

Association of Teachers and Lecturers Press Release



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FOR EDUCATION CORRESPONDENTS/ NEWS

ATL general secretary's speech questions government's conviction to accept Tomlinson proposals

In a speech to be made later today in Manchester, Dr Mary Bousted, general secretary of the Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL) will question whether the Government, in their forthcoming response to Sir Mike Tomlinson's report on 14-19 education, will have the conviction to give the go ahead for a much needed transition to new forms of assessment.

In her speech at the CENTRA Conference, *Tomlinson and Beyond; where next?*, Dr Bousted will say:

"The report has been published now for over three months and we wait for details of the White Paper expecting the Government to fudge the key issue of a green light for a transition to new forms of assessment and an eventual end to GCSE, AS and A2.

"There is no doubt that young people in this country are over burdened by external assessments and tests. Tomlinson proposed a balanced and reasonable way forward - he did not ask for tight deadlines, indeed he fully recognised that a rigorous and respected system of teacher assessment, which did not increase workload, would take several years to develop. And yet, the Government has appeared to run away from even a proper debate on this essential issue.

"The simple fact of the matter is that the current accountability frameworks imposed on the education system by successive government administrations, and this one, do not support the Tomlinson vision."

Dr Bousted will say that Sir Mike Tomlinson's proposals call for a more collaborative and coordinated approach between schools, which seems to go against the Government's plan of giving schools greater freedom and powers. Dr Bousted will say:

"If Tomlinson's vision of 20 learning pathways, encompassing both academic and vocational routes, is to be realised, then this requires careful and comprehensive coordination. And yet, if you turn to the Government's five-year strategy you find that all secondary schools are going to be 'independent' and will be invited to name their own specialisms. Popular schools are going to be able to expand much more easily.

"It is almost impossible to envisage how young people are going to get equal access to the whole range of routes envisaged by Tomlinson in a system which will become, if the Government's vision is realised, a free for all."

Dr Bousted will also outline how Tomlinson's proposals provide huge challenges to the Government's accountability framework for schools. Dr Bousted will say:

"Mike Tomlinson is quite clear on this point - league tables, in their current form, cannot survive the implementation of his proposals. ATL is interested in new forms of accountability - and it seems to us that if current accountability measures are to be retained, we are going to have to look at an area, rather than institutional league tables- but the Government's stance on this question is very unclear."

Dr Bousted will question the huge financial implications for the Government if they do accept Tomlinson's proposals, and will say that the cost of personalised approaches to learning advocated by Tomlinson should not be underestimated. ATL's general secretary will say:

"Young people will need much clearer and more readily accessible advice about which learning pathways best suit their talents and aptitudes. They will need support and guidance through more complicated timetables and the demands of learning on a number of sites. So the reforms will need to be accompanied by considerable expansion of high quality impartial advice and guidance for all young people."

Dr Bousted will also call for a reduction on the assessment burden on teachers and learners, which, she will say, is vital in order to engage young people in life-long learning. Dr Bousted will say:

"We need to reduce the burden of terminal assessment which sees students take about 40 exam papers during GCSE and A level. This burden of terminal assessment distorts the learning process - reducing the inventive and enjoyable process of teaching into coaching for the test and because high stakes tests measure a very narrow range of achievement - leaving important skills and abilities unrecognised and unrewarded."

Dr Mary Bousted's speech will also address the need to look beyond current frameworks, working practices and structures to meet the diverse educational needs of today's and tomorrow's generation of young people. She will also highlight the clear and urgent need to improve the status of vocational

courses and qualifications, and call for necessary resources and training to be provided to ensure that when new vocational courses are developed and accredited, they are taught well and in environments which are properly equipped.