

TULIP project meeting – 20 Feb 2008

University Lifelong Learning, and work place/trade union education

Bill Jones

Universities Association for Lifelong Learning

**University Lifelong Learning and trade union education:
strong historical links**

early history of University adult education - extra mural departments

most provision was 'liberal adult education'
but an important strand in working with unions – shop steward day release
programmes – joint with unions and TUC.
focus on subjects relating to industrial relations
included certificates in industrial relations

Another dimension– developed in the 1960s -- work related professional
programmes – management, new technology, 'Continuing Education' later called
Continuing Professional Development (CPD).

The TUC programmes ended with the reduction in day release.
CPD has flourished, mainly because it can generate income.

Issues for work related provision in the UK

The academic/vocational divide

much has been said about this.

For example: progression to HE via academic route – school - traditional academic
A level – is at a very high level – 90%
universities are much more interested in this than vocational qualifications
poor understanding of vocational qualifications and pathways by university
admissions tutors

Ironically the majority of UK HE is in fact vocational – including the old established
research-led universities –engineering, medicine, law etc – professional training –

This closely linked to CPD as professional bodies require regular updating
programmes.

What has shaped the work-related workplace learning agenda in recent years?

development of the lifelong learning (LLL) concept

1960s onwards – UK rather late to develop LLL in comparison with rest of Europe. In universities the adult education departments became first ‘continuing education’ to reflect the growth of work-related programmes; later they were mostly renamed ‘lifelong learning’.

Issues of definition of *Lifelong learning*:

too broad and vague –thus easy to ‘hijack’ - for political aims – grand claims are made, but in fact it has become used for narrow, vocational training for the young school leaver.

Changes in the nature of work –

- Rapid change
- Globalisation
- Technology
- decline in manufacturing, rise in service industry,
- upskilling -
- rise in uncertainty -
- decline in linear, career-long jobs
- multiple careers, flexibility, re-skilling
- later start to careers, later finish – pension issues

Demographic population and life changes – migration, mobility, retirement age, employability, skills, qualifications

Increase in high-level skills brings business and universities closer together – both on research and knowledge transfer and employment skills

Greater need for university-level training and skills in a wider range of occupations and businesses.

For example school teaching and nursing – now graduate professions.

Also the rise of the MBA and other business related qualifications.

Changes in patterns of teaching and learning

– flexibility, part time, e-learning, growth of APEL – all enable work based learning to be more accessible.

Increased Government interventions - policies aimed for HE to get more involved in the commercial world.

A corresponding decline in policy towards personal and community development.

These policy interventions have taken various forms, and have increased in urgency as the policies have failed to have enough effect to satisfy successive governments:

- increased level of participation in HE (50%)
- Strategy for greater social inclusion
- Redress ‘vocational’ v ‘academic’ imbalance
- Dominance of the economic imperative
- Keywords/phrases – ‘skills’ ‘employability’
- ‘learning society’ ‘knowledge economy’

Government Policy: To increase participation

New Labour Government – 1997

New and welcome emphasis on education and higher education

This began with genuine vision for lifelong learning:

Preface to *The Learning Age* (1998)

By David Blunkett, Secretary of State for Education:

Learning enables people to play a full part in their community and strengthens the family, the neighbourhood and consequently the nation. It helps us fulfil our potential and opens doors to a love of music, art and literature. That is why we value learning for its own sake and are encouraging adults to enter and re-enter learning at every point of their lives as parents, at work and as citizens.”

The Government introduced a 50% target for widening participation

- this to include
- improved social inclusion (of non-traditional HE participants)

but – target age range 18-30
focus on vocational, employability

Some examples of Government interventions:

Foundation degrees – 2 year vocational – employers involved in curriculum – degrees in specific employment sectors – public service – e.g, health and social care – private sector – retail, transport, construction.

Treated with suspicion at first but now proving successful – Govt target 100,000 per year.

Lifelong Learning Networks

Aim – to increase vocational progression to HE

employability – link to regional agencies and job market, employers, Sector Skills Councils

About 40 of these, regional or sub-regional partnerships.

Sector Skills Councils – 25 of these - stimulate training, identifying skills shortages, and improving skills for business sectors
to reduce skills gaps and shortages

- improve productivity, business and public service performance
- increase opportunities to boost the skills and productivity of everyone in the sector's workforce
- improve learning supply including apprenticeships, higher education and

‘Train to Gain’ programme

Government funded brokerage for skills needs and supply in workforce.

Focus on lower skills but being piloted at higher education level

'Aimhigher'

Large Government investment to Increase participation in HE. Aim – early intervention through schools - age 13-19 - to raise aspiration, school attainment, and thus applications to HE. Structure: partnerships in regions and counties – Has had some success but difficult to make a real break through.

Also special national Aimhigher projects in strategic subjects and other areas:

One of these is

Trade Unions Aimhigher project was developed by Aimhigher Greater Manchester and unionlearn with the over-arching aim of generating increased demand for higher level learning in the workplace by developing a collaborative approach between unions and unionlearn, Aimhigher partnerships and higher education organisations.

Piloted – with the Open University – to offer Open University courses through trade unions and the Union Learning Representatives – has had moderate success and hoped to develop further –

Other examples of renewed interest in university/trade union co-operation, e.g:

Trade Union Education at University of Wales, Newport.

for trade union members

A range of 10 credit modules that can build up into a Certificate of HE.

Examples of curriculum:

Political Inequality, Globalisation, Sociology of the Media, Study Skills.

Work based, work related education/lifelong learning

is still rising rapidly up the HE agenda – increasing Government urgency

The 'Leitch report' – World Class Skills – claims the need for over 40% of all adult employees to have HE level qualifications by 2020. This significantly is a Treasury report.

Also significant that the new Government departments for education do not have the word 'education' in their titles.

'employer engagement'

The latest move by Government towards this need for a very large increase in qualified workers.

Note: there are three sources of finance for education:

Individual, state, employer. All should pay in proportion to the benefit. Government argues that of the three, employers in the UK are notoriously reluctant to pay for the skills training needed for successful business.

But employers are resistant to this, arguing that they need intermediate skills – literacy, numeracy - and these are the state's responsibility. Not for employers to redress shortcomings of the school system

And in analysis of what makes for commercial productivity, qualifications not seen as of high importance. Employers say they need skills, not qualifications.

Therefore: many interventions, but much remains to do

Employers:

Need to engage employers in a training culture – too many employees don't get encouragement to learn. In the OU/Unionlearn project – 80% of those asked said the key factor was getting time off for learning is a problem, and for 60% this was a real problem. This is a particular problem in small companies.

HE providers:

Need to overcome the 'vocational/academic divide'

need to understand better the vocational routes into HE – admissions tutors need training to be fair to non-traditional applicants-

Government:

Needs to understand the demographic issues for the next 20 years: decrease in young adults from 2012; mid career skills development is crucial, but Government emphasis remains too much on young participation. But 70% of labour force of 2020 is already working – great need to develop those already in workplace.

Needs to understand the need for the re-skilling of older workers for changes in career

Simplify the vocational qualifications structure which is far too complex, overlapping, conflicting, and thus a barrier to understanding by education providers.

Not confuse 'qualifications' for 'skills'

Need to interpret 'lifelong learning' as a broad, learner-centred concept and not narrowly as skills training for the national economy

Bill Jones

Universities Association for Lifelong Learning

Bill.jones@niace.org.uk

Note on terminology:

LLL	Lifelong Learning
APEL	Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning
HE	Higher education (University level – either in a university or Further Education college (degree validated by a university))
OU	Open University
MBA	Master of Business Administration