

The future of vocational education

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UCU VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Vocational education is coming further into mainstream education policy discourse following the publication of the Wolf review of vocational education in 2011, with apprenticeships being lauded as the ‘new norm’ by the Prime Minister in 2013 and the introduction later this year of the high profile Tech Bacc.¹ The Labour Party has proposed their own Tech Bacc² and have pushed apprenticeships high up their agenda too.

Existing UCU policy on vocational education has been formed through various routes such as Congress motions, responses to consultations, the development of UCU’s post-school education manifesto and committee decisions. This document brings together all the strands of existing policy as well as developing our thinking in some key areas. If agreed by the Committee, the idea is that this paper and the further work that flows from it will form will be used as the policy basis for our campaigning and lobbying work in the lead up to the General Election 2015.

The first point to note is that much of the discussion on vocational education that receives wider attention focuses on young people only and though a large part of this policy paper addresses the needs of young people UCU must maintain the position that vocational education and training for adults is of equal and necessary importance for lifelong learning to become a reality. The rhetoric around upskilling and reskilling to adapt to technological and labour market change does not match up to the practice and UCU must continue to press the case for these restrictive policies for adults to be lifted.

14-19

UCU supports the creation of an integrated 14–19 education phase. Our curriculum and qualifications system needs to be based on credit accumulation and transferability to ensure that all learning is properly recognised and valued. All young people would work within the same framework without a vocational/general divide as currently

¹The Tech Bacc is a performance measure for 16–19-year-olds beginning September 2014. It will include an extended project, a level 3 core maths qualification and a level 3 vocational qualification

²Labour’s Tech Bacc proposal is for all students to take English and Maths to age 18 and to do work experience, and employers to accrediting ‘high quality vocational courses’

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happens. For too long the vocational route has been viewed as second best and or remedial, and a wholesale change in the 14–19 system can change this. The curriculum should be broad and comprehensive offering a personalised route to an overarching diploma that would include general education (thus consistent with the political focus on English and maths attainment), practical and applied learning as well as vocational/occupational skills. Every student of all abilities would study a blend of general and vocational subjects with a third year (18–19-year-olds) available and fully funded, to those who need it. The vocational element should include wider learning such as rights, the role of unions, citizenship, democracy and environmental issues. A broad and inclusive curriculum for all 14–19-year-olds implies acknowledgement of the central importance of the lecturer as creator as well as deliverer of the curriculum. Given the recent divergence of England, Wales and Northern Ireland on GCSEs and A-levels content and structure this proposal has the potential to reunite the systems.

The integration of education pathways and qualifications should be reflected in the institutional arrangements for education. We have recently seen a greater diversity in education providers for 14–19-year-olds, with university technical colleges, studio schools, FE colleges, free schools, academies and community schools all entitled to teach 14–19-year-olds full-time. However this diversity has led to fragmentation of funding, competition rather than collaboration between providers and a serious deficiency in information, advice and guidance services to equip young people with the knowledge they need to make the right choice about place of study and courses for them. Independent, high-quality information, advice and guidance is crucial to helping young people navigate their options. Young people also need fair access to all institutions and must be able to change or combine institutions to provide them with the right education experience in order to make the most out of the different options available to them.

The diploma would be delivered at a number of attainment levels to support motivation and progression. This will allow for proper recognition of all learning and ensure portability to other learning providers, and will provide value to higher education institutions and employers. It would bring to an end the continual churn and change in vocational education. The system needs stability and this overhaul would bring about the all encompassing reform that is necessary to prevent future piecemeal tinkering with the system.

Employers have a role in the design and content of vocational qualifications, as do teachers, lecturers, trade unions and young people themselves. Too much recent reform has disregarded the valuable input of teachers and learners in favour of a single minded focus on the employer. Employers may be able to articulate their current skills needs and do provide a crucial role in skills development of young people but they are not necessarily able to provide sufficient information on future needs. They have also had many chances in the past to get involved with vocational qualifications but rates of engagement with qualification design have not risen. This is why social partnerships, involving all parties, are of such importance in vocational education. The best qualifications have currency with all those with a stake in the system and an isolationist approach to qualification design will not work – something which has been designed only by the employer will not necessarily meet all the learning needs of young people or be recognised by higher education providers.

Lifelong learning can no longer be an afterthought in the education system and increasingly it will be seen as one of the means by which to address the problems raised by an ageing population.

Particularly in the context of the raising of the compulsory education participation age proper financial support for young people needs to be provided. This will prevent young people from being penalised if they cannot afford to participate in the required number of hours of education and will help with widening participation and social mobility aims. The 16-19 bursary fund that has been put in place to replace education maintenance allowance (EMA) is not adequately funded to provide the support to all the young people that need it.

14-19 policy summary

- Implement an integrated 14-19 phase with a multi-level diploma based on credit accumulation and transferability to be taken by all students.
- Overhaul careers education, information, advice and guidance for young people to ensure it is independent, high quality and accessible to all.
- Employers, teachers and learners all have a valid role in designing vocational qualifications.
- Restore proper financial support for learners to replace EMA.

ADULTS

The UK is an ageing society, with people living longer and being required to work longer. 70% of the 2020 workforce is already in the labour market. Lifelong learning can no longer be an afterthought in the education system and increasingly it will be seen as one of the means by which to address the problems raised by an ageing population. Technological change and globalisation are transforming all aspects of peoples' lives: communications, work, education and learning. The pace of change impacts upon learning: the increasing insecurity of employment tenure means there is a constant pressure for upskilling and reskilling throughout a lifetime. To assist individuals in making the most of the opportunities as well as the challenges posed by this, good provision for workplace learning and training for career changes or second chances for the over-25s is imperative. However, since the Train to Gain scheme was scrapped there has been little government support available for individuals and businesses to provide the necessary in-work training. Furthermore findings from the national skills and employment survey 2012 highlight a long-term decline in training participation in the UK (pre-dating the recession of 2008-09). The proportion of British workers engaged annually in more than 10 days training declined from 38% in 2006 to 34% in 2012. Worryingly for equalities reasons this fall is especially concentrated among women (down by around 10 percentage points).³

Current government policy on equivalent or lower qualifications (ELQ) is contradictory to the need to upskill and reskill throughout lifetime and indeed to government rhetoric on this subject. There has been a dramatic fall in part-time students in HE, the vast majority of whom are mature students, many of whom are following vocational courses while working full- or part-time. Universities UK found that *'Following a decade of slow decline, the numbers of students recruited to undergraduate part-time courses in*

³<http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/socsi/ses2012/%5Bhidden%5Dresources/2.%20Training%20in%20Britain%20-%20mini-report.pdf>

Not enough emphasis is placed developing skills for building careers and many adults end up moving in and out of low skilled, low-paid temporary work.

*England suddenly fell by 40% in two years (2010–11 to 2012–13): equivalent to 105,000 fewer students.*⁴ UCU notes the recent concession on ELQ policy for part-time students studying engineering, technology and computer science (allowing them to access fee loans) but this does not go far enough and the ELQ policy should be dropped.

The recommendations of the Witty Review on Universities and Growth include having an explicit responsibility for facilitating economic growth, an 'enhanced third mission'.⁵ If the report is implemented, this should be linked to universities being part of the social partnerships to develop vocational qualifications and courses for adults, and linking up with small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to share expertise.

Vocational qualifications for adults should follow a pattern of modularisation to be integrated within a system of credit accumulation and transfer similar to that recommended for 14-19 year olds. This model of learning allows for greater use of technology and innovative learning platforms as an additional learning resource. The flexibility and convenience of online learning is obviously a positive development for learners working full or part time and has the potential to engage many more people into learning. However we must be mindful of the quality of learning and teaching taking place and the appropriateness of online learning to the content being delivered and the needs of the learner. No online platforms should be accredited without proper involvement and oversight by a quality assured education provider. Wherever possible learners should have the opportunity to become part of a community of learners facilitated by the teacher/lecturer and the chance to share and co-create knowledge with their peers.

Unemployed adults need vocational education programmes through which they can reskill or upskill themselves to be successful in re-entering the labour market. However adults are subject to a punitive 'work first' approach with little regard for the existing skills, experience and personal ambition of the jobseeker. Not enough emphasis is placed developing skills for building careers and many adults end up moving in and out of low skilled, low-paid temporary work. Skills assessments should be used to tackle skills deficiencies and identify skills need. They should provide proper diagnosis rather than going through the motions of a tick box exercise and they should not be a tool for applying sanctions. Many colleges have a wealth of knowledge and experience of working with those furthest from the labour market, and combined with their links to local employers they could play a major role in providing these bespoke skills solutions for unemployed adults.

Jobcentre Plus should become a first-hand partner of their local enterprise partnership (LEP) making use of local labour market information to advise unemployed people of the opportunities in their areas and empowering them to access the skills training they need to take up these opportunities. For the under-25s who suffer most from the long term effects of scarring from long periods of unemployment the Youth Resolution proposal can play an important part of bringing together Jobcentre Plus, local authorities,

⁴The power of part time, Universities UK 2013

<http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/highereducation/Documents/2013/PowerOfPartTime.pdf>, p3

⁵https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/249720/bis-13-1241-encouraging-a-british-invention-revolution-andrew-witty-review-R1.pdf

Training rates are in long term decline, and action must be taken to halt this. Employees should have a statutory right to paid education leave through an expanded union learning representative system helping to foster a lifelong learning culture.

local employers and colleges and universities to work together to boost opportunities for the employment of young people in their areas. More of this type of joining up of policy is crucial. For instance, the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) funded traineeships programme for 19–23-year-olds is not necessarily accessible to those on jobseekers allowance because it is discretionary according to what their advisor decides, so in effect they could lose their benefit if they went on a traineeship with which their advisor did not agree. This has got to be addressed so that benefit claimants are not penalised for following a government programme that will be of benefit to them in raising their skills and experience to find work in the future.

There should be a programme to support in-work training for people upskilling within occupations. As cited above, training rates are in long term decline, and action must be taken to halt this. Employees should have a statutory right to paid education leave through an expanded union learning representative system helping to foster a lifelong learning culture. If these policy changes are implemented then we will already be beginning to change culture and attitudes towards training, and the positive effects should be felt in the in-work training opportunities.

Adults policy summary

- over-25s to have a bespoke career change/fresh start programme to replace apprenticeships in recognition of their different educational needs
- reverse the decline in workplace training with statutory time off for learning
- scrap equivalent or lower qualification policy
- skills support for unemployed adults matching local labour market needs using expertise of colleges and LEPs
- implementation of Youth Resolution for young adults up to 25
- reconstituted sector skills councils in a social/industrial partnership model to include employers of all sizes, unions, learners, and FE and HE providers.

APPRENTICESHIPS

Apprenticeships have been gaining a higher profile with the Prime Minister saying he supported them becoming the ‘new norm’. All three main political parties have clearly articulated policies on apprenticeships and so they are in vogue with political leadership as the messages resonate with voters.

Apprenticeship numbers have been growing in recent years with 868,700 funded apprentices participating in the 2012/13 academic year.⁶ The growth trend can be put down to two significant reasons. One is that apprenticeships at level 2 have been available since 2000 and the other is that people aged 25 and over become eligible for apprenticeships in England and Wales in 2008. So of those 868,700 apprentices, 181,300 were under 19, 294,500 were aged 19-24 and 392,900 were 25+ (with 58,300 of those aged over 50). So although much of the political discourse around apprenticeships centres on young people, the reality is that a significant proportion of the total number of apprentices are actually over the age of 25.

⁶Statistical First Release, November 2013

Apprenticeship education not only relates to learning the skills and theory necessary to become a skilled practitioner in the apprentice's chosen field, plus English and maths, it also encompasses employability skills, citizenship education, rights and responsibilities at work and a range of wider learning objectives to ensure the apprentice receives a well rounded education.

This, combined with the availability of apprenticeships at level 2 has contributed to concerns about quality. In many cases employees were having existing skills accredited in a matter of weeks and this was being badged as an apprenticeship despite no new employment being created and no skills training really taking place. In part this is what prompted the Richard review of apprenticeships which recommended a tightening up of eligibility – in that apprentices should be doing a new job or one which requires substantial learning of new skills. UCU supports this principle but still has concerns that the term apprenticeship can still be used while it misdescribes the education and training taking place. Education has a central role in apprenticeships and UCU supports measures to strengthen the learning element of them and to provide more opportunities for progression to HE through higher level and advanced apprenticeships. Apprenticeship education not only relates to learning the skills and theory necessary to become a skilled practitioner in the apprentice's chosen field, plus English and maths, it also encompasses employability skills, citizenship education, rights and responsibilities at work and a range of wider learning objectives to ensure the apprentice receives a well rounded education. Many people over the age of 25 will have gained sufficient work experience to have developed these wider skills already. One solution would be to maintain an apprenticeship type training programme for the over 25s for those who want to pursue career changes or need a fresh start but with its own brand identity and criteria which differentiates it from the under-25s apprenticeship incorporating wider learning, so that we can be very clear about what an apprenticeship really is and not dilute its status.

To keep education at the heart of an apprenticeship maintaining a strong presence of off-site learning is of vital importance throughout the duration of the programme. Time away from work allows the apprentice to embed their learning, to participate in critical reflection, join a community of learners and practitioners and develop the theoretical underpinning necessary to practise their craft. It also prepares the ground for learning at higher levels and allows them to receive English and maths education from specialist teachers. Colleges are ideal places to foster these types of learning. Although the Richard Review recommends mandatory off the job (though not necessarily off-site) training the government proposal actually reduces the number of off-site learning hours required, down to a minimum of 20% from 30%.⁷ UCU believes this is a mistake. Our apprenticeships are also unusual in that they only have a twelve month minimum duration (and this itself is only a recent development). In order to provide the holistic education outlined above we should work towards a statutory three year minimum duration for our apprenticeships, with off-site learning required throughout to ensure quality, a proper role for education, and prevention of training being misrepresented as an apprenticeship when it does not fulfil the necessary criteria.

It is important also to note that the rhetoric around apprenticeships is disproportionate to the numbers participating even with the recent growth. They are far less common in the UK than in other advanced economies, for example Switzerland has 43 apprentices at level three for every 1,000 staff, Germany 40, Australia 39 and Austria 33 compared with six in the UK.⁸ Although we strongly support apprenticeships as a way

⁷The Future of Apprenticeships in England: Implementation Plan, October 2013, p19

UCU supports the development of higher apprenticeship frameworks and believes it should become more commonplace to use apprenticeships as a route into HE and into professional sectors more commonly associated with graduate entry, such as law, management and IT.

to earn while you learn and open up alternative routes into professions we do urge for a serious recognition of the scale of the challenge facing us to increase numbers to the levels seen elsewhere and the significant change this will require from all stakeholders including employers, learners, parents, learning providers and government as a funder and supporter of apprenticeships.

At present apprenticeships at level 2 provide an important opportunity for young people to participate in education where they might not otherwise have suitable opportunities to learn and so fall out of the education system. However in other countries it is normal to only start apprenticeships at equivalent level 3. If a diploma of the type UCU outline is implemented then this might supersede the necessity of having level 2 apprenticeships as young people will be able to follow learning programmes better aligned to their needs. The government's traineeship programme (introduced in August 2013) could also form an important pre-apprenticeship experience for young people with lower attainment. However it would need to be expanded to provide greater coverage across the country and would need to provide young people with paid work experiences as set out in the TUC traineeship charter⁹ if they were undertaking proper work. These policies are consistent with the proposals in the Husbands Review of Vocational Education and Training for the Labour Party policy review¹⁰ and so should gain traction with Labour's education spokespeople in the run up to the General Election.

UCU supports the development of higher apprenticeship frameworks and believes it should become more commonplace to use apprenticeships as a route into HE and into professional sectors more commonly associated with graduate entry, such as law, management and IT.¹¹ Apprenticeships have the potential to be a key lever in increasing social mobility, particularly when higher education fees are so high in the UK by global standards. The higher apprenticeship fund has made a start in increasing opportunities for apprentices to study at level 4+ but it starts from a very low base. The take up and availability of apprenticeships at this level are tied in with Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG) and the perceptions of employers, learners and parents and education providers and the more apprenticeships are embedded and accepted as a proper route to a profession while working, the more demand there will be from young people and employers.

To prevent exploitation apprentices must be fairly paid. Although we accept that apprentice wages are often lower because they are trainees, they deserve to be properly remunerated for their labour. Financial responsibilities such as rent, bills and dependents do not disappear just because one happens to be an apprentice. If we really value apprentices as an integral part of our workforce then the pay disparity between national minimum wage (NMW) and apprentice minimum wage should go. The Institute for Employment Studies found that the introduction of the

⁸Real Apprenticeships, Boston Consulting Group for Sutton Trust, 2013, p.13

⁹<http://www.unionlearn.org.uk/news/2013/08/09/tuc-model-traineeships-charter-guidance-union-representatives>

¹⁰http://www.yourbritain.org.uk/uploads/editor/files/Skills_taskforce_-_apprenticeships.pdf

¹¹For a full list of the available higher apprenticeship frameworks see:

<http://www.apprenticeships.org.uk/employers/the-basics/higher-apprenticeships.aspx>

The number of women taking apprenticeships has more than doubled over the past decade. However, women are still pursuing careers in 'traditional sectors' that offer lower wage returns and career opportunities than sectors where men tend to do their apprenticeships.

NMW for apprentices actually impacted negatively on wages for younger age groups, possibly because it was set so much lower than the NMW rate.¹² This is especially important if we move to a three year minimum apprenticeship duration where the danger is that young people could be used as a cheap source of labour for the two years. A pay rise to reflect the growth in skills and experience should be awarded after every year in training to counter this risk.

We remain concerned about the gendered nature of apprenticeships survey not only because of breaking down traditional occupational barriers but because of the different career and pay prospects open to those in different sectors. The number of women taking apprenticeships has more than doubled over the past decade. However, women are still pursuing careers in 'traditional sectors' that offer lower wage returns and career opportunities than sectors where men tend to do their apprenticeships. In 2011/12 half (50.1 %) of all apprenticeship starts were female. However, women made up just two per cent per cent of all apprenticeship starts in each of the construction, electro-technical and vehicle maintenance and repair sectors, and less than four per cent in the engineering and driving vehicles sectors. By contrast, over nine in ten apprentices who started in the hairdressing (92.2 %) sector were women. This 'gendered' imbalance in apprenticeships mirrors the gender segregation seen in the workforce more generally.¹³

This is also reflected in the teaching staff where UCU's own survey of vocational education and training members conducted in 2012 showed that most teachers and lecturers follow the gender segregation pattern too. The top three subjects taught by women were: business/ICT/administration, arts subjects and hair and beauty therapies. The top three for men were: engineering/electrical/manufacturing subjects, business/ICT/administration and bricklaying/construction. Subjects with no male teachers at all among survey respondents included: animals/veterinary nursing and early years/childcare. Subjects with no female teachers at all among survey respondents included: carpentry/joinery, motor vehicles/automotive, plumbing, heating and gas.¹⁴

To cement the valued status of apprentices, a certified professional title akin to licence to practice should be awarded upon completion. This would give immediate status to the apprenticeship, provide a clear outcome to strive for and would restore the link to joining a community of occupation that Fuller and Unwin argue has been lost, *'the UK approach to apprenticeship (and workforce development more broadly) is mired in lists of skills and job-related activities which have become detached from a concept of occupation. This detachment makes it harder for apprentices to construct meaningful occupational identities and, therefore, to have a vision of what they are trying to become.'*¹⁵

¹²IES, The Development of apprentice wages and the impact of the new apprentice rate of the National Minimum Wage, Stefan Speckesser, 2013

¹³<http://www.tuc.org.uk/equality-issues/research-reveals-gender-stereotyping-apprenticeships>

¹⁴UCU undertook a survey of members teaching vocational programmes in December 2012 in order to provide a submission to the Commission of Adult Vocational Teaching and Learning. The survey had over 400 respondents

¹⁵Fuller and Unwin Apprenticeship and the concept of occupation, 2013, p7

What is missing from the apprenticeship picture is how to engage enough employers, particularly small and medium-sized businesses with the apprenticeship programme.

If we restrict apprenticeships to the under-25s as previously discussed, the over-25s are in need a bespoke vocational programme to enable lifelong learning to come into fruition. An adult may need such a programme for various reasons, for instance a desired career change, changes in the local labour market, obsolete skills, a second chance at learning or relocation. An apprenticeship as UCU conceives it is not appropriate because by this age employability skills have been acquired, transferable skills developed and a basis of knowledge in what it is to be an employee in the workplace formed. So the educative part of an apprenticeship covering the rights and responsibilities of work and citizenship that UCU feels forms part of the heart of an apprenticeship are not required. What is required is training and education in the sector/occupation that the person has chosen to follow. So the career change/fresh start programme should be developed as a discrete programme with its own funding and separate to the apprenticeship brand. It should maintain a minimum level of off-site learning for theoretical learning, critical reflection and any maths and English provision that might be required, and a 12-month duration to ensure rigour and quality as even though the employability skills have been developed the technical skills will be largely learnt from scratch. It will also prevent misuse of public funds for funding things that do not really constitute apprenticeships and will put the spotlight on the government's claimed success in growing apprenticeships when they are talking about young people.

What is missing from the apprenticeship picture is how to engage enough employers, particularly small and medium-sized businesses with the apprenticeship programme. Group training associations (GTAs) are an under-used resource for SMEs and more efforts should be made to resource these and improve access to apprenticeships for SMEs. The independent Commission of Inquiry into the role of GTAs in 2012, chaired by Professor Lorna Unwin, found that they could help to remedy the serious skills gaps and shortages with businesses and Unions playing a part to expand their reach.¹⁶ Without employers on board there simply will not be the places available to expand apprenticeship numbers. We need to return to the concept of on-the-job training for professions. Employers need financial incentives and they need firmer apprenticeship targets in public sector contracts, (to include their supply chain) to start putting rhetoric into practice. As the economy slowly recovers and employers begin to hire more staff we need to ensure that an appropriate number of apprenticeships are created within these new positions.

We need a proper employer engagement model. There is a good business case for apprenticeships that more employers need to understand. Employers can recoup training investment in as little as one to three years, depending on sector. It also minimises risks in hiring new staff and helps keep staff turnover down. Employers can grow and improve their business, selecting from the widest possible talent pool. In Switzerland, apprenticeship schemes generate net benefits for employers of an average of £6,000 per apprentice during a three-year apprenticeship term.¹⁷ They provide multiple benefits but are still often characterised as bureaucratic and burdensome in the UK.

¹⁶<http://www.ioe.ac.uk/66947.html>

¹⁷Sutton Trust p14

Although we recognise the economic and political constraints within which we operate we do believe that the inherent value of education and all the good outcomes that spring from it makes the case for continued and increased investment in education very strong.

It will take political courage to implement and begin to challenge the ingrained non-training and development culture, particularly in some of the sectors reliant most heavily on a low skilled workforce expected to work flexibly with little job security. There is in fact a win-win situation to be had in changing attitudes in these sectors to provide greater opportunities to develop high level skills with clear career pathways. For instance, take the adult social care sector, a large and fast growing sector that has the potential to employ great numbers of school leavers and young people but is typically low skilled, low pay work. The Work Foundation summarises it thus, *'it is a growing sector with a range of skill demands, where demand for a skilled workforce will grow across the country, and it provides good examples of employer engagement which are likely to strengthen the apprenticeship brand. However, there are challenges which must be addressed going forward, particularly issues around progression routes, equity and low pay. Young people need to see apprenticeship as a valuable pathway into the labour market but in turn the sector must develop better opportunities to progress to higher skill and better paid positions. Given endemic skills shortages and increasing demand for quality care services, there is a particularly urgent need to address these problems in social care.'*¹⁸

Apprenticeships policy summary

- should revert to a programme for under-25s only
- move towards a statutory three year minimum duration
- have education at their heart, with mandatory off-site learning provision including wider learning aims
- abolish the gap between national minimum wage and apprenticeship minimum wage
- a certified professional title should be awarded upon completion
- financial support through fiscal measures that will work for small and medium enterprises – tax credits, wage subsidies, grants from levy system
- employers should contribute financially to training through levies proportionate to size.

FUNDING

The education sector has endured a period of austerity with little change in sight. The further and higher education sectors in particular have been hit hard because of the political decision to ringfence the schools budget. Although we recognise the economic and political constraints within which we operate we do believe that the inherent value of education and all the good outcomes that spring from it makes the case for continued and increased investment in education very strong. UCU supports the knowledge economy umbrella campaign to increase investment in tertiary education to match the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) average.

¹⁸The road less travelled? Improving the apprenticeship pathway for young people, Katy Jones November 2013

Sector skills councils should be reconstituted with employer and trade union representation to form the social/industrial partnerships we desperately need to enact our vocational education policies.

The voluntary model around vocational education and training in the workplace has failed, as employers have supposed to have been taking the lead in skills development and vocational qualifications since the 1980s. To overcome this failure there should be statutory underpinning of training and a set of fiscal measures to reward employers who engage properly. We note that the Richard Review on apprenticeships has led to a funding consultation by the government, with a co-financing approach with relief through PAYE being favoured. Although there are concerns about the ability of small firms to cope with the system which should be carefully considered, UCU believes this is an important step to embedding the principles of supporting training through the tax system.

Workplace learning should be supported through fiscal measures such as tax credits to subsidise training/wages of those who are training. Where training is not completed the subsidy would have to be repaid. For instance, Austria runs such a scheme where 50-65% of wage costs of apprentices are covered in the first year.¹⁹ Furthermore the other workplace training and education schemes should have similar fiscal rewards.

We reject the loans policy for over-24s at level 3 or above. The majority of adults taking courses with a loan are the Access to HE students who qualify for a concession anyway if they go on to complete an HE course. The model for higher education fee loans simply does not work for vocational education and training, and the policy should be scrapped in its entirety. This policy has already failed as the numbers of adult apprenticeships at higher levels fell through the floor and the Secretary of State has announced they will not now apply to apprentices. However there is a lack of clarity about when the change will take place as apprenticeship loans are still in place and the regulations have not been changed. This highlights another problem – the lack of timely information to allow vocational providers to make forward plan and make decisions accordingly. For instance, the recent announcement by the Education Funding Agency (EFA) that 18 year olds would have to take a 17.5% cut in funding was unexpected and made without consultation. UCU believes that funding methodologies must be as far as possible be simple, clear and understandable; they should not favour a particular mode of delivery or level of qualification, achievement or attainment, but properly and fully fund all modes and levels. The arbitrary cut in 18-year-olds funding does not follow these principles in the slightest.

Sector skills councils should be reconstituted with employer and trade union representation to form the social/industrial partnerships we desperately need to enact our vocational education policies. They should be sufficiently resourced and have the necessary powers to effect change in relation to vocational and workplace learning and importantly should have the power to raise levies for training across their sectors. Training levies are commonplace elsewhere and schemes exist in the UK construction industry, engineering construction industry, and voluntarily in the film industry. The UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES) research found that, ‘the levies seem

¹⁹Real apprenticeships: creating a revolution in English Skills, Boston Consulting group for the Sutton Trust October 2013, p28

²⁰UKCES, Understanding Training Levies, 2012, p50

In order to implement a successful change in vocational education policy and to maintain the highest standards we must keep the teachers and lecturers working in vocational education at the heart of reforms.

to have a net positive effect on the quantity and quality of training.’²⁰ They ensure that employers all have a stake in the training system for their industry, all pay in and all benefit. Currently ‘the needs of the employer are privileged in the organisation of education and training, generating the conditions where the apprentice’s commitment is associated primarily with the employer rather than the occupation.’²¹ A partnership would overcome this problem by providing a collective solution. All would pay in according to size/turnover and would be entitled to grants and assistance with training and development.

Government machinery needs to play its part in an integrated system and funding must be seamless and not subject to an arbitrary split at 19 where the learner moves from DFE to BIS-funded provision. Hiding the wiring from learners and employers is a crucial part of simplification and accessibility. In all cases provision should meet the needs of learners and employers first and foremost rather than being structured according to funding agency. For instance the traineeships programme runs from 16–23 (or 25 for learners with a learning difficulty assessment) but because it is funded by two different agencies (the EFA and SFA) those aged 19 years+ have different eligibility requirements for the programme. They are ineligible if they have achieved a level 2 qualification, even though their need for a traineeship may be just as great as it was when they were 18 and had the same level 2 qualification.

Funding policy summary

- voluntary approach has failed; statutory underpinning of vocational education and training (VET) needed with, fiscal measures such as tax credits and levies to properly support and fund learning
- scrap failing 24+ advanced learning loans
- social/industrial partnership model to properly engage all types of employers, provide union role and representation, raise levies and provide grants
- government to fund VET seamlessly without an arbitrary divide at age 19.

TRAINING, SUPPORT AND CPD FOR VOCATIONAL STAFF

In order to implement a successful change in vocational education policy and to maintain the highest standards we must keep the teachers and lecturers working in vocational education at the heart of reforms. VET teachers are both professional teachers and professionals within a specific subject/trade/craft/skill. There is a need to ensure they have enough opportunity to bring their own knowledge and skills of industry up to date with regular subject-specific continuing professional development (CPD) and time spent going back to industry, especially with the pace of change and technological development being so rapid. Vocational teachers need CPD to ensure they are familiar with developments in their industry and to keep their teaching relevant and meeting employers and employment requirements.

Qualified teachers are fundamental to the provision of quality vocational education. Vocational teachers are engaged in more than just training. They must foster positive

²¹Fuller & Unwin p28

relationships with their learners to create successful learning environments and meet developmental, emotional and academic needs. They are professionals in their vocational field and they are part of the teaching profession. The creeping deprofessionalisation of the workforce from the revocation of the 2007 workforce regulations is not good for teachers or students. Teachers should be supported toward gaining their teaching qualifications in recognition of their dual professionalism and should be appropriately rewarded and recognised for the knowledge, skills and qualifications they have developed in the workplace as well as for their knowledge, skills and qualifications as teachers. The remuneration and employment conditions of VET teachers should be such that it is possible to recruit and retain highly qualified staff in their areas of competence.

You can see from the results of the UCU member survey of vocational members in 2012 in the tables below that the types of CPD offered and those considered most useful do not match up. This must be addressed to ensure that investment in CPD is actually having the greatest effect.

Table 1

How useful have the following been to your teaching?					
Answer options	Very useful	Somewhat useful	Neither	Somewhat useless	Very useless
Generic CPD	8.3%	45.5%	24.2%	17.4%	4.5%
Subject Specific	55.5%	27.7%	8.4%	5.0%	3.4%
Pedagogical	19.3%	45.5%	19.3%	10.2%	5.7%
Industrial/ professional updating	51.5%	22.2%	10.1%	6.1%	10.1%

Table 2

What types of CPD do you participate in? (choose all that apply)	
Generic CPD	90%
Subject Specific	65.7%
Pedagogical	30.0%
Industrial/professional updating	45.0%

Staff and CPD policy summary

- VET teachers must be supported to work towards qualification.
- Time off for CPD and industry updating is essential.

