Evidence-informed policy: Let's not base our 14-16 strategy on myths and misunderstandings

CAMBRIDGE ASSESSMENT

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Myths

- High performing systems are not ‘routed’ systems
- The A level system is narrow and inflexible
- We need ‘a system’ which everyone can understand
- Parity of esteem must be achieved

Myth 1
High performing systems are not ‘routed’ systems

- Dual system countries – Germany, Austria, Switzerland – around **45pc**
- Finland – 87pc remain in education and training after 16; **45pc** in vocational schools
- Netherlands – vocational route from year 9 – high esteem system – **40pc**
- Australia – **40pc** on upper secondary vocational route

- In ‘integrated’ or ‘unified’ systems, people make choices.

Myth 2
The A level system is narrow and inflexible

- A levels allow high intensity HE
- Top combination maths, biology and chemistry taken by just over 4pc of candidates
- 21,000 combinations and we stopped counting
- We achieve high levels of general education early

Myth 3
We need ‘a system’ which everyone can understand

- The WHOLE system?
- The spurious claims of the NQF
- Of course people need to make informed choices
- Fitness for purpose
- Opportunities for movement across routes at key points

Myth 4
Parity of esteem must be achieved

- Fitness for purpose is more important than parity
- Pursuit of parity has given us ‘academic drift’
- Diploma rationale perpetuated myths of a unified system
- Real apprenticeship is worth pursuing
- Weak apprenticeship has fuelled substitution

14-16 – 16-19? Routes from 14?

- There ARE gaps – early taking of GCSE maths
- Obsession with qualification-led change
- Stop pursuing the wrong goals – parity of esteem, a ‘tidy’ system
- The importance of ‘essential elements’ of maths, science and literacy –
- We should NOT see the issues as vocational VERSUS academic