University and College Union

UCU's vision of adult learning

UCU's vision for adult learning is constructed around a number of principles:

- High quality learning of the highest quality as it is needed, by whom it is needed, when it is needed in whatever mode or setting.
- Adult learning is an irreducible characteristic of life, work and culture in the 21st century, hence a public service and funded as such.
- Adult learning was and is essential to economic, social and civic regeneration, even more so in the current recession
- A negotiated, comprehensive liberating curriculum delivered by a professional high quality workforce alive to the diverse economic and social benefits of lifelong learning
- Adult learning is concerned with the active transmission of knowledge and skills
- Adult learning permeates across all education sectors including compulsory education(family learning)
- Adult learning has equality and diversity and equal opportunities at its core
- Adult learning harnesses new technology to meet the needs of adults and to empower them in a globalised world
- A system of governance that is truly accountable and empowers learners, practitioners and their communities, including employers

UCU's long standing promotion, articulation and campaigning for the principles and practices of adult learning is central to our educational philosophy and policies, and central to all sections of UCU membership. Our members link current and future adult learning to its rich past as part of radical social movements.

We set our vision for adult learning in the context of lifelong learning to support a progressive vision of the wider world. If lifelong learning covers the totality of learning that a person experiences throughout their life, adult learning is that part of learning that takes place in adulthood. The economic and social benefits of adult learning are universally recognised and add value to the health and well-being of individuals, and promote community and social cohesion, tolerance, debate and a sense of belonging and association that comes from taking part in learning with others.

Adult learning now

Defining adult learning has always been a difficult undertaking. It has been called among other terms, adult education, vocational education, non-vocational, adult and community

learning, personal and community development learning, extra-mural education and continuing education. Various government agencies also have their own definitions of what an adult is. For the purposes of this vision, 'adult' is taken from the higher education definition, and means those students and learners over the age of 25.

Different learners may bring different motivations and aspirations to the same learning process. What is considered 'informal' and 'non-vocational' by one learner may be perceived as more formal learning experience by others. Additionally such learning experiences may be taken up with a vocational or employment goal in mind.

There are as many definitions of learning as there as theories of learning. Most seem to focus on processes by which experience, knowledge, behaviour or practice undergo a relatively permanent change. This may be through active processes of actual acquisition of facts, theory and practice and/or reflection. There are qualitative differences between various kinds of learning experiences. Clearly human beings spend their whole lives learning in one form or another and these experiences can run through the full spectrum from highly formal and structured to completely informal and unstructured. Learning also refers to and encompasses the outcomes of it, the mental processes used when learning and the interactions between individuals and their learning and wider environment.

Frank Coffield in a recent pamphlet provocatively entitled 'Just suppose teaching and learning became the first priority' (LSN 2008), defines learning thus:

'learning refers only to significant changes in capability, understanding, knowledge and practices, attitudes or values by individuals, groups, organisation or society.'

UCU argues that the starting point for any discussions on what adult learning is, and for the creation of a vision of what adult learning can be in the future, must be based on learning as an active and conscious process with tangible outcomes, and on interactions between people, however mediated by technology.

Taking a definition of non-vocational education adopted by the European (European Commission 2001) as a useful starting point for defining the whole spectrum of adult learning, UCU defines it as being structured in three principal forms:

- Formal learning: typically provided by education or training institutions, structured in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support and leading to certification. Learning is intentional from the learner's perspective.
- Non-formal learning: that is learning not leading to certification, but structured in terms of learning objectives, learning time and support. Non-formal learning is intentional from the learner's point of view;

- Informal learning; resulting from daily life related to work, family, or leisure. It is not structured in terms of objectives, time or support. It does not lead to certification and learning may or may not be intentional.

Adult learning is very diverse. It occurs in higher education at undergraduate and post-graduate levels, in general and specialist further education colleges in programmes from the most elementary and basic levels to graduate level and above. It takes place in prisons. UCU members deliver programmes of adult learning in local authority and offender education services and in and to voluntary/third sector organisations.

For almost half a century, there has been a developing discourse around lifelong learning. If this is defined as meaning the whole spread of learning from 'cradle to grave', adult learning is that part which occurs in adult life after the period of compulsory education has ended. Lifelong learning and the creation of the 'Learning Society' has become the mantra for most countries, developed and developing.

Adult learning has had a growing yet inconsistent profile in this country over the last thirty years. It is both a cornerstone of many government policies and initiatives, yet suffers from inadequate and overly bureaucratised funding, target driven management, an over emphasis on economic instrumentalism and subservience to inappropriate determination by market forces. Our vision for adult learning is that it must be based on a universal entitlement and accessibility to learning that is responsive to the needs of individuals, communities and society in general, and meets their aspirations.

Factors driving adult learning

There are a number of trends that drive the current developing profile for adult learning:

- **Demographics:** the UK has an ageing population. Its population is living longer. The number of people aged between 16 and 24 is projected to fall from 6.9 million in 2005 to 6.6 million in 2020 – a reduction of 4.9 per cent. Between 2010 and 2020, there will be 60,000 fewer people each year in the 15–24 age cohort. Young people are also taking longer to establish themselves in adult roles and the labour market. A much quoted statistic, not least in the Leitch Report (2006) is that 70% of the workforce of 2020 is already at work now. Simultaneously the largest ever age cohort, (the bulge' generation) approaches retirement. There are growing numbers of 'young old' aged 50-75, most of whom are and will be in good health and many of them still economically active. There are also growing numbers of 'old old' people, mainly aged 75-100 plus, many potentially active, but dependent on others for some aspects of daily life. Over recent years there has been a growing trend for retirement ages to be pushed upwards.

  This ageing population and potentially declining workforce impacts not just on work and employment, but also on society and the family. One way that the UK may address this

has been through increasing migration. This has its effects across the education system, including adult learning, as can been seen in the Government's decision to impose fees for ESOL programmes. All of this means that adult learning can no longer be an after-thought in the education system and spectrum, as it has been. Increasingly adult learning will be seen as one of the means by which the state, employers and individuals address the problems and issues raised by a changing and ageing population.

- **Technological change and globalisation**: technological change and innovation have always been one of the forces that have impacted on work and life and hence on people and society. Since the industrial revolution, the pace of both the introduction and use of technology has quickened, until it seems to have reached a zenith with the development and introduction of information and communication technology.

  Among other effects, this has clearly had revolutionary impacts on everyone and everything, including work and society. Computer assisted design and production including automation has transformed production and employment across the world, opening new markets but also bringing developing countries into manufacturing and production.

  Fast systems of communication have transformed finance and capital flows, although as we currently see, not always with positive impacts. Economies, markets, capital and labour movements are now conducted on a global scale. Nations and states can no longer be isolated from one another, or from events anywhere in the world.

  Technological change and the ever accelerating pace of development have also changed personal and family communications and interactions. Both technological change and globalisation change adult learning: insecurity of employment for many means there is a constant pressure for re- and up-skilling throughout people's lives. The possibilities and potentialities of e-learning may well revolutionise all aspects of adult learning, including its delivery and content, as well making available limitless resources and information.

- **Economics:** adult learning over the last thirty years has been increasingly discussed in terms of its economic rationale. This is based in what is termed 'human capital' theory. This holds – whether correctly or not remains highly debatable – that in a globalised world, where technological developments are constant and ever present, where it is relatively easy for previous under-developed economies to enter production markets, and where all developed countries are facing demographic pressures, a nation's workforce and its skills are an increasingly important element in attracting all-important inward investment. For developed countries, the education and skill levels of their workforces may be the only competitive edge they may have over their competitors.

> Developed countries cannot compete with the low wages paid in developing countries, so must become high-skill, high-value producers. Successive waves of newly industrialising countries have put pressure on the developed economies to accelerate technological innovation and to intensify productivity to maintain competitiveness in a growing global economy. In addition, the different elements of product development and design, production, distribution and marketing are increasingly often distributed internationally.

Further globalisation seems unstoppable, and its impact on the economy, employment and the labour market appears not to be able to be controlled or altered. The UK has traditionally relied on low-wage, low-skill production. It is also a polarised economy and society in terms of employment, qualifications and education and training. Traditionally only academic learning has high status.

The UK compares favourably in international comparisons when it comes to producing graduates cost-effectively. But vocational education has long been considered of inferior status, and there are longstanding deficits in 'technicians' with qualifications at levels 3 and 4, as well as a long tail of underachievement. The UK has among the lowest rates of participation beyond the age of 17 of all developed economies. Seven million adults lack functional literacy skills, 14 million lack functional numeracy skills, and 40% of the workforce is without level 2 qualifications.

Unlike many of its international competitors the UK has always relied on the voluntary efforts of employers in skills generation; and for over 100 years, UK employers have mostly failed to rise to the challenge. For too long too many UK employers have relied on a few mostly large employers to provide training, while the others poach the results of this, usually with higher wages. Thus it is argued in government rhetoric and policies that what the UK therefore requires for its future prosperity are more and better skills. The recent Leitch Review of UK skills needs stated that skills creation is "the most important lever within our control to create wealth and to reduce social deprivation". The role of government in this global economy becomes to ameliorate the most damaging of the effects of economic change by equipping individuals with the skills to change jobs and careers in response to those changes.

Thus it is increasingly argued by UK governments that adult learning across all education sectors can only be supported with public funds if it impacts on both the stock of skills and raises the levels of those skills. The form of this support has been to suborn adult learning to what it is perceived that employers want from it. This achieved its apotheosis in the Leitch Report which recommended that all public adult learning funding up to higher education, and leaving out the tiny funding stream for non-accredited adult and community learning, should be routed through employers by 2010 (since amended to 2015).

The need for adult learning to meet the needs of employers and the economy runs across all education sectors. Given the circumstances of the current economic climate, to place so much reliance on employer demand for skills would seem increasingly problematic, especially as even when the economy has been a lot more buoyant than at present, many employers, and especially small and medium enterprises where most jobs have been created in recent years, have been noticeably reluctant to match their actions around skills generation to the Government's rhetoric.

- **Social inclusion and cohesion:** it is axiomatic to describe the UK as a society that is constructed along profound divisions of wealth, class, gender, race and ethnicity, age and perceived mental and physical abilities. The forces described above combine with many others to continue to maintain this society, and indeed strengthen processes that can lead to even greater individualism, atomisation and alienation.

  The UK is going through a period of profound widespread social change. There are accelerating changes in life including work and in the family which are driven by globalisation. There is an increasing diversity and fragmentation of experiences and institutions, of changing identities, loyalties and aspirations. Consumerism with its focus on supposed choice and individuality takes an ever firmer grip on society and individuals. All of this can lead to despair and a sense of hopelessness for many, especially when this is associated with multiple deprivations. Many feel themselves excluded from mainstream life and culture. Society is becoming increasingly and simultaneously both atomised and polarised. Social and community divisions become sharper and more intractable.

  As the state struggles with the consequences of all of this, social and civic inclusion and cohesion have taken an increasingly high profile in government policies and discourses. Adult learning is increasingly seen as a valuable tool in the furtherance of policies aimed at developing social inclusion and cohesion. Adult learning, it is claimed, can foster a critical and informed engagement with social, political and moral issues, and thus support the development of a tolerant, participative democracy for all citizens and communities. Adult learning can significantly help to develop peoples' skills, orientations and confidence to navigate the risks, uncertainties and ambiguities of contemporary life. It can constitute a key resource in enabling people to participate in the shaping of society and to take advantage of social change rather than being its victims. David Blunkett when Secretary of State for Education and Skills put it as follows in his forward to the Learning Age White Paper (2000):

  > "learning strengths families, builds stronger neighbourhoods, helps older people stay healthy and active, and encourages independence for all by opening up new opportunities to explore art, music and literature. And what was available to the few can...be enjoyed and taken advantage of by the many".

The current context of adult learning

A brief history of adult learning

The river that is adult learning in this country is made up of many tributaries. It has a long and rich history. Adult learning has taken place in every society, although almost all of it in informal and non-formal settings. It was delivered through and in family, community and religious settings. With the rise of literacy levels and the industrial revolution adult learning took on a new importance. Even with the establishment of compulsory school education, for almost three-quarters of a century, until the 1944 Education Act, learning beyond elementary education took place as adult learning, and increasingly as more formal adult education. For all those except for the very privileged few who went to university, learning for life and for work took place in adulthood.

The Industrial Revolution with new technological advances, increased specialisation and production meant that increasingly skills for employment and indeed for social and civic life encompassed bodies of knowledge and skills that were imparted in more formalised settings set apart from work. As the working class became more and more definable and conscious at the end of the 18trh century and as the political and civic order and discourse was shocked into turmoil with the American and French Revolutions, adult learning delivered through a plethora of social, political and religious organisations took on renewed vigour and importance. Self-help groups, community organisations, trade unions, mutual improvement groups, co-operatives, correspondence societies, even reading groups, sprang up everywhere. E P Thompson's seminal work 'The Making of the English Working Class' wonderfully describes the rich mosaic of adult learning provision in the first half of the century often organised and delivered within and by the community.

In the latter half of the 19th century with increased industrialisation and urbanisation, parts of this informal adult learning came together in the formation of Mechanics Institutes. These were more formal settings for adult learning that delivered the skills, education and learning that was more and more in demand by employers. Mechanics Institutes did not confine themselves just to vocational and skills learning, but also organised social and cultural learning. Denied access to state sponsored learning, the working class set about creating their own sources of education and institutions to deliver it.

The mix of adult learning with social and political movements, intimately and organically linked to adult learning continued. The UK being first into industrialisation to a large extent could only develop the knowledge and skills demanded by industrialisation in an essentially pragmatic and experiential manner. This also took on a class dimension. Social class and status still lay with a landed class supported by what formal education existed and this was a classic general education to be a 'gentleman'. The development of an empire absorbed those parts of the ruling class that could not be incorporated into national governance. Vocational learning and education was left to those who needed it and could organise it for

themselves. It was second class with a lower social status and recognition. Those attitudes still persist and plague vocational education and adult learning today.

Increasing technological change and industrialisation as well increasing foreign industrialisation and competition also meant the state could not ignore the need to foster better communications, literacy and knowledge creation and transmission. The Penny Post established in 1840, was in its own way a revolution in communication as the Internet was at the end of the 20th century. In 1850 the Public Libraries Act set up a network of public libraries built on the ideal of equal access to shared resources. Millions engaged in informal learning, and by the 1860s over 70% of men were literate – with women fast catching up.

With the first formal state intervention in elementary education in 1870, adult learning became the 'finishing school' of the working class: the place where working men and women went to complete their education. Higher education began to expand beyond Oxbridge and the Mechanics Institutes often became municipalised and their curriculum extended to higher levels of technical knowledge and skills. Foreign industrialisation built on the banks of knowledge and skills pioneered in the UK, and were often fostered by the state. Interestingly the later quarter of the 19th century saw the first of a long line of reports and inquiries bemoaning the lack of formal vocational training in the UK, and linking it to the threat of foreign competition and the relative decline of the UK's leading industrial position: again a tradition that continues to the present.

The beginnings of the 20th century also saw an extension of self-organised adult learning with the formation of the Workers' Education Association. The increasing need for a technician and craft cadre meant that the craft unions became incorporated into more formal education through an involvement with apprenticeships. Completing one's apprenticeship and obtaining a union card became a rite of passage in many jobs, a tradition that continued until Thatcher broke the tripartism in vocational education in the 1980s, along with the decline of the old apprenticeship system with the collapse of UK manufacturing.

As democratically elected local councils were established in the latter years of the 19th century, both adult education and technical education became increasingly delivered through local authority services and institutions, a pattern which continued for virtually the whole of the 20th century. Much of the adult education provision was in courses whose curriculum was a mix of previously self-organised programmes as well as an 'improving' menu of classes, often designed to transmit social and family values and support. Adult education was still inter-woven in working class communities and culture, and also offered opportunities to engage in arts, literature and music.

The years before and after the First World War saw a flourishing of adult education alongside a vibrant growth of political parties, trade unions and social movements, organisations and philanthropic endeavours. The slogan displayed on many union banners

of the era of 'Agitate, Educate, Organise' could equally have been applicable to many of these organisations with study opportunities well to the forefront of their activities.

Higher education continued to expand through the establishment of universities often in the heart of urban and industrialised centres. Alongside the traditional 'Oxbridge' curriculum of the classics, these institutions offered many more scientific and technical subjects and an expanding range of programmes in the arts and humanities. The technical 'schools' and colleges delivered an expanding range of technical education training and qualifications required by local industry. Some of these technical institutions delivered at higher and higher levels. Purely adult education institutions were created such as Birkbeck College, some of them residential. The adult learning that revolved around the unions and the emerging Labour Party was formalised into national structures such as the National Labour League of Colleges, and its more radical rival the Plebs League.

All of this activity was recognised by the State when in 1917, and then again in 1919, the Government made a commitment, never fulfilled, to support formal and informal adult learning as a key part of rebuilding society after the First World War. A duty to educate was built into the BBC's charter as a completely new form of mass communication developed in the 1920s.

During the Second World War, adult education became a crucial element not only in the struggle for the total population to adjust to total war, but also as part of the social cement needed to fight such a war. The links between adult education and community and social life were utilised to great effect. The LCC even delivered to the air raid shelters in the London Underground. Adult learning also received a massive fillip with the formation of the Army Bureau of Current Affairs. This was designed not only to provide the technical know-how for fighting a modern war, but as an essential vehicle for wider civic and social learning. More formal programmes of learning were supplemented and augmented with self-organised activities and discussion groups. The Bureau's influence endured well into the immediate post-war period and the creation of the Welfare State.

In the post-war period the Butler Education Act finally established universal secondary education, and at least in part technical education. Adult education lost part of its remit in terms of continuing education. The 1944 Act also gave statutory backing for technical, or as they were becoming known, further education and technical colleges. These continued and expanded their role as the deliverers of vocational education and training for local industry, although predominantly to younger workers, often on day release.

In the immediate post-war period there was still a rich mix of voluntary organisations and local authority non-vocational adult education. The curriculum became truly comprehensive, at least in some areas where it was possible to study anything from archery to zoology. This was supplemented by universities' continuing work in higher levels of cultural, social, humanistic and artistic adult learning through Extra-Mural Departments.

However, with increasing affluence, growing consumerism and individualism, and in the 1950s another revolutionary development in communications, television, the non-formal adult education curriculum lost its links with working class community and social life. Through the 1950s and '60s its classes, although never anything less than worthy, took on a cosiness and routine that did not carry the spark of radicalism that they had had before the war. Although higher education slowly expanded it still was largely the preserve of young people.

Radicalism was recaptured when non-formal adult learning took up the challenges posed for it by the rediscovery of poverty, social action and community alongside deeper social and cultural changes in the late 1960s. Higher education was expanded hugely after the Robbins Report (1963), although again the main beneficiaries were largely middle class young people. Vocational education and training also became transformed with the first major statutory intervention through the Industrial Training Act which established Industrial Sector Boards and planning and training levies. Although much derided later and even today as being hugely bureaucratic and wasteful, this was in fact a major stimulus to UK vocational training, with many, albeit larger, employers finally taking workplace training seriously across a greater section of their workforces. Adult higher education took a massive forward leap with the creation of the Open University, a national initiative utilising modern communications to reach many adults with part-time higher education distance learning and degrees for the first time.

The impetus for the beginnings of radical change in non-formal adult education came with the publication of the Russell Report (1972) which at least partly challenged the sector to take up some of the challenges in the social agenda of the 1960s. In a variety of settings, some in municipal services, in the voluntary sector, especially the WEA, and in some urban settlements and some university extra-mural departments and action research projects, there were initiatives to reach beyond the existing adult learners and into communities with what became a more engaged and radical curriculum. Many policies and now accepted aspects of adult learning had their birth and development in these services: adult literacy and numeracy, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), family learning and access courses to higher education and employment.

The 1970s and '80s was a period of political and economic disjunction as well as social unrest and turmoil. This coincided with the re-emergence of feminism as well as new social movements such as gay and lesbian rights, and a growing sense of alienation from established white society on the part of UK black and minority ethnic communities. This led to an emergence of identity politics, often self-organised. Adult educators were able to reconnect with their radical traditions and engage with this ferment of ideas and activity.

The accession of Thatcher with a determined right-wing 'modernising' agenda for national economics, politics and cultural life dealt body blows to working class communities, as traditional heavy industries declined, and in some cases were brutally smashed. Rising

unemployment and its accompanying social unrest saw a massive intervention by the State into post-compulsory education and training. The Manpower Services Commission, a government agency, ran a bewildering alphabet soup of programmes to try to cope with both youth and adult unemployment. The remnants of state corporatism in vocational training were swept away with the old apprenticeships, accompanied by a determined push by government to suborn its curriculum to employer needs and control. Competence based qualifications were devised in which underpinning knowledge and skills seemed secondary to task performance. The current pre-occupation with employer needs in workplace learning, but leaking from there into both school curriculum and higher education, can be traced directly back to this period.

Technical colleges found their traditional role of supplying vocational education to and for local industry becoming increasingly redundant in many parts of the country. In order to find new audiences many picked up on the growing demand for adult learning, often stimulated by non-formal adult learning providers. These were for accredited programmes that could lead to enhanced and better employment prospects. Long established vocational programmes were opened up to adults as well as new initiatives such as Access and Return to Work programmes. The majority of students for these and the new forms of non-formal adult education were women, as the workforce became increasingly feminised. Technical colleges became Further, and sometimes even further and higher education colleges, as they extended their programmes to higher levels. There was a growing body of mature students in HE, especially the polytechnics, as the colleges of higher education had become. Higher education also responded to the growing managerialism in the economy by developing ever expanding programmes of management education. Non-formal adult education continued to try to expand its reach and curriculum in the face of ever tightening resources as local authorities were forced to cut back on their whole range of services, but it increasingly felt like an uphill struggle just to maintain an adequate level of provision as well as a comprehensive curriculum.

The low point for municipal further and adult education and learning came in 1992, when the dying embers of Thatcherism not only tore FE colleges away from local authorities but divided adult learning into that which would be funded and that which could be funded: into Schedule 2 and Non Schedule 2 work; into desired and permitted adult learning. Not surprisingly the desired and permitted were programmes that led to qualifications, with qualifications being seen as the same as skills – i.e. what employers were purported to want. The unfunded, at least by central government, were the non-vocational, non-accredited programmes organised in non-formal adult learning settings.

Incorporated colleges, 'freed' from local democracy and accountability, and increasingly dominated by institutional management and local employers, and driven by ever more Byzantine funding methodologies, abandoned many of the new directions for their adult work, retrenched and fell back on what was familiar and stable – the education and training

of young people. A new national sector, the FE sector, emerged around a crude and complex bureaucratised set of national rules, inspection and policy drivers. The non-formal adult education was left to the voluntary sector which had immense trouble adjusting to the new system, and to those local authorities which could afford and wanted to continue to deliver it. Across the education system, increasingly driven by market forces, adult learning was more and more being seen as just another commodity.

Higher education continued to expand. Although this was mainly in the form of increased participation of young people, more 'mature' students were entering higher education, often through, for at least part of their studies, FE colleges. There were some moves away from traditional school academic entry qualifications in favour of the new forms of qualifications and courses being pioneered in FE and adult education. Some universities, colleges and adult education services formed partnerships as 'Open Colleges' which tried to smooth progression routes for adult learners as well as creating new and innovative learning programmes and qualifications. This expansion of higher education was not accompanied by commensurate rises in funding, so the unit of resource of higher education, how much could be spent per student, was increasingly squeezed. This too impacted on adult students who often required more support than younger students. There were also moves to tie higher education closer to employers' agendas, and this often impacted negatively on university departments dedicated to adult learning, the extra-mural swiftly being renamed as departments of continuing education. Their curriculum often became more restricted and linked to economic goals.

Adult learning since 1997

The election of New Labour in 1997 seemed to herald a renewal for adult learning. A hopeful start was made with the publication of the ground breaking Kennedy report on widening participation in FE. Although commissioned before New Labour took office, and more far-reaching in its scope than just adult learning, its analysis and focus on social justice and widening participation had a crucial impact on adult learning. It underpinned the discourses and policy developments around lifelong learning in the mid-1990s.

The Fryer Committee and Report on Adult and Continuing Education (1997) followed quickly after, and encapsulated the hopes and aspirations of adult learning. It broke new ground on the promotion of workplace learning by recognising the potentially crucial role of trade unions. It ushered in the Green and White Papers, 'The Learning Age'. However what was also present was a noticeable and worrying pre-occupation with the economic rationales for adult learning.

In structural terms New Labour in bringing in the Learning and Skills Act and system in 2001 continued with much of the mechanisms of the previous Further Education Council, while introducing planning, at least for a short time. Non-formal adult learning in an attempt to iron out many of the geographical differences in provision became funded by the

national body, the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), with what was to become a safeguarded national funding stream. Colleges however remained autonomous and outside the scope of local democracy and accountability.

However New Labour bought heavily into 'human capital' theory and the economic rationales for adult learning quickly pre-dominated both debate and actual policies. Two Skills White Papers while bringing in welcome initiatives continued past government policies to link adult learning ever tighter to perceived employer agendas and needs. These policies reached their zenith with the Leitch Report 2006 into national skills needs for 2020, which recommended, not accepted by the government, that virtually all adult learning funding should be directed through employers by 2010. In Leitch even higher education and its curriculum was to be driven ever nearer to employer needs. This government, as all previous governments, remains wedded to rejecting any serious statutory basis for skills generation and workplace learning, basing its policies on a bankrupt and failing voluntarism on the part of employers.

Nonetheless there have been important advances made since 1997 not least the rediscovery, development and sustaining of the role of unions in learning. This has resulted in ever-increasing numbers of branch-based union learning representatives, and a growing awareness and implementation of new machinery by unions for securing workplace learning.

There have been other positives. All adults are now entitled to Level 2 qualifications and under 25s to Level 3. In September 2008 a unitised curriculum was created for adults through the Qualification and Credit Framework which is the culmination of years of hard work to make the adult curriculum more flexible and suited to older learners. In the same year Informal Adult Learning was at least recognised as existing through its own Government consultation in 2008.

However, it is in both the direction of adult learning policy as well as in the detail that criticisms can be made of the government's policies on adult learning. Increasingly, the agenda for adult learning has focused on economic rationales: adults learning job skills through Train to Gain and Skills Accounts (still being piloted). To 2011 LSC and its successor body's adult learning funding stream will decrease by over 6% and Train to Gain funding will increase by almost 100%. All funding for adults except that for non- and informal adult learning will move to Train to Gain and Skills Accounts by 2015. Yet there are increasing criticisms of Train to Gain: the most devastating is that it is largely 'deadweight': paying for what employers would be doing anyway. It has been accused of assessing existing skills in the workplace rather than creating new ones. And it has been argued that the overwhelming need by the economy is for intermediate and higher skills rather than those lower levels covered by the programme. This year, the underspend on Train to Gain exceeds £100m but the money instead of returning to its source, the LSC adult learning funding stream, was used to plug holes in the HE budget. With an economic

recession looming it is unlikely employers will prioritise training, despite government exhortation, and unless the money to be spent on Train to Gain is used for programmes for the rising numbers of unemployed, it may also remain underspent.

Criticisms can also be made of the detail of many policies. Although the new adult entitlements at Level 2 and 3 were welcome, they have focused resources on full qualifications at the expense of smaller 'bite-sized' courses which better suited many learners, and indeed employers. There have also been reductions in government subsidies to Level 3 and above programmes for adults, with consequential rises in fees as Government has sought to shift the balance of payments for some courses to employers and individuals. By 2010, adult learners on the very programmes that employers declare are needed, will pay 50% of the costs of their learning. Even though the safeguarded national budget for non and informal adult learning has remained static since 2005, and will remain at that level until 2011, this represents a cut in real terms.

In two years from 2006-2008, nearly one and half million adults were lost to adult learning, with a 3% fall in the number of adults participating in learning in 2007-08. Indeed, the NIACE annual survey of adult learners showed that the proportion of adults currently learning, or having done so in the last three years, has fallen from 41% in 2007 to 38% in 2008. These falls in numbers have not just been in non-formal and 'recreational' learning as the government often contends, but in programmes leading to qualifications: ICT programmes record a drop of over 52%, Health, Public Services and Care nearly 50%; Agriculture, and Horticulture and Animal Care 36%. The drop in the numbers learning has fallen disproportionately on the very groups that the government is desperate to attract back to learning: among social class C2's (skilled manual workers) learning has fallen from 40 per cent to 33 per cent in a single year, reversing their participation gains of the last ten years. Full-time workers' participation has fallen from 51 per cent in 2006 to 45 per in 2008. Part-time workers' participation fell from 55 per cent in 2006 to 48 per cent in 2008. The numbers of 25–34 year olds learning has fallen from 50 per cent to 43 per cent in a single year. No increase in participation at all has been secured over the last ten years for those in socio-economic groups DE (semi and unskilled workers, unemployed and retired people). There was also a sharp drop in the number of adults planning to take up learning in the future: 45 per cent in 2006 and 36 per cent in 2008. Surprisingly, the fall is most dramatic among current learners: 88 per cent in 2006 and 72 per cent in 2008. Furthermore, the greatest decline in LSC-funded courses has been in Level 1 and entry levels with a loss of 603,200 learners: a 40.6 per cent fall (2004/05 to 2006/07).
Alan Tuckett, Director of NIACE, suggested that the survey findings show:

"The price of investment in key groups of adults in workplace learning is being paid for by reduced participation by other adults from exactly the same groups. This is either because other workplace learning opportunities are being offered to those already with higher skills, or because those adults can no longer access public provision they previously chose for

themselves… the time has come for Government to count the cost, as well as the benefits, of its current policies for adult learning."

New Labour has never reversed that harmful Conservative division of adult learning into the 'good': worthy of public funding; and the 'bad': not worthy of it. Rather, it has embraced and reinforced it with ever-increasing vigour and conviction. The Government also appears to have an abiding belief in the political benefits of steering the education and training system from the centre. This has produced instability among education providers as government endlessly shifts its priorities and the providers attempt to double guess the direction of policy.

The reliance on the market (which in reality is highly centrally managed) has also resulted in the unintended marginalization of the most vulnerable learners. Moreover, the combined effects of top-down policy-making and marketisation have contributed to the undermining of the local level of governance and institutions' ability to respond to their local communities and local labour markets. The behaviour of education providers has become principally driven by national policy levers, which continue to privilege competition over collaboration in a locality. Even where self-organised and adult learning voluntary organisations have managed to survive they have often been separated from their social and political roots.

Increasingly from the 1980s, higher education has been accepting more and more mature students, with some 11% of all HE students attending programmes in FE. New Labour gave with one hand, establishing a target that 50% of all young people under 30 should a have a 'higher education experience, while taking away with the other when it introduced higher fees for university programmes, and loans replacing maintenance grants for undergraduates.

Although the government introduced a number of important and useful initiatives to widen participation in higher education, most of these have been aimed at widening participation by young people. Part-time study, the overwhelming mode of learning by adults in higher education, remains disadvantaged in terms of its funding and the support given to part-time HE students.

Foundation degrees, perhaps a useful opportunity for adults wishing to obtain a higher education qualification, both in its own right as well as a building block to a full degree, delivered largely by FE, has been strongly associated with employer needs. Leitch attempted to set out processes by which these links between funding, learner support and curriculum would bind higher education even tighter to employers.

In 2008 the Government announced that it proposes to withdraw £100m of funding for students studying for a higher education qualification equivalent to, or lower than, a qualification that they have already been awarded. This will hit universities offering courses

to adults and part-time students the hardest. Analysis by UCU of the data on the potential financial implications for universities and colleges reveals that post-92 universities (former polytechnics) and institutions and departments (such as continuing education) that specialise in offering courses to workers wishing to retrain will be the biggest losers.

As the economy descends to its worst crisis in almost 70 years, the two main foundations of New Labour's adult learning policies, the reliance of employers and market mechanisms across the whole spectrum of delivery, and of self and light touch regulation, are shown to have been built on shifting sands.

As the House of Commons Innovations, Universities and Skills Select Committee has stated in a recent report, increasingly the focus in the face of steeply rising unemployment must be on re-skilling rather than up-skilling. It is almost axiomatic that when faced with falling sales and profits, employers usually cut training as one of their first survival methods. If their actions follow the pattern of previous recessions, programmes such as Train to Gain may not prove to be the driver for increased adult learning, contrary to the Government's expectations. The impact of the recession will be felt throughout adult learning provision and will make all collaboration with employers more problematic. Simultaneously the demand for adult learning is highly likely to increase as adults who are unemployed or at risk of unemployment look to not only improve and add to their skills, but also look to adult learning to maintain their self-confidence and to develop new interests.

In the area of accountability, external events concerning the regulation or the lack of it in the financial services sector highlight self-regulation and 'light' touch inspection of adult learning providers, and must cast some doubt as to how viable this can be.

The result over a decade of New Labour is that adult learning is in a parlous state. It can increasingly be seen that the foundations of its policies, a subordination of adult learning to almost purely economic rationales, financial stringency and funding methodologies which discourage curriculum development and responding to ever more mechanistic and numerical targets have brought about this situation. Never has there been a greater need to set out an alternative vision for adult learning.

Adult learning: the vision

We have set out at the start of this publication the key principles on which UCU's vision for adult learning is built. In addition we would also argue that it also encompasses four key and crucial concepts which are worth detailing before developing more detailed elements and components of that vision because these concepts interact with and through the principles to give body to this vision.

We believe that the UCU's vision for adult learning is radical and progressive and is built on many previous policy statements made by both the predecessor bodies to UCU, AUT and

NATFHE. This vision in setting out a direction for UCU's adult learning future policies, and in doing so transcends the policies of AUT and NATFHE to forge a new vision for 21st Century adult learning.

Empowerment

The right to learn is a human right. Article 26 of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that:

"(1) Everyone has the right to education……Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit. (2) Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups…."

Adult learning is linked to personal growth and development, to well-being, and to collective development and solidarity, as well as to civic and global responsibility.

Adult learning is among many other things, a process of personal and collective empowerment and emancipation, with inclusion, equality of opportunity and access to a broad, comprehensive and liberating curriculum, at its core. This is true for every aspect of adult learning in whichever sector and institutional setting it takes place.

By 'empowerment' we mean the processes by which individuals and communities are able to take fuller control over their own lives and the situations in which they find themselves. Such processes are of course built around the possibility that there will be opportunities where such actions become possible. Adult learning is a vehicle for obtaining the knowledge, skills, attitudes, disciplines, self-belief and confidence whereby individuals and groups have at least some of the tools needed to seize those opportunities. Adult learning can also open up some of those opportunities for action and the taking back of control over situations. This is because adult learning should also contain the means for adults to begin to express their potential and the changes of behaviour that have come from their learning, and to exercise them, not least in relation to their own current and future learning.

When current and future adult learning is built around this concept of empowerment, it strengthens its roots and traditions in terms of its purpose, engagement with society and social movements. It builds from its students' lives and experiences. This has been especially important in the context of the developments in informal and non-formal adult learning which have reached throughout the whole spectrum of adult learning, including engagement with that myriad of self-organised groups in a whole series of social movements which, as in earlier times, have come together with their self-defined, and in part self-realised learning agendas. In turn non-formal learning's engagement with these

groups has also helped to build a body of knowledge and skills which often has merged into and influenced higher education. These on-going engagements have a profound influence on the curriculum and the practices of teaching and learning.

Adult learning, in making these links and defining, developing and delivering curricula that do try to empower, and sometimes liberate their students and learners, is supporting an active and progressive vision of the wider world, and a sense of belonging that comes from taking part in learning with others. Having empowerment central to UCU's vision of adult learning has implications for other aspects of this vision. Adult learning was and is essential to economic, social and civic regeneration, even more so in the current recession.

Equality and diversity

The centrality of the concept of empowerment to adult learning, is given further substance because UCU's vision for adult learning is also constructed around the fact that equality and diversity must be at the heart of its concept, purposes, curriculum and delivery.

John Rawls states that an equal society protects and promotes equal real freedom and substantive opportunity to live in the ways people value and would choose so that everyone can flourish: "…an equal society recognises people's different needs, situations and goals and removes the barriers that limit what people can do and can be".

Adult learning must start from a position that the society within which it exists, is profoundly unequal in its distribution of wealth and power. These inequalities arise from society's perceptions and the status it accords groups defined in terms of class, gender, race, ethnicity, religion, age, perceived mental and physical ability, sexual orientation and geography. Adult learning must and does challenge those perceptions and that acquired status. It can offer opportunities for people and groups to challenge the expected norms and power relationships by offering adult learners opportunities to acquire, build and deploy knowledge, skills and attitudes to undertake this.

The recent DIUS consultation put it thus:

"The overall vision must be an inclusive adult education service in which people from all backgrounds can participate….everyone has the right to pursue their basic human needs for creativity, physical activity and intellectual stimulation. Learning is a key tool in securing equality of opportunity but at the moment that key turns most easily for people with confidence, money, motivation and opportunity to join in."

The UCU vision would not dissent from this. Among the key outcomes of adult learning must be to ensure that those without the confidence, money, motivation and opportunity have access to and are able to easily use it.

UCU would argue that adult learning of all kinds has at its core equal opportunities. We also contend that access and opportunities for, and participation in adult learning should not be limited by class, financial means, age, sex, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or perceived mental and physical ability. Access to adult learning must be access to a comprehensive curriculum. This is a curriculum that is not prescribed in its content, level or outcome. It should enable all who wish to participate in adult learning to do so in the place, time and mode of attendance that suits their circumstances.

Democracy and accountability

In the 21st Century in globalised developed economies and increasingly fragmented social and civic spheres, adult learning is an irreducible characteristic of life, work and culture. It must be founded and largely built through public services. Adult learning, as part of lifelong learning is a public good. It should receive public funding. In doing so, it and the structures and systems and the institutions that deliver adult learning, must be subject to scrutiny and accountability to the people who ultimately fund it, and to the various communities it seeks to serve. This has profound implications for the shape of those structures and systems, and also the governance and accountability of the institutions. Throughout adult learning there needs to be transparent and useable lines of accountability which ultimately reside with democratic structures and bodies so that all stakeholders, and more importantly the public, can feel that they can have the systems, policies and processes that they want.

When considering the implementation of such a concept throughout adult learning, it becomes clear that those lines of accountability have to be fit for the role of that part of adult learning and the institutions who deliver it. For example, most forms of non-formal adult learning have been in the past, and should in the future be resourced and supported at local, usually at local authority level. Accountability to local democratically elected bodies would be the obvious and most natural place for their accountability to lie.

Other more formal learning providers have acquired alongside their local roles, regional, specialist and even national roles. Accountability should still flow to democratically elected bodies, even if this may mean political developments, for example, the emergence of some form of regional democratically elected bodies. If an institution had a specialist sectoral role then it could also be accountable in some way to an industry body which itself would be properly representative of employment interests, the employees as well as the employers.

There are institutions which have national and even international roles. If the proper form of accountability for such roles is national, then it should be with Parliament, but a Parliament that has real powers of scrutiny, discussion, interrogation, investigation and influence.

There will undoubtedly be national agencies that are actors and intermediaries between government and institutions. Such agencies most also be accountable to democratic bodies. In their own governance they should also be representative of the sector that they work in and through.

In non-higher education, there must be a reduction in the growth of what can only be termed a 'quangocracy' – the plethora of national agencies. These must be kept to a minimum, and to those areas of activity where independent scrutiny, analysis, investigation and activity are required.

Currently there is much discussion about the need for and merit of self regulation. Higher education is held up as the model of an education sector regulating itself. Further education by contrast is seen as sector in which government and its agencies micro manage with huge bureaucratic burdens. Self-regulation has much to commend it, especially if institutions and the sector are mature enough and responsible enough to police themselves. But self-regulation must include the voices of staff and students.

These systems of accountability will require proper and fit for purpose measures and indicators. The key to real accountability is information. There is a place for quantitative measures and indicators. However there are also qualitative ones. Numerical indicators and grades must not be allowed to dominate. Where they are used, they should also include indicators that show added value and distance gained by learning experiences. Qualitative measures can describe context and circumstances as well as 'softer' but no less important aspects of institutions' work such as community cohesion, inclusion and equality and diversity. One crucial aspect of accountability is academic freedom and autonomy for staff. It is essential that staff are allowed to explore knowledge and ideas freely and openly without unnecessary interference and censorship. If there is true accountability not only upwards to appropriate democratic institutions, there should also be accountability downwards to staff and in turn staff become accountable for their actions as well.

Adult learning has another crucial role to play in ensuring real democracy and accountability. We have already described adult learning as being a process of empowerment, facilitating and developing the knowledge, skills, articulation and communication, and above all the confidence, to take part properly in wider civic and social life, and thus participate fully in national as well as more local and institutional systems of democracy and governance. Of course adult learning at all levels also delivers and should continue to deliver specific programmes in the civic, political, economic and cultural aspects of society.

Cross-cutting themes

To fully create this vision of adult learning, it is useful to picture how this would look in a number of key areas of adult learning.

Governance and accountability

We have described at the start of this publication an underpinning principle that adult learning, and the institutions and organisation that delivery it must be founded on a system of governance that is truly accountable and empowers learners, practitioners and their communities. In a modern society this includes employers and employment.

Non-formal and some aspects of self-organised informal adult learning should be connected to systems of local governance and accountability through local government. These forms of adult learning are delivered and should be funded locally. Its curriculum should respond to what are essentially local requirements and wishes.

Non-formal adult learning providers while being accountable to local authorities should also have sector and institutional forms of governance on which communities, staff and learners should be represented. In addition such providers should also establish links with the communities they serve through more open and participative fora.

The work on the recent informal adult learning consultation has revealed often hidden pockets of other government funding that can be seen as promoting and supporting adult learning, as well as a multitude of self-organised adult learning groups and other interesting developments often based on maximising the potential of new technologies. The consultation posed the questions as to whether and how these informal adult learning opportunities could be supported and fostered.

UCU believes that they should be supported so as to provide at local level a wide spectrum of opportunities where there is space and opportunity for self-organised groups to come to be supported and connected to more formal situations. Such support could also include 'staff' and organisational development programmes, and ensure that this part of the spectrum is able to play its part in terms of equality and diversity.

There has been discussion since the informal adult learning consultation on the creation of new local partnerships to bring together the various forms and providers of local non- and informal adult learning. UCU would support this if the resources to create them were additional and not taken from the already hard pressed existing funds. Such partnerships would be able to provide infra-structural support, co-ordination and strategic direction. They would have to be open and transparent and have real resources to support providers and learning opportunities as well as real community, staff and learner involvement.

Since Incorporation in 1993, when further education colleges were removed from local authority control, there has been a serious democratic deficit in its governance. The systems of accountability through national agencies have often been neither clear nor transparent. UCU's vision is to see further education returned to local democratic control, and its governing bodies opened up to proper and real representation from its principal

stakeholders, students and learners, the staff who actually deliver it, and the communities it serves, including employment interests. If such local accountability was through local authorities, then it would link colleges to the schools system which would mean that there was a continuum of accountability for the period from the end of compulsory schooling and into adult life and learning.

It can also be argued that many FE colleges have since Incorporation outgrown their local roots, and acquired regional and even national roles. It may be that democratically elected and accountable regional forms of government may be a better location for FE accountability, especially in relation to that part of its adult work that is in skills and employment. We believe that ensuring proper accountability and public trusteeship of public funds for this work could be connected to regional forms of governance through local authority and sector representation in these.

To exercise proper accountability, there would still be a need for quantitative and qualitative indicators to inform and illustrate the performance of providers. There would still be a place for external scrutiny and inspection. But such functions would be provided by bodies which themselves were democratically accountable and whose own governing bodies would be made up of representatives of stakeholders, including staff and students and learners. The benchmark standards by which providers and services would be evaluated against would be a mix of national, regional and local elements reflecting the contexts and circumstances of the provider. Neither the indicators nor the standards should become goals to be achieved for their own sake but grow organically from the work and context. They will need to be clear, simple and understandable. They should not entail such a bureaucracy that resources have to be diverted from teaching and learning to produce and sustain them.

Within the type of accountability that we describe, there could be moves towards self-regulation in areas other than ultimate accountability. In discussion with the bodies where accountability lies, the sector itself could create standards of performance and behaviour, and in the first instance 'police' these.

Higher education has its long standing forms of accountability and self-regulation. These too should be opened up to proper democratic accountability at national and institutional levels. Governing bodies must be truly representative of the various internal and external stakeholders.

All sections of adult learning, but especially further and higher education, have a relationship to employment, if only because it is often the desired end point for many of its students and learners. Given the lamentable record of UK employers and industries in respect to education and training, and the heterogeneous nature of many industrial sectors, there is a need for employment interests to have sectoral bodies which can articulate, co-ordinate and give coherence to their voice and requirements. Although we

consider that there is nothing sacrosanct about the present configuration of Sector Skills Councils, we believe that if they were turned into bodies that were truly representative of employment interests with appropriate employer and employee representation they could give substance to employment interests. Such bodies would also need resources and powers to effect change within their sectors in relation to vocational and workplace learning.

Accountability and governance in adult learning will need agreement about purposes, values and roles. To achieve a truly learning society will require strategic direction and policies as well as collaboration and co-operation from the different sectors delivering it, including the school system from which it takes learners, as well as from its stakeholders. This will also mean planning, not least to prevent duplication and waste, but more positively to make the connections on which progression and more learning, in whatever direction, is possible.

Foster in his report on FE in 2005, recommended a National Plan for further and adult learning. He was looking at a sector that was diverse and multi-faceted; that reached from compulsory education to higher education; that had to work with schools, universities, as well as with communities and employers and was the intersection between a variety of streams of funding needing an agreed strategic direction. This plan should assess both need and demand, coordinating current and future priorities and resources at national, regional and local levels.

We consider that this idea has merit and should be applied across adult learning, involving all the appropriate sectors, institutions, services and providers. It would exist and interconnect at these various levels. It would be both a top-down as well as a bottom-up process. Top-down, as clearly the nation has requirements and priorities that need to be taken into account. Bottom-up, in that that learners and communities will indicate their needs and desires for adult learning. Alongside these definitions and identifications would run identification and analysis of existing resources at the various levels, together with some knowledge and understanding of what and where additional resources might be found. From these processes, agreement about the policies, priorities, needs and real demand for adult learning could be laid down, and policies and actions taken to achieve the desired outcomes.

Funding

UCU's vision for adult learning is for a system that is free for the student at the point of delivery. Our first principle underpinning this vision is adult learning which is affordable, high quality learning of the highest quality as it is needed, by whom it is needed, when it is needed in whatever mode or setting.

We would go further and argue that this vision also means that financial considerations should no longer be barriers to adult learning in any part of the system. Thus we also advocate systems of financial support for learning and students and learners that mean these barriers to learning are abolished. Study at whatever level costs more than just any fee for attending: maintaining oneself and family, books and materials, in some cases special clothing, caring responsibilities including child care, travel and sometimes accommodation all can be barriers to learning and should be removed.

UCU strongly argues that all of adult learning requires proper, adequate and sufficient national resources to ensure its availability to all. However, we also know that realistically resources are finite, despite the astronomically high sums currently being spent in seemingly non-productive ways on propping up failed and greedy financial institutions and on destructive wars, so this vision also sets out how that ultimate goal can be reached.

UCU continues to call for a return to free higher education at the point of delivery, and realistic learner maintenance grants. This must apply fully to part-time as well as full-time adult students. Currently the discrimination in terms of funding provision and support to part-time higher education students is openly discriminatory and damaging to adult higher education students. This must cease. If adult learning is an investment in the future then it must be supported properly by public funds. Where additional loans may be needed by some, these must carry no or low interest and be paid back over appropriate and reasonable time periods.

In further and informal adult learning fees have been traditionally paid. However, over recent years the concept of an adult entitlement to certain levels of learning, sometimes further moderated by age cohort, has been created. UCU argues that in moving to further and adult learning which is free at the point of delivery, these entitlements need to be extended. We would argue that the current entitlement to level 3 qualifications for those up to the age of 25 should be extended to all adults without this level of qualification and skills.

The Government announced some years ago its intention to shift the balance of who pays for adult learning towards the individual and the employer, leaving the State to pay for provision that would otherwise not be delivered and for those who have most need. We consider that there should be sufficient funding not to have to embark on such forms of rationing. However, the government has reduced the amount of public subsidy available to adult learning programmes above Level 2 until it will reach 50%. This has resulted in many programmes becoming beyond the financial reach of many prospective students. More tragically still many of these are in low paid employment, looking to learning and qualifications for improved employment with better pay and prospects. The subsidy should be restored immediately as part of a move to total adult entitlement.

Adult students in FE adult provision must also have access to grants to support the costs associated with learning. Currently many adults have to rely on their families to support them when learning, putting increased stress on often stretched budgets. There are welcome, although very limited funds, at college level to ameliorate the burden of these costs. Such funds must be expanded to meet all legitimate needs. Adult learners must have access to grants to support themselves and their dependents when studying. If loans have to be made in certain circumstances these should carry low or no interest and be repaid within reasonable time frames.

If employers have specific needs from adult learning, then it is right that they should be able to buy such provision customised to those requirements. They should pay the full cost of such provision, although this might be in part be from public funds. Colleges should be released from income targets which often set punitive parameters on them, with an adverse impact on fees.

Non-formal adult learning like FE has traditionally charged fees for its provision. In the past this has been accompanied by generous policies in respect of remission of such fees for certain groups, such as the low paid, those on state benefits and older people. Again in recent years, course fees have risen because of government pressure and the remissions given, which have been severely restricted. Non-formal adult learning is becoming polarised between those who can afford the higher fees, and those who receive it for free because they are on benefits. Those on low wages who are often in greatest need of and desire for adult learning are squeezed out. This must be reversed and non-formal adult learning returned in the first instance to being affordable by all those who want to use it. Fee levels if charged must be affordable and support for adult learners must also be available so as to provide universal access.

It is equally essential that funding across the full spectrum of adult learning must be adequate to sustain the infrastructure that is needed to ensure high quality learning and teaching. This means funding to build and maintain modern and up-to-date buildings and to provide plant, equipment and appropriate technology. Adult learning also requires access to reservoirs of knowledge and information. Some of this will be through well-equipped and stocked libraries, as well as resource facilities that utilise the new vistas opened up by new technology and the internet.

There must be adequate resources to support a full range of learning and learners. Those students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities need to have access to the full range of human and other support, as well as access to the technologies that can reduce some of the impact of their difficulties and disabilities. These must be fully funded so that all who have such needs can be facilitated to learn. There are parents who are learners who may need high quality childcare when studying. Adult learning institutions must also have regard to the totality of the learning experience, and provide spaces for refreshment,

informal social interaction and discussion. Not for nothing has it been said that some of the best learning takes place between students and learners over the coffee break.

Informal adult learning while usually not charging high or sometimes any fees has need for access to free and cheap facilities where physical access is not a problem, as well as support in enabling all who wish to benefit from this provision to do so. UCU would want to see informal adult learning organisations and groups having a statutory right to use a wide range of public buildings including schools and libraries at no or very little cost.

All of this has profound implications for funding. It has implications for the quantum spent by the State on adult learning. This must be sufficient to maintain the types of high quality learning we have described above. It means that the percentage of Gross Domestic Product for FE needs to be increased to at least 1% of GDP. In HE the percentage of GDP devoted to it should rise to at least 1.1% of GDP. If the Learning Society is worth having it is worth paying properly for.

The various methodologies through which the State funds adult learning must also change to fit this vision. With the boundaries set by them being sensitive to meet the diversity that is adult learning, they must simple, clear and understandable. Their procedures and processes must not consume resources that could have gone to research, teaching and learning. They must be mode and level free; that is, not favour a particular mode of delivery or level of qualification, achievement and attainment, but properly and fully fund all modes and levels appropriately.

There was a decade of under-investment in higher education in the 1990s. Although partially reversed under recent Labour Governments, it has continued to dog the sector. While large funding increases have gone into the research and science base, the unit of resource for teaching has remained static. The impact of this for adult HE learners is to eat away at some of the supportive conditions that HE adult learners, usually after years of educational disadvantage, need for success. This has included the growth in teaching group size and reductions in meaningful teacher-student contact time.

In higher education both teaching and research should be fully funded so as to meet all reasonable costs. Funding agencies should fund according to priorities that have been agreed by democratic processes, and in which all stakeholders have involvement and ownership. In future there needs to be a more equitable balance in funding for teaching and research.

Quality assurance

UCU's vision of adult learning is of a high quality education and training system. Adult students and learners would not be properly served by anything less. Anything less than the highest standards of quality in adult learning is not acceptable, certainly for the

investment of public resources that such our vision will require. But the standards for this quality provision; how they arrived at and owned by all; how such standards are applied and judgements made; and how the processes, procedures and activities that will maintain and improve high quality provision are implemented, will be very different when this vision has been realised.

Quality can only be a meaningful concept if it is constructed in terms of both activities and their measurement and owned by all involved in it. Quality must not become an end in itself, as sometimes seems the case currently. The dimensions and determinants of quality must be explored, analysed and understood in their totality.

As with accountability, quantitative measures of quality of performance have their place, but should not be allowed to dominate, as currently. Similarly qualitative processes and indicators can illuminate crucial aspects of the delivery of adult learning and the circumstances in which it is happening.

The various elements of adult learning currently are subject to various national and sector external inspection and quality assurance, as well as internal institutional processes. Each has their place. If adult education is a public service, it is not unreasonable for it to be subject to a degree of national external scrutiny.

Sector and institutional quality assurance should be about setting proper and justifiable sector and institutional standards of quality. Those agencies making these judgements should also offer guidance and support for improvement, as did the old HMI system, and more recently the Adult Learning Inspectorate.

Adult learning, given its curriculum and the precepts on which it should be built, should be constructed with the active involvement of both staff and students and learners. Quality assurance measures should be fit for purpose, taking account of both the sector and the purposes of the teaching and learning. Quality assurance should not become a bureaucratic tick box exercise aimed at meeting external benchmarks, but should be an active process that can gain ownership and involvement by all. Internal institutional processes should not be used as vehicles for victimisation and scapegoating, but genuine routes to the development of teaching, learning and research. Quality should not be an endless treadmill to hit more and more external and often irrelevant national benchmarks. Quality assurance and quality improvement activities must be fit for purpose. Peer evaluations and processes that seek to utilise the knowledge and skills of fellow practitioners in improving quality should be encouraged, resourced properly and seen and recognised as a legitimate.

UCU's vision for adult learning would include time and opportunity for practitioners and providers of adult learning to analyse and reflect on their performance, examine how it can improve, and initiate and implement activities that can achieve this and be sustainable. This will require a sea change in both the paradigm by which external state agencies

charged with the responsibility of inspection and evaluation of provision are constituted and operate, alongside similar changes in institutional and service level quality assurance.

Globalisation and technological change

We live and adult learning exists in a world where communications, economies and social relations have become globalised. This has a profound impact on all aspects of adult learning: its purposes, roles and values; it curriculum and its content; and its scope and modes of delivery. It also impacts immensely on adult learners themselves and on their needs, wishes, aims and aspirations.

Adult learning can be a hugely powerful tool for understanding this increasingly complex world, as well as providing the opportunities for analysis of and interaction with it. We have described how empowerment and equality and diversity are irreducible characteristics of our vision of adult learning. In the globalised world we now live in these elements are needed more than ever. Adult learning must be flexible and smart to flourish in such an environment. It has proved so in the past, and can be so again to meet these new challenges.

The emergence of globalised systems of information and knowledge also has profound implications for the content of adult learning. Previous concepts of knowledge often constructed from particular cultures, power, ethnicity and geography can be and are being challenged. The scale and the content of these debates have emerged on a much wider scale than ever before because of globalisation and technological advance. Adult learning in the future should be able to make full and positive use of the opportunities opening up.

New technology and communications have changed teaching and learning. They have often transformed learning experiences, sometimes opening up opportunities to those often denied them in the past. In our vision teaching and learning remains at its core a social interaction between people. New technologies and the Internet can open up vast new vistas of knowledge and information. They can illuminate and make more real a whole new range of information, knowledge and experiences. Adult learning in the future should be a blend of approaches including debate and discussion as well resource based learning that open up and utilise these new and exciting possibilities. Technologies can enhance as well as distort this. They must not become yet another barrier to success in learning. They must not be allowed to reinforce existing disparities of wealth, power and access to knowledge and learning. Copyright legislation and intellectual property rights at national and international levels should protect the authors and producers of knowledge while ensuring the fullest access to the full range of ideas, debate and materials.

Role of learner

There is debate with adult learning as to whether, the term 'students' or 'learners' is more appropriate. Some feel strongly that the term should be 'students'. Others, particularly those involved with informal and non formal adult learning, consider that the term 'students' should be used for younger learners, and that term 'learners' should be used adults who are participating in learning. Throughout this vision the term 'students and learners' has been used, as well as 'students' and 'learners'. There is clearly a debate that needs to happen as to what is the appropriate term.

One of the distinctive features of adult learning is who are the learners and what this means for the nature of teaching and learning, the role of the teacher and the role of the learner. This distinctive feature is the simple fact that these learners are adults. They bring to adult learning their life experiences including most importantly, their previous learning experiences.

This, at least on some level, means that the teaching and learning relationship is one between equals: not equal in the specific knowledge, understanding and skills the learner is seeking and the teacher has. But equal in terms of what is brought to the learning, the use it will be made of, and what goals and aspirations can be met. In all adult learning, the learner should be an active partner and participant. The UCU vision of adult learning is built upon this. Thus the learning should be a double-sided, interactive process which transforms both tutor and learner.

Adult learning is about both the acquisition of new knowledge, understanding and skills and about the participation in different communities of knowledge and practice. Coffield explains in 'Just suppose teaching and learning became the first priority' that learning recognises changes in the learner's identity because learning changes who they are. It creates meaning out of their experiences; and explores how this new knowledge, understanding and skills can be made real and used.

This learning does not take place in isolation from the world but in the context of what has become known as 'learning cultures'; that is the social practices through which teachers, tutors and students learn. Individual students and learners are part of these practices and should be able to exert their influence upon them; and learning cultures are part of individuals and influence them in turn. Learning cultures permit, promote, inhibit or rule out certain kinds of learning. These processes should be dynamic and reciprocal.

Learning is also the process through which the learner's attitudes to study are confirmed, developed, challenged or changed. Adult learning should then present a holistic view of learning rather than the narrow, official, often instrumental view which is pre-occupied with qualifications.

The exact dimensions of the space for reciprocal and more equal interactions between teacher and adult learner can be constrained. These constraints may arise from the nature of the knowledge sought and from other external factors. So for example the connection between learning and qualification, attainment and achievement, often the goal of adult learners, may mean following a particular externally derived syllabus or programme, and so the content of the curriculum may only be able to be negotiated around the margins. Some learning has to be linear because knowledge and understanding at a particular level requires other knowledge, understanding and skills to have been acquired beforehand. But it is essential to manage these constraints so they are restricted to those that are essential for that learning, and not created artificially and so become barriers to the creation of the partnership that successful adult learning should be based upon.

This also means that learners need to know that all knowledge is 'provisional', that it has a history of which they need to be aware. They also need to have some understanding of what is worthwhile knowledge, how different kinds of knowledge are constructed, how they can make connections between them, and how new knowledge is created. Moreover they need to be able to distinguish between personal knowledge and the body of objective knowledge which has been accumulated over time by their culture and society at large. In this way, learners not only learn but become active participants in the creation of 'new' knowledge.

Adult learners bring not just educational but life, familial, employment, financial, community and identity experiences to learning. Because adult students and learners are often seeking to reverse the results of previous education experiences, many of them will also have had or be experiencing problems and issues with these as they learn. Therefore, adult students need access to real and sufficient support both financially and in other forms to meet and resolve some of these issues.

Adult learners may often need pastoral support. This should be in the form of well resourced welfare and well-being facilities. These should not be split off entirely from teaching and learning activities but available separately as well as in an integrated way. These need to recognise the constant interplay of learning and emotion, of formal and informal learning, of students' and learners' lives inside and outside the learning situation. Adult learners must be dealt with in terms of their full humanity and lives. Successful adult teaching and learning must be based within the lived experiences of its learners, but be able to transcend that and take knowledge, understanding, skills and ultimately action to higher and deeper levels.

To achieve this goal of learners being active partners in future adult learning will require time for reflection and discussion by teachers and students: time to achieve mutual understanding and analysis of the actual processes of effective teaching and learning, time to reflect on this and time to mutually agree improvements. Students need not be on a treadmill towards qualification. Teachers need time to listen, reflect and act with their

students. Time is a resource and the kind of space that needs to be devoted to what is described above has cost implications which will need to be met.

Many, perhaps most adult learners learn through part-time participation. Yet most if not all the structures, funding, organisation, delivery of adult learning, including support of all kinds to learning and learners, discriminate against part-time learning. These barriers to successful learning must be eradicated.

Participation in adult learning is in part successful because it is usually voluntarily entered into and continued. Compulsion should have no place in successful adult learning. Increasingly some adult basic skills provision is deemed to be essential for employment and employability, and compulsion is being introduced for certain areas of provision and certain groups within society. UCU's vision will not be based on such compulsion with the consequent threat and actuality of sanctions. Such regimes cannot promote active adult learning successfully and must abolished. Learning must happen because adults want and can see the benefits that can result from success in it. They need the barriers to learning and achievement removed, rather than being compelled to participate.

The curriculum

Our initial statement of principles underpinning the UCU vision for adult learning states that it should deliver 'a negotiated, comprehensive liberating curriculum' which is 'concerned with the active transmission of knowledge and skills'. We deepen this and insist that such a curriculum must be able to be accessed by all adults, regardless of class, social position and status, wealth and income, age, ethnicity, religion, gender, perceived mental and/or physical abilities, sexual orientation or geography.

Further UCU believes that the mark of a civilised society is that it encourages, promotes and supports the provision of a comprehensive adult learning curriculum. This should go beyond elementary learning and encompass high levels of skill and scholarship - from introductory tasters to deeper and more intensive learning experiences. It recognises that some forms of learning are cumulative and are built on the understanding of basic concepts. It also recognises that other opportunities will be generated and met by learners' own activities.

A comprehensive adult learning curriculum is a scaffolding of learning opportunities, rather than a series of ladders. Such scaffolding extends vertically as well as horizontally. It can and does lead to higher and deeper levels of knowledge, understanding and skill. It also has a progressive dynamic so that successful learning can be transferred and reproduced in a variety of settings and levels. This is one main reason that the decisions taken recently to remove funding for higher education equivalent and lower qualifications are so pernicious and must be reversed.

Adult learning and its curriculum is made up of a spectrum of episodes, opportunities, access points, programmes, courses and classes ranging from the most loose and informal to the highly disciplined and structured. All should be recognised and valued. They complement, enhance and enrich one another.

Because it is about adults living and being in the real world, adult learning, while it can make surprising, imaginative and innovative lateral as well as vertical connections, is also 'untidy' and at times 'disjointed'. Adults fit learning alongside the other demands in their lives. As a result, they often study in short bursts, pursue development through a pattern of studies hard to equate with vertical progression routes, drop out for a while creating havoc with progression and retention, and re-engage, often using different institutions. Some adults choose to learn intensively for short periods. Effective teaching and learning provision recognises this.

Adult learning is difficult to fix into tightly defined boxes delivered in Ford-like knowledge factories. Adult learners have full lives, with many competing pressures, with complications, complexities and incident. The adult curriculum must be capable of moulding itself to that range of circumstances and constraints. It must be flexible and capable of being delivered in a variety of modes in terms of time, formats and methods. A full, comprehensive, inclusive and accessible adult curriculum where there are these opportunities as well as the connections to other learning has to be delivered across all the sectors making up post-compulsory education in any future picture of adult learning.

The justification of adult learning by its contribution to economic goals means that its curriculum in all sectors is becoming vocationalised or threatened with a crude vocational instrumentalism at the expense of a genuinely rounded education. In far too much adult learning there is an obsession with exams and grades. This has forced students to follow narrowly based criteria to pass exams at the expense of developing the ability to think critically and be creative. There still runs an often false dichotomy within education between the vocational and the academic. The UCU vision rejects this and seeks through a comprehensive and genuinely accessible curriculum to open up opportunities for all to fulfil their aspirations, needs, desires, talents and aptitudes to whatever level and for whatever goals they wish to pursue.

Learning for its own sake, for sheer enjoyment as well as fulfilment of aptitudes, talents and curiosity has its part in future adult learning. There need to be opportunities within the mix of adult learning where people can be stretched and challenged, acquire new knowledge, understanding and skills not because of any instrumental need, but just because they want to and can do. The remorseless squeeze on adult learning from instrumentalism of all kinds has eroded what used be known as recreational or non-vocational or even liberal adult education to a mere shadow of its former glories. Ministers posed the question 'pilates or plumbing?'. UCU declares not only that this is a false choice but that plumbers may well benefit from pilates. Governments bemoan public funds spent

on Holiday Spanish, we say why not, especially if so many people have had poor previous experience of learning modern foreign languages and adult education is just about one of the few places were it may still exist in an affordable form.

The adult curriculum will consist of many learning journeys. It will be where tentative first steps can be taken, whether into new subjects or making up for previous poor learning experiences and regaining confidence, or as the fundamentals for life and further and deeper learning such as literacy, language and numeracy. It can be where previous knowledge, understanding and skills can be built on and turned into measurable and recognised outcomes. Many of these journeys are progressions into ever higher and deeper levels of knowledge and understanding. They encompass research and reflection which are among the main springboards for the creation and development of new knowledge, analysis and insights. All learning is interconnected for the individual who undertakes it. The impact of learning for whatever purpose or motivation is not just about that purpose or motivation, but spills over into many if not all aspects of a person's life. Successful learning grows confidence and often promotes further learning perhaps across a wide range of topics and interests.

An essential element of adult learning journeys is that there is a need for clear, understandable, up-to-date information, advice and guidance. In the current jungle of routes, qualifications and often competing providers the need for free, impartial, independent and accessible services for adult learners is overwhelming. Our vision of adult learning would mean introducing coherence and simplification into its systems, but adults wanting to embark on learning, and while learning, will need such services to explore their needs, alternatives, choices and aspirations. If there is to be the kind of explosion of adult learning that we believe would take place if our vision were realised, then information, advice and guidance services will be required as never before. Such guidance is also an integral part of the actual processes of teaching and learning. Space must found in workloads and teaching commitments for this to happen.

The adult curriculum must be capable of delivering essential and basic skills for those lacking them, often because of previous poor educational experiences. It also will encompass knowledge, skills and understanding as well as discipline and order at higher levels and greater depth. It embraces all subjects at all levels.

Adult learning includes learning journeys that lead to qualifications. These do signal knowledge, understanding and skills that have been acquired. They should also test how these can be used and how they can be built on. But is there a need for a market in qualifications in many areas? While they should valid, reliable and fit for purpose in their content and assessment, is there such a need for regulatory bureaucratic frameworks that can divert resources away from teaching and learning?

This vision of adult learning has been built on concepts of empowerment and equality and diversity in terms of both its content and process. Adult learning must contain both the actuality and potentiality for negotiation. We have recognised that there may well be justifiable constraints on what can and is negotiated. For delivery of most adult learning there needs to be some organisation, planning and implementing; classes and teaching hours known, agreed and allocated; knowledge, understanding and skills imparted and absorbed; and assessments conducted as both a signal to learner and teacher of gains and understanding achieved. Some of these are matters for negotiation, especially by and for adult students. Timetables can and should make allowance for regular and irregular caring duties. Unitisation and modularisation of programmes, while not without considerable dangers in terms of the breaking up of content into manageable but often illogical and at times nonsensical pieces without synoptic knowledge and understanding, do offer the possibility for smaller, more usable and digestible pieces. This is not about making learning easy, it is rarely that, but making it fit better with learners' lives.

This process of negotiation with reciprocal and positive benefits for teachers and students should carry on into the delivery of the curriculum, into pedagogy and content. Successful adult learning is based on a dialogue and discourse between teacher and learner in the context of mutual respect and toleration. It is the place where new and sometimes contrasting ideas, knowledge, understanding, skills, perceptions, cultures and pre-conceptions can be tested, challenged and built on.

Widening participation

Society today is built on widening discrepancies between different classes and groups of people. This is reflected in all education and learning, and exists in adult learning. These discrepancies privilege a few and disadvantage many. Those who receive the most in adult learning are the very people who have received the most already. If adult learning is about empowerment and equality and diversity, it must be about widening participation in adult learning in meaningful ways that eliminate these discrepancies and disadvantages. It must open itself up so that it's completely accessible for all those wishing to use it and to those who may in the future.

Recent research undertaken by the current Inquiry into lifelong learning commissioned by NIACE seems to show that the UK compares well to other developed countries in terms of its reach – that is, the number of adults that it touches in one form or another. Where it compares unfavourably is in the depth and breadth of that engagement. It is clear that there is still much to be done to engage more adults in all aspects of adult learning, especially those classes, communities, groups and individuals who have received least from it previously, and are in great need of its benefits. Much also remains to be done to make these engagements with adult learning more understandable, deeper and more sustained and usable by very many more adults than at present.

A significant minority of adults see little in the current pattern of adult learning to encourage them to participate – yet there is nothing inevitable about this. Where educational institutions start from learners' experiences, and design programmes fit for purpose, such scepticism can be transformed into a passion for learning.

However, this does not happen overnight and will require resources and patience. There are examples from the past described above of how adult learning was able to engage communities and individuals in an organic way in which adult learning was part and parcel of these communities' culture, identity and development. There are also examples of more recent specific initiatives to widen participation, associated with all sectors delivering adult learning. These reach out to communities, people, groups and individuals to understand the context and circumstances of these lives, and their potential learning needs and aspirations. They build learning programmes that can begin to address these needs and secure the possible positive benefits and opportunities. University extra-mural and continuing education departments have a long and successful history of taking their programmes out of their institutions and buildings as have non-formal and further education. Backed by information, advice and guidance, outreach is an essential component of the adult curriculum, if widening participation is seen, as it must surely be, as a core function of all providers. It combines strategies to recruit learners with curriculum innovation, and empowerment with negotiation and partnership.

Such work can not be undertaken in institutional isolation. It builds on effective partnership with community based bodies in the voluntary sector, in health, social services and housing departments in local authorities, and with employers and unions. Outreach, guidance and partnership work all take time – with uncertain short-term outcomes for the institution making the investment. But they are the heart of effective strategies to reach and support those communities currently under-represented in education and training, and will have a more critical role in the next decade, if the system is to achieve its economic and social goals. They should be considered together with the advances that have been made in identifying measures that work in securing equality of opportunity, and improved equality of outcomes, but not often consolidated and implemented.

Bringing in and retaining new participants to adult learning across the whole spectrum will require not only increases in support for learning, but also flexibility and adaptability across the curriculum. It may well operate through different modes and formats many of which will use the opportunities opened up by new technologies. Universal access to adult learning will need to be backed by universal access to the support needed to use it positively.

Widening participation will reach out to people from all sections of society, no matter where they are. One very important aspect to adult learning is that which takes place in prisons. Currently there are over 80,000 people in the so-called secure prison estate, some 60% of whom are barely literate. There is a growing evidence base that education and training are

among the best and most effective ways of reducing re-offending and rehabilitating offenders. Yet prison education is all too often under-resourced, poorly housed and equipped, delivered by part-time insecure staff, and often reduced to a narrow curriculum. UCU's vision for prison education is for it to be part of the rich mix of future adult learning opportunities; for it to be recognised and valued within the justice system so that it meets the needs of prisoners in developing essential skills, and allows for the release of talents that have often been stifled. Prison education in the future must be based on the same entitlement to the same comprehensive curriculum that we envisage for rest of the population.

Social, civic organisation and cultural regeneration

Adult learning fosters a critical and informed engagement with social, political and moral issues and thus supports the development of a tolerant participative democracy for all citizens and communities. It should encourage appreciation and participation in the arts, sport and cultural activities; and secure the role learning can play in the achievement of public and collective good. The best adult learning is a democratic process rooted in the principles and practices of social justice. It can give opportunities for people to progress their learning across boundaries, especially those between less and more engagement in learning, between non-formal and informal learning. Indeed progression may not just be to more learning, but could also include becoming more involved in community or trade union activities. Such discussions have profound equality considerations which must not be lost in any discussions about the future shape and state support for adult learning. It can play a significant role in social action and community cohesion. Learning can also open opportunities for collective action to resolve community, social and economic problems.

Adult learning which is embedded in principles of empowerment, democracy and equity has a crucial role to play in social, civic and cultural education and regeneration. It can uncover rights and explain responsibilities. When society is becoming increasingly and simultaneously both atomised and polarised and where social and community divisions become sharper and more intractable, exacerbated by the current economic crisis, adult learning and education must be an active and committed presence and recognised and resourced as such. Adult learning has an active role addressing, posing questions and putting forward solutions to this increasing diversity and fragmentation. This should run throughout its entire curriculum. It requires resources to continue and expand this work, as well as freedom to do so. In doing so it reproduces its radical beginnings and can foreshadow exciting and potentially liberating futures.

Workplace learning

The workplace has always been a setting for adult learning. Work has always been one of the ways that the products of this learning can be practiced and developed. Work and employment are goals for many participating in adult learning and an 'end-user' of that

knowledge, understanding and skills. Much of adult learning is about the formation and transmission of the knowledge, understanding and skills required for work. It is about gaining the pre-requisites for entry into and continuing membership of communities of practice. Because the employment and the workplace are of crucial importance in adults' lives, it is a setting where our under-pinning principles of empowerment and equality can have the most profound impact.

While UCU is critical of the way in which economic rationales have superseded almost all others, we do not deny their validity or that they need serious and rigorous consideration. The needs and requirements of employment must be taken seriously, listened and responded to. These do have a place across the whole of the adult learning curriculum, but this place must be appropriate and relevant to what is and can be delivered.

This voice needs to be not only that of the employer but should also be the voice of employment interests. This means that the requirements, aims and aspirations of employees and potential employees must also be taken into account. For over twenty-five years virtually every reform, initiative, qualification and structure has been required to be employer-led. Yet employers and sectors are very heterogeneous and diverse. Many employers simply do not have the time for the engagement in education and training that the government expects from them. What then becomes the voice of employers are consultants and sector bodies that purports to represent industry. No wonder so many initiatives serve only to confuse and fail employment.

This is not to say there has not been progress in the area of workplace learning. We have seen very welcome initiatives, changes and reforms over the last decade in both the recognition of the employee perspective, best articulated by trade unions, and important developments in making this real. For what has been relatively little public funding when compared to the sums spent on employer-led policies, trade unions have been re-connected to their radical educational past. The growth of a genuinely grass roots development with the creation of branch learning representatives, and a national union-owned and led body, Unionlearn, to articulate, give coherence and purpose as well as make connections across the whole spectrum of adult learning, has enabled for the first time progression through work-based and often workplace learning to the highest standards and levels.

Trade unions' involvement in workplace learning and trade union education are among the very pillars that support and develop our vision of future adult learning. The UK record on workplace training is woeful when compared with most of the country's international competitors. It has long been and remains a key component of the UK industrial policy of low-skill, low-value and low-waged production. It has been clear for many years, and recent economic events bring home the point, that reliance on this deregulation of labour markets and of financial capital, and liberal and neo-liberal market theories, and above all

voluntarism in workplace learning, are not the routes to national economic prosperity and social cohesion.

Future workplace adult learning must recognise the role and importance of employee needs, aspirations and desires about how workplace learning is delivered and recognised, and above all in relation to its content. The current machinery enabling this should to be strengthened and fully embedded in the workplace through legislation. The legislation should make mandatory joint employer-employee learning committees, and provide a statutory basis to training and development as part of collective bargaining, as well as statutory time off for union learning representatives not only to be trained, but actually to carry out their roles. Learning must become as every day a reality as health and safety have become in the last thirty years. This was the vision that promoted the renaissance in unions' involvement with learning as outlined in the Fryer Report.

Workplace learning has traditionally taken place both on the job, through structured training, as well as 'sitting with Nellie'. Although usually given low status there has also been structured and more formal off-the job training. This runs through the spectrum of adult learning providers in further and higher education. Successive governments stretching back for a century at least have bemoaned the UK's approach to vocational and workplace training, and tried a whole slew of policies, projects and initiatives, pulling as many supply-side levers as come to hand to generate the kind of skills generation and re-generation that a modern developed economy needs.

They have mostly failed. While there have been positive developments and advances, they have tended to wreck on the UK's stubborn reliance on voluntary efforts, usually of employers. Because of deep-seated cultural, structural and institutional traits, with its focus on shareholder dividends and short term profit, UK industry consistently fails to see human capital as much of an investment compared to other forms. Education and training usually come low down on employers' priorities, no matter how many reports demonstrate the contribution of this to better, more efficient and higher quality outcomes.

These tendencies are increased with the profound changes to the UK's economy following from the decline of primary and manufacturing industries and the growth of the service and finance sectors. Much of this growth is in small and medium sized enterprises which because of the size and often the precarious nature of their market positions, have understandable difficulties in responding to governments' exhortations on skills.

Workplace learning in the future must have a statutory basis. It is too important in a modern economy to be left to chance and market forces. If employers neither train nor pay for training for their workforces, then the state must intervene to make them live up to their responsibilities. This is the case in most European and Pacific Rim economies where workplace training is founded on legislation.

A third of UK employers offer no training to their workforces whatsoever. Most workplace training that does take place is either to meet statutory regulation or goes to those at the higher levels of employment – those in full-time work and with long records of educational participation and qualifications. If adult learning does have such strong economic imperatives, then surely there is enough positive benefit and payback that all employers should help paying for it, especially when it is they who will derive the most immediate benefits. This must cover all employers because otherwise the vicious circle of 'poach not coach' will not be broken. Such legislation should cover enforceable rights to education and training, to paid time off to undertake this and a right to up-to-date impartial and independent information, advice and guidance not only on learning but also on employment and career development. These rights must also fully recognise the learning needs and rights of part-time, temporary, contract and agency workers whose numbers in the workforce have exploded in the unregulated economy that has been developed over recent decades.

Such intervention need not be bureaucratic or punitive. We envisage a platform of statutory rights to workplace education and training, with the interests of the low-skilled, the part-timer, temporary, agency and contract workers included. We would advocate a 'push and pull' approach to changing these long seated attitudes to training and development. 'Push' from that bed of statutory rights, and 'pull' from state subsidy, perhaps in the form of fiscal incentives and industry and sector intervention. We see democratised Sector Skills Councils, representing fully employment rather than just employer interests, continuing their current work in defining and identifying future labour market need, reviewing and assisting curriculum and qualification development, and setting out routes to skills and employment for their industry/sector. We also want to see them have the tools to be effective. This should not preclude the possibility of statutory levies where these are needed to spread the costs of training more equitably in each industry/sector. It should not also preclude the expansion of 'licences to practice' which specify what knowledge and understanding and level of skill are needed to practice a particular job or craft and have some statutory backing.

A vision of workplace adult learning will have to critically examine and analyse many of the basic assumptions on which governments of every hue have based their skills and workplace learning policies.

Ewart Keep in a paper on work-based learning to the current Inquiry into adult learning, 'Explaining current patterns and their outcomes' (NIACE 2008), makes a critique of the current government vision, which he argues is based on a set of mutually supportive propositions. We would support this critique and argue that a better vision must be based around more correct assumptions and realities.

The first of these current government assumptions is that more and better skills are "the most important lever within our control to create wealth and to reduce social deprivation"

(Leitch Review, 2006), and that human capital is now "the key determinant of corporate and country success" (Blair, 2007). Others are: that globalisation is unstoppable, and its impact on the economy, employment and the labour market cannot be controlled or altered; that the role of governments is only to ameliorate the most damaging of these effects by equipping individuals with the skills to change jobs and careers in response to economic change; that the bulk of the labour force either are, or will become, knowledge workers; that low skilled jobs are vanishing, and all workers need higher levels of skill and qualification in order to be employable and to move up the job ladder and that the main safeguards for workers in terms of preventing exploitation within the workplace, is a minimum platform of universal individual employment rights such as on health & safety; entitlement to paid holidays, maternity and paternity leave; these are now in place, and no further major extensions are needed; that if people feel they are being poorly treated or undervalued in their current workplace, their skills will enable them to find better employment elsewhere (Blair, 2007); and finally that publicly funded investment in education and training can alter the incentives for individuals and employers to invest in skills and will leverage major additional investment from employers. This will sooner or later lead to a 'supply push' effect (H M Treasury, 2002; DfES/DWP, 2006), thereby securing the long soughtafter, as Keep puts it, Holy Grail of a "once and for all change in the training market" (H M Treasury, 2002). He goes on to say that unfortunately many of these beliefs are not all that well-founded.

For example, claims about the imminent arrival of the 'knowledge economy' may be overstated and certainly avoid addressing the substantial residuum of relatively low skilled, low waged jobs. The scale of fundamental change in the underlying structure of employment may be smaller than is sometimes imagined. Keep argues that the real squeeze has been in the middle jobs, particularly among the skilled. Most projections around skills are about the supply of skills, not about the demand for skills from employers. There are still and will continue to be many jobs which require no qualifications at all, and quite a few where qualifications might be seen as a hindrance. The vast majority of these jobs demand relatively low levels of formal qualification, while offering poor pay, low job security, limited job satisfaction, and few if any opportunities for progression and development. Insofar as skill needs in these jobs are changing, they are doing so in small, often very small steps, and such skill needs as this creates can be dealt with through short courses or more likely through formal and informal learning on the job

Finally, Keep gives a timely reminder that we may be expecting too much of skills as drivers. However much our passion and vision for adult learning, and specifically workplace learning, it is not the magic bullet for all society's ills. We have argued that it can have massive impacts in many areas, but that impact will be maximised in association with other great changes in culture, policy and actions across the broad sweep of public policies and services. Skills can only be a major driver if they are associated with industrial policies that go to the heart of how UK industry is structured. It must reach into work organisation, job

design and making better use of the skills and ideas that staff already have as well utilising fully and effectively the skills that can be acquired.

The UCU vision of workplace learning extends into the area of its content – its curriculum. For too long these have been tied to a competence base. Although this has some positive and interesting impacts around elements within workplace learning, they have, with their focus largely on performance, under-stated the place of underpinning knowledge and understanding. This has also encompassed qualifications. Again, although this has opened up new and interesting areas to explore such as new assessment methods, all too often it ends up a cheap box ticking at the expense of real knowledge and understanding that can be built on. It will also be essential to end the merging of skills and qualifications so that counting up the latter is taken as real skills development. Gaining qualifications can and usually does mean gaining skills, sometimes being able to practice those skills. But to equate them can short change those seeking the skills and the qualification.

The workplace learning curriculum must contain the knowledge and understanding needed in work. It must impart the skills needed by both workers and employers. It must be constantly developing as are the industries in which it takes place. There will be need for inter-change by teachers and trainers with industry to ensure that they are keeping up with developments. It must have progression so that knowledge and skills can move to higher and deeper planes.

At the same time workplace learning cannot be separated from the rest of the world. Skills are practiced at work, but they also in being so practised relate to the world as lived. Competence based programmes and qualifications as well as modern industrialisation splits off skills from that world, and in doing so can debase, demean and alienate the learner from the processes of learning and the well-rounded practice of those skills in the workplace. Gaining skills must be accompanied by some analysis and understanding of their position in the real world.

Workplace should also contain elements that support our vision's foundations of empowerment and equity. Union Learning Representatives and even parts of Train to Gain show how some of past educational disadvantages can be successfully remedied through learning at work. Certainly previously educationally and socially disadvantaged groups such as women and those from black and minority ethnic communities look and will continue to look to workplace learning as a site to redress those disadvantages. It should also have some impact on employment itself which is the setting for much discrimination.

Workplace learning should also be capable of sustaining a strand that is about civic and social rights and responsibilities. Here of course trade union education does and should play a greater part. Workplace learning should be encouraged to take the kinds of steps it has in the past to engage people in a far wider exposure to learning than just around their jobs.

The Ford Educational Development Scheme in the 19080s simply paid its workforce to study anything they wanted! A truly pioneering and innovative initiative.

Adult learning's interface with employment and the workplace is and should be developed more as a continuum of provision. The results of much higher education research are of extreme importance and relevance to employment. Pure research often needs to be transformed into applied research, and thence to practice in the workplace. This community of interest between higher education and employment should be encouraged and fostered but in a manner that stresses the equality of the two perspectives.

Further education continues to be a primary setting for a great deal of off-the-job workplace learning. It has always supplied education and training to local industry and it continues to do so. It is and will continue to engage with employment in imaginative and innovative ways where both partners value and respect the contribution each brings to the table. Both partners will have greater understanding of the restraints, constraints and fundamentals of each other's situation and contribution. The teaching and learning will be moulded to the situations, objectives and aspirations of employers and employees, without exploiting either.

Even informal and non-formal adult learning can play its part in relation to employment. There are countless examples of courses which are described and used by many as non-vocational, which are in fact very vocational for some. These are learning settings where the self-confidence, belief in ones own potential and re-discovery of learning can be the start of journeys that lead to employment.

The practitioner

Many publications on the current state and future of adult learning fail to discuss the key importance and role of the practitioner. They also usually neglect to explore the dimensions of why the practitioner is crucial to the process of successful adult learning, and what makes for successful practitioners.

UCU as the largest union in post-compulsory education and training could not possibly describe its vision without giving a central place to the practitioner. Its members are the people who actually deliver, teach and organise adult learning in this country. They do this is in informal, non-formal, further and higher education, in prisons and in general and specialist institutions. They teach programmes from the most basic to the most advanced and esoteric. They are intimately involved in both the creation and transmission of knowledge, understanding and skills. Without the commitment, enthusiasm, abilities, talents and passion of its teachers and other staff, adult learning would be as nought.

UCU members and all adult learning teachers are professionals. UCU, as were its predecessor organisations, AUT and NATFHE, is both a trade union and a professional

association. They and it have always considered that the professional status of adult education teachers across the whole spectrum of adult learning, the values that underpin it, and the training and development of such staff, are areas of legitimate concern, negotiation and partnership in policy formulation and implementation with governments, sector bodies and individual institutional managements.

The vision of adult learning that UCU has presented here demands the very best teachers who need initial training and continuing development if they are deliver the high quality learning programmes and education that adults want and need. This type of adult learning requires commitment, enthusiasm, time, patience and resources.

The role of the practitioner

Adult learning practitioners have always been drawn from a wide variety of backgrounds, employment, roles and motivations. A constant theme has been their dedication, enthusiasm, expertise and knowledge. Their hard work and commitment has sustained adult learning through all the vicissitudes of public policy towards it.

These staff have often been at the genesis of the innovation and flexibility that characterises this sector. The very innovations that are now accepted parts of adult learning - literacy, numeracy, ESOL, for example, all had their origins in non-formal adult education. Access programmes were pioneered by further education colleges and universities. These developments occurred because of the presence of professional adult educators able, not only to devise innovative curricula to meet often unarticulated learning needs, but also to analyse and build these innovations into lasting and productive learning experiences.

Adult learning practitioners are skilled in maximising individual and collective learning opportunities. They are teachers and tutors who possess subject knowledge and expertise, along with a good understanding of the best ways to teach those subjects so that learners are engaged 'with the big ideas, key processes, modes of discourse, and narratives' of those subjects. This will include searching questions and discussion about the nature and use of this knowledge.

We have described previously how the very best adult teaching and learning takes account of what adult learners know already. This also requires responding to the personal and cultural experiences of the different groups in their classrooms. It also provides activities and structures of intellectual, social and emotional support to help learners to move forward in their learning so that, when these supports are removed, the learning is secure.

This requires of practitioners professionalism and continuous development both in their subject and as teachers and educators. It is our firm conviction that adult educators are professionals. Teaching adults requires both subject and practice knowledge and

understanding assessed through qualifications. These constantly need updating and developing as well as reflection. Teaching as a profession is underpinned by a set of values and ethics, and its performance and outcomes evaluated against exacting standards. Professionalism should be based on public confidence and trust.

However, the bureaucratised and increasingly marketised adult learning system we currently have seems to be based on low trust in the professionalism of its practitioners. The mechanistic quality assurance policies and procedures at both national and institutional level seek to replace proper trust in professionals with regulation and meeting arbitrary benchmarks. It is a system where in principle the job and skills of many professionals including teachers is sought to be defined in detail, without ambiguity, and therefore codified precisely. Even the training of such professionals is also seen as straightforward, based on a well-defined, unproblematic body of knowledge and a concomitant skill-set that hardly changes over time.

Our vision of adult learning can not rest on such a deformed and narrow notion of professionalism, based as it is on the learner being seen as a passive recipient of pre-defined knowledge and skills. Such a system becomes based on the standardisation of all aspects of professional life and work. Standardisation aims to reduce the scope of professionals to make judgements which may vary or be mistaken. There is then little space left for teaching as an art, or as a craft, something honed and fashioned over time in the context of a 'community of practice'. The professional adult educator will acknowledge that new knowledge, changing circumstances and new learners are apt to produce new problems for the teacher, who therefore needs the capacity to respond to new and unexpected situations. Neither can it encompass the idea of the learning process as active and reciprocal, combining research, creation and re-creation by groups as well as by individuals, with a range of possible outcomes and wider benefits at the level of the individual learner, the group, the community and society in general.

This view of professional practice suggests that a policy of learning, teaching, and teacher development, whatever its intentions, will be damaging both to society and to individuals. In particular, it will lead to deskilling: it nurtures in professionals a passive, bureaucratic and parochial version of their work, and which over time leads to diminishing interest in, curiosity about, and capacity to deal with unexpected situations, or even to imagine crisis scenarios so as to prepare for them. Specifically it leads to a diminution in preparedness and of the capacity to make judgements about the best course of action in difficult, complex situations, something surely what all adult educators need to do.

The kind of professional practice which would deliver our vision of adult learning would be very different from this. Professionals would set the standards by which they wish to underpin proper public trust. This setting of standards would be undertaken in an open and transparent way with all stakeholders. These standards would be commonly held, and could then be upheld and policed by the professionals. Because of their public interest and value,

these practices, activities and standards must be applied and maintained in fair and equitable way, with the state and/or other bodies playing their appropriate roles.

Double professionalism

Adult educators work to a double professionalism. They are professionals in relation to the subjects they teach. Indeed many of the subjects have their own defined standards, requirements and professional bodies. They are also professional teachers responsible for and accountable for their practice.

Both aspects of adult educator professionalism should be recognised and valued and staff given time and resources to meet the different sets of requirements, standards and expectations and to engage in developing and updating their knowledge, understanding and skills in both the professional areas of their work as adult educators.

In non-formal and further education there is a professional body that is underpinned by Parliamentary Regulation that all teachers and trainers have to join. It has its own requirements and Code of Conduct. In higher education the professional body and membership of it is still voluntary.

We recognise that professionalism will require its own associations. All such bodies whether mandatory or not, must be democratic and driven by and accountable to their members. Teachers should form the majority and deciding voice in them. Given the overlaps between the education sectors, there will need to be mutual recognition and status of membership and requirements of other professional bodies at least within education. Any membership fees should be paid by either the Government, as is currently the case with membership of the further education professional body, the Institute for Learning, or by the institution, as membership of such bodies is often integral to many teachers and lecturers.

The workforce

The adult learning workforce is diverse. It covers those engaged in research and teaching, as well as in learning support and administration and the provision of other services. All are professionals in what they do and should be treated as such. Such staff should be recruited through equality and fair selection procedures. After appointment, all staff should be properly inducted and set on a career ladder to ensure their retention and professional development.

It is important in adult learning that there is some attempt made to reflect in the composition of the workforce the groups that they are teaching and the various communities that they seek to serve. Although there has been progress across adult learning, there is still much to do. In further education the work of the Commissions on

Black Staff and on Staff with Disabilities show just how much remains to be done, but also lay out paths of action that are entirely in accord with, and would be essential for the fulfilment of our vision.

Salaries

Adult learning requires the best possible staff. Such staff have to be attracted, recruited and retained. This will require salaries and rewards able to attract the very best. Salary levels need to be comparable with other professionals. They should be based on national pay bargaining structures which can recognise the dimensions of adult learning delivery and respond to these. Adult learning providers do operate in different labour markets, local, regional and national. Salaries and rewards must reflect these. Such salaries should also contain elements of progression that can acknowledge the commitment, development and changing roles of staff.

Conditions of service

Adult learning has always been characterised by its flexibility. The conditions of service are crucial for adult learning staff. While recognising this need for flexibility, they must be such as to recognise the different roles and requirements of these staff and be placed within the 'normal' frameworks applying to the institution's staff. Workloads must recognise the processes of adult learning, and that these require time, patience, adjustments and reflection. Adult education is not just teaching. It is also advice, guidance, sometimes counselling, administration, coordination, collaboration with internal and external colleagues, organisation and planning. These must be recognised and encompassed within workloads. The kind of adult learning we envisage will need smaller classes, more pastoral work, and more contact time that at present. This has implications for the size of the adult learning workforce. Workloads should also include within them time for training and development, as well as research and scholarly activity. These latter activities are relevant to all adult educators. All need time for reflection, renewal and updating of both their subject knowledge and skills, but also their practice as teachers.

This flexibility in adult learning at least in some part comes from its employment of many part-time staff as teachers, tutors, research workers and learning support workers. However, this flexibility must not be based on exploitation. All those working in adult learning deserve and should receive proper recompense and support for their efforts. They should be paid for the full range of their work and role. They deserve stability and security of employment. This can not be based on short and fixed term contracts. Such staff should be as far as possible be on proper fractionalised salaries. They should have secure employment opportunities, equipment and resources, and staff development that encourages and promotes the best possible learning and possibilities for reflection and the development of their practice.

Training and development

All adult educators need training and development in both arenas of their professionalism and work. In terms of their subject they will usually have had the education and training to both practice and teach it before they start teaching. However they will need to keep abreast of developments, and update knowledge and skills. They will continue to engage in continuous professional development in their subject expertise. The time and resources that need to be allocated to this are an important part of the realisation of our vision.

In terms of teaching practice, all those who teach adults have need for both initial training and continuing professional development. Very few are born teachers, especially of adults. There are both knowledge and skills that need to be acquired. Initial teacher training will need to be recognised, valued and supported as part of the normal workload of all new teachers. Time must be allowed to attend proper teacher education and training programmes, fees paid by the institution and coaching and mentoring support provided. Updating, reflection and analysis in the area of teaching is on-going, especially with the increasing introduction of new technologies to adult teaching and learning, as well as the growing familiarity and use of it by adult students. The kind of adult learning which we have mapped out will require time and resources allocated to this necessary refreshment and development.

All adult educators need off-the-job reflection and the re-charging of batteries. Teams and individual teachers need time after training to assimilate the new ideas and practices they have been exposed to in order to work out their own and joint responses.

Professional development is not only a responsibility for all professionals but it is also a right and should be backed by an entitlement. Staff have their own learning needs, gaps and aspirations. Professional development should include how an institution will respond to the latest government initiatives, but space must also be left for teachers to develop new materials or to develop their joint working with colleagues or to devote to whatever they feel they need to support their own lifelong learning as professionals.

UCU's manifesto for adult learning

A public service: a public good

- Adult learning is a irreducible characteristic of life, work and culture in the 21st century, hence a public service and funded as such.
- Adult learning was and is essential to economic, social and civic regeneration, even more so in the current recession
- Adult learning is a continuum of provision from the most basic and informal learning to the most formal, advanced and specialised. There should be no artificial barriers

between the different parts of adult learning, and progression to higher and deeper learning.

Governance and accountability

- All adult learning and education requires systems of governance that are truly accountable and empowers learners, practitioners and their communities, including employers and employment interests
- Accountability must flow upwards to democratically elected bodies
- Where an institution had a specialist sectoral role then it could also be accountable in some way to an industry body which itself would be properly representative of employment interests, the employees as well as the employers.
- Where institutions which have national, the proper form of accountability should be with Parliament, but a Parliament that has real powers of scrutiny, discussion, interrogation and investigation and influence.
- Any national agencies which are required must be accountable to democratic bodies. In their own governance they should also be representative of the sector that they work in and through.
- In non-formal and further education, there must be a reduction in the growth of 'quangocracy'. These must be kept to a minimum, and to those areas of activity where independent scrutiny, analysis, investigation and activity is required.
- Academic freedom and autonomy for staff. Is an essential component of true accountability. It is essential that staff are allowed to explore knowledge and ideas freely and openly without unnecessary interference and censorship.
- Accountability also flows downwards to staff and in turn staff become accountable for their actions as well.
- Non-formal and some aspects of self-organised informal adult learning should be connected to systems of local governance and accountability through local government.
- Non-formal adult learning providers should also have governing bodies on which communities, staff and learners should be represented. They and FE colleges should set open and participative for a to link to the communities they serve.
- Informal adult learning opportunities should be fostered and supported so as to provide at local level a wide spectrum where there is space and opportunity for self-organised groups to be supported and connected to more formal situations.
- Informal and non-formal adult learning should be supported by the creation of new local partnerships. However the resources to create them must be additional, and not taken from the already hard pressed existing funds. Such partnerships would be able to provide infra-structural support, co-ordination and strategic direction. They would have to be open and transparent and have real resources to support providers and learning opportunities as well as real community, staff and learner involvement.
- FE colleges should be fully and wholly returned to local government in terms of accountability. Where, and especially in relation to their role in skills and employment,

colleges have acquired regional and/or national roles then this should link to accountability to regional forms of government through local authority and sector representation in these.

- College governing bodies should contain greater representation from staff, students and communities
- Performance benchmarks and standards should be a mix of national, regional and local elements reflecting the contexts and circumstances of the provider. Such measures should grow organically from the institution's work and context. They should be clear, simple and understandable and entail a minimum.
- Sector Skills Councils have a role to play in articulating, co-ordinating and give coherence to employment and sectoral interests, views and requirements. They should be constructed around appropriate employer and employee representation. They will need resources and powers to effect change within their sectors in relation to vocational and workplace learning.
- A National Plan for adult learning should be created for adult learning defining potential and actual needs, available and potential resources and strategies to achieve its fulfilment. Such a Plan should have regional and local emanations.

Funding

- Funding across the whole spectrum of adult learning must sufficient to fund this vision.
- The percentage of Gross Domestic Product devoted to further and non-formal should increase to at least 1% of GDP. In higher education the quantum of funding should be increased to at least 1.1% of GDP
- The UCU vision is for all adult learning to be free at the point of delivery
- In terms of progression to this vision:
- End to Higher Education fees and restoration of realistic student maintenance grants. This should cover part and full time students
- In further education a progressive expansion of an entitlement to all adults of a 1st level 3 qualification. The definition of what constitutes a first level 3 qualification can be modified depending on the currency the qualification, and purpose for which the qualification is sought. The first step in this expansion should be raising the current level entitlement to the age of 30.
- The current policy of reducing the amount of public subsidy to level 3 and above qualifications should be rescinded and the previous subsidy of 75% of the cost of the programme undertaken, restored. Fee income targets for colleges should be abolished
- Should loans to students and learners be needed, these should be at no or low interest rates and repayable in reasonable and appropriate timescales at such time as the student is able to pay
- Financial support for all adult students in further and higher education. This to include support for maintenance costs for the student and any dependents, costs of books and

materials, any required equipment and clothing, costs of caring responsibilities and any travel to study costs.

- Learner Support Funds in further and adult education providers should be increased so that they are capable of supporting all legitimate student needs. Any loans made must carry low or no interest and be repaid within reasonable and appropriate time frames.
- Whilst fees are charged for non-formal adult learning, there should be realistic and wide fee national remission policies.
- Funding across all adult learning must be adequate to sustain the infra-structure needed to ensure high quality learning and teaching, including required new building, maintenance modern and up-to-date buildings, plant, equipment and appropriate technology, and well-equipped and stocked libraries, and resource facilities. This should also include spaces for refreshment, informal social interaction and discussion
- Funding across all adult learning must be sufficient to support properly all those learning difficulties and/or disabilities need. This should include the full range of human and other support, as well as access to the technologies that can reduce some of the impact of their difficulties and disabilities
- Funding methodologies across adult learning must as far as possible be simple, clear and understandable. Their application must not consume resources that could have gone to research, teaching and learning.
- Funding methodologies must be mode and level free; that is not favour a particular mode of delivery or level of qualification, achievement and attainment, but properly and fully fund all modes and levels appropriately.
- In higher education there should be no disparity of treatment for part time learning programmes and part time students.
- Funding priorities used by funding agencies should be agreed through the appropriate democratic processes, with involvement of all stakeholders including staff and students.

Quality

- All standards and benchmarks used either nationally, sectorally or at institutional level must be subject to construction, regular review, and modification in the light of experience on the ground and how the qualification and curricular offer across all post 16 is reformed, Such processes should include all stakeholders including staff and students
- National agencies used for national and sector external inspection and quality assurance should also offer guidance and support for improvement
- Quality assurance and quality improvement activities must be fit for purpose.
- Peer evaluations and process that seek to utilise the knowledge and skills of fellow practitioners in improving quality should be encouraged, resourced properly and seen and recognised as a legitimate.

Technological change and e-learning

- Adult learning where appropriate and possible should be a blend of human inter-action and the use of appropriate technology.
- There should be sufficient investment in new technologies and learning programmes to teach and train adults to use them effectively, as well as access to facilities with new technologies so as to ensure the eradication of 'technological haves' and 'have-nots'.
- The UK Government should act so as to revise copyright legislation and intellectual property right at national and international levels to protect authors and producers of knowledge whilst ensuring the fullest access to the full range of ideas, debate and materials.

Role of the Learner

- Adult learners must be recognised and valued for their life, familial, employment, financial, community and identity experiences they bring to learning. This will mean that they can be equal partners in their learning, and that teaching and learning are mutual and reciprocal activities.
- Adult students need access to real and sufficient support both financially and in other forms to meet and resolve some of these issues. This will include pastoral support. This should be in the form of well resourced welfare and well-being facilities.
- Compulsion should have no place in successful adult learning and should not be used in any adult learning provision.

Curriculum

- All adults should have access to a negotiated, comprehensive liberating curriculum delivered by a professional high quality workforce alive to the diverse economic and social benefits to lifelong learning
- Adult learning is concerned with the active transmission of knowledge and skills
- Adult learning permeates across all education sectors including compulsory education(family learning)
- Adult learning must recognise and value that its curriculum is made up of a spectrum of episodes, opportunities, access points, programmes, courses and classes ranging from the most loose and informal to the highly disciplined and structured. All should be recognised and valued. They complement, enhance and enrich one another.
- Effective teaching and learning provision recognises that adult learning may at times be, 'untidy' and at times 'disjointed'; and perhaps take place in different institutions.
- The adult learning curriculum must be capable of moulding itself to that range of circumstances and constraints. It must be flexible and capable of being delivered in a variety of modes in terms of time, formats and methods.
- Adult learning must be supported by clear, understandable, up-to-date information, advice and guidance both from an impartial and independent service and as an integral

part of the actual processes of teaching and learning. Space must found in workloads and teaching commitments for this.

- Qualifications for adult learning must be fit for purpose. Where possible adult learning programmes should be modularised and unitised.
- The various credit accumulation and transfer systems should be linked so as to allow students and learners to carry forward credits gained in their learning.
- The adult learning curriculum should include programmes that can be undertaken for their own sake, and not leading to qualifications.

Widening participation

- Adult learning must be based around an entitlement and curriculum offer for adults, including access to guidance, learner and learning support.
- Institutional funding and student funding arrangements should be adjusted so that part-time study is not disadvantaged
- Adult learning should be supported by outreach work to those individuals and groups who have been and are disadvantaged in terms of educational opportunities. Funding should include resources for such outreach work.

Workplace Learning

- Workplace learning should be underpinned by legislation
- There should be a statutory right to 5 days per year of paid education leave for every employee. Such leave should be able to be accumulated and 'banked' so that it may be taken up in larger blocks of learning.
- Statutory rights for ULRs to able to carry out their duties.
- Legislation should underpin the creation of learning agreements and committees
- The inclusion of training should be extended to all collective bargaining
- Sector Skills Councils should become fully representative of employer and employee interests.
- Sector Skills Councils should have the power to make levies for training across their sectors.
- Workplace learning should be supported through fiscal measures such as tax credits
- The systems of licences to practice should be expanded and underpinned by statute.
- Unions must be real social partners in the Government's skills strategies
- Legal rights to paid time off to train to be strengthened
- Adult employees without a Level 2 and Level qualifications should have a statutory right to request paid time off to train from their employer to achieve this educational standard in order to tackle those employers that refuse to allow their staff to access state-subsidised paid time off arrangements.
- Positive action is needed at all levels to tackle skills discrimination
- Unions and workers must have an equal voice in workplace skills bargaining

- Government should also act as an employer of best practice in relation to its own workforce and continue to use public procurement to embed training obligations in contractual arrangements
- Wider learning experiences should always be an integral part of a vocational curriculum; our students need to learn about their rights, the role of trade unions, citizenship, discrimination, participating in democracy and environmental issues

Role of the Practitioner

- The role of the practitioner in stimulating innovation in adult learning should be recognised and valued.
- The role of adult learning practitioners as professional should be recognised and valued.
- The dual professionalism of adult learning practitioners as both subject specialists and as teachers and researchers should be recognised and valued.
- This professionalism should be underpinned by proper initial training and subsequent continuing professional development. Both initial and continuing professional development should be properly resourced, with time within workloads to undertake such activities. There should be entitlement for all adult learning staff to initial training and CPD.
- Adult learning practitioners should be actively involved in the creation of professional standards, values and codes of professional conduct
- Fees for membership of professional bodies should be paid by either the State where such membership is mandatory, or the employer where it is not.
- There must be good data on all aspects of the workforce. Where an adult learning provider is in receipt of public funds, there should be mandatory duty to supply the requisite workforce data.
- The recruitment of all adult learning practitioners should be on the basis of fair selection procedures, followed by proper induction and support.
- The recommendations of the Commission on Black and Minority Staff in FE and the NIACE Commission of staff with disabilities should be fully implemented.
- Salaries for adult learning practitioners should be such as to recruit and retain the best possible staff
- National salaries and conditions of service, structures and systems should recognise any special requirements that adult learning practitioners may need.
- Such salaries should also contain elements of progression that can acknowledge the commitment, development and changing roles of staff
- Although there may particular circumstances when part-time hourly paid and fixed term adult learning staff are used, as far as possible all adult learning staff should be full or fractional contracts.