

The Role of English and Maths in Technical and Vocational Education: Looking back to look forward

A timeline of lessons from the past

Significant moments	Date	The focus/key point of interest	
		<i>Developments in technical education</i>	<i>English/Maths (literacy and numeracy)</i>
Founding of the City and Guilds of London Institute	1878	Founded by City of London and 16 livery companies in order to contribute to the development of a national system of technical education.	English and Maths not separately examined or taught.
The Second Samuelson Report <i>Produced by the Royal Commission on Technical Instruction (1881-1884).</i>	1884	Technical education and the subjects it should include are defined.	Maths listed with drawing, natural science and modern languages. English is not mentioned.
The Technical Instruction Act	1889	The state first becomes involved in Technical Education: 'The expression "technical instruction" shall mean instruction in the principles of science and art applicable to industries... It shall not include teaching the practice of any trade or industry or employment' (387:8).	No mention of English and/or Maths.
The Teaching of English in England (The Newbolt Report) Commissioned in 1919 by the Board of Education, the Report was produced by a Departmental Committee chaired by Sir Henry Newbolt.	1921		Chapter V, <i>English in commercial and industrial life</i> , gives recommendations for the teaching of English in schools 'designed to prepare students for an industrial and commercial career'.
Secondary Education with Special Reference to Grammar Schools and Technical High Schools (The Spens Report) Commissioned in 1933 by Board of Education, the Report was produced by a Consultative Committee chaired by Sir William Spens.	1938	Recommends a tripartite school system with pupils allocated to grammar schools, technical schools or 'modern' schools by means of general selective examination.	Progressive recommendations for Maths teaching relevant to technical education include 'problem method' and 'project method' which anticipate recommendations made by the Nuffield Foundation in the 1960s. Recommendations for English include teaching skills such as letter and report-writing, note-taking, précis (summarising), and questions designed to test comprehension (Spens, 1938, p. 227).
Education Act 1944 (The Butler Act)	1944	"The schools available for an area should [provide] all pupils opportunities for education...including practical instruction and training appropriate to their respective needs" (5:8). The cost of technical schools meant that the tripartite system of became bipartite, comprising grammar and secondary modern schools.	Focused on the structure of secondary education rather than curriculum.

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<p>15 to 18 (The Crowther Report) Commissioned in 1956 by the Minister of Education, David Eccles, the Report was produced by the Central Advisory Council for Education (England) chaired by Sir Geoffrey Crowther.</p>	1959	Although lacking recommendations for the technical curriculum, Part 6 of the Report <i>Technical Challenge and Educational Response</i> , proposes 'a balanced education [not] by the addition of courses in the humanities [but] by broadening out the syllabuses in some of the technical subjects' and that courses 'detach from their narrow dependence' on future employment (Crowther, 1959, pp. 531-2).	Early reference to 'literacy' and 'numeracy' within the school sixth-form curriculum. Stressed the need for more literate Science students and more numerate Arts students (Crowther, 1959, pp. 276 – 277).
<p>New Mathematics Educational Movement The School Mathematics Project (SMP), (1962) the Mathematics for the Majority Project (MMP) and the Nuffield Primary Mathematics Project (NMP) (1964).</p>	1960s		Nuffield Primary Mathematics Project makes recommendations (similar to proposals in Spens 1938, <i>above</i>) widely applicable to contemporary Maths teaching at all levels, with learning carried out 'through active involvement with real situations and real material' (Rappaport, 1971, p. 297).
<p>The Dartmouth Conference Anglo-American conference on the Teaching of English.</p>	1966		The Dartmouth conference and John Dixon's report, <i>Growth Through English</i> (1969), generally accepted as the start of the personal growth movement in English, a student-centred approach to learning (Goodwyn, 2016).
<p>A Language for Life (the Bullock Report) Commissioned in 1972 by Education Secretary Margaret Thatcher, the Report was produced by a Committee of Enquiry chaired by Sir Alan Bullock.</p>	1975		Cites employers' concerns about standards of literacy and numeracy and makes recommendations for (school) teaching of English relevant to TVET e.g. note-taking, selective reading, referencing, reading for information and purpose (Bullock 120: 8.13 (ii), 8.14 (iii)).
<p>James Callaghan's Ruskin speech Ruskin College Oxford 18 October 1976.</p>	1976	Callaghan's speech is generally cited as being the originator of policy discourses linking education and the economy (Hayward and Fernandez, 2007, p. 218).	Basic literacy and numeracy described as 'essential tools' of education (Callaghan, 1976).
<p>Rise of the Manpower Services Commission</p>	Late 1970s	A quango focused on youth unemployment and creating a 'flexible' labour market. Oversaw a series of youth and adult training schemes.	Literacy and numeracy marginal to 'soft' skills.
<p>Mathematics Counts: Report of the Committee of Inquiry into the Teaching of Mathematics in Schools (The Cockcroft Report) Commissioned in 1978 by Prime Minister James Callaghan, the Report was produced by a Committee of Enquiry chaired by Dr Wilfred Cockcroft.</p>	1982		Emphasis on the usefulness of Maths as an integral part of other subjects and contexts beyond the classroom (Cockcroft 1982: 281). Cockcroft's definitions of 'numeracy' and 'numerate' - explained as 'possessing an at-homeness with numbers and an ability to use mathematical skills to cope confidently with the practical demands of everyday life' (Cockcroft, 1982, p. 11) - remain current.

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The National Council for Vocational Qualification (NCVQ) established	1986	Tasked with reform of vocational education and to increase the status of vocational learning.	National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) developed 'as a competence-based approach to training in which literacy, numeracy and communication were not emphasised' (Tusting and Barton 2007:6).
Introduction of General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs)	1992-3		GNVQs included 'core skills' with literacy, numeracy and language brought back into vocational training.
<i>Improving literacy and numeracy: a fresh start (The Moser Report)</i> Commissioned in 1998 by Minister for Education and Employment David Blunkett, the Report was produced by a working group chaired by Sir Claus Moser.	1999		Recommendations played a key role in shaping New Labour's National Skills Strategy (DfEE 2001).
National Skills Strategy (NSS)	2001-9		A strategy designed to improve adult basic literacy, language and numeracy skills and to 'support economic growth and individual prosperity, opportunity and choice' (BIS, 2009, p. 4)
<i>Review of Vocational Education – The Wolf Report</i> Commissioned by the Conservative-led Coalition Education Secretary Michael Gove, the Report was the result of an independent review of vocational education undertaken by Professor Alison Wolf.	2011		Following Wolf's recommendation, GCSE English and Maths become a compulsory part (condition of funding) for all post-16 learners without a minimum GCSE 4 /Level 2.
Introduction of T levels	2019	A level 3 technical qualification equivalent to 3 A levels.	Students expected to have a minimum GCSE grade 4 English and Maths in order to access T level programmes. A set of non-examinable English and Maths skills (6 General English Competencies and 10 General Maths Competencies) part of the subject content of every T level. GCSE English and Maths exit requirement for T levels dropped in 2021.
The Skills and Post 16 Act	2022	Key aims of the 2022 Act include: developing relationships between colleges and employers to ensure TVET provision meets local needs; improved careers advice and guidance and the prioritising of green skills.	Proposals for local skills improvement make no references to English and Maths or literacy and numeracy.