and that it is coherent and its existence in a complicated landscape is not only a "should" or a "could", it is a must. I think that is important.

We are wholly supportive of a baccalaureate model for education. We believe that the International Baccalaureate is an exceptional, globally-recognised, well-established, rigorous and robust programme. We would like more schools to be aware of it, for the recognition to be evident around the world, around the country, for there to be explicit endorsement of it from the Government, and for it to be funded alongside the A-level, the BTEC and the T-levels programme at higher levels.

Alice Barnard: Connected to all of this is assessment reform. If we reform the way that schools are measured, things like the International Baccalaureate will become part of the norm. They will be delivering the exact way in which we want young people to both learn and thrive in a multimodal system. Assessment reform has to be a critical part of any discussion or on anything that impacts education three through to 19.

Q255 **Caroline Ansell:** One final point, you talk there about the International



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Baccalaureate. What do you make of some of the coverage around a British baccalaureate? I guess I speak as a modern linguist. I hope that does not mean a baccalaureate without modern languages. A British baccalaureate; what are your thoughts?

Richard Markham: We believe that a broad and balanced curriculum for all students is a good idea. I worry about a British baccalaureate that the time taken to scope, to design, to implement and then deliver will fail a generation of our young people. What should be the approach is schools should be allowed and encouraged to look at a pre-existing model, which they can wholly adopt or they can run alongside what they are already doing.

Kate Greig: I am very open to conversations about any baccalaureate. It is all about that broad depth, balance and flexibility that our young people need because that is absolutely what worked. We have the IB at the moment and what we don't want to do is let time pass too much and then in five to 10 years' time saying that we should have a British baccalaureate. Yes, I am open to all conversations about education but what we have now is hugely successful. We need to keep on with that while other things might be talked about at the same time.

Chair: Tom is going to say that this could further complicate an already complicated range of options.

Tom Richmond: If all that any Government do to create a British baccalaureate is just cut and paste the IB and put the word "British" on it, we probably have not moved the conversation very far forward. The baccalaureate that we designed was different from the IB because it did not have a diploma programme and a careers programme. It had academic, applied and technical options all under one roof. A bit more in the mould of the Tomlinson review from many years ago.

We believe that the biggest prize is putting all courses and all programmes on a level playing field, all high quality, all rigorous so that students can choose the right course. We think if you had these different options, the dividing lines between different baccalaureates or diplomas, we think that you still have that sense that there is good versus bad or better versus worse. We wanted to get away from that, so our baccalaureate said "level playing field" for everything.

Alice Barnard: I think the witnesses have covered that absolutely brilliantly. The point is this is about what 'good' looks like and we do have a template for that. My biggest plea would be that the EBacc at GCSE is a misnomer and should be dropped as quickly as possible. We have some good stuff going on. We can evidence that in English schools right now. What we need is strong leadership in schools. We need the Department for Education to listen. I am delighted that the former Chair is now in the Department. It feels like there may be a little more room for common sense if he can drive that agenda; the agenda this Commons Select Committee has discussed many times.



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What my other plea would be is that there needs to be cross-party enthusiasm for what is happening in education instead of party political, because party political always leads to ideology and dogma. What we need is cohesion and support. We need that to be across a 10-year vision. My plea would be, within Parliament, please can we think about how we can achieve that?

Chair: Cohesion is important but at every stage all our thoughts should be about: this is for children and young people, full stop. Alice, Richard, Kate and Tom, thank you very much. As an Education Select Committee, we gather evidence, we write reports, we make recommendations to Government. It is up to Government to respond to that, but we certainly hope that the evidence that you have provided today will be part of a future policy direction that is going to be beneficial for all of our young people. Thank you very much.