



PRESS RELEASE

28 SEPTEMBER 2009

New approaches to vocational education needed for a high-skill economy: City & Guilds Centre for Skills Development responds to Lord Mandelson's speech to the Labour Party conference

Responding to Lord Mandelson's speech to the Labour Party conference, the City & Guilds Centre for Skills Development's Senior Manager for Policy and Practice, Kate Shoesmith, welcomed the Business Secretary's commitment to a high-skill economy, but warned that this required new approaches to vocational education and training. She added that Lord Mandelson's belief in the importance of academic and vocational education had to be matched by a sincere recognition that both types of education were equally valuable, renewing calls for a dedicated vocational option post-14, and steps to address funding inequalities between the two systems.

Future skills needs.

Referring to Lord Mandelson's statement that Britain's industry was dependent upon skills and apprenticeships, Shoesmith said: 'we are pleased to hear the Business Secretary's consistent recognition of the value of skills development. However, as training providers across the country see learner numbers increase in line with Lord Mandelson's pledges, we need policies that support training providers in their delivery, rather than constrain them. This includes providing adequate funding for vocational education and training, which still often loses out on funding in competition with academic education.'

Shoesmith continued: 'Lord Mandelson said Britain had to be as good at development as it is at research, warning that we have too few technicians for future industries. We feel that the rather narrow focus of our classroom-based curriculum has contributed to the present dearth of technicians. Young learners of all abilities need to be given access to clear information, advice and guidance that offers them a variety of careers and learning routes, helping to reinforce our vocational education and training sector and making sure that all learning styles are treated equally.'

'As the Business Secretary rightly said', she added, 'we also need to consider our future skills needs. Many people are talking about "green industries". To fill the jobs that these will create, we need a variety of technicians trained at all levels in the necessary new skills, and vocational training can play a key role here. We look forward to hearing more policies for this area in coming days.'



Value of vocational education.

Turning to the Business Secretary's statement that young people with degrees and apprenticeships were able to 'climb higher', Shoesmith said: 'We believe that Lord Mandelson's comments recognise the intrinsic value of both higher and further education pathways. Universities are not the only option, nor are they the right option for everyone. We would like to see the Government provide access to a wide variety of vocational education pathways, including a defined vocational pathway to qualifications for young people from the age of 14 onwards. Apprenticeships, though important, are not the only choice open to learners and employers interested in vocational education.'

ENDS

To follow up or to arrange an interview with Kate Shoesmith, please contact Andy Wasley, PR & Communications Manager, on andy.wasley@skillsdevelopment.org, +44 207 294 3576 or +44 7813 886189.

Notes to editors.

1. **About CSD.** The [City & Guilds Centre for Skills Development](http://www.skillsdevelopment.org) is a not-for-profit research and development body which is committed to improving the policy and practice of work related education and training internationally. It aims to achieve its vision of a world in which all people have access to the skills they need for economic and individual prosperity. To do this, it works worldwide with policy makers, employers, training providers and learners to share knowledge and help to lead the debate on policy and practice. It is a part of the City & Guilds Group