

## The CBI &ndash; looking at education through the wrong ...

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CBI boss Richard Lambert has not, unlike his predecessor Adair Turner, understood the reality of the 21st Century. [He has railed this morning](#) about:

*The education system .. failing pupils from poorer homes and producing exam results which "we ought to be ashamed of"*

As he correctly points out:

*There is an absolutely straight correlation between GCSE results and free school meals, a straight line so the most deprived get the worst results*

And he's right. And he's also absurdly wrong in offering his comment that:

*The problems are rooted in a "culture of low aspiration"*

No they're not.&#160; They're rooted in a culture of deprivation, as his own comment on free school meals shows.&#160;

There are many faces to deprivation. The common factor to all of them is lack of money. This is not an accident in the UK: it is deliberate. Some of our largest companies (major supermarket chains and retailers,&#160; major facilities management companies and government service contracting out groups, caterers, and more) base their entire business model on paying wages that ensure deprivation.

I offer an example. Sir Terence Leahy, boss of Tesco, [earlier this year](#):

*attacked "woefully low" standards in Britain's education system and blamed the government for a surplus of quangos and guidelines.*

But average [full time equivalent pay](#) at Tescos in 2008 was under £13,000. Now, I know that might be distorted by pay in Asia — but the majority of employees are in the UK and so whilst pay may be higher than that in the UK on average it remains massively below UK average pay however calculated, which exceeds £20,000 by all measures

used. And Tesco's are the UK's biggest private sector employer.

Lambert says that underachievement is linked to free school meals. These can be claimed by [anyone with pay of less than £16,040](#). That's on average all the staff at Tesco's.

So like it or not Tesco's, and employers like it, are paying the wages that ensure people claim free school meals which seem to be linked with a lack of aspiration and poor education results. This is the crisis for education. we're training people to do work which is demeaning, boring, and dead end. And you want them to be inspired at school when they see that is their prospect?

There are, of course, solutions. The first is to train people quite differently. Competence is not key to young people, capability is. We demand competence in some absurd things like IT skills which will be redundant three years after they leave school. we do not teach them the essential capability to adapt, which means preparing them for life long learning and change.

The second is to massively reduce differentials in society by serious redistribution of income and wealth: then people can have hope of a fair chance. Reduced differentials enhance fairness of outcomes, and nothing is more motivating than fair outcomes.

Third, we have to pay teachers more. Especially those in difficult subjects. It's absurd for example that few state schools can offer really good science curricula now. This has nothing to do with quangos or anything else. this is undervaluing education. and business must pay for this by paying more tax.

So it's back to you Richard Lambert. call for:

- \* Higher pay for lower paid staff
- \* Better paid teachers
- \* More tax overall
- \* More redistribution in society
- \* Better qualifications for life
- \* More meaningful work

Then we'll solve the education problem.

I'm waiting to hear from you.