

**MANIFESTO FOR
POST-SCHOOL
EDUCATION
EDUCATION FOR THE
FUTURE – INVESTING
IN OPPORTUNITY**

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EDUCATION FOR THE FUTURE – INVESTING IN OPPORTUNITY

We are calling on all those who care about education and the future of our country to support our vision of post-school education.

That vision is founded on a fundamental belief in the intrinsic value of education as a force for the enhancement of the lives of individuals, the development of their talents and the realisation of a truly civilised, socially responsible, fair and prosperous society.

Our colleges and universities are key drivers of economic recovery, since they are the main sources of the skilled workers and professionals on which that recovery will depend. We also know that those who hold qualifications and who participate in education and training go on to be healthier, wealthier and more active citizens.

Continuation in education beyond compulsory schooling determines the life chances of individuals. Our society is more unequal than ever – improving access to education, and the quality of the education on offer, is the basis for the creation of a fair society and for ending the massive waste of human potential that characterises our current system.

We believe that everyone should be able to access the type of education that is right for them within a high quality, publicly funded system.

FUNDING OUR FUTURE: THE CASE FOR INVESTMENT IN EDUCATION

The government's austerity policies have failed. Cuts in public expenditure have led to increased unemployment and stagnation in demand for goods and services, with a consequent failure of investment and wealth creation. This has been made worse by an unfair tax system and by the government's failure to deal with a failed banking sector. As well as the devastating effects on the most vulnerable and disadvantaged sections of our society, austerity has exacerbated rather than solved the problem of government debt and is destroying the long-term economic prospects for the UK.

We urgently need an alternative economic strategy based on investment in our people and in the key contributors to future growth and recovery.

In the future success will depend increasingly on the ability of societies to develop and effectively apply the skills, knowledge, creativity and inventiveness of their workforces. That is why further, adult and higher education, along with research and development, are the most important and fundamental part of our social and economic infrastructure.

Investment in post-school education is highly productive for both individuals and the economy:

- students starting further education qualifications in 2008 will generate an additional £75bn for the economy over their working lives, over and above what they would have contributed if they had not achieved those qualifications¹
- from a current income of about £23.4bn, our higher education sector generates nearly £60bn of output, creates 2.6% of UK jobs and earns over £5bn in exports – this represents a rate of return unmatched by any other form of public investment²
- Numerous studies have demonstrated the benefits of participation in adult learning for health and well-being; people with further and higher education qualifications are also more likely to participate in community and voluntary organisations and in general to be more active citizens; offenders who take part in education while in prison are three times less likely to reoffend than those who do not³
- The government estimates that research and development (R&D) accounted for 51% of all UK productivity growth from 2000 until the start of the recession.⁴ In 2011 university spin-out companies generated almost £2bn in revenues and employed 17,000 people.⁵ Higher education research and teaching are indispensable to the continued success of the UK's creative industries embracing arts, culture, digital media and sports.⁶

1 BIS (2011), *Measuring the Economic Impact of Education*

2 Universities UK (2009), *The Impact of Universities on the UK Economy*

3 John Bynner (2009), NIACE, *Lifelong Learning and Crime: a life-course perspective*

4 BIS (2012), *Annual Innovation Report*

5 1994 Group (February 2013), *HE Briefing*

6 Universities UK (2010), *Creating Prosperity: the role of higher education in driving the UK's creative economy*

AUSTERITY AND WASTED TALENT: THE EFFECTS OF CURRENT POLICIES

Current policies represent a massive, potentially catastrophic dis-investment in our public education system. Those policies have not only cut expenditure in a short-term – and unsuccessful – attempt to reduce the deficit, they have also created social inequality by making access to education increasingly dependent on the wealth of individuals and their families.

Education is the main determinant of social mobility, of ensuring equality of opportunity, including the opportunity for everyone to fulfil their potential.

The government has said that “tackling the opportunity deficit – creating an open, socially mobile society – is our guiding purpose.”⁷ Yet by all measures Britain is becoming a more unequal society.

The rhetoric of government policy contrasts sharply with its reality. Here are just a few recent examples:

- The failure to deal with the scandal of youth unemployment means that we now have over 18% of our 18-24 year olds not in education, training or employment – higher than the EU average. This is a gross waste of talent greatly compounded by the many years of failure to invest in our further education colleges and by the effective abolition of the educational maintenance allowance (EMA)
- We face the prospect of a significant and sustained decline in access to English (in particular) universities as a result of the tripling of fees and an 80% reduction in public funding for teaching. Entry in 2012 fell by 6.6% for UK applicants domiciled in England, while acceptances for Scottish-domiciled students,

7 Cabinet Office (2011), *Opening Doors, Breaking Barriers*

who pay no fees, rose. We now have the annual prospect of thousands of young people who wish to enter higher education and are qualified to do so being excluded either because they cannot afford the fees or because the places are not available for them. Meanwhile, we pile students with debts that many will never repay under a student loans scheme that will cost future tax payers heavily. In the US, which has had a state-supported student loans system for many years, student loan indebtedness recently hit one trillion dollars. The US Treasury Office has identified student debt as one of the main factors restraining consumer demand in the economy.⁸

- We are currently experiencing an unprecedented crisis in part-time student recruitment to higher education, particularly affecting adult students aged 21 and over where the fall in recruitment in 2012 was over 30%. They are being squeezed out of higher education by fees and the general lack of financial support for part-time students. The removal of funding support for students wishing to pursue further study at equivalent or lower level (ELQ) has also had a major impact on access to adult learning.
- This situation comes on top of years of cuts in adult and community learning through the withdrawal of public funding and the imposition of fees. And this has been allowed to happen despite the relatively high levels of adult functional illiteracy and innumeracy in this country, compared with our competitors, and the growing educational needs of an ageing population. Funding for English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) is also under constant threat, again in sharp contrast to the government's rhetoric of social inclusion and coherence.

Rather than planning for a future in which access to flexible lifelong learning will be a pre-requisite of

economic success, we have the prospect of further cuts in further, adult and higher education budgets.

Of most immediate concern is the extension of the fees/loans regime (and corresponding withdrawal of public funding) to adult learners aged 24 and over in further education undertaking intermediate and higher level courses, including access courses for entry to higher education. This presents yet another barrier to access to education precisely at a time when we should be encouraging the development, renewal and upgrading of education and skills.

Although the government claims to have protected public funding for research from the cuts, the science budget has in fact been significantly eroded by a failure to maintain its real value in line with increased costs.⁹ Any weakening of the UK's R&D capacity will greatly reduce our competitiveness, especially when the massive investment in R&D by the emerging economies is considered. In addition, the over-concentration of research funding across all disciplines in a small subset of our universities threatens the productive link between teaching and research and hence the quality of both.

8 Financial Times, p8, 6 March 2013

9 Campaign for Science and Engineering (2011), Public Funding of UK Science and Engineering: putting government rhetoric to the test

LEARNING FOR LIFE AND LIVING TO LEARN: ANOTHER EDUCATION IS POSSIBLE

Peter Scott, professor of higher education studies at the Institute of Education, recently pointed out that the UK is “complacently contemplating decline” while most other countries are pushing hard for growth. He notes the exponential increase in demand for “knowledge workers”, most of whom will need to be graduates. But he adds the crucial point that it is not just a matter of sound economics: “To confront the challenges we face we need to cultivate a critical humanity, open minds in open societies.”¹⁰

The case for an alternative to austerity, with education at its centre, is overwhelming and winnable.

UCU is calling for a broad alliance of all those who care about education, scholarship and research to campaign together. Faced with the prospect of further cuts in public expenditure, our immediate and urgent objective is to achieve an increase in expenditure on post-school education to bring the UK at least to the average OECD expenditure level (a current shortfall of about £4.2bn).

More broadly, we are calling for support for our alternative vision for the future of education and for a fair, inclusive society. We stand for:

- the removal of all financial barriers to access to education
- a high quality, publicly funded education system accessible to all
- lifelong learning as a reality, not just a slogan
- a properly paid, valued and respected teaching, research and learning support professional workforce

- institutional autonomy, academic freedom and democratic governance
- an end to privatisation, marketisation and bureaucratisation of education
- an education service founded on respect for equality and diversity, commitment to the promotion of social inclusion and active opposition to all forms of discrimination
- an education service that is able to develop in all students the level of critical thinking needed to play a full role within society.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

You can register support for our campaign for investment in post-school education by going to www.knowledgeeconomy.org.uk. You will find a wide range of material there providing hard evidence in support of our arguments.

You can download copies of this manifesto from www.ucu.org.uk/manifesto and use it to lobby MPs, start discussions in local education and community groups and in trade councils.

If you have any questions or suggestions about the campaign and manifesto, please email: manifesto@ucu.org.uk.

Thank you for your support.

AN ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION IS POSSIBLE

¹⁰ Guardian, 5 February 2013