



**WALES  
CYMRU**

**RESPONSE TO: A manufacturing Future for Wales –  
Framework for Action**

**Contact Details:**

**Jamie Insole  
Policy Officer  
UCU Wales  
Unit 33, The Enterprise Centre  
Tondu  
BRIDGEND  
CF32 9BS**

**Tel: 07854 366504**

**E-mail: [Jinsole@ucu.org.uk](mailto:Jinsole@ucu.org.uk)**

The University and College Union (UCU Wales) represents almost 7,000 academics, lecturers, trainers, instructors, researchers, managers, administrators, computer staff, librarians, and postgraduates in universities, colleges, adult education and training organisations across Wales.

UCU Wales is a politically autonomous but integral part of UCU, the largest post-school union in the world. It was formed on the 1st June 2006 by the amalgamation of two strong partners – the Association of University Teachers (AUT) and the National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education (NATFHE) – who shared a long history of defending and advancing educators' employment and professional interests.

The Covid-19 crisis poses a double challenge. Beyond the public health emergency, the necessary immediate response has been an unprecedented economic shutdown. Yet that is only the beginning of our difficulties. When the medical emergency passes, we will re-emerge into a shattered economic landscape. The challenge will be to restart – in some sectors, even rebuild – a severely stressed economy, with the risk being that the inequalities of wealth, power and opportunity we struggled with beforehand have been newly amplified. We require a recovery and reform process in which the value of education and the needs of the community, as well as the imperative to live within planetary boundaries, come before the overweening prerogatives of marketization. The learner's lifelong needs are addressed through a pathway of seamless progression. New social partnership are forged between institutions and sectors. Parity of esteem is achieved as outdated distinctions between vocational and academic pathways give way to world class methods that place pedagogy at their very center.

For this reason, we welcome the opportunity to respond to 'A manufacturing Future for Wales – A Framework for Action'. In doing so we will address some of the questions posed by the consultation, but we also, and most importantly from our perspective, the importance of pedagogy in achieving the ambition set out in the framework.

**Q1: Do you agree with the definition of high value manufacturing as described and its importance in future proofing the sector?**

UCU agrees with the definition

**Q2: Do you agree with the themes identified, which have to be addressed to help future proof the sector?**

UCU broadly agrees with the themes as identified. However, we feel that future proofing will be enhanced by an emphasis on pedagogy (the process by which learning is acquired) and quality enhancement. Moreover, in addition to other points that we make, the progress of the Commission for Tertiary Education and Research (CTER) Bill provides an opportunity to refurbish vocational and qualification pathways.

**Q3: Do you agree with the actions proposed and do you have any additional suggestions on how the commitments in the plan can be delivered?**

Strengthening collaboration between government, industry, trade unions and academia to increase innovation by the application of research to improve competitiveness

The CETR Bill envisages the creation of a Research and Innovation Committee under the new Commission. In addressing the future role of that Committee, there is definitely space for a body which coordinates research and spend. Working jointly with the relevant stakeholders, the remit should be to support regional investment through the development of appropriate qualifications.

The OECD Future of Regional Development Report 2020 (OCED FRDR) proposes an “office at the center of government responsible for strategic planning and public investment for regional development”. If this idea is to be realized, a part of the Research and Innovation Committee’s task should be finding a better way of capturing the knowledge transfer from the sector and ensuring that it has a place in future economic development.

UCU acknowledges that the end of EU Structural Funding must lead to the development of new methods and patterns of collaboration. Noting the development of research unions in Scotland, the Midlands and elsewhere, it seems clear that broad ranging cooperation maximises opportunities to access UKRI funding. The OECD FRDR 2020 sets out a vision of national government in which it acts as coordinator, collaborator but not controller. Similarly, this is mirrored in the recently published second Reid Review (2020). In its recommendations around the role of legacy funding, it positions transitional government support as a key ingredient to establishing a context for future collaboration around UK and international bids. UCU welcomes this approach since, whilst government and the regulator should play a role in determining priorities, the impetus must remain with the institutions.

UCU notes this consultations emphasis on the finding of the Fair Work Commission and the proposed Social Partnership Bill. The ambition to demonstrate that Wales remains a credible player post-Brexit cannot be separated from conditions of employment within the post-16 sector. UCU believe that the terms and conditions of researchers/early careers staff must be addressed if we are ever going to be able to attract and retain the best and the brightest to study and work in Wales. For the past two years UCU has sought to encourage the Welsh university sector to develop best practice in relation to the research concordat. Thus far, only Swansea University has begun to properly address these issues from our perspective.

## **A Welsh Apprenticeship Framework**

UCU believes that more thought needs to be given to the structures which enable dialogue involving employers and the education profession in delivering a curriculum that is fit for purpose.

Referencing the Foundational Economy agenda and noting the success of schemes such as 'Better Jobs – Closer to Home', Wales needs to find a way to encourage the uptake of apprentices from the small and medium enterprises (such as sharing apprentices). We also need to pay much more attention to the gender stereotyping which appears to be prevalent in apprenticeships in Wales.

UCU hopes that the introduction of the new curriculum in schools will ensure that school leavers are properly prepared for the structural changes to work with the increased use of digital technology and the changes in the production processes in manufacturing. The Health and well-being goals of the current government are key drivers in this space. In responding to governments Foundational Frame and Economic Contract, we must ensure that we possess an apprenticeship framework which meets the needs of the both the individual and the employers in Wales.

UCU is encouraged by government's powerful ambition to value both 'vocational' and 'academic' routes equally (although we do not accept a stark delineation between them). However, key to success in this area is the need to revisit the definition of an Apprenticeship.

In 2018, UCU asked Professor Bill Lucas to draft our responses to the policy on Apprenticeship in line with our belief that we should have an academic evidence base for what works and can deliver the Welsh Government's agenda.

Quoting directly, Professor Lucas defines an apprenticeship as;

“An apprenticeship is a mutually beneficial relationship between a learner and an employer in which an individual, through a blend of on- and off-the-job methods and by working with other more skilled people, becomes competent in a chosen occupation. By competence we include both routine and non-routine expertise. Apprenticeship, in addition, equips potential employees with the habits of mind of someone who has a deep pride in the vocational activity for which they are being formed, while at the same time developing the wider skills they will need for a lifetime of working and learning. While the learning will focus on the demands of contemporary workplaces, it will also unambiguously seek to prepare the apprentice morally and socially for active citizenship.”

UCU strongly urges Welsh Government to heed the advice from experts in this field. Prof Lucas further argues that:

“Despite the many different kinds and levels of apprenticeships our research has suggested that there are three key features of apprenticeship learning: 1. The fact that they require both on and off-the-job learning. 2. Their social context – that they require learning from and with others within a community of practice. 3. The requirement for visibility of learning processes – as an integral aspect of the first two and as an increasingly acknowledged feature of effective learning wherever it takes place.”

UCU is keen that the relevant industry standard is embedded within the qualification and kept up to date. Rather than creating radically different pathways, government should be enabling collaboration across sectors. This requires a comparable standard around which qualifications can intersect.

We need to ensure that pathways below level four are properly informed about the Welsh apprenticeship framework; that they align properly and, at the same time, keep pace with the technological developments in their local industries. UCU have been trying to persuade Welsh Government and FE employers that they need to have arrangements in place which reflect the academic sabbatical that exists in HE, so that staff have the time and motivation to engage with their local employers to ensure that provision does align and make sense in relation to pathways for students.

Partly for this reason, UCU proposes a 'Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales' which will allow for credit accumulation and transfer, alongside accredited prior learning, within a common Apprenticeship Framework for Wales. This introduces greater flexibility into the system, allowing apprenticeships to adapt to lives as they are lived. Referencing the success of systems in Holland & Germany, with a degree of portability and the right balance of flexible access arrangements, there is no reason why a young apprentice might not achieve an equivalent Masters qualification. This is crucial both from the standpoint of boosting associated GVA and raising productivity. Research demonstrates how parity of esteem ensures a more equal, cohesive and motivated society.

### **The need to refine skill sets to ensure we have the people with the right skills we require in Wales to work in manufacturing**

As it stands, Wales confronts challenges in terms of productivity, skills and an unevenly distributed economic activity. The combined economic impacts of Corona Virus and Brexit are both likely to accelerate the decline of old industries whilst placing maximum pressure on the bottom end of the employment market. Conversely, the crisis has forced both a development and expansion of digital practice, arguably accelerating innovation and supplanting physical distance with digital proximity. During previous recessions, whilst economic downturn might have driven a counter-cycle which found more people accessing education to escape gloomy economic weather, the advantages which these qualifications brought was not always obvious.

Referencing OECD FRDR 2020, there is a recognized need to develop medium level skills throughout every Welsh Region. If this is to be achieved, it is essential that courses are funded to take account of existing and actual need. In some cases this might mean adopting a more flexible approach to how learning is delivered and what a qualification constitutes. A portable and flexible credit system constitutes the best opportunity to engage old and new learners. However, work must occur across multiple tiers of government to create the space and funding for experimentation. It follows that funding should reflect the very real needs of learners as they adapt to the uncertain needs of a recovering, transitional economy. Good outcomes are not always best achieved by targets designed to match qualification 'outputs' in other UK nations,

At the same time any 'equality led strategy' must also weigh the requirements of skills partnership with the needs of existing and potential learners, especially when it comes to a new adult education curriculum, which must deliver properly fund provision at levels one &

two to re-engage the 'hardest-to-reach' and people living in poverty. As has been seen in previous recoveries, there is a very real risk that opportunity will accrue to those who are most able to access it as policy pursues the 'low hanging fruit'. A place-based approach thus becomes crucial – something that UCU welcomes in this consultation.

To meaningfully address quality of provision, we must see genuine social partnership and seamless working with education professionals, including practitioners and their trade unions. From our perspective as an education trade union and professional association, quality in education is not about the number of students achieving top level qualifications; it is about the quality of the process that gets them there. It is also more than just the learner experience of the process, it is about the expertise of the professionals that guide them through the process. Therefore when designing processes and activities to strengthen and enhance the quality of learning, it is crucial that there is consideration of how practitioners are supported in their role, to develop their own professional skills. UCU takes the view that this is best achieved in a collaborative context.

With respect to governments stated ambition as presented in this consultation, the role of the teaching professions contribution to quality development must be given serious and wider consideration. There has been a tendency in recent years to overlook the expertise of teaching professionals. This has been particularly noticeable in the way that, despite concerns raised about workload, increasing bureaucracy and de-professionalization, teaching staff have been expected to deliver more qualifications, at higher grades, to more students, with fewer staff, in less time and with reduced funding; but still at a globally acceptable level of quality.

The combined effect of such factors has hugely undermined the role of pedagogy, to the detriment of the quality of education. Pedagogy; the method and practice of teaching, is fundamental. It deals with the theory and practice of teaching and how these influence learning. It includes the study of theories of learning, which inform the strategies and judgements taken to understand learner's needs.

The OCED, in their report 'What Does Innovation in Pedagogy Look Like? (2018)', argue that '...to call for a pedagogical framework is to recognise the key role of pedagogy, not to ask policies to dictate the best teaching methods.' Further, the report advocates that 'Such a framework needs to start with the argument that teachers are high-level professionals whose professionalism revolves around collaborative pedagogical expertise.' A serious amount of funding must be provided for the development of pedagogy in order to focus on the role of the teacher as a creative professional. Without this, regardless of how we define it, we will thwart any attempt to truly improve the quality of the learner experience in Wales.

The necessity is made all the more urgent by accelerated transitional pressures posed by Covid 19. For instance, an accelerated move towards blended learning and digital platforms requires that methods adapt so that pedagogy remains central to teaching practice and learner experience. However, UCU Wales recently noted that the most recent Digital 2030 Framework provided a 'strategic framework' which initially failed to realize these objectives. Following discussion, this matter is now in hand. However, this experience reaffirms the importance of government 'doing with', as opposed to 'doing to', the sector.

Finally, UCU supports the fight to protect our planet for future generations and is ready to rise to the challenge of the climate and environmental crisis. We stand up for those workers

whose jobs are at risk if we don't take action to make the recovery and transition to a net-zero economy a just one. Having made the case for a pedagogy which supports the development of competencies, capabilities and 'habit of mind', it is worth noting their practical value to securing a just transition.

Similarly, our institutions and academics constitute powerful repositories of knowledge and expertise in their own right. In delivering its wider remit, the Government should remain mindful of the data and evidence base which they can deliver when provided with adequate incentive.

**Question A:** We would like to know your views on the effects that the manufacturing plan would have on the Welsh language, specifically on opportunities for people to use Welsh and on treating the Welsh language no less favorably than English.

UCU supports Welsh Governments Cymareag 2050 Vision and is keen to see the Welsh language mainstreamed throughout post-16 education.

UCU is content to see this response publishe

