

Review of post-16 Education and Vocational Training

Introduction

The Scottish Government's review of post-16 education and training has now been published. Its remit included all publically funded provision (excluding higher education in universities) as well as provision funded by employers and learners. Willie Roe, ex-Chair of Skills Development Scotland, led the review.

Purpose of the review

To help to achieve

- Significantly better value for Scottish Government expenditures
- More effective connections on employment matters between Scottish and UK Governments
- Faster progress towards Government Economic Strategy targets and National Outcomes

Key findings

The report emphasises the critical importance of post-16 education and training. It argues that arrangements need to be strengthened and better integrated into other parts of the education and employment systems. It calls for other bodies to make detailed decisions on how to move forward though. The report lays on a set of 12 key principles to a learner centred system. The system should for example be

- Easy to understand and navigate
- Operate in a transparent and accountable environment
- Be market led with strong employer engagement
- Attract an ambitious and adaptive workforce
- Roe believes a lack of transparency affects all levels of the system and impedes "the achievement of peak performance"

The report calls for a new funding model which includes individuals, employers and public funding. It does not offer a clear model or even evaluate options.

Roe Recommendations

The report makes 46 recommendations. The key points are

- A time limited commission to be set up to drive forward the transition to an integrated system. It should include the leaders of each part of the system and equivalent numbers representing the interests of business/employers, learners/trainees and the wider community. It should consider engaging specialist help.
- Skills Development Scotland (SDS) should provide public information about the system of resource allocation and distribution of further education provision including rationale for year-on-year changes
- Scottish Government should undertake a fundamental review of how post-16 education is financed
- Feasibility of a national system of personal development accounts to be explored

KEY POINTS:

- The big questions around funding remain unanswered
- Calls for the Government to set up another review to look at funding
- Calls for a commission to drive for change though unclear on what the change should be
- Calls for devolution of labour market services of Job Centre Plus and other DWP funding streams



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- Work should move forward quickly in particular on careers information and the My World of Work website
- Scottish Government to continue to work to secure the devolution of labour market services of Job Centre Plus and the resources provided by DWP and its suppliers for the Work Programme in Scotland
- Need to adapt systems to create something more unified and focused to support both economic inclusion and advance economic growth
- At every regional and local level there are important roles for business to play in schools and skills and vocational systems. LA should establish a Business-Education Network. These should be co-funded by private and public sectors
- SDS should continue to explore private sector investment partnership opportunities for the products and services they are developing.
- Explore ways of making the system more 50 weeks a year 6 days a week 15 hours a day
- FE colleges should take the lead and explore the scope for shared/outsourced services.

UNISON View

UNISON welcomes the commitment to lifelong learning and comment on the value of Union Learning in the report. We also support the devolution of labour market services. We do have concerns about increased privatisation within education particularly as there are no concrete options for the big issue of funding. This needs to be resolved. We agree that there should be a mixture of public and business funding. The fairest way to do this is through taxation and a training levy on employers. This ensures that all businesses contribute rather than freeloader off the better businesses who do invest in the development of staff.

My World of Work promises much but it is still only a website. However good it turns out to be it won't replace the face to face contact and support that many people need. Many people face considerable barriers to finding employment or training need a great deal of support over a long period of time. This investment will save money in the long term by keeping people off benefits.

Many of his recommendations are current practice. The careers service has focused on "career planning" for some time and we are not sure how this differs from "career management" and to suggest that the FE system needs to longer hours shows little understanding of current timetables and flexible learning options in place.

The call for the system to be learner focused is welcome. Learning at all levels cannot be based on short-term business needs. There is little incentive for businesses to train staff who will move on. It does though benefit all of society and the economy to have skilled flexible workers who can continue to develop skills for changing workplaces throughout their lives.

Once again there is a call for more work on increased shared services; this is already high on the agenda. UNISON remains sceptical promised savings levels in a range of the projects being discussed across the public sector.

Action for Branches

Branches should check with relevant employers to see if they are taking any action on the basis of this report. Key issues include privatisation of services, shared services, changes in terms and conditions and job losses. Please feedback to Kay Sillars in the Bargaining and Campaigns Team.

Further info

Roe Review

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2011/08/15095448/17>

Clyde Valley Review

http://www.unison-scotland.org.uk/briefings/b009_Bargaining_Brief_ClydeValleyShareServicesBusinessCase_August2011.pdf

Christie Commission

[http://www.unison-scotland.org.uk/briefings/244\(243\)Public%20ServiceReformJan2011.pdf](http://www.unison-scotland.org.uk/briefings/244(243)Public%20ServiceReformJan2011.pdf)

Section 52 guidance

<http://www.unison-scotland.org.uk/briefings/s52%20guidance.pdf>



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