



File

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

Prime Minister (1)

David Young phoned. He would like to call in to see you on Sunday evening for a chat - around  $\frac{1}{2}$  hour. I told him you would be at Clevers but he says he will be in that area earlier in the afternoon so this is no problem.

He wants to talk about

- (a) the damage which would be done to MSC and VTS if the TUC pulled out of the MSC (as they are considering doing)
- (b) the work of the MSC generally
- (c) the future / his future.

Agree? Yes not

AT

ps. I added a note by David on TVEI which he submitted to NEDO

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Mr. A. Turnbull



**National Economic Development Council**

ACTION

NEDC(84)25

29 February 1984

Note by the Secretary to the Council

The attached personal note by Mr David Young on "Technical and Vocational Education" is relevant to the discussion of item 1 of the Agenda for the Council meeting on 7th March.

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TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION: SOME PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

Note by David Young

1. Discussion about the education of engineers and technologists raises wider issues concerning technical and vocational education. This note is about some of these issues. It is based on my experience so far with the Technical and Vocational Education Initiative.
  
2. Several key points stand out:
  - a. the new technical and vocational education opportunities have proved very popular - with parents, teachers and, above all, the young people themselves. All projects are oversubscribed. The Initiative has caught the imagination of the clients. The main anxiety of the LEA s involved is the likely scale of demand for places next September.
  - b. TVEI is popular at all levels. Young people are being attracted from across the ability range;
  - c. it is proving harder effectively to tackle the traditional boy/girl bias in particular subject areas. Strong efforts are being made, with some success. This is, of course, of particular importance if the supply of engineers and technologists is to be improved;
  - d. the Initiative has released a surge of enthusiasm and commitment which, if sustained and tapped, will facilitate many developments on which progress might otherwise have been slow, eg increased collaboration and sharing between schools and colleges and, equally significantly, schools and schools (most TVEI projects are adopting the consortium approach); profiling and assessment to include those aspects of attainment not readily deduced from exam qualifications; and coherent, progressive, and relevant four year educational programmes across the ability range leading to a wide variety of qualifications.
  
3. A promising start has been made. But before outcomes emerge of the kind the Council (to judge from previous discussions) would want, several less welcome aspects have to be faced.
  - a. The projects have to deliver not only in terms of the intrinsic quality of the educational programmes on offer but also in



terms of the acceptability of the formal outcomes to employers, polytechnics, universities etc, and therefore ultimately to parents and young people. I am less than confident about this. Universities and employers are generally conservative in their approach to new kinds of qualifications and accreditation. Unless they are fully aware of TVEI-type developments, and support them (and make practical adjustments in entry requirements and further training/education programmes), such developments may lose their impetus.

- b. By September this year, TVEI will cover 59 LEAs in England and Wales and some 500 schools and colleges. There will be other projects in Scotland too. This is still only a small minority of schools within the LEAs concerned. A further 22 LEAs (whose project proposals cover some 130 schools and colleges) sought support under the scheme but their proposals could not at this stage be included. Many of the institutions which will be taking part are in the vanguard of educational development. Starting up with enthusiasts is one thing. Keeping it up and replicating is quite another.
- c. For there to be effective general extension of technical and vocational education on the TVEI model there must be systematic means of ensuring that the institutions concerned have specific aims within the general framework; that they develop the curricular and other components of their educational programmes in a way likely to fulfil the aims; and operate as far as possible co-operatively to produce the widest opportunities most cost effectively for the young people concerned. The coming test will be the extent to which the present educational system can generate and sustain this level of responsiveness.
- d. There are some emerging general constraints on the growth of technical and vocational education. For example, the expansion of technology education in schools is limited by the number of specialist technology and design teachers qualified to teach the modern subject and a prospective continuing shortage of supply. The growth in interest from schools in this area and some others (eg computer studies, business studies) is exceeding the present capacity of the system to respond.
- e. The examination system is regarded by many as being in a mess. The Council has recently had a full discussion on this. The point need not be laboured. But LEAs involved in TVEI



are increasingly seeing the need for a common and co-ordinated approach to examination matters and other issues of accreditation

- f. Employers have a key part to play and are not yet properly organised to play it. A lot can be done locally through the existing organisations but an overall strategy and thrust is lacking and seen to be lacking. The organisational structure is fragmented (in some cases threadbare) and much disorganised, unmanaged and unfocussed goodwill in industry is, in my judgment, going to waste.

4. None of these problems is wholly new. But their acuteness is sharpening. A concerted attack on them is important for the future of TVEI and the development of technical and vocational education more generally. TVEI may provide a focus in the short term, if it is properly developed and fully supported, but a more lasting and co-ordinated approach needs to be considered. Time is not on our side.