

Seeking perfection with persecution?

The writer is a qualified FE teacher, has a Masters in Education and has taught for five years.

How does your college approach lesson observations? Lesson observations are now a part of every teacher's life and undoubtedly a crucial part of quality control in every kind of teaching and learning environment. But lesson observations do not *have* to be accompanied by overwhelming stress, hours of burning the midnight oil and a sense of impending doom.

The best lesson observations will always have a pre-brief and de-brief. These discussions are essential for the success of the observation and must have adequate time allotted. They enable the teacher and observer to meet and introduce themselves to each other, establish the ground-rules, set the scene, focus the observer and decide on the practical issues. The aim of the de-brief is to be reflective, learn from each other and share good practice.

In contrast to this approach, management at the FE college I currently teach at have recently introduced new observation procedures. Through our informal peer-observations we had already seen that our team consists of extremely competent teachers who are very hardworking and always place learners' needs first. Our college's overall outcomes after a recent Ofsted inspection were very disappointing; however, our own department achieved 'Outstanding'. We were anticipating congratulations and opportunities to share our 'best practice' with other colleagues with a view to improving overall standards.

However, thanks to an expensive external consultancy firm, staff are now provided with a three-week (emailed) notification of an observation which could take place at any time within a 'one week window'. For some colleagues this could consist of more than 25 hours of individual teaching sessions - a daunting preparation prospect, even for the most organised and conscientious of teachers. With no pre- or de-brief, we are subjected to observations from managers whom we have never met, who have no knowledge of our subject areas and whose own departments are failing! Under the threat of suspension unless we adhere to the new rules, this approach - which has been described as a 'dehumanising witch-hunt' - has understandably meant an increase in stress levels amongst staff. This is mainly because staff graded as 'satisfactory' have to endure the

process all over again in order to provide evidence of improvement or face 'competency measures' administered through the personnel department. Everyday I see my colleagues in tears or being physically sick before lessons; being unable to sleep or eat in the run-up to the observation week and in one case having a car accident. Personally I recognise the symptoms of my own blood-pressure rising. This is not because of any lack of competence or preparation on our part - but because of the implicit sense of judgement that comes with any 'observation'; the amount of paperwork required for each lesson and aspirations to have (yet more) 'evidence' of 'successful' lessons. Unsurprisingly, highly competent staff are now leaving to work in a more supportive environment.

Sadly, there is little evidence of any support to alleviate the stress involved in this situation. Even the college's occupational health is an external consultancy (accessed only through a line manager). Just when we thought matters couldn't get any worse we have been subjected to a management audit which included further 'ad hoc' lesson observations. The resulting report made the objectives of the audit clear: *'[we] have been trying to understand the apparent anomaly between the extremely high success rates [of our department] and the relatively poor profile of teaching recorded in the college observation system'*. The reason for the 'anomaly' seems obvious enough to us, the staff. It seems management are trying to discredit Ofsted's own judgement - and at additional cost to the taxpayer!

Teaching is well-documented as one of the most stressful occupations and together with the additional stresses of FE teaching like longer hours, smaller budgets and lower pay than any other teaching profession, this is a prominent issue. Has this college forgotten that it has a legally binding duty of care towards its staff members (and learners)? This includes a responsibility to reduce causes of stress - not increase them further. Against all advice and guidance from other colleges, Advanced Practitioners, academic research, the unions, not to mention protests from staff, management refuse to change the policy. What needs to happen now? Another teacher suicide? I pray not.

The first time as tragedy, the second time as farce . . .

I was a young lecturer in FE in the 1980s, employed by the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA), on a salary of several thousand pounds more than I would have earned as a secondary school teacher, and imbued with a great sense of optimism, dedication and energy. I left the sector some fifteen years later, on a salary of several thousands less than a secondary school teacher, and with a sense of disquiet and exhaustion. The disquiet came, in part, from the prolonged contract dispute that had soured and eroded FE working and led to a comparative substantial drop in pay. But it also came from my sense that the sector into which I had put so much of myself now gave many students a deeply shoddy educational experience and cared little for dedicated staff.

In my first year as a full time teacher I taught primarily on BTEC and Access programmes. The BTECs were the big recruiters in our department, whereas the Access programmes were relatively new and attracted much smaller numbers of potential students, who were all interviewed to ensure that this was the right course for them I soon discovered the difference this made to their management.

At the end of the year I attended Course Boards for both programmes. The Access Boards were managed by a small number of staff who stringently guarded their standards; students who hadn't made the grade were not recommended for higher education and alternatives were suggested; recruitment and admissions were tightly monitored and controlled. Senior managers barely noticed what was happening here. Not so with the BTEC panels. When the staff managing these panels tried to block students from progressing to the next year of the programme (because of achievement, attendance or conduct), their decisions were subsequently overturned by the senior managers in the department; when they tried to insist that some of these students should never have been admitted in the first place, their views were ignored. Against our better judgement we were asked to provide resit after resit, and take back students who had failed year on year. The pressure intensified as time went on - each year we needed more 'bums on seats' and a higher level of progression to meet the Government's funding requirements and to secure staff jobs.

The outcome of this was predictable. When I started in FE the most able of my BTEC students were outstanding, and even the most average were able to get a good degree from a redbrick university.

When I left FE, the Access programmes were recruiting soundly, the admissions process was still rigorous, the programmes were protected by the staff, still achieving high standards, attracting dedicated students of varying ability, and sending those students to Higher Education with sound academic skills. But the BTEC programmes had slumped badly. Although the admissions criteria were now barely in existence, the programmes were no longer recruiting well, and even though the top students were still good, the average students were absolutely unable to deal with the complexity of the academic material their predecessors had handled, and the weaker students were barely literate. The focus of the teaching had changed too - assessment now lay at the heart of the process, and learning stagnated amongst the tick boxes.

I left FE for the HE sector and found myself teaching on a range of undergraduate programmes, some large and some small, but over the years the FE pattern has started to repeat itself in HE. The small programmes, where recruitment and admissions are controlled by staff, are generally smooth running and with good standards. But, as the government targets bite, there is more and more pressure on the larger programmes to act as indiscriminate sponges, sucking up potential students regardless of their suitability for the programmes and vice versa, and squeezing out every last graduate possible, regardless of their application or ability. Once students are actually admitted to a programme the pressure to pass them through is considerable. I find myself with undergraduate students who are so weak that I wouldn't have accepted them onto the FE Access programme - and I find myself being asked to set resit after resit for students who are here year on year and often distressed about their progress and prospects. An excellent student is still an excellent student, but colleagues who have been in HE longer than me tell me that, at the lower levels, the dropping standards are clear and depressing - having been through a similar situation once already, I can well believe it.

So, as I find myself faced with an increasing number of struggling students, and as I find myself being asked to focus more and more on tick-box assessment rather than valuable learning, I can't help but wonder, when a particular approach has been so disastrous in one sector, why on earth is it now being replicated so faithfully in another?

Support visiting tutors and agency staff!

Rebecca Galbraith reports on the UCU 'Stamp out casualisation!' conference

F&HE now has the second most casualised workforce in the UK. (The first is in catering.) This means that there are many workers in FE and HE who feel vulnerable, have very little job security and don't have the same conditions as their colleagues - such as preparation time, holiday pay and sick pay. They are fixed-term, hourly paid and agency workers.

On Friday 26th February there was a conference for the UCU 'Stamp Out Casualisation' campaign. The campaign aims to fight the unfair and unequal treatment of casualised staff and the detrimental effects of casualisation on the quality of provision. The campaign was launched in 2008 and a committee has been working on organising agency workers and fighting battles in FE colleges, although the campaign has not always been high profile, so many of you may not have heard of it.

The conference was attended by about 50 people, the majority from HE. The density of casual workers, particularly hourly paid, in the union is low. Motions were passed to show that the priority for the campaign is to recruit and support these workers. In the afternoon a workshop was run on using collective grievances to tackle casualisation. At the College of Haringey, Enfield and North East London (CHENEL, formerly CONEL) the union successfully used a collective grievance to move hourly paid workers (working for four

years and on a contract of 0.5FTE or more) on to fractional contracts. The grievances were based on evidence that sessional workers receive less favourable treatment when compared to full time or fractional workers. Among the many complaints stated were: less pay for the same job duties; inferior job duties; work not allocated transparently; selected for redundancy on the basis of their sessional contract status . . . the list went on. A successful campaign against casualisation was also fought at Tower Hamlets College. At both institutions effective local campaigns, combined with the grievance strategy, forced management to concede fractionalisation.

Two things were made clear at the conference. Firstly, the financial crisis should not be used to push the fight against casualisation into the background. Casual workers need their problems to be a central fight for the union as a whole, now more than ever. Secondly, the cuts have two seemingly contradictory effects on casual workers: firstly, they are likely to be first out the door, and secondly, those left will then have to fight casualisation themselves. Additionally, for various reasons many hourly paid workers may be unsure about striking - but if we are to win the fight against cuts and redundancies, it will be because all workers, including casual workers, stand together. We need equal pay and equal rights for all who work in FE.

Where we stand:

Post-16 Educator seeks to defend and extend good practice in post compulsory education and training. Good practice includes teachers working with students to increase their power to look critically at the world around them and act effectively within it. This entails challenging racism, sexism, heterosexism, inequality based on disability and other discriminatory beliefs and practices.

For the mass of people, access to valid post compulsory education and training is more necessary now than ever. It should be theirs by right! All provision should be organised and taught by staff who are trained for and committed to it. Publicly funded provision of valid post compulsory education and training for all who require it should be a fundamental demand of the trade union movement.

Post-16 Educator seeks to persuade the labour movement as a whole of the importance of this demand. In mobilising to do so it bases itself first and foremost upon practitioners - those who are in direct, daily contact with students. It seeks the support of every practitioner, in any area of post-16 education and training, and in particular that of women, of part timers and of people outside London and the Southeast.

Post-16 Educator works to organise readers/contributors into a national network that is democratic, that is politically and financially independent of all other organisations, that develops their practice and their thinking, and that equips them to take action over issues rather than always having to react to changes imposed from above.

News update: March - April 2010

Week beginning 1/3/10

Police in riot gear expel students occupying an admin building at Sussex University in an attempt to prevent 115 job cuts (equating to 9 per cent of staff there). The UCU branch there votes to ballot for strike action over the same issue.

Management at Sheffield University, where the vice-chancellor, Keith Burnett, is also chairperson of the Universities and Colleges Employers Association (UCEA), 'share[s] in confidence' with local unions a set of ideas for 'saving' staffing costs in 2010-11, which include: full time staff opting to work for four and a half days a week; no pay award in August 2010; three, six or twelve month unpaid sabbaticals; four weeks unpaid annual leave; compulsory redundancies.

The Association of Colleges (AOC) has launched a survey of cuts by universities in degree-level programmes franchised to FE colleges. Such provision has up to now represented annual earnings of £400m for the 270 (out of 353) colleges involved. The total of HE students in FE has been around 172,000 (equating to 10 per cent of all HE students), and of these 56,000 have been funded through franchises or other partnerships with universities. Half of these latter places may be in jeopardy. AOC chief executive officer (CEO)

Martin Doel writes to secretary of state for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS), Peter Mandelson, urging him to fund more college-based HE directly (ie rather than via franchises).

Findings of a survey by London School of Economics (LSE) Centre for Economic Performance researchers, based on 'hundreds of thousands of students' [*Times Higher Education - THE*] include: between 1995 and 2008 the number of full time postgraduate students at UK universities nearly doubled, reaching 250,000; the proportion of these who were from overseas rose from 30 per cent in 1995 to 55 per cent in 2008; the total paid per year in fees by all UK postgraduate students in 2008 was £2.75bn. (The survey report is titled *The Social Composition and Future Earnings of Postgraduates*.)

In a letter to the *Times Education Supplement (TES)*, Nadine Carter, director of policy for the Association for College Management (ACM) and Association of Managers in Education (AMIE) maintains that: '... significant numbers of colleges are likely to go to the wall ...'

The Million+ 'thinktank', representing 28 post-1992 universities, publishes a report - *A Postgraduate Strategy for Britain: Expanding Excellence, Innovation and*

Opportunity - in which it is claimed that such universities deliver: 37 per cent of all postgraduate provision in the UK; 30 per cent of such provision for international students; 10 per cent of PhD level provision for international students in the UK.

The first scrutiny by Ofqual of the principal learning qualifications in three of the 14 14-19 Diplomas finds that some assessments in engineering, in society, health and development, and in creative and media are not as demanding as they could be. (All three awarding bodies are criticised for this.)

Sheffield University has now decided to drop its disciplinary proceedings against Guirong Jiang, a research radiologist in its Academic Unit of Bone Metabolism, in favour of an 'independent review' to be held in private. (Jiang, whose contract is to be terminated at the end of March after 13 years, was accused of publishing some of her research findings without seeking the permission of her supervisor, Unit head Richard Eastell. Eastell was involved in the earlier attempt to victimise whistleblower Aubrey Blumsohn. Jiang says she would prefer the disciplinary to go ahead.)

Barnet College principal Marilyn Hawkins intends to make £5m of cuts; she thinks this will involve

sacking 50 out of 400 lecturers and up to 60 support or senior management staff. (This appears to be the largest cut in a London college. Barnet belongs to the 157 Group of large colleges with good Ofsted results. Hawkins was formerly vice principal at Grimsby College, where principal Daniel Khan has recently taken unexpectedly sudden retirement following the collapse of several college companies.)

Publication in the week beginning 22/2/10 of *Recurrent Grant for 2010-11*, a paper presented to the 28/1/10 board meeting of the HE Funding Council for England (HEFCE) suggests that in 2011-2012 HEFCE will, as expected, move towards greater concentration of research funding on elite institutions.

Walsall College faces a cut of £1.4m (25 per cent).

A £550,000 cut to South Worcestershire College's adult education budget has put at risk the continued operation of its Acquired Brain Injury Unit, the only facility for such students in the country.

Former North West region National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education (NATFHE - predecessor of UCU) activist and Association for Liberal Education chairperson Mike Hopkins, is appointed principal of Middlesborough College with effect from July 2010.

Westminster University students occupy the office of vice-chancellor Geoffrey Petts to protest against plans to cut 285 jobs there.

Week beginning 8/3/10

A survey of its members, conducted by the Association of Learning Providers (ALP - ie private trainers) in January 2010, finds that many fear that local authority ignorance of what they

do will lead to them being overlooked when 14-19 contracts are awarded after the LSC goes out of existence at the end of March.

The UCU branch at the University of Kent has voted to ballot for strike action unless management withdraws its threat to make compulsorily redundant up to eleven out of 32 academics in the school of biosciences there.

Interviewed at BECTA's Next Generation Learning conference, held in Birmingham, CEO Stephen Crowne offers his opinion that: 'There is no reason why the whole of a college's IT infrastructure and the services run on it could not be run by an outsourced supplier',

In a paper addressed to the board of the HE Academy (HEA), which receives £30m annual funding and currently has 24 subject centres as well as a central office in York, its recently retired head, Paul Ramsden, says: 'I have formed the firm opinion . . . that the organisation has a sustainable future - but not in its current form'.

The annual National Employers Skills Survey, conducted across 80,000 employers by the UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES), finds that the number of staff thought by their employers to lack all the skills necessary for their current job has risen to 1.7 million (up 400,000 over 2005, but still well below the 2003 peak of 2.4 million). One in five employers, concentrated in the hotel and catering, manufacturing, retail and wholesale and health and social care sectors, claim to have such staff. UKCES chief economist Mark Spilsbury suggests some of the rise may result from specialist staff being laid off, with those remaining asked to pick up their functions.

There are signs that the Government may be manoeuvring to transfer, with effect from 2011, some or all of the HE research funding for science up to now

distributed to universities on the basis of the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE, now replaced by the Research Excellence Framework - REF) to distribution via the research councils. (This could to reduce universities' freedom to decide how such money is actually spent, thereby linking it more to commercial requirements and less to the development of knowledge.)

Features of the situation at Riverside Halton College (in Cheshire) include: the college was formed in 2006 from the merger of Halton College (of FE) and Runcorn Sixth Form College; Runcorn had been graded by Ofsted as inadequate, and Halton had a longer history involving a high profile franchising scam orchestrated by the principal in the period to 1999; this involved over-claiming £14m of public money; a new principal, Michael Sheehan, took over in February 2009; this resulted in 40 of the 500 staff 'leaving'; a £65m building plan had to be abandoned following the LSC's Building Colleges for the Future fiasco; the college has now had a favourable Ofsted report.

Sussex University UCU president Paul Cecil says that management 'has not engaged meaningfully' with the union's proposals for avoiding compulsory redundancies by a 'voluntary fractional scheme' (ie by full time staff electing to become 0.5 or 0.8 lecturers).

In *How to Shift Power to Learners*, a paper published by the Centre for Innovation in Learning, which is part of the Learning and Skills Network (LSN), King's College London professor Alison Wolf says FE students should be financed through loans like those in HE, and colleges allowed to develop their own qualifications.

Features of the situation at Cumbria University include: HEFCE is threatening to claw back £1.01m from Cumbria's 2010-11 grant, on the grounds that Cumbria recruited 274 students above

2008-09 levels after HEFCE had forbidden institutions to do this; Cumbria is appealing this decision; Cumbria is removing from its 'portfolio' 58 out of its 533 courses; facilities at a number of its sites, including Tower Hamlets in London, are to be curtailed.

Derby College (of FE) is to sell off its Mackworth site and the farm which forms part of its Broomfield site. (Mackworth was originally an FE college in its own right, parallel to Derby College of FE at Wilmorton.)

In its election 'manifesto', the Association of Graduate Recruiters, representing a number of employers, urges an incoming government to drop the target of 50 per cent HE participation and remove the cap on fees.

Week beginning 15/3/10

Points in an analysis of universities' own financial statements for 2008-09, carried out for the THE by the accountants Grant Thornton (and leaving out five institutions, among them London Metropolitan University and the University of Cumbria) include: at the end of the period studied, 33 institutions were in deficit; the sector as a whole had a £343.3m surplus; only 29 per cent of institutions had a surplus exceeding 3 per cent of their income (recommended by HEFCE as the minimum safe level); total income for the sector as a whole had risen by 19.5 per cent over the preceding two years; in 2008-09 this total income was £24.9bn; 41 per cent of this total (£10.2bn) went to universities in the Russell Group (the 20 or so largest and poshest institutions), roughly the same proportion as in 2006-07; in contrast, the percentage going to the Million+ Group (ie the 29 least posh former polys) was 11.7 per cent (£2.8bn), down from 13 per cent in 2006-07; the largest income in 2008-09 (£1.14bn) went to Cambridge University, followed by Oxford (on

£862.5m) and Manchester on £754.6m; institutions with high deficits in proportion to income included Thames Valley (12.3 per cent, the highest), Wolverhampton (9 per cent) and Bucks New University (7.3 per cent).

Points in a *Guardian* article on prison education include: The Manchester College (TMC) has contracts for over 90 institutions, representing around 60 per cent of all offender education; TMC principal Peter Taverner has now written to all staff saying they need to save £5m across the service; a spokesperson for TMC claims this may equate to 250 staff (under 7 per cent of the workforce); the LSC says that in December 2009 TMC decided to withdraw from contracts in the south-east and north-east.

HEFCE announces universities' funding allocations for 2010-11, totalling £7.36bn, of which £4.73bn is for teaching, and £1.6bn for research. When inflation is allowed for, this represents a 3.6 reduction over 2009-10. Within this, 29 institutions will receive above-inflation increases and 99 will experience real terms cuts, with 69 undergoing actual cash cuts. 32.15 per cent of the total goes to Russell Group universities, 13.72 per cent to the 1994 Group (smaller, research-intensive institutions) and 17.10 per cent to Million+ group universities.

As regards research funding specifically, the effect of the 2010-11 allocations will be to cancel out gains made by non-Russell Group institutions following the 2008 RAE. 37 institutions will see above-inflation rises in HEFCE research funding, while 85 will see losses. Within this, about half of all Russell Group institutions will see increases. In particular, Oxford's research income will rise by 6 per cent (£7m) over 2009-10, while University College London (UCL) and Cambridge will each get rises of about 4 per cent (£4m plus each). In terms of groups of universities, all other than the

Russell group will undergo reductions.

In the wake of Michael Gove's announcement that a Tory government would scrap the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency (QCDA - ie the main successor to the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority), it emerges that its first CEO, Andrew Hall is to leave after less than one year, to become CEO of the AQA exam board.

A UCU document, *Privatising Our Universities*, attacks both the Government and the Tories for plans to allow student choice to force some universities out of the market, and for moves to encourage dependence on income from private sources.

The first skills audit produced by the UKCES predicts that: between 2007 and 2017 in the UK, engineering and agriculture will shed more than 100,000 jobs each; financial services will sink from first to fifth place in terms of economic importance; the biggest areas for employment growth will be health and social work, hotels and catering, and retail distribution.

The Independent Review of HE Funding and Student Finance, chaired by Lord Browne of Madingley, issues for consultation until 14th May its interim report. Based on over 80 submissions so far received, this finds that every extra pound of income generated for universities by top-up fees has been 'matched by about a pound in additional costs to taxpayers' (*THE*) and that the current system has done 'nothing to alleviate the rationing of higher education places due to public finance constraints'.

A *TES* survey finds that the highest paid person in the whole field of school and college (but not university) education is currently LSC CEO Geoff Russell (on £258,343, including £50,505 in

employer's pension contributions). the highest paid state school head in the period studied is Sir Alan Davies, head of Copland school in Wembley, on £183,000, including an annual bonus of £80,000. (Davies recently resigned, following financial 'irregularities' revealed by union rep Hank Roberts.) On LSC data for 2007-08, the highest paid FE college principal was Newcastle College principal Jackie Fisher, on £184,000. (The highest salary for an HE vice-chancellor is £474,000.)

HE Statistics Agency (HESA) figures for 2007-08 showing the 'days ratio' of total funds to total expenditure for each university reveal that the average university in England could, if deprived of all income, have survived for 105.96 days on its reserves. Within this, however, Greenwich University could have survived for only 14.39 days, Derby for 13.58, and Anglia Ruskin for 12.57.

A *TES* feature about the drive by Peter Birkett, principal of Barnfield College (of FE, in Luton) to take over neighbouring schools, reveals that 'more than 30 colleges attend meetings of an FE principals' academy sponsorship group' held there.

Following an agreement with management, Leeds University UCU branch announces that its 'long-running dispute with the university is now over' and calls off a strike that was due to be held on 16th March. (The union expected between 650 and 700 jobs at Leeds to be lost through management's attempts to 'save' £35m a year, while management put the figure at 400.)

A study commissioned by Ofqual from the polling organisation Ipsos Mori finds that 37 per cent of school teachers and 70 per cent of the public/parents know 'nothing' or 'not very much' about 14-19 diplomas.

UCU members at Sussex University take one day of strike action over management moves to make 115 redundancies and axe major areas of history research and teaching. The university has also obtained a High Court injunction banning protests by students.

The final draft of a paper commissioned by the LSC in the summer of 2009 from accountants KPMG maintains that: around 50 general FE (GFE) colleges are 'currently designated as struggling' (ie financially); a further 50, though currently breaking even, are deemed to be vulnerable over the next three years; about 100 are 'sound' enough to withstand cuts of 10 per cent; 45 are 'good' or 'outstanding'; of these, 15 have significant cash reserves and a 'predatory' vision (ie they would take over weaker colleges). The paper concludes that: 'A large number of colleges will fail to remain viable in the next three years so the number of GFE colleges will decline - not necessarily a bad thing'.

Lawyers acting for the management of Salford University have threatened to sue a student, Damien Shannon, for posting critical comments on a website and on the vice chancellor's blog. (Last year, Salford sacked a lecturer, Gary Duke, for criticising senior managers in a series of newsletters.)

Sussex Coast College claims to have become the largest sixth-form provider in Hastings through its dedicated centre, called Academy 6.

An NUS survey based on online responses from 2,058 female HE students finds that one in seven have been subject to serious sexual assault or serious physical violence while at university.

Kathy Taylor, a lecturer at Northumberland College, has been elected vice president of UCU, with City and Islington College

lecturer Sean Vernell (the UCU left candidate) in second place.

The Acquired Brain Injury Unit at South Worcestershire College has been saved from closure after agreeing to redesign its curriculum to fit LSC requirements.

The former principal of Rotherham College of Arts and Technology, George Trow, becomes the fifth person in the last five years to be appointed principal of Doncaster College.

Points in *The Growth of Private and For-profit Higher Education Providers in the UK*, a report produced for Universities UK (UUK - ie the vice chancellors), include: 177 private colleges accredited by the British Accreditation Council between them have links to 60 state-funded UK universities; about 26,000 students are studying for UK-validated awards at such colleges; dozens more private colleges are accredited by the Accreditation Service for International Colleges; there are five companies currently providing between them foundation courses for 33 UK universities. The report recommends that UUK open itself up to membership by private bodies with degree awarding powers.

The five unions representing HE staff (the Educational Institute of Scotland [EIS], GMB, Unison, Unite and UCU) submit to the Joint Negotiating Committee for HE Staff (JNCHES) a joint salary claim for 2010-11 that includes: a £550 lump sum for low paid staff; a 4 per cent overall rise; extension of the national pay spine to include hourly paid staff; and an increase to £6,000 in London weighting.

A report by law firm Eversheds to the board of London Metropolitan University concerning the £36.5m clawed back by HEFCE in 2009 after alleged over-claiming of student completions recommends additional investigations into the role played by deputy vice-

chancellor Bob Aylett and finance director Pam Nelson, plus scrutiny of the internal management assurance services provided by Kingston City Group.

Week beginning 22/3/10

In a *TES* interview to coincide with the transition from the LSC to the Skills Funding Agency (SFA), Geoff Russell, the CEO of both, says that: 'We [ie the SFA] will move away from the top-down approach towards a much more market-driven position where our role will be simply to do three things. We will provide funding, we will manage quality and we will try to empower the customer and free the employer to respond to customer demand and let the system run'. Of the LSC's Building Colleges for the Future fiasco, he says: 'The truth of the matter is that while we screwed up the capital pipeline, the position that colleges find themselves in today is a result of the recession. If we had screwed up and there had been no recession we could have trotted off to the Treasury'. (The SFA will have 1,800 staff in 21 offices, as against LSC's 4,000 staff in 51 offices.)

When inflation is factored in, HE funding allocations in Wales equate to a real-terms cut of about 4 per cent per institution, and in Scotland, of 0.6 per cent.

In a report commissioned by the Conservative Party, former Imperial College rector Sir Richard Sykes urges: an end to modularised A-levels; direct university control over the content and assessment methods of A-levels; a US-style Scholastic Aptitude Test of maths and English for all university applicants; an end to school league tables; exclusion of vocational qualifications from the UCAS points tariff.

It emerges that Imperial College has been in talks with private providers interested in buying its

Wye campus (in Kent, formerly Imperial's department of agriculture) in order to set up a private university there. One such provider is the 'University' of Buckingham, reportedly in conjunction with the Headmasters' and Headmistresses' Conference (ie the body speaking for the poshest private schools).

Points in an Ofqual report include: the exam board 'market' (ie the provision of GCSEs, A-levels and vocational qualifications) is thought to be worth about £933m per year; since 2001, the total number of accredited qualifications has risen from 2,771 to 9,708; the numbers of accredited qualifications other than GCSEs and A-levels achieved annually rose from 2.2 million on 2002 to 6.1 million in 2009; within this, the largest increase by a single awarding body was by Edexcel - from 66,000 achievements in 2003 to 500,000 in 2009.

University College London (UCL) philosophy professor Michael Martin claims that a move by management at King's College London 'in a way . . . means the end of universities in the UK'. (In January 2010 all academics in arts and humanities at King's were told they must make a case for keeping their jobs, as 22 posts had to be cut. Martin's argument is that they must show their research is in line with management's aim to recruit international students paying uncapped fees, thereby destroying the possibility of valid research.)

Funding for 2010-11 allocated by HEFCE to FE colleges doing HE work shows an overall 2.2 per cent rise over 2009-10 (to nearly £196m). The amount allocated to the five biggest such providers is up nearly 5 per cent, to nearly £45.8m. These five are Newcastle College (to receive £11,468,619), Blackburn (£10,541,445), Blackpool and the Fylde (£8,693,505), Bradford (£8,037,083) and Grimsby (£7,031,528).

The UCU HE Sector Conference agrees to ballot members for national strike action unless the Universities and Colleges Employers Association (UCEA) agrees to include discussion of job security in the forthcoming pay talks.

Three FE college principals - Barnfield College's Peter Birkett, Bradford College's Michele Sutton, and Helen Sexton of the National Star College (for people with disabilities) are appointed to the board of the Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA - the body which will oversee local authorities' control of 14-19 funding from 1/4/10). The other members of the 11-person board comprise three reps from local authorities, two from local authority schools, one from an academy, and one academies sponsor.

Sheffield University is abandoning an £8.4m plan to refurbish a building as a 'learning hub'.

Commenting on *Research Selectivity and UK Performance*, a document written for the HE Policy Institute (HEPI) by the 'analysis firm' Evidence, HEPI director Bahram Bekhradnia says: 'The idea of concentrating research funds based on the historical characteristics of universities makes no sense'.

Oxford University issues 'preliminary figures' for its 2010 undergraduate admissions which show that the percentage of offers made to UK state school applicants has risen to 65.4 per cent, from 53.9 in 2009.

More than 140 academic staff in the Faculty of Life Sciences at University College London (UCL) have written to the provost, Malcolm Grant, to protest about his plans to make 20 of them redundant in an attempt to 'save' about £3m.

Birmingham City University vice-chancellor David Tidmarsh said he will seek 'full restitution' of the

£30m spent so far on plans for a city centre campus. (On 3rd March, the university paid Birmingham City Council £18m for the proposed Eastside site, and on 11th March the Government announced plans for a high speed rail link between London and Birmingham, including a station on the land sold to the university.)

Points in a National Audit Office (NAO) report on the Student Loans Company (SLC) include: the service provided to new students in England who applied for finance in 2009-10 went over budget by £8m while average processing times rose by a third; BIS 'did not monitor the SLC effectively'.

According to a HEFCE document, *Initial Decisions on the REF*, HEFCE is now quite likely to drop the plan to use citations (so-called 'bibliometrics') to assess the value of a university's existing research and hence determine the allocation of research funding in future. (Bibliometrics involves counting how often a research paper published by one academic in a peer-reviewed journal is cited in the bibliographies of papers by others.) The main problem appears to be 'the equalities implications'. (The plan to assess the 'impact' - ie immediate practical utility - of research is to go ahead.) At the same time, HEFCE research director David Sweeney says the first REF is likely to be postponed for a further year - to 2014-15.

The Budget includes a government pledge to fund an additional 20,000 students places in HE in science and technology from next year.

Week beginning 29/3/10

The THE publishes figures for the amount spent by HE institutions in England, Scotland and Wales in 2008-09 on vice-chancellors (excluding pension payment but not pension contributions), and the

salary scales for full time academic staff at the same institutions. (The first list does not include the Universities of Cumbria and Gloucestershire and London Metropolitan University nor University College Birmingham and Edinburgh College of Art. The second includes Cumbria but leaves out Liverpool Hope. The list is based on HESA figures analysed by accountants Grant Thornton.) The average amount spent on vice chancellors in each main grouping of institutions was as follows: Russell Group - £270,579; 1994 Group - £247,798; University Alliance - £222,460; Million+ Group - £205,411; GuildHE - £156,005. The average salary for all other full time academic staff was about £47,000. Within this, the average salary for a professor was £74,341.

There are now 94 sixth form colleges in England, and 258 FE colleges.

HESA figures show that in the UK HE sector in 2003-04 there were 10,740 people who were classed as managers, while in 2008-09 this figure had risen by 33 per cent, to reach 14,250. In the same period, the number of students rose by 9 per cent (from 2,200,180 to 2,396,055), while the number of academics increased by 10 per cent, (from 106,900 to 116,495).

In an article about his role, written for the *TES*, John Freeman, director of the Local Government Association's React Programme (ie part of the arrangements by which the state hopes to make everyone stay in education or training to 18) says, of his appointment in 2008: 'I was old enough - just - to recall the last time the age of participation increased in 1972-73 and I wanted to ensure that we did not just force non-engaged young people into any course with vacancies, but one that genuinely met their needs'.

Responses to HEFCE consultation on a plan for HEFCE to take on

the power to require institutions to dismiss their vice-chancellors include opposition to this on the part of the 1994 and Million+ Groups. For the latter, CEO Pam Tatlow says the proposal is a 'heavy-handed and disproportionate response to an isolated event' (ie the situation that arose at London Met. University).

Points in a *TES* article on the possibility of private companies taking over 'failing' FE colleges include: John Hyde, managing director of Hospitality Industry Training (HIT) claims to be in discussions with Hugh Pitman, who in January sold his company, JHP Training, for £56m, to form an organisation for this purpose; however, lawyers believe the current legal situation might prevent a company disposing of a college's assets; Glynne Stanfield, a partner in the law firm Eversheds, and author of an earlier 157 Group report recommending such moves by colleges themselves, says that 'To be fair to the private sector, I don't think it's coming in to rip off the taxpayer'; Stanfield implies that a Tory government might change the law in an early education bill.

Features of the situation at the University of Gloucestershire include: in her resignation statement, tendered on 25/3/10, vice-chancellor Patricia Broadfoot tells staff that 'the university is now firmly positioned on the road to recovery'; the university council's vice-chairperson and finance committee chairperson, Malcolm Bell, has resigned after less than eight months in post; the institution's 1908-09 financial statement shows a £6.3m deficit on an income of £67.4m; Gloucestershire also has long-term borrowings of £31.6m and a 56 per cent debt-to-income ratio.

HESA figures on international students in the UK in 2008-09 show that: the largest single group was students from China (47,035, up 3.7 per cent on the year

before); the second largest group was from the US; more than 34,000 were from India, up 31.5 per cent on the year before; at 14,380 (up 22 per cent), Nigerians constituted the third largest group; the total for all non-EU students was up 9.4 per cent, to over 250,000; numbers from elsewhere in the EU rose to 117,660 (up 4.9 per cent).

In HE pay negotiations, HE unions unanimously reject the UCEA's opening offer of a non-consolidated sum equal to 0.25 per cent of the existing wage bill.

In its report titled *One Step Beyond: Making the Most of Postgraduate Education*, the review panel on UK postgraduate provision set up by Lord Mandelson and chaired by BIS science and research director Adrian Smith recommends further concentration of HEFCE funding on elite institutions, funding to be linked explicitly to delivering skills to business, and the embedding of 'transferable skills training' in all postgraduate research programmes.

The Government releases statistics purportedly showing that in 2008-09 45 per cent of people aged between 17 and 30 were or had been in HE, up from 43 per cent a year before.

Week beginning 5/5/10

A company called University Partnerships Programme (UPP) has been lobbying the Government and shadow ministers. UPP currently provides and manages 'about 20,000' student rooms at eleven UK universities, and has also 'supplied' lecture theatres to the Universities of Kent and Plymouth. It designs, builds, finances and operates the building concerned under a 40 or 50 year lease, receiving rents for that period, after which the building belongs to the university. In March it finalised a deal to build 740

student rooms for King's College London. It employs its own janitorial staff.

In a *Guardian* feature on shadow skills minister David Willetts, he says, of the change from the LSC to YPLA and SFA: 'This is a year of transition - if we [ie an incoming Tory government] move fast, we can get a new, simpler system in place before the existing one is bedded down'.

A HEA report on seven HEFCE funded projects in which, between 2005 and 2007, two-year degrees were piloted alongside three-year ones, finds that the former were only viable on current fee levels because HEFCE development funds were used to back them up.

In his first press interview since becoming managing director of Edexcel, the exam board which is owned by the Pearson publishing group, Ziggy Liaquat, who joined Edexcel in 1995, emphasises its intention to extend its Results Plus 'service' (ie the provision to schools of a detailed breakdown of candidates' performance), into 'producing learning materials and resources and technology to support attainment'.

At the end of the financial year 2009-10, 10,363 disabled students who applied to the Student Loans Company (SLC) for the Disabled Students Allowance (DSA) have yet to receive it. (In 2009, administration of the DSA was transferred from local authorities to Student Finance England, part of the SLC, and this change is thought to be responsible for the delays.)

The YPLA publishes its *National Commissioning Framework*, which sets out the rules it will use to oversee local authorities' decisions about the funding of 16-19 provision (16-25 for those with learning difficulties). This includes a structure of sub-regional groupings (SRGs) and regional planning groups (RPGs). The latter have representation from local authori-

ties, regional development agencies (RDAs), regional Government Offices and the SFA.

According to Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) programme manager Rob Bristow, universities, including Manchester Metropolitan and Royal Holloway London, are increasingly outsourcing student email systems to 'cloud computing' providers such as Google and Microsoft, which offer them a free service. (Microsoft's 'cloud' service is called Live@edu.)

In a *TES* article on the Functional Skills Support Programme, a BIS spokesperson says that: 'The intention is to replace Skills for Life literacy and numeracy qualifications [with Functional Skills] from September 2012, subject to the outcomes of the [current] pilot', but also that Functional Skills will be 'rolled out nationally in September 2010. A spokesperson for ALP claims they have been 'inundated' by providers complaining about falling success rates where Functional Skills has replaced Key Skills on provision for apprentices, while for the National Institute for Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) director Alan Tuckett says: '... there is too big a jump to classroom-based functional skills from how they [ie adults doing Skills for Life] are working now'.

The Government has signed a funding agreement worth £40m which will allow the setting up in Hastings of two academy schools sponsored by East Sussex County Council, BT and the University of Brighton.

In its report on the Machinery of Government changes effective from 1/4/10 (ie the replacement of LSC by the YPLA and SFA) the Commons BIS committee says: 'We are not convinced that ... it is right to pay for bureaucratic change by denying many adults the new skills they need to meet the challenges of the world' and 'We have grave concerns about

the logic or probable effectiveness of having two organisations running further education, and we have yet to be presented with a convincing argument in support of this approach'. (The Government hopes to save £17m a year through the change.)

The Commons Children, Schools and Families Committee recommends the Government adopt an approach to the problem of people not in education, employment or training ('NEETs') observed by them in Holland, in which more generous benefit support goes along with compulsion.

Unison puts forward a set of five 'election demands' for FE, including a legally enforceable cap on principals' pay.

UCU members at Northumberland College (of FE) vote to ballot for action over management plans to make 67 lecturers redundant, increase class contact by 10 per cent and reduce to cap lecturers' pay at £27,000.

Coleg Llandrillo (in Conwy and Denbighshire) and Coleg Meirion-Dwyfor (in Gwynedd) have merged, forming an institution with 21,000 students and a £45m annual turnover.

Week beginning 12/5/10

The Liberal Democrats' election manifesto includes claims that they would: abandon the plan to raise the leaving age to 18, substituting an entitlement to two years of education that could be done at any age; a general diploma for 14 year olds incorporating vocational and academic elements; a single funding council for HE and adult FE; 'literacy and numeracy courses to be made compulsory for people staying in education who have not reached the expected level by 16' (*TES*). The Tories say they would axe Train to Gain and confirm they would resurrect the Further Education

Funding Council for England (FEFCE), which presided over high levels of corruption after the incorporation of colleges in 1993.

The 'University' of Buckingham (ie the private institution) makes it known that in September 2011 it will stop being involved with the two-year diploma run by the Integrated Health Trust charity. (This diploma involves both conventional and alternative medicine and is validated by Buckingham.)

Tribal, the 'public sector services company' (*TES*), claims that savings worth £230m per year could be made in the FE sector if the 'bottom' 75 per cent of colleges started to operate as efficiently as the most efficient performers. However, 157 Group executive director Lynne Sedgmore comments that: 'There comes a point where you can't cut any more without causing damage'.

Warwick University looks set to join Sussex in excluding newly appointed support staff from its defined benefit pension scheme.

Points about FE in the third *Annual Workforce Diversity Profile* report by Lifelong Learning UK (ie the sector skills council covering FE) include: between 2006-07 and 2007-08 the total FE workforce grew by just under 35,000 (15 per cent); just over half of those employed in FE in 2007-08 were teachers, while just under 7 per cent were managers; more than a third of all staff were over 50; only 3 per cent declared a disability; just over 8 per cent identified as black and minority ethnic (BME); 64 per cent overall were women; 65 per cent of these women were working part time, as against 47 per cent of the men; 49 per cent of all women working in the sector were working as teachers as against 59 per cent of men.

All three main parties intimate that they would if elected effectively freeze HE pay.

The NUS annual conference, held in Gateshead, calls for retention of Education Maintenance Allowances (EMAs) regardless of moves to raise the leaving age to 18.

Anecdotal evidence from HE admissions departments suggests that the limits set by the Government via HEFCE on undergraduate recruitment are affecting disproportionately applicants from less well-off backgrounds.

Liverpool University's accounts for the year to July 2009 show a deficit of £13.2m, in contrast to the forecast surplus of £2.3m. (The vice-chancellor is former University of the West of England vice chancellor and UUK head Sir Howard Newby.) A spokesperson for the UCU branch at Liverpool points out that 112 members of staff there were paid over £100,000 in 2008-09 (up from 88 the previous year) and £324,000 was spent on compensating senior staff for loss of office.)

Sheffield University's review of the case of the researcher Guirong Jiang, conducted by a head of school from Birmingham University, finds that Sheffield's treatment of Jiang, which included launching and then dropping a disciplinary procedure against her, as well as terminating her contract, was 'reasonable', and also that Richard Eastell, head of the Bone Metabolism Unit there, acted reasonably towards her. (Eastell was previously implicated in the attempt to sack the whistleblower Aubrey Blumsohn.)

Points to emerge from the annual accounts of Cumbria University for the period 2008-09 include: the deficit rose from £8.5m to £13.2m, on an income of £79m; the deficit for 2009-10 could reach £9m; the university breached the terms of an £8.7m loan from NatWest bank, making it technically repayable on demand; it spent £985,000 on consultancy fees in connection with planned new buildings at

Caldew Carlisle, now postponed to 2020; it may in 2010-11 experience a drawback by HEFCE in excess of £1m due to over-recruitment of students this year.

The NUS conference elects as president Aaron Porter, vice-president HE since 2008, who, following the defeat of a motion calling for the union to restore 'a strong campaigning national student voice for free education', states that he is 'committed to ensuring that the NUS remains a pragmatic player in the debate' on fees.

HESA data shows that: for students starting full-time undergraduate courses in 2007, the five highest drop-out rates after one year were at the UHI Millennium Institute (25.4 per cent), the University of the West of Scotland (21.4 per cent), Bolton University 19.8 per cent, University of Central Lancashire (17.1 per cent) and Thames Valley University (16.9 per cent), the two lowest being Cambridge (1.2 per cent) and Oxford (1.1 per cent). Figures for the inclusion of under-represented groups in 2008-09 range from Harper Adams University College (58.4 per cent of full time undergraduate entrants), followed by London Met. (57.5 per cent), Greenwich (56.2) and Wolverhampton (53.8), to Cambridge (12.6), Oxford (11.5), and the Courtauld Institute (7.9).

Week beginning 19/5/10

The *TES* gives prominence to claims by the Pearson Research Institute and the auditors RSM Tenon, that there has been, over the last seven years, a growing tendency for FE colleges to exaggerate their success rates, thereby allowing them to claim bonuses from the LSC said to have been worth about £30m..

The *TES* cites figures indicating that the number of FE colleges funded by the LSC now is about

100 less than the number funded by the FEFC in 1997, while the ratio of students to lecturers has risen from about 18:1 in 1999 to about 34:1 in 2008.

Both the Lib Dems and the Green Party claim in their election material that they would abolish HE tuition fees, the former by phasing them out over six years.

A *TES* analysis of colleges' account covering the period 2007/08 to 2008/09 shows that: the average pay of principals rose in that period by 5.7 per cent; the two highest paid principals were at West Notts College (on £197,000) and Newcastle (£196,000); the combined incomes of the top five colleges are almost equal to the combined incomes of the bottom 80; in 2008-09 City College Birmingham paid former AOC CEO David Gibson £186,000 in consultancy fees plus £33,000 in VAT for his work as acting principal.

UCU figures indicate that between 2001 and 2009, the average salary for a principal rose from under £76,000 to just under £120,000.

In a case brought by UCU and relating to 89 fixed-term staff formerly at Lancaster University, an employment tribunal ruled that the employer failed to consult properly when terminating their contracts, and must, in about 30 of these cases, provide 60 days pay in compensation. (UCU believes that, of 179,000 teaching staff in HE in 2008-09, about 63,000 were on fixed-term contracts, the majority either researchers in Russell and 1994 Group universities or hourly paid lecturers in post-1992 institutions.)

In a letter to the *TES* about the possible replacement in 2012 of Skills for Life by Functional Skills, City of Sunderland College principal Angela O'Donoghue maintains that: 'Removal of the ability to deliver and accredit skills for life will result in poor functional

skills achievement and a continual reinforcement of failure' and 'it could destroy one of the most successful education strategies of all time'.

Ofqual figures for the market share of the main A-Level awarding bodies in 2008-09 reveal that these were: AQA 41 per cent; OCR 25 per cent; Edexcel 25 per cent. In 2008, Edexcel's total income (ie including for other exams) was £205.7m, AQA's £144.4m and OCR's £120.8m.

In the light of Tory plans to divert £775m, mostly from the Train to Gain budget, into creating an extra 100,000 apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship places annually, and Lib Dems plans to remove £325m of T2G funding from large companies, there is evidence of private training providers changing their focus to basic skills.

UCU members at Northumberland College take strike action against plans by principal Ruth Ellis-Jones to cut 68 out of 550 jobs there and impose deteriorated contracts in an attempt to save £1.3m (ie about 20 per cent of the college's public funding for adult students).

Week beginning 26/5/10

Bath Spa University is to co-sponsor the Sarum Academy, a Church of England school which is to replace the Salisbury High School, thereby acquiring, in the words of vice-chancellor Frank Morgan, 'strong links with the Salisbury education diocese, and . . . a centre for our teacher education with the 200 diocesan schools in Wiltshire and Dorset'.

The OCR exam board has told head teachers they cannot observe the on-line process by which A-level grade boundaries are now set. (Edexcel claims it allows heads to 'attend' virtual meetings for this purpose, while AQA still uses face-to-face meetings.)

UCU's HE Committee starts preparations for 'simultaneous industrial action across all HE institutions' if the UCEA does not make a 'satisfactory response' to this year's pay claim.

UCU branches at the University of Westminster, King's College London, UCL and Sussex University are all due to take strike action on 5/5/10, along with eleven FE college branches in London. (Up to 285 jobs are in line to be cut at Westminster, up to 205 at King's and up to 100 at Sussex.)

Points revealed via research by the Women's Leadership Network (ie female senior managers in FE colleges), covering the period February 2009 to February 2010, include: 38 per cent of the 230 general FE (GFE) colleges in England have women principals; 29 per cent of the 93 sixth form colleges have women principals; women comprise 64 per cent of the GFE workforce and 60 per cent of managers in such colleges; 46 per cent of the 28 157 Group colleges have women principals; the highest concentration of women principals in GFE colleges is in the South East (53 per cent of 34 colleges); the highest percentage of women principals across both GFE and sixth form colleges is in the North West (45 per cent of 55 institutions).

Universities UK has advised universities not to apply for full 'highly trusted sponsor status' when their interim possession of this status, initiated on 6/4/10, runs out on 30/6/10. This status forms part of UK Border Agency (UKBA) rules aimed at attacking 'economic migrants', and would require institutions to ensure that no more than 3 per cent of international students fail to complete their courses, and university staff to carry out checks on prospective students that occupy most of a 21-page UKBA handbook.

A Unison survey indicates that 76 per cent of FE colleges are cutting

courses and 70 per cent plan to sack staff. UCU FE head Barry Lovejoy says that 3,453 lecturers' jobs are at risk nationally as a result of cuts already underway, and points out that some colleges may be making cuts in order to build up reserves that would allow them to 'rescue' (ie take over and asset strip) other colleges that get into difficulty. The AOC claims that the £340m of likely cuts could equate to 7,000 redundancies.

Just over 4,000 mainly academic staff at Cambridge University begin voting on measures proposed by the university's council (ie in effect, the vice-chancellor) to make it easier to sack them. The vote closes on 7/5/10. (These staff, about half of the total employed there) are those who belong to Regent House, the so-called 'dons' parliament'.)

A year-long research study by Sue Wallace (at Nottingham Trent

University), based on observations of and interviews with lecturers across a range of vocational areas in three colleges in Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire, finds evidence that lack of job prospects is undermining students' willingness to complete work, attend on time etc.

Oxford University has in a year raised from donors including the financier George Soros £32.4m (\$50m) to match funding donated by alumnus James Martin, the computer scientist, who had already (in 2005) given the institution \$100m.

Brunel University (in Uxbridge) is attempting to stop Thames Valley University (TVU) from renaming itself the University of West London.

CAFAS Council for Academic Freedom and Academic Standards

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- ◆ investigates malpractice and publishes findings
- ◆ seeks to develop a support network with unions and other organisations.

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Independent working-class education: which way forward?

We print here a statement drafted by Sheila Cohen in the light of discussion which took place at a meeting held at Ruskin College in Oxford on 27th March 2010. The aim of the meeting was to discuss the future of trade union education as a feature of working-class organisation and politics, and to examine the challenges which now confront us.

*Following an introductory talk by Sheila, there were presentations by Colin Waugh (editorial board, *Post-16 Educator*) on the historical background of independent working-class education, Ian Manborde (responsible for the MA in International Labour and Trade Union Studies at Ruskin College) on key themes of trade union education, and Kim Moody (formerly director of Labor Notes) on lessons from activist education in the US.*

Points raised in discussion included: the need to relate to the changing working class, and in particular to its internationalisation; the need to tackle anti-theoretical prejudices; the question of how to multiply opportunities for the politicisation of working-class activists; the need to see union organising as something more than a part of the industrial relations machinery and to adopt a changed model for it.

It was agreed that a statement about the issues involved in reviving IWCE be drafted and circulated to a wider audience of activists. Please send comments to post16educator@runbox.com

The history of working-class and trade union education is almost as old as that of the working class itself. Yet, like the working class in its relationship to capitalism, it has always been divided between two major tendencies, resistance and accommodation. The 1909 Plebs' League strike against attempts by Ruskin College to 'neutralise' what had initially been an unambiguously class-based approach to the education of working-class students illustrates this divide (see Colin Waugh's history).

After the rank and file-based upsurges of the late 1960s and early '70s, the 1974 Labour government set out to placate and incorporate the trade union movement with a 'Social Contract' which included a number of new rights including improved trade union educational provision and the right to time off for trade union courses. However, the late 1990s began to see a move away from comparatively independent and open forms of trade union education to a 'partnership'

oriented approach consonant with the managerialist approach of the New Labour government. TUC education, at least, has become dominated by an overall 'skill-based' agenda within which courses and qualifications became part of the government's National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) scheme.

While this placed TUC education in a much more secure political and financial position (currently threatened by a possible Tory victory in May) the employer-led and increasingly legalistic content of TUC courses, even outside 'UnionLearn', has undermined much of the implicitly class-based content and process of TUC education. While 'Stage One' courses on basic issues such as recruitment, negotiation skills etc still leave room for discussion and analysis of workplace experience, this now tends to be dominated by a highly procedural 'disciplinary' and 'rights'-based approach. Broader courses such as 'Contemporary Trade Unionism', which might be expected to provide room for historical and political argument, are not surprisingly unpopular with employers and therefore, given the institutional context of fees, class numbers etc, increasingly unlikely to run.

For all these reasons, the class content of trade union education can be argued to have been, if not neutralised, then fundamentally threatened - a conclusion reached by a large body of trade union tutors whose interest lies in promoting independent working-class theory rooted in labour history rather than in teaching the correct way to conduct a 'disciplinary'.

The disillusionment of many such tutors - and no doubt students - with this 'skills'- and procedures-based agenda in trade union education provides one set of reasons for attempting to provide, in however small a way, some alternative in terms of a form of trade union education rooted in the concerns of workers rather than employers. This would, essentially, include labour and trade union history as a basic component. It would encourage an understanding of political and economic issues based in a critical - ie Marxist - analysis of the capitalist system. It would avoid what the Plebs' League students so wonderfully called the 'sandpapering' of their class instincts. It would be rooted in and consciously develop from working-class

students' everyday working-class experience. Most of all, it would bring theory and practice together to shed light on the everyday concerns faced by workplace trade union activists, including the crucial question of internal trade union democracy and class independence from the employer.

Who would be our audience? While independent working-class education is open to all, the emphasis in trying to develop such a programme must, I would argue, be on committed workplace activists who come equipped with a lively interest in political, historical and industrial issues. Should we be able to gain commitment from such already-existing activists in the stronger sections of the movement, it may be possible to 'build out' and bring in less experienced workers.

However, none of this is immediately accessible. While a project to develop Independent Working-Class Education (IWCE) could possibly be rooted in some of the more active trade union education institutions, such as Northern College and Ruskin, any institutional support contains dangers, as it compromises precisely the political independence crucial to this project. How to square the circle? The experience of the US project Labor Notes suggests one answer, though not an easy one in the British political environment. The activity and practice of Labor Notes has been precisely to 'build out' from a grassroots network of workplace-based activists who have found its conferences, publications and day or weekend schools concretely valuable in building their own organisation and strength in the workplace.

My own view, though others may differ, is that it is only through building up a similar network of contacts who can be more or less relied on to take an interest in this project that we can move forward. These contacts should include both trade union tutors and workplace activists. Without such a network, and with the problems surrounding institutional support cited above, we would be wise to recognise the very real practical problems surrounding the setting up of an IWCE project - highly desirable though such a project would be. If we can build up a reasonably reliable base of this kind, however, we may be able to move forward to another IWCE-building conference, perhaps at Northern College in the autumn.

Higher than what?

Patrick Ainley

Practitioners in F&HE face cuts that have already begun and which will intensify under a new government. Raised student fees differentiated by subject and institution to between £5,000 and £10,000 - if not uncapped altogether - are also virtually inevitable, yet many academics and their managers see their salvation in the market this will create. Pursuing their own research careers and regarding teaching as inferior, many have lost sight of what higher education is supposed to be about. *Higher than what? Further than where?* as Sir Toby Weaver, author of the 1965 Woolwich Polytechnic speech, asked in his 1974 lecture at Rotherham College of Technology. This article, first published in Greenwich University's *Compass* journal, is intended to stimulate a debate that readers of *PSE* can also join.

Some academics assert that HE's 'higherness' comes from specialisation, but this is also the case in FE. Others advance a confused notion of academic freedom that allows HE teachers to set courses linked to their research interests. However, although there is not (yet) a National Curriculum for HE, many programmes of study have long been agreed with external bodies, while in institutions where the main activity of most staff is teaching or supporting teaching, research and scholarship exist only in 'pockets'.

So, academic ideas of 'higherness' tend to default to what they look for in student assignments: a critical analysis of the information required. This is seen as 'deep' rather than 'surface' knowledge. The same metaphor props up the notion of an ideal HE providing independent space 'above' mundane society. In this rarefied atmosphere, HE gives its student apprentices conceptual tools to question received ideas and test their own claims to truth against the relevant criteria of their particular subject, using scientific experiment, logical proof, scholarly or more directly social research, technical practice or artistic creation.

Thus students graduate to Mastery of their respective disciplines or to areas of practice in which they are able to defend, in the wider world, the conclusions they have arrived at in discussion with the community of scholars that includes their teachers. Such discus-

sion is encouraged by teachers, who themselves learn from representing their understandings based upon research in the subject communities to which they belong.

Yet the idea that universities prepare professional elites is no longer sustainable. The class division between the professions associated with HE and the trades associated with FE is one of many things that have changed lately. Meanwhile, competition in the examination of levels of literacy as proxies for what Bourdieu called 'cultural capital' (itself a proxy for money capital) has become intense. Competition starts earlier and goes on longer, with the result that the traditional selectivity of English education now stretches from primary to postgraduate schools. As Tim Brighouse quips: 'No matter how far you go in the English education system, they'll fail you in the end!'

Alternatives to traditional disciplinary academic specialisation, which is paradoxically supposed to provide generalised managerial knowledge, have been extinguished with the dominance of a subject-centred National Curriculum in schools and the imitation of the pre-existing university model by renamed polytechnics. Nevertheless, teachers in all HE institutions continue their mission impossible of widening participation whilst maintaining quality on a reduced unit of resource.

So, rather than seeking to perpetuate academic approaches, why do we not try to do something different? As Ruth Silver, ex-principal of Lewisham College, suggested five years ago, at the same time as Greenwich University and Goldsmiths' College students 'aim higher', why should they not also go further by attending their universities' partner colleges to acquire the practical competences that employers always complain are missing in graduates who have only theoretical 'book knowledge' without practical application. This would combine 'higher' with 'further', education with training, and 'deep' with 'surface' learning, or theory with practice. What Silver called 'thick HE' would thus unite practical competence with generalised knowledge.

This is also the way to think about 'employability'. Students outwith the Magic Five top universities, to which the big banks now reportedly restrict their

choice of recruits, have to convince the remaining employers that, while their abstract 'book knowledge' may not be expressed with the elegance of technical and largely literary exercises of the traditional type, their practical experience has given them the 'nouse' to put that theory into practice.

In the long term, however, the crisis of legitimacy for a competitive education system undermined by recession calls into question the continuing separation of the academic from the vocational (as in the latest Diploma qualifications, for instance) and demands the integration of generalised knowledge with skill and competence.

One immediate response might be a foundation year for all undergraduates as in Scotland, even though this goes against the logic of the European Bologna re-organisation, and also that rising fees mean more expense for students. Why not use the anticipated fee revision to admit that most of our nominally full-time students are actually part-time, and provide part-time courses costed and paced accordingly?

Living at home whilst studying also reduces the intensity of traditionally compressed 3-year subject degree courses. Alongside 'standards-based' vocational courses on which skill is confined to competence and knowledge to information, this all makes large parts of HE more like FE. This is not to disparage FE but to take the opportunity to complement academic courses with practical placements and training in the poly-technical generic competences required across the range of available employment (so-called 'personal and transferable skills').

It also recognises that you cannot have education without training (though you can have training without education). Real craft and professional skills can be cultivated in F&HE, alongside the generalised knowledge imparted by HE no longer restricted to its academic (largely literary) form.

Above all, educational community should be preserved in the dialogue of teachers with students. We also need debate amongst staff across disciplines, while being open to revision of our preconceptions and practices - just as the traditional notion of HE expects students to be (see above).

There has already been too great an expectation that the expansion of HE could change society by itself. So, while not abandoning education's transformative aspirations, we must be realistic about its prospects at the close of the economic period in which most of our students grew up. Between the 1986 'Big Bang' and 2008's Big Crunch, several things happened at once which should set the framework for discussion:

- **A reformation of social class** to which expanded education and training has contributed. Until the late 70s, many left school at 15/16 for 'jobs without education', but an associated trades union culture, as well as formal apprenticeships, has been

largely lost. New technology has been used to automate and outsource formerly skilled work, while the 'unskilled' section of the formerly manual working class has been relegated to so-called 'underclass' status. Meanwhile, processes of deskilling formerly applied to skilled manual workers are reaching up the new working-middle of society to reduce many former professions to the level of waged labour. Thus, widening participation in higher education has been presented as the professionalisation of the proletariat whilst disguising an actual proletarianisation of the professions.

- **A new market state has replaced the old welfare state.** In the administration of this 'post-welfare state', power contracts to the centre, as responsibility is contracted out to individual agents (institutions or individuals) for delivery. In education as elsewhere, this results in a new mixed economy, in which a state-subsidised private sector dominates a semi-privatised state sector. Despite calls for a return to Keynes, the new system remains in place, so that its individually competing institutions - such as schools, colleges and universities - depend upon centralised contract funding in the new marketplace for students and research.

- **Young people are overschooled and undereducated,** well described by a University of Greenwich Education Studies undergraduate in 2004: 'Students learn to connect their self esteem and what they may achieve in later life to their exam results. Over-assessment has made subject knowledge and understanding a thing of the past as students are put through a routine year after year, practising what exactly to write and where in preparation for exams'.

- **Under these competitive pressures, new Information and Communications Technology has facilitated a culture of cutting, pasting and plagiarising.** Despite the access to information which this has afforded, students are often not exactly illiterate and innumerate but they are certainly not expert readers or familiar with statistical probability, for instance. Worse - many are not aware of their limitations.

- **The massification of popular culture** has also added to the overwhelming of intellect by information.

To indicate the wider context of so-called 'dumbing down' goes beyond the knee-jerk academic and Conservative calls for more selective examination. Instead, F&HE should give those failed by overschooling an entitlement to overcome their undereducation. F&HE cannot do this by offering more of the same. Just how different is a matter for debate amongst a community of students and teachers aiming higher whilst going further.

Sean Vernell on young people

Colin Waugh

Sean Vernell, *Don't Get Young in the Third Millennium! Capitalism and the Demonising of the Young Working Class* (Bookmarks Publications, 2010), 40pp, £2.00

This is an interesting pamphlet which PSE readers would do well to look at. Sean Vernell is a lecturer, in English I think, at City and Islington College, and a prominent activist in UCLeft, both in London and nationally. (The pamphlet has a two-page foreword written by Michael Rosen in a language presumably intended to resemble how young people speak.)

In the 1970s, stimulated in part by academic research funding, there was a spate of book-length studies of working-class young people, including the collection of recorded material titled *The Paint House*, Mungham and Pearson's *Working Class Youth Culture*, Robbins and Cohen's *Knuckle Sandwich*, Marsh, Rosser and Harre's *The Rules of Disorder*, Dick Hebdige's *Subculture*, the work of Angela McRobbie, and, most influentially of all, Paul Willis's *Learning to Labour*. Sean's pamphlet is to be welcomed as an attempt to start further discussion in this area.

Sean's approach also has much to recommend it. He is right to make clear from the start that the crucial area is working-class young people, and not youth in the abstract, and right, also, when he emphasises that the working-class includes people like FE lecturers. Given the limitations of a short pamphlet, he is right again to review the history of 'moral panics' about young people going back into the first half of the 1800s - that is, to the birth of an industrial proletariat. Lastly, his analysis of the ways in which working-class young people's life chances now are under ruling class assault in

virtually every sphere - employment, education, housing, the family, criminality, racism, benefits - is eloquently and succinctly expressed. (He is better here on employment issues than the anti-vocational tendency of his earlier *Manifesto for FE* might lead readers to expect.) His pamphlet avoids completely the kind of 'theoretical' language that was used in the 1970s by academic commentators on youth to camouflage the tame political assumptions behind much of their work.

On top of all this, Sean is also right to focus in the second half of his pamphlet on a positive vision of what can and should be done, and on the active role that working-class young people can and should play in this. However, there are, I feel, at least two serious problems with the way he goes about this. (For reasons of space I will focus here on his overall approach rather than on specific measures which he proposes, several of which are worthy of detailed discussion.)

First, Sean himself must have reached school leaving age at the start of the 1980s - at the very moment, then, when the full weight of Thatcherism was thrown against working-class young people, and in the period which included the 'uprisings' in inner city areas across England and the government's response in the form of the Youth Training Scheme, launched by Norman Tebbit in 1981 and implemented from 1983. Behind these events lay the expulsion of young people from mainstream, unionised jobs that began with black 16 and 17 year olds as far back as the three-day week under Heath, and which by 1980 had spread much more widely, reversing the creation of apprenticeships that accompanied the 1964 Industrial Training Act. A

key priority for anyone wishing to take action now is to try and understand how the organised working class as a whole - ie and not merely its bureaucratic 'leaders' - so readily acquiesced in this expulsion. But Sean can write (p18): 'Throughout the 1980s more and more training schemes were launched: YOPs, YTS, MSC and others'. In other words, he has not given himself time to check the kind of basic information that you need if you want to understand how the state mobilised against young people of his generation. (The Youth Opportunities Programme was introduced in 1978. The Manpower Services Commission was a state agency set up in 1973.)

Secondly, Sean seeks to establish that sections of working-class young people either are already taking, or soon will take, a lead in a broad process of social struggle, and in the first sentence of his conclusion (p37), he says: 'The terrain on which young people are beginning to fight for a better world is far more favourable than it was the last time a wave of mass unemployment ravaged young people's lives' [ie in 1979 CW]. He then goes on to explain that the situation is more favourable now because 'the ideology of the free market' has 'spectacularly collapsed' whereas then its victory had been signalled by Margaret Thatcher's election. The point about ideology is right. However, something else has also collapsed in the meantime, namely working-class self organisation. We do need to focus on young people's resistance and on trying to restore their access to proper jobs. But we also need to focus on reversing this latter collapse, which entails looking to - and organising validly amongst - people in the 25 to 45 age range.

ESOL: a political history

Alice Robson

ESO^L is an area of education unique in its close relationship with migration, with government and societal views of migrants - and, over the past decade, increasingly bound up with immigration policy and controls.

The racism experienced by ESOL learners, in the interactions with public services, on the streets through racist abuse and discriminatory policing and through the pernicious effects of immigration controls (waiting for asylum/leave to remain decisions, the threat or reality of detention, doubts over whether family reunion will be permitted), has never been left at the classroom door. In 2002 the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act was passed, requiring those seeking citizenship to show 'a sufficient knowledge of English, Welsh or Scottish Gaelic and about life in the UK'. With its recent extension of this to indefinite leave to remain applicants, the link between English and the very right to stay in the UK makes ESOL an increasingly important part of the Government's agenda of ever-tightening immigration controls.

The bringing of ESOL into the 'Skills for Life' strategy alongside literacy and numeracy in 2001 resulted in materials for ESOL teaching and learning being produced by the Government. The ESOL materials produced by the then DfES in 2001 are an insight into government views of the ideal migrant, using example upon example of migrants as compliant 'model citizens'. The twin focuses are 'community cohesion' and 'employability'. Workers are taught through all the stages of getting a low-paid job (helpfully assisted in this by their local Job Centre), and how to communicate in deferential fashion when they get one. Interaction with those in positions of authority is problem-free, ignoring the dynamics of class and race which so often structure these exchanges. The underlying message is if you don't get what you need it is your fault not that of the authority figure.

Whichever government wins the election, the future is precarious for ESOL teachers and learners, with huge cuts being made to ESOL provision in many colleges across the UK in the next academic year, and beyond. And cuts will not happen across the board - with the current emphasis on 'employability', embedded courses targeting those who are likely to be able to get work are replacing classes at lower levels and for learners such as women with caring responsibilities who may be unable to work. And with funding tied to 'targets' (ie exams), learners who have little or no previous education, and may not be literate in their first language, are discriminated against.

ESOL is undoubtedly in challenging times, but what of the past? As an ESOL teacher fairly new to the profession I was interested to explore ESOL teaching and learning in historical perspective. Struggles and debates around teaching English to migrants are not limited to the 21st century. Can the history of ESOL give us any ideas of where to go with the problems we face today, and of how we might make our classrooms spaces where critical, class-conscious, anti-racist education can take place?

One of the major events in the early years of ESOL in the UK was the arrival of Jewish migrants from eastern and central Europe in the early 20th century, fleeing persecution by the Tsars who planned to 'de-Judaize' Russia. Then, as now, new migrants were denigrated in the British press, one publication exclaiming that 'many of them do not speak English and they mix very little with Englishmen'. Certainly the migrants' common use of Yiddish and their concentration in Whitechapel, often working in Jewish-owned and staffed workshops, meant that Yiddish remained for many the primary language of communication. However, as Sheila Rosenberg's history of ESOL in the UK (a detailed account of government responses to the

language needs of migrants and the organisation and practice of ESOL from the late 19th century to the early 21st) explains, some Jewish migrants did attend English classes at this time. This was a period of expanding municipal adult education provision, and, interestingly, English classes for migrants were offered alongside classes in the languages spoken by migrant communities, including Yiddish, German, Welsh and Irish. The emphasis was not just on new migrants learning English but also on mother-tongue provision, and on others having the opportunity to learn the language of the new migrant communities.

Migrants

After World War 2, migration from the New Commonwealth prompted government concerns about the language needs of new migrants. The 1963 Ministry of Education pamphlet *English for Immigrants* commented on the need for both English as an Additional Language (EAL) support and mother-tongue provision in schools. Largely focused on children, the chapter on adults was written by a government inspector whose experience of English teaching was limited to teaching English abroad. (Teachers who read the recent UK Border Agency - UKBA - consultation document on the pre-entry language requirement may have come to similar conclusions about the gap year activities of civil servants who wrote the astounding recommendations in that text.) As Rosenberg writes, there was no interest in the background of these ESOL learners - recently arrived from the Caribbean and South Asia and other New Commonwealth countries - or the needs they had. Of the Section 11 funding for new Commonwealth migrants used for education (both English and mother tongue provision), it was estimated that only 1 per cent was spent on adults. The government approach in this period of restricting migration through a series of immigration acts whilst claiming to improve the condition of those already here, in part through the measures in the 1968 Race Relations Act, was the context for the setting up of the Community Relations Commission to promote 'harmonious community relations'. Part of this strategy involved establishing adult community language schemes, an approach which presages the central role of learning English to New Labour's more recent 'community cohesion' strategy.

Much of the ESOL provision from the 1960s was voluntary-run, with classes taught by volunteer teachers who were usually untrained. Such teachers often worked alone, as 'home tutors' teaching in students' homes, and thus lacked the opportunity to

be part of a community of practice. According to Rosenberg, there was some college-based ESOL provision at this time, but it tended to be work-related. The role of the third sector in ESOL provision is a very timely issue, with cuts to FE colleges likely to result in more ESOL being provided by the voluntary sector. The 'New Approach' to ESOL, led by local councils working in partnership with local providers with the aim of reaching 'hard-to-reach' groups, is likely to exacerbate this trend. As Melanie Cook and James Simpson wrote in a recent article in the *Basic Skills Bulletin*, the need for this is not because *people* are hard to reach, but *provision*. The groups often identified as priorities are those excluded from college provision because of their immigration status (such as newly-arrived spouses), or those who would have attended outreach classes (such as women with childcare needs) which have been cut. The Migration Impact Fund, launched by Labour last year, uses increased visa fees to provide services (including ESOL) for migrants, much of which has gone to third sector organisations. Now, as in the 60s and 70s, voluntary sector provision means that the Government avoid looking like they are spending money on migrants.

The Inner London Education Authority (ILEA), set up in 1963, became increasingly concerned with ESOL in the 1970s. In 1977 a director for ESOL was appointed, and ILEA's Language and Literacy Unit, focused on literacy but also covering ESOL, was established in 1978. The unit pushed for full-time appointments for teachers, programmes of staff development for (the largely volunteer) teachers, and the production of ESOL materials. They also recommended that colleges produce language policies, often developed as part of their wider anti-racist policy. Much of the work of ILEA, particularly in the field of literacy, was innovative, radical and critically considered questions of race, class and gender. *Language and Power*, published in 1990, is a textbook for students and teachers which is underpinned by the recognition that attitudes to languages and different languages varieties are largely determined by the power relations between different groups in society. Migrants from the Caribbean and India brought with them varieties of English which, in the UK, were frequently regarded as 'bad' English. *Language and Power* shows that Standard English is just one form of English - other forms are different, not 'wrong'. The low status of non-standard varieties of English is not a result of their linguistic features, but rather a result of the structuring role of class and imperialism in society. Teaching in inner London today, with many students using the Multicultural London English that is spoken in their homes - yet faced with materials

that use only standard English, I found this book hugely useful in thinking through ways of working with learners to consider different varieties of English and the differential access to power that these provide.

While ESOL may have been less radical than literacy (perhaps because of the influence of EFL, particularly in terms of materials), the 80s certainly provide some examples of innovation in ESOL teaching and learning. Teachers working today who began teaching in this period have commented on the continuing influence these have had in informing their perspective of ESOL teaching. Some of the materials produced in this period show a marked difference from the Skills for Life materials described above. The BBC's course 'Speak for Yourself' - a television series with accompanying book that was published in twelve languages - takes different situations where it might be difficult for people to get what they need and looks at why it is difficult, what the point of view of the other person might be as well as the necessary language. As the introduction to the book states, communication is much more important than knowing the right words: 'It is not enough to know what words to say. To get results, it is necessary to know how to say them'. Scenarios include phoning in sick at work, applying for benefits, dealing with racism at the dry cleaners and being stopped by the police.

Awareness

The Industrial Language Training Programmes which ran from the late 1970s to the late 1980s provided work-based ESOL for migrant workers, but saw communication as something people needed to share responsibility for and thus also provided training in cross-cultural and language awareness for employers and other employees. This is in sharp contrast to New Labour policy which, particularly following the 2003 Bradford and Burnley riots, is premised on laying blame for a lack of 'community cohesion' on migrant communities (particularly migrant women), without an acknowledgement of shortages in provision or on the racism that persists in British society. As Rosenberg argues, the strength in Industrial Language Training lay not only in its bringing together of the latest approaches to language learning with the belief that communication needs to involve both employer and employee, but also 'a clear understanding of the powerful influence of racist attitudes in the workplace'. The anti-racist campaigns of the 1980s were an important context to ESOL teaching. Rakesh Bhanot and Yasmin Alibhai's 1988 article 'Issues of Anti-Racism and

Equal Opportunities in ESL' provided a sharp critique of patronising ESOL materials, and urged teachers to critically assess the materials they used for hidden racism. The importance of learners' own experiences, frequently affected by discrimination, were validated through the publishing of student writing which provided important opportunities for their voices to be heard. Inspiring examples include the National Extension College's *Asian Women Speak Out* published in 1979 and ILEA's *My Personal Language History* published in 1989.

The late 80s and the 90s saw drastic changes to the context of ESOL teaching and learning as part of Thatcher's attacks on education and migration. In terms of immigration, we entered a period of ever-tighter controls. In terms of adult education, ILEA was abolished in 1988, too innovative and too left-wing for the Conservatives to tolerate. Funding from the Industrial Training Units was transferred to the Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit (as the Basic Skills Agency, now part-run by the private, multi-million pound profit-making consultancy firm Tribal). FE colleges were removed from local authority control in 1992. Mother tongue provision was no longer funded by Section 11, a funding stream which shifted from being post-based to project-based, became target-driven, and open to private and third-sector providers as well as local authorities. Section 11 funding was much reduced by the mid 90s and stopped altogether in 1998.

The history of ESOL in the last decade, characterised by the bringing of ESOL into the Skills for Life strategy alongside literacy and numeracy in 2001, the rhetoric of responsibility (read: compulsion) for migrants to learn English in politicians' speeches following Bradford and Burnley and the Cantle report which followed, the ever tighter links between ESOL and immigration policy, and the introduction of fees for ESOL learners (but not literacy and numeracy learners, a discrimination strongly felt by ESOL learners) in 1997 is better known, particularly for newer teachers like myself.

Political

But what can we learn from taking a longer view? Perhaps most obviously, looking at the history of ESOL over the past century really brings home the inherently political nature of the profession. Successful governments attempt to avoid spending money (or at the very least avoid looking like they are spending money) on migration, with provision being more commonly seen as a tool for 'community cohesion', to mend the social ill that is migration, rather than respected as a field of education. The

past also provides us with examples of innovative, radical approaches to teaching and learning. These serve as a useful antidote to the competency-based approach - successfully resisted by many ESOL teachers - where the role of the teacher is to tick things off from a list of 'competencies', setting students SMART targets which can be neatly recorded on the individual learning plan. As we enter a new stage of cuts, and consequently a fight for jobs and places, our struggle as teachers for the future of ESOL must also be one which rejects the narrow view of ESOL promoted by the 'community cohesion' and 'employability' agendas. Instead, we should build on the work of teachers in the past in creating liberatory education which supports migrants - old and new - to learn the English they need for whatever reasons they need or want to.

Many thanks to those who have listened to the talk on which this article is based and shared ideas and reflections with me: teachers and activists attending the February meeting of the Campaign Against Immigration Controls; level one ESOL students at Tower Hamlets College and their teacher Wojtek Dmochowski. Also thanks to Sue Davis for sharing with me her collection of ESOL materials.

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