

Policy Submission Form

Brief summary of the policy

A distinct and robust policy to protect funding for the Further Education sector and define its role in the provision of lifelong learning for all.

Description of the 'problem' your proposal would solve and why it is necessary.

The problem is the gradual dismantling of the FE sector as a vehicle to provide lifelong learning opportunities. This service is being swiftly eroded through lack of funding and political commitment. The current lack of protection is resulting in repeated funding cuts that are undermining the provision of a world class education for all.

In-Depth explanation of the policy and its implications.

The ability and need to gain qualifications for life does not stop at 19 years old. Opportunities to access a wide range of qualifications at differing levels, will become increasingly important as the working population ages, resulting in perhaps several career changes throughout working life. Supporting older people to maintain and enhance their potential value to society will be of increasing significance to policy development of the future.

In 2012-13¹ 67% of unique enrolments on further education programmes were people over the age of 19 years; a clear indication that there is demand for education for adults and yet current policy is mainly aimed at the education and training of those aged 19 and under. We risk losing a vital pool of untapped Welsh talent if the provision of further education for adults is not safeguarded. The current proposal to reduce the budget for part time courses by 50%, is likely to have disproportionate effect on women. In 2012-13 58% of all unique part time enrolments in FE were women and 59% of part time learners over 19, were women domiciled in deprived areas.

Enabling more working people to gain access to qualifications, will assist them out of in-work poverty. We recognise the desire for employers to provide funding for the 'up-skilling' of their employees and agree that they should take responsibility for financing the acquisition of skills and qualifications that will directly benefit their business. However, this is likely to leave many employees 'trapped', where the qualifications they need to change jobs to gain better pay and therefore reduce the need for 'in-work' benefits, are not funded by the employer and are too costly to fund themselves.

We support moves to improve the quality and status of apprenticeship programmes in Wales and welcome the desire to create parity between the value of vocational and academic qualifications. Further education, with its teams of highly skilled and qualified vocational staff, is uniquely placed to provide the off-site training and education required to help realise this ambition. If apprenticeships are to truly be seen as a high quality vocational pathway, there needs to be greater input from not just employers, but also those delivering the programmes. Lecturers in further education have a wealth of knowledge and experience that could be drawn upon to help develop a world class apprenticeship model. They are dual professionals, not just having industrial expertise but also that of teaching, giving them a unique role in the development of a skilled workforce.

Education is an important tool in the promotion of equality and social cohesion; it can help to inform ideas and thinking and help to break down the barriers of prejudice and intolerance. With the rise of the threat of radicalisation, it is increasingly important to provide alternative opportunities and viewpoints. Further education can help to prevent the alienation of those that might be vulnerable, through lack of available choice.

Much emphasis has been placed on early years intervention and improving attainment of pupils eligible for free school meals. However, there is evidence to suggest that;

*"In most [early intervention] studies, the impact on attainment tends to wear off over time..... Early years and pre-school interventions are therefore not sufficient to close the gap in attainment for disadvantaged children."*²

Low educational attainment of parents, affects their children's development and progress at school. Further education supports an approach to family learning that enables all family members to enhance their learning and can support whole families who are vulnerable to poverty.

¹ <https://stats.wales.gov.uk/Catalogue/Education-and-Skills/Post-16-Education-and-Training/Further-Education-and-Work-Based-Learning/Learners/Further-Education/UniqueLearnersEnrolledFurtherEducationInstitutions-by-Deprivation-Gender-Age>

² <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/toolkit/toolkit-a-z/early-years-intervention/>

“The benefits of learning to families matter because of the way that poverty can be passed on through the generations. Children and adults learning together, for example, can contribute to children’s resilience and communication skills, and can help to reduce children’s psychological and behavioural disorders. The acquisition of skills by parents can also help children’s performance at school. Children’s achievement in early life remains the best indicator of their living successful lives as adults. In this context, lifelong learning has an important contribution to make to reducing poverty in the long run.”³

Therefore it is false economy to invest only in early years intervention programmes. Without providing educational opportunities for parents and carers to support and embed the culture of learning, the benefits of early intervention are likely to be lost.

Further education has a vital role to play in the lifelong education and integration of individuals, but it cannot do so without the adequate protection and funding.

Justification based on values.

The current political emphasis on the primary function of FE being the vocational arm of 6th form provision, for the purpose of providing training for employment, runs contrary to the desire to provide a world class education system for all. It makes the assumption that the need for education ceases at 19 for those who do not progress to higher education. It will stifle the creative talents of ‘late developers’; it will set a lifetime path for employment, which will be difficult to change; it will reduce social mobility and entrap the very people that early intervention programmes are designed to help.

The introduction of a clear policy to protect funding for the further education sector and define its role in the provision of lifelong learning for all, will help to deliver the Liberal Democrat aims to build a society that will

- *“seek to balance the fundamental values of liberty, equality and community, and in which no one shall be enslaved by poverty, ignorance or conformity.”*
- *“champion the freedom, dignity and well-being of individuals...and their right to develop their talents to the full.”*

and provide an

- *“education system that finds and nurtures the best in everyone, to break down the unfair divisions in our society and to ensure a productive and competitive economy.”*

Costings

This year alone, the FE sector has seen a loss of £26m, the impact of which has already resulted in at least 800 redundancies. This will mean larger classes, fewer teaching hours and reduced course choice. Even for the full time under 20’s, the quality of provision will not be ‘world-class’. For adults, the option of affordable, part-time education will be greatly reduced.

We suggest that as a way of supporting the investment in early years intervention, some of the £282m secured through the Pupil Premium, should be used to ensure that there is significant adult education to engage and inspire all family members. The intergenerational benefits of learning will help to extend the positive effects of early intervention beyond compulsory education. Ignoring the role of adult education in closing the attainment gap and tackling child poverty is a false economy. We would suggest that an initial investment of £35m would help to restore the balance of lifelong education and alleviate the poverty in which many children are living, now.

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³ Fullick, L., (2009), *Poverty Reduction and Lifelong Learning*, IFLL Thematic Paper 6, NIACE

Policy Submission Form

Brief summary of the policy.

The creation of a framework of governance that will support the democracy, transparency and accountability of our universities.

Description of the 'problem' your proposal would solve and why it is necessary.

Recent examples of ill-advised financial decisions at higher education institutions in Wales highlight the need for the inclusion of staff, students and trade unions in the membership of governing bodies.

The past year has also seen significant pay increases for some of the universities senior managers, which has been made more difficult by the current lack of transparency surrounding the decisions of remunerations panels.

In-Depth explanation of the policy and its implications.

UCU Wales believes new measures are necessary to ensure that the governance of higher education institutions is democratic, representative and transparent, not only to promote public confidence but also that of the staff and students who learn, teach and carry out research.

Now, more than ever, it is particularly important to ensure that every penny in the HE sector is spent wisely, for the benefit of all. It is currently unclear how the salaries of many leadership positions in further and higher education are decided; as a result, there is a democratic deficit in our education institutions. Introducing a requirement for detailed minutes of remuneration committees to be published, and vice-chancellor and executive salary packages to be fully disclosed would allow leaders to be held fully accountable for their actions.

The need for revised governance procedures has been recently highlighted, with the announcement by The University of South Wales that they would be withdrawing the London centre project earlier than originally planned. It is our understanding that a budget of £750,000 over a two year period, was allocated for the setting up of a London based campus, which enrolled no students.

UCU Wales call upon any future Government in Wales to continue to monitor and to review the mechanisms for determining the pay of senior managers in both HE and FE. Further, we call for the inclusion of staff, students and trade unions in the membership of governing bodies, to increase transparency and accountability at education institutions.

Justification based on values.

More open and transparent procedures which include input from all stakeholders, would uphold the liberal democratic belief that people should be involved in running their own communities. A more collegiate approach would be of benefit to staff and students alike; it would foster a sense of partnership and community in Welsh universities and ensure democratic decision making with regards to the allocation of financial resources.

Costings

We would suggest that this could be addressed through a code of good practice and estimate consultancy costs in the region of £20,000

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Brief summary of the policy

The election of members to the Education Workforce Council.

Description of the 'problem' your proposal would solve and why it is necessary

Currently, the lack of democratic election of members of the Education Workforce Council has resulted in there being no representation for further education lecturers within the body.

In-Depth explanation of the policy and its implications

Schedule 1 of the Education (Wales) Act 2014 states that the Council should consist of 14 members who are to be appointed by the Welsh Ministers. In conjunction with the Education Workforce Council (Membership and Appointment) (Wales) Regulations 2014, the procedure for appointments, effectively only allows council members to be appointed by Welsh Ministers, 7 direct appointments and 7 appointments selected from nominations.

UCU Wales is concerned that the democratic election of peers, which was part of the membership selection process of the former GCTW, has been completely removed.

The result of this has been that there is no FE lecturer representative on the Council. The skills, knowledge and expertise required of the Council to support this section of the Education Workforce has been omitted.

One of the aims of the Council is to maintain public trust, and confidence, and to safeguard the interests of the learners, parents and general public. We fail to see how this will be possible if the Council do not have the trust and confidence of the profession.

Fitness to practise should not be assessed without the input of representation from the relevant sector. Likewise the role of the EWC to provide advice to the Welsh Government and others on matters related to the education workforce and teaching and learning, will lack information pertinent to FE lecturers.

If the EWC is truly expect to drive up standards of teaching and learning, it needs to engage practitioners in a more meaningful and supportive way. The democratic election of peers, representative of each category of the EWC, should be fundamental to this process and would demonstrate trust and respect for the professional integrity of teachers and lecturers.

Justification based on values

Just as good teachers are essential for good schools, good lecturers are essential for good colleges; and just as teachers require support to build the status of their profession, so do lecturers.

If vocational education is to share the parity of esteem that academic studies enjoy, those delivering the provision need to be promoted as worthy professionals. Ensuring that FE lecturers are represented members of the EWC, is an essential step towards this. The current make up of the Council unfortunately entrenches the idea that FE lecturers do not have the professional status afforded to School teachers.

The election of members to the Education Workforce Council, supports the Liberal Democratic pledges to

- Promote a fair and democratic society
- Build the status of the teaching profession
- Promote parity of esteem between vocational and academic subjects

Costings

The cost of implementing such a change would be minimal in return for the benefit of an increased confidence in the EWC, from staff in the FE sector. The cost of balloting members could also be kept to a minimum with the use of online balloting.

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