* Vocational Education
* **What is Vocational Education?**
* Is a type of education that focuses on skills for the workplace – as opposed to “academic education”.
* It will involve such areas as careers education, and technical education, especially where there is a focus on jobs which have a specifically technical or even manual component.
* May have an impact in three main areas
  1. **Educational Institutions** – e.g., Technical or Modern Schools (in the tripartite system), City Technology Colleges, a range of specific academies and Free Schools
  2. **Credentials/qualifications** – e.g., CPVE, NVQ, GNVQ, BTEC, CTEC plus specifically vocational disciplines at degree level or the creation of modern apprenticeships, which leads to…
  3. **Workplace based learning** – e.g., work experience programmes, YOP/YTS, etc  
     This might also coincide with greater involvement of private companies within schools, as sponsors, providers of learning materials, etc. thus **serving the specific needs of employers**
* **New Right Policy:**
* The **New Right** introduced the so-called “**New Vocationalism**” in the 1980s.
* They argued that Britain needed job related training in order to fight against high levels of unemployment of the time, and in order to prepare youngsters for a variety of new upcoming jobs within the technology industry. Existing academic education was not providing workplace skills that employers needed.
* **Three** key policies from this time

1. **National Vocational Qualifications** (NVQs) a framework for assessing and accrediting workplace and other training at all levels
2. **Youth Training Scheme** (YTS) requiring young people without work to train with employers to continue to be eligible for benefits
3. **City Technology Colleges** – new schools often with commercial sponsorship not bound by the National Curriculum but focusing on technical skills. These were removed from LA control and given enhanced budgets

* **Key Policy Aims**
* To enable school leavers to become more attractive to employers and improve the skill base of the workforce
* To achieve “**parity of esteem**” between academic and vocational routes
* To provide new skills for a restructuring British economy stripping away outmoded or outsourced industries
* Why might this be even more important now?
* **More recent initiatives**
* **BTEC** has emerged from GNVQ (General National Vocational Qualifications) via so-called “Vocational A levels” Each of these qualifications has attempted to further enforce parity of esteem
* The most recent attempt to do this by establishing greater rigour in BTECs has been to increase **examined content** to 50% of the whole
* CTCs and similar institutions have often morphed into **academies** – again without LA control, with enhanced funding and freed from the National Curriculum
* **Work experience** has become reinforced through new Careers guidelines (**Gatsby** criteria) for those in school and college
* New Labour’s **Raising of the School Leaving Age** actually excused 16-19 year olds who were already in employment or training (NEETs)
* Coalition and Conservative policies have sought to reinforce work experience even to the extent of enabling 15-16 year olds to work in supermarkets
* **Perspectives on education and work?**
* Functionalists
* Liberal Theory
* Marxists
* Feminists
* **Some Criticisms**
* **Reinforcing social class and ethnic divisions** – social and cultural reproduction
  + Good students have been cream-skimmed for academic courses, less promising ones put on vocational ones (**Paul Willis, Gillborn and Youdell**?)
* YTS and other work experience schemes simply to **massage unemployment statistics**
  + Removal from the UB/JSA register makes it appear that unemployment is reduced Phil Cohen - he argued that Youth Training Schemes serve capitalism by not teaching young workers genuine job skills but rather attitudes and values needed in a subordinate labour force.
* **Gendered stereotyping** affects the types of courses taken by students
  + Hair and Beauty, Health and Social Care as predominantly female subjects?
* **The skills that are required are still not really there**
  + Employers still complain that school leavers lack the skills that are specifically required (IoD, CBI and other reports)
* **Parity of esteem has never been achieved** with pupils, parents, employers
  + Recent developments in exam accreditation lessen the focus on skills, and simply make BTECs one more exam based subject

**Resourcing is uneven**

* + **Birdwell** suggests that secondary schools in England and Wales often neglects pupils with vocational aspirations, and instead focus on educating the brighter students, who are destined to pursue higher education – Marketization and League Tables often reinforce this – and this in turn is driven by media and government policy and policy makers