

Beyond the employability agenda

Introduction

This statement sets out UCU's priorities and principles in relation to teaching in further education (FE) with the aim of strengthening the value and recognition of teaching in further education. The paper reflects longstanding Congress/FE Sector Conference policy on a range of issues such as teaching qualifications and professional development,¹ 'accountability' structures in FE, including student surveys,² lesson observations³ Ofsted inspections,⁴ and, of course, funding⁵ and terms and conditions of employment.⁶ This paper seeks to develop an alternative agenda to the employability drive in further education and is complemented by '*Beyond the consumerist agenda*' the UCU policy paper on teaching quality and student learning in higher education.

UCU is clear that teaching in FE should be built around the following principles which are at the core of the profession:

- Stability of funding, job security and proper contracts of employment
- A requirement for all lecturers in FE colleges and adult education to be supported so that they can remain fully-qualified professionals
- Relevant and appropriate continuing professional development (CPD) as part of the normal workload of FE lecturers with recognition of the 'dual professionalism' of FE lecturers
- Negotiated peer observation, mentoring and professional training.

Stable funding and a broad and balanced FE curriculum

Financial instability

Further and adult education are of fundamental importance to a healthy and prosperous society and economy. Teaching and learning in the further education and skills sector are fundamental to its success. Since the incorporation of colleges in 1993, further education has been subject to a succession of market-driven policies and targets, enforcing competition between colleges, schools and universities often conflating the needs of employers with the needs of employment. This has resulted in an impoverished view of education as limited to meeting the demands of employers.

UCU believes market-driven policies have undermined the economic, as well as the cultural and social purposes of education, including the capacity of FE staff to support diverse and often deeply disadvantaged communities.

Moreover, in the words of the UCU's ten-point charter for FE and adult education:

"Learning is about more than employability – Greater recognition needs to be given to the wider benefits of and broader purposes of further and

adult education; it can provide an enriching experience for people of all ages and abilities and should be celebrated for all its positive outcomes.”⁷

Restrictive, outcome based funding criteria mean that lecturers increasingly face a tension between supporting students onto courses that provide a higher level of challenge, but potentially increase the potential for failure – an outcome that incurs a financial and perceived quality penalty.

At the heart of the current problem is a funding crisis in further and adult education. The severity of funding cuts is placing a dangerous limit on the delivery of education and training in the FE sector. Proper public investment in further education and skills is needed if the full benefits for the sector are to be harnessed. The proposed cuts for 2015/16 must be halted, and an extra £1 billion of public funding invested to reverse the 35% reduction in spending on adult skills since 2009/10.

Around 1 million adult learners have been lost since 2010 and these changes will remove opportunities for many more. Many of the courses which will be most at risk from the changes cater for those who missed out on qualifications at school, or for those who need short bursts of learning to get back into employment. There have already been reductions in the number of students aged 19 to 24 taking courses such as construction, engineering and in the creative arts as a result of recent cuts. These areas are crucial for economic growth, and it is vital that these courses are not lost.

The average FE College has an income of £27 million, £5 million of which comes from SFA for adult further education. However many colleges who specialise in providing adult education are substantially more financial exposed to the impact of this cut. This 24% cut in 2015-16 will create a new large gap in college budgets and compounds problems caused by the historical underfunding of the sector, in particular since 2010.

The value of further education

There is a clear evidence base for increased investment in post-16 education. Our colleges and universities are key drivers of a successful economy, as they are the main sources of the skilled workers and professionals on which economic growth depends. Adult education is also of vital importance, whether it's work-based learning helping people to improve their skills, community learning engaging those furthest from education and employment, or prison education helping offenders to turn their lives around. We know that those who hold qualifications and who participate in education and training go on to be healthier, wealthier and more active citizens. So ensuring that everyone can access education opportunities is an important part of boosting our economy and improving our society.⁸

The economic benefits of further education are quantifiable. The net public benefit of an individual being educated to tertiary level is 13%⁹, meaning that for every pound invested beyond secondary education, £1.13 is returned to the

UK economy. Figures from the Department of Business, Innovation in Skills (BIS) show that the net public value of further education is around £25 per pound of investment. Students aged 19+ in further education generate an additional £75 billion for the economy over their lifetimes over and above what they would have contributed if they had not achieved these qualification.¹⁰ There are many wider benefits of learning, including improvements to students' self-esteem, confidence and ability to assist their children with learning.¹¹ Part time adult learning is potentially worth over £1,100 per person in terms of the benefits which it provides in relation to health, social relationships, volunteering and employability¹².

The cost of underinvestment is too great. Research conducted by the University of York found that young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) at 16-18 have poorer life chances than their peers and are more likely to be a long-term cost to the public purse. These individuals are: four times more likely to be out of work, leading to increased spending on welfare provision and loss of national insurance contributions; five times more likely to have a criminal record with a cost to the criminal justice system; six times less likely to have qualifications leading to lower potential earnings and a loss of tax revenue; and three times more likely to have depression leading to a cost to the National Health Service. Taking the example of the entire 2008 group of young people NEET, the cost of this cohort has been estimated to be over £13 billion to the public purse and £22 billion in opportunity costs before they reach retirement age.¹³ As such, further education brings huge societal benefits: fewer demands on welfare; lower crime rates; greater tax income and lower demand for NHS services.

Funding for a broad and balanced curriculum offer

Learning, is about more than employability – equal recognition needs to be given to the wider benefits of and broader purposes of further and adult education; it can provide an enriching experience for people of all ages and abilities and should be celebrated for its positive outcomes¹⁴

In addition to the funding crisis, we are concerned about the narrowing of the curriculum and assessment in further and adult education. This can be illustrated by recent developments regarding the teaching of English and Maths.

Of course, the sector has a clear understanding of the value of English and Maths skills for progression to further education, employment or training. The value of these skills are well-researched and documented. However, the increasing degree to which English and Maths qualifications are being prioritised, is often at the expense of a broad and balanced curriculum. We are seeing an increasingly diminished range of subject and level provision, with Level 3 qualifications becoming less easily available.

The bursaries offered for specialist maths and English FE teachers, while very welcome, may not increase the supply to the levels needed because they are

only available via a pre-service training route. Furthermore, the more attractive salaries and terms and conditions of service available in the school sector support the sector to neither retain nor attract suitably qualified professionals. The consequences of this are already evident, indeed Ofsted inspection reports identify a decline in English and maths standards in colleges while at the same time college vacancies for teaching staff in these areas have increased.

Advanced Learning Loans

UCU opposes the introduction of loans for students who are over 24 years old studying a Level 3 qualification or above. These cuts in funding ultimately make it harder for unemployed young people to get the skills they need. Similarly, UCU denounces plans announced in July 2015 to convert university maintenance grants for low income students into loans. These changes risk having a negative impact on participation in higher education, particularly amongst those who need the most support.

Recommendations¹⁵

- The government should fund an education service that is able to develop in all students the level of critical thinking needed to play a role within society.¹⁶ We want to see government commit the UK to funding tertiary education at a level that can close the international competitive gap in investment with other countries and enable the UK to compete on an equal footing
- Clear funding commitments over a five-year period are needed to allow coordinated planning of resources.
- FE Colleges should be able to offer a fully rounded vocational education, including opportunities for adult students, rather than a narrow approach to skills and training.
- Government should reverse Advanced Learning Loans policy
- Government should not abolish the maintenance grant
- Further education should be returned to the control of local regional bodies, with input from parents, education providers, community groups and employers and a focus on local collaboration rather than competition.

Improved conditions for further education teachers

Salaries

Further education lecturers have suffered real pay cuts totalling more than 17% over the last five years. This has been a result of rising prices, below inflation pay awards, and in some cases pay freezes. College staff now face a living standards crisis with many already being dragged into financial hardship and poverty. As an example, for experienced lecturers at point 8 on the teaching scale this equates to a loss of over £6,100 a year. Coupled with cuts to their real term pay college staff are also, as a result of large scale job cuts, struggling with increased workloads and excessive working hours.¹⁷

The October 2012 Lingfield Report into Professionalism in FE in England¹⁸ established that the long-term position is that FE Lecturers salaries, on average,

have been between those of school teachers and university lecturers i.e. FE Lecturers salaries have been higher than those of school teachers. The report found that from 2001 the position changed from the established trend so that currently FE Lecturers in England tend to earn between 6% – 8% less than school teachers.¹⁹

School teachers will receive increases this year to address recruitment issues that exist for schools. The ability of further education colleges to attract and retain staff will decline unless a pay rise addressing the gap between further education lecturers' and school teachers' pay is applied. This is evidenced by the fact that the length of time to fill teaching vacancies has risen from 11.1 weeks in 2010 to 12.5 weeks in 2014²⁰

Casualisation

The cuts in further and adult education and the ongoing marketisation of the sectors are all driving colleges to further *casualise* their workforces in pursuit of 'flexibility'. For example, 60% of FE colleges use zero hours contracts to deliver teaching. zero-hours contracts are not compatible with developing a professional workforce that will deliver high quality services. The increasing casualisation of the workforce makes it difficult for teachers and lecturers to gain systematic and supported opportunities to pursue the dual aspects of their professionalism. These contracts have the pernicious effect of diminishing the value of academic teaching and, furthermore, the student experience. For students this means their lessons may not have enough staff, they may not know from term to term who is teaching them, and that it is impossible to build up proper educational relationships with a fast-changing workforce. That's why UCU argues constantly for transferring casualised staff onto secure contracts.

Deprofessionalisation of the teaching role

Finally, we are also concerned about the misuse of instructor/demonstrator/trainer posts in further education and in particular the fact that some colleges are using these contracts for staff who are being required to deliver teaching. These colleagues are required to teach students without receiving the professional recognition or the pay of a main grade lecturer. Most are employed on support staff contracts with direct student contact, holiday entitlements equivalent to those of pure administrative or technical staff and pay which has no link with teaching scales.²¹ Where a role requires teaching, staff should be employed on a teaching contract.

Recommendations²²

- Further education teachers should be fairly rewarded: Teachers in further and adult education should receive at least equal pay to school teachers. In the longer term, further education lecturers' status and pay should be restored to their long-term position sitting between school teachers and university lecturers.

- Further education teachers should be employed on proper contracts of employment: we, therefore, call on college employers to prioritise the conversion of hourly-paid post to full-time, or part-time, fractional positions.
- In the interests of defending professional standards and staff terms and conditions, UCU will continue to campaign to prevent or to mitigate explicit attempts to substitute lecturing jobs with instructor/demonstrator posts.

Teaching qualifications and continuing professional development

Re-establishing a requirement for all FE lecturers to be supported so that they can remain fully qualified professionals

We have been vocal about our opposition to the revocation of the FE Teachers' Qualification (England) Regulations 2007. This move has served to deprofessionalise the workforce and fails to support improvement in effective teaching and learning. The changes have also served to introduce a fundamental disparity for students between the ages of 14 and 18 who enrol at a college since their counterparts who attend mainstream provision are taught by teachers who are required to hold a teaching qualification. We are clear that the best teaching and learning will be delivered by those who hold or are on track to hold Qualified Teacher Learning and Skills (QTLS) status.

In a similar vein, the revocation of teaching qualification regulations in further education has compromised government attempts to achieve parity between the school and further education sectors.

At present parity only exists in name. Whilst Statutory Instrument 2012, No. 431 amended the 2003 regulations so that holders of QTLS automatically have Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) and may be appointed to permanent positions as qualified teachers without any further training or induction requirements the different ways in which QTS and QTLS are obtained present a real barrier. QTS is automatically conferred upon completion of a period of initial teacher training or at the end of the assessment-only route whilst those working in the further education and skills sector and seeking QTLS can only do so at a significant financial fee, currently £485.00, and with at least a seven month waiting period between expression of interest and conferral of QTLS. Furthermore, lecturers working in the further education sector face a significant financial penalty if they chose to work across a range of sectors. This is an unacceptable situation. We wish to see equality of status and transferability between qualified teacher status in schools and qualified teacher status in the FE sector.

This, coupled with the revocation of the FE Teachers Qualification regulations serves to minimise the value of the qualification in its own right within the sector. Whilst held in high regard by those in the further education and skills sector, at present, the only time when a professional is legally required to

present their QTLS is when they seek to leave the further education and skills sector and teach elsewhere in the education sector. UCU has broadly welcomed the 2014 Professional Standards²³, but we strongly believe that they must be underpinned by a teaching qualification.

Recommendations

- The government should reinstate the requirement for FE teachers to be qualified. The regulations should not be applied retrospectively where existing staff are highly qualified and experienced or in a way that impacts disproportionately on equality groups.
- The government should set out plans to ensure that the methods for conferring QTLS and QTS are aligned – QTLS should be awarded automatically and free of charge following completion of a teaching qualification

The professionalism of further education lecturers

Dual professionalism is a long-established, though not uncontested, notion in further education and skills. Referenced in the final report of the Commission on Adult Vocational Teaching and Learning (CAVTL)²⁴, and the 2014 FE Professional standards, dual professionalism is the notion that teachers and lecturers in FE and vocational education in particular, have both their vocational or academic specialism and also develop professionalism through an understanding the pedagogy of teaching and learning.

CAVTL highlighted the importance of teachers and lecturers being given the opportunity to reflect on the most up-to-date and effective teaching methods. The report also made clear the need for professionals to have the space to keep up to date with the subject area so as to be aware of technological and other developments in the field. This is particularly important given the implications for curriculum development, a skill which has been undermined in the further education and skills sector due to narrowing curricula, reduced contact time and the preeminence of qualifications which has been driven by an increasingly instrumental view of education.

It is important to note that the concept of dual professionalism is not without its critics. On dual professionalism, David Plowright and Glenn Barr critique dual professionalism on the basis that it is 'context-free'. They argue that the context within which professional expertise is deployed is vital. As such, it is the interaction between the lecturer and the student that allows issues to be identified and for these to be placed within the context of previous learning and the students' prior experience and understanding. The professionalism of FE teachers is thereby rooted in 'the fusion of the subject and all aspects of its teaching', and not in a context-free dual professionalism.²⁵

Furthermore, UCU notes the principle of democratic professionalism²⁶ as asserted in the writing of Judyth Sachs, Stephen Ball, Ingrid Lunt and Howard

Stevenson. Stevenson's²⁷ recent writing on a vision of a new democratic professionalism, as based on three core principles, are helpful here:

- teaching is a process of social transformation and that it should be underpinned, above all else, by values of social justice and democracy
- teaching is a technically complex process in which teachers need to draw on professional knowledge, pedagogical theory and personal experience in order to exercise professional judgement. Professional judgement requires agency by which teachers are able to make meaningful decisions based on assessments of context. The concept of teachers' professional agency must be at the heart of a democratic professionalism
- teachers' professional agency must be considered as both individual and collective. At times teachers will be able to assert their agency as individuals, quite appropriately. However, in order to secure meaningful influence in relation to the fundamental elements of teachers' working lives then teachers will need to assert their influence collectively

Democratic professionalism is also not without its critics. Notably, James Avis argues that it capitulates to neoliberal managerialism because it is set within this context is thus located within the competitive education settlement.

Professionalism is a truly contested notion in further education, varying across individuals, contexts and time. Acknowledgment of the problematic nature of the notion is perhaps just as important as acknowledgment of some of the varying concepts of professionalism.

Recommendations

- UCU has welcomed the creation of a Centre for Vocational Education Research (CVER), and will watch the development and outputs with interest.
- UCU notes bottom-up initiatives such as Tutors' Voices: National Network for Further, Adult, Community and Skills Educators²⁸ who argue the need for tutor-led, democratic professional association. The association anticipates that it could become 'the collective voice of powerful, democratic professionalism for the further, adult, community education and skills (FACES) sector.

Relevant and appropriate CPD as part of the normal workload

Lecturers in FE approach their dual and democratic professionalism with integrity, however, to be able to meet the aspirational standards there is a need for access to relevant, appropriate and meaningful Continuing Professional Development (CPD).

A further consequence of the revocation of the 2007 teachers' regulations was that the regulations alongside setting out compulsory membership of the Institute for Learning (IfL), also set out the requirement to undertake a

minimum of 30 hours CPD per year. Whilst UCU had campaigned for membership of the IfL not to be compulsory, particularly when linked with a membership, UCU had always supported the 30 hour minimum requirement and indeed, IfL's professionalism agenda.

Funding and budgetary restrictions are leading to stagnant salaries and reduced opportunities for time off, cover for teaching and provision of relevant materials and/or equipment. In October 2012, for the purposes of the UCU submission to the Commission on Adult Vocational Teaching and Learning, we asked our members about their opportunities for continuing professional development. With just over 400 respondents, the following examples provide useful information on the context in which our members are working. As examples, nearly 50% of respondents stated that they had undertaken CPD in their own time and only a quarter of respondents stated that they had been given time off for learning.

UCU survey of members for the Commission on Adult Vocational Teaching and Learning (October 2012)

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%

When do you undertake CPD? (tick all that apply)	
Within your normal workload	49.7%
Outside you normal workload	58.7%
In your own time	49.0%

What support does your institution give you to allow you to complete CPD? (tick all that apply)	
Time off for learning	23.6%
Cover for teaching	26.9%
Fees of external courses paid	49.1%
Providing materials and/or equipment	23.2%

Much of the generic institution-wide CPD provision is of limited use if provided in isolation of ongoing, specific and relevant CPD opportunities. UCU strongly supports the need for FE staff to be professionally qualified and developed. Along with the rest of the sector, we want to see teachers in our colleges delivering high-quality education with the appropriate qualifications and access to further training and personal development and opportunities to keep up to pace with technological change in industry. UCU is concerned that without employer support to facilitate take-up of CPD, any registration cost of a membership service could effectively result in a double pay cut for members who were asked to pay individually for membership and then again through their time commitment.

This is often an area where part-time staff often face disproportionate access. Employing organisations must ensure support for teaching staff is universally available and accessible to teaching staff.

UCU has welcomed the Education and Training Foundation's desire to provide greater support to the sector in relation to professional reflection through its voluntary Foundation Professional Membership Service. The ETF has repeatedly stated that it will never seek to mandate membership, a move which UCU has welcomed. UCU believes that lecturers should be trusted with their own continuous professional development and supported by their peers, managers and leaders with the resources and time and space to reflect on their professional and organisational practices. Put clearly, there should be an employer-supported entitlement to CPD with, at most, a requirement to make a CPD declaration.

The natural development from this position paper is the development of a union wide agenda on professional development. As already highlighted in '*Beyond the consumerist agenda*' (UCU, 2014), such a statement could be based on:

- overall increases in staff development budgets
- identified time and budget for training and development activities
- identified time and budget for activities to support newly appointed staff, including hourly-paid colleagues (e.g. mentoring)
- the preservation of time for scholarship and 'scholarly activity'
- union involvement in determining staff priorities for formal training (including content and delivery)

UCU has publicised guidance on CPD *How your employer can support your continuing professional development*, a practical UCU guide to negotiating for professional development in Further Education.

Recommendations

- Teachers and lecturers must be trusted with their own continuous professional development. They must be supported with the resources and time to work with peers to reflect on their practice as professionals.

- Training must be provided and fully funded.
- There should be a contractual minimum entitlement to CPD. UCU suggests that a minimum of 30 hours each year should be used as a guide when negotiating CPD agreements. However, a minimum number of hours should not be seen as a limit to further appropriate CPD nor should it become a reason for a tick box approach in order to reach 30 hours.
- Time off for learning, cover for teaching, payment of fees for external courses and the provision of materials and equipment must be an explicit feature of the employment contract

Developmental, peer-based accountability and assessment

Lesson observation

Observation in and of itself can be a useful, formative method to support professional reflection and development. In recent years, the pernicious punitive use of lesson observations has led UCU to develop clear policy on this issue.

UCU has long been concerned about the validity of graded lesson observation, particularly when linked to capability procedures. Indeed, graded lesson observations have been the trigger for the largest number of local disputes of any one issue in the further education and skills work place for a number of years.

In November 2013, we commissioned and published *Developing a National Framework for the Effective Use of Lesson Observation in Further Education*²⁹ by Dr Matt O’Leary to initiate a broader conversation on this issue. The report is based on a survey of over 4,000 UCU members and raised serious questions about graded lesson observations’ fitness for purpose. O’Leary found that an overwhelming number of lecturers did not believe graded observations were the most effective method of assessing staff competence and performance or improving teaching and learning.³⁰

Key findings include³¹:

- 89.7% agreed that unannounced observations would lead to increased levels of stress and anxiety amongst staff
- 83.2% disagreed that unannounced observations were a welcome addition to the quality improvement process
- 85.2% disagreed that graded observations were the most effective method of assessing staff competence and performance
- 76.3% agreed that ungraded observations were more effective in assessing staff competence and performance
- 74.8% disagreed that graded observations had helped them to improve as classroom practitioners

- 67.4% agreed that graded lesson observations should no longer be used as a form of teacher assessment
- 65.7% disagreed that graded observations were essential for improving the quality of teaching and learning
- just 10.6% agreed that graded observations were the fairest way of assessing the competence and performance of staff.

We are clear that lesson observations can be a powerful tool when used in a supportive and trusting atmosphere as part of a range of techniques for developing professional teaching practice. Managers need to trust that real and sustainable improvements in teaching and learning can be achieved by allowing lecturers to reflect on their own practice. Lecturers need to be confident that when they are observed it is not to catch them out or label them with a number which is supposed to represent the quality of all of their teaching. Such a system would support the improvement of professional practice by fostering innovation and creative teaching – putting CPD at the heart of lesson observations will allow them to play this vital role.

Any lesson observation scheme will need to cover the equal opportunity implications of any procedures for observation. Lesson observation will need to be undertaken with sensitivity to issues of gender, race, class, sexuality, ethnic origin and to issues concerning perceived physical and mental ability. This may be essential when the teaching has been designed for a single sex or a particular ethnic group or those in some community settings. Any agreement between the UCU branch and local management should detail lesson observation for part time teachers. These must be proportionate to the amount of hours that are being taught by the part time teacher.

Recommendations³²

- removing the use of grades and exploring alternative models of observations
- removing the automatic link between observations and capability procedures
- prioritising the professional development of staff - including meaningful, mutually-agreed, support for lecturers where particular development needs are identified
- formal allocation of timetable hours for observations - including pre-observation planning and post-observation feedback
- a portfolio approach to assessing performance - lesson observations should not be the only or main indicator of performance
- the criteria for any informal assessment of lesson observations should be negotiated and agreed

- introducing statutory training and qualifications for all observers

Ofsted inspections

The impact of the Common Inspection Framework is largely debated within the union. Whilst UCU quite naturally shares the ambition of excellence in the sector, there has been wide scale dissatisfaction with the current target-driven and snapshot approach to inspection. This caused our membership to pass a motion at congress in May 2014 calling for the abolition of Ofsted in order to 'end an inspection regime that is driving all sectors of education through a 'toxic' target-driven culture'. UCU is in favour of a developmental and supportive approach to inspection.

We disagree with the blunt employment of a four-point scale to judge this and each of the other proposed elements. A narrative approach would be welcomed here as this would support readers of the reports to have a much better understanding of the context and judgments and avoid the potential pitfalls of a graded judgment.

For many years, graded lesson observations were used as a proxy assessment of staff competence and performance. UCU is clear that the high-stakes nature of Ofsted inspection fuelled the use of punitive internal observation mechanisms. Colleges often cited Ofsted's own procedures as a justification for using graded lesson observations.

Of course, lesson observations can be a useful tool as part of a portfolio approach to supporting and improving teaching and learning, however, a harsh and 'relentless' pursuit of improving the quality of teaching cannot lead to real or sustained improvements in teaching and learning. UCU has therefore welcomed changes to the 2015 Ofsted inspection handbook which no longer calls for a judgement on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment using graded lesson observations. The UCU publication '*Developing a national framework for the effective use of lesson observation in further education*'³³ consisted of unique research conducted by the union and called into question the widely used practice of graded lesson observation, asserting that it has no discernible impact on the quality of teaching and learning.

UCU has critiqued Ofsted inspections as lacking in understanding of the unique nature of further education and skills sector. This has typically led to less favourable outcomes for FE, Adult and Community Education (ACE) and sixth form college providers. We have welcomed changes currently being made at Ofsted to increase the proportion of inspectors with recent practitioner experience in the sector and subject area and await feedback from members and analysis of the of the first inspections under the new single inspection framework.

In recent years Ofsted has been keen to take up the employer responsive agenda. We believe that this agenda risks leaving learners high and dry if their own aspirations do not match the local area's economic priorities. Colleges require stable investment in the full range of education and training options so they can continue to help people of all backgrounds accomplish their learning goals. Ofsted methodology continues to expect better outcomes despite the infrastructure for learners being subject to significant funding cuts in recent years with further threats on the horizon. UCU has repeatedly raised concerns about Ofsted's failure to appropriately address that in the context of poorer funding, the sector will increasingly struggle to deliver 'more for less'.

In recent years we have also highlighted our concerns about the over prioritisation of headline performance figures rather than distance travelled. In particular for some of FE's learners who face the biggest challenges their very real and most valuable progress and achievements are not captured in standard measures of performance and outcomes. There appears to be no recognition that there are any valid learning outcomes that do not involve moving into either employment or further study.

The publication of *Ofsted inspections – clarification for further education and skills providers*³⁴, constitutes a timely response by Ofsted to a number of myths that have been fuelled in the name of 'being sufficiently prepared for Ofsted'. In particular UCU welcomes the following statements:

- Ofsted has no preferred teaching style. Inspectors use a wide variety of evidence to judge the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. This includes: direct observation of learning sessions and assessments; reviews of teaching and learning resources and students' work; and discussions with students, teaching staff and employers.
- Ofsted does not expect providers to use the Ofsted evaluation schedule to grade teaching or individual lessons. Similarly, Ofsted does not require providers to undertake a specified amount of lesson observations. Ofsted expects providers to use a variety of approaches to evaluate the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that they can identify good practice and areas for improvement.

Recommendation

- UCU awaits the outcome of feedback from members and analysis of the first inspections under the new common inspection framework for education, skills and early years and will continue to represent our members concerns about the rigour and validity of Ofsted inspections.

Student satisfaction surveys

Another element in the FE 'accountability' structure is learner voice. The Skills Funding Agency, for example, produces FE Choices Learner Satisfaction Survey and Community Learner Satisfaction Survey. These surveys ask students to rate their satisfaction with their course. The [FE choices comparison website](#), is the

official site designed to enable students to '*compare performance information about further education colleges and other organisations that receive government funding and offer education and training to people over the age of 16*'. The Learner Satisfaction Survey is then used to develop a student satisfaction performance indicator which gives each college or training organisation a score on how students rated a particular organisation.

In line with the corresponding statement published in '*Beyond the consumerist agenda: teaching quality and the 'student experience' in higher education*³⁵, it is important to state that UCU is clear that such surveys cannot provide unequivocally valid and precise measures of teaching effectiveness, and should therefore be divorced from disciplinary, capability and promotion procedures. In addition, UCU will keep a watching brief to ensure that any attempts to misuse student satisfaction survey data taken from the FE Choices Learner Satisfaction Survey to discipline staff and cut provision are challenged.

Recommendations

- UCU will keep a watching brief to ensure that any attempts to misuse student satisfaction survey data taken from the FE Choices Learner Satisfaction Survey to discipline staff and cut provision are challenged.
- UCU will continue to highlight the methodological and pedagogical flaws in 'student satisfaction' surveys.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper represents an attempt to develop an alternative agenda on teaching in further and adult education. It focuses on some of the key professional issues that UCU have addressed in recent years, such as teaching qualifications, access to professional development and the impact of lesson observations and Ofsted inspections. It also addresses some of the main employment issues that are shaping our FE members' working lives, such as increased casualisation and the growing use of demonstrator/instructor roles.

Endnotes

¹ UCU (2014) FESC motion, 'Professional development rather than performance management' (FE14)

<http://www.ucu.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=7083#fe14>

² UCU (2014) FESC motion, 'Professional Development/Performance Management/The Learner Voice' (FE13):

<http://www.ucu.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=7083#fe13>

³ UCU (2014) FESC motions, 'Lesson observation' (FE15):

<http://www.ucu.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=7083#fe15> and 'FE lesson observation policy' (FE16),

<http://www.ucu.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=7083#fe16>

⁴ UCU (2014) FESC motion 'Ofsted' (FE17), <http://www.ucu.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=7083#fe17>

⁵ UCU (2014) FESC motion 'FE funding cuts' (FE19), <http://www.ucu.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=7083#fe19>

⁶ UCU (2014) FESC motion 'Zero hours contracts in FE' (FE9):

<http://www.ucu.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=7083#fe9> and FE10 'Part-time and casualised lecturers':

<http://www.ucu.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=7083#fe10>

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- ⁷ UCU(2014) A ten-point charter for the future of further and adult education, November:
<http://www.ucu.org.uk/media/pdf/0/2/ucu>
- ⁸ UCU (2014) Making the case for public investment in post-16 education:
<http://www.ucu.org.uk/media/pdf/a/m/makingthecaseforpublicinvestment.pdf>
- ⁹ OECD (2013) Education at a Glance
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