UALL Universities Association for Lifelong Learning

Future Directions for Lifelong Learning

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12th October 2011

Future Directions for Lifelong Learning

- Has part time come of age at last?
- On the other hand has Lifelong Learning had its day?
- Where should we look for new directions for Lifelong Learning?

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- Origins (1947) in university adult education departments
- Now broad-ranging work in all aspects of lifelong learning – access, CPD, PT degrees, public programmes, etc
- Maintain essential values of liberal student-centred learning

Lifelong Learning

- By definition all-encompassing

  For this presentation:
- personal, community and professional development
- relatively small programmes
- virtually all part-time
- part time is a mode, Lifelong Learning is a concept

Has part time come of age?

- No longer obscured or forgotten in policy statements
- More or less parity in support
- The entitlement to loans is crucial especially in high-fee culture
- Relatively low threshold for loans of 30 credits

has Lifelong Learning as a concept had its day?

- traceable as far back as the 1919 Report:

  …an inseparable aspect of citizenship, and therefore both universal and lifelong
- appeared briefly in the UK in the 1970s
- reappears after 1997: Blunkett Foreword to *The Learning Age* (1998)
- soon part of every mission statement

Has Lifelong Learning as a concept had its day?

- a problematic term
- like other terms for an undeniable good it is too vague and prey to abuse
- in application reduced to opposite of visionary:

    narrow, instrumental, vocational programmes

    aim not quality of life or citizenship but employability and economic contribution

Lifelong Learning for the immediate future?

- Out of favour in Whitehall corridors?
- Too closely associated with New Labour?
- In policy rhetoric does have currency:

  Education should not stop when a person leaves school. The opportunities and enjoyment it offers should be available to people throughout their lives in different forms; full-time and part-time, academic and vocational, whatever will help them achieve their goals at that stage of their life (White Paper).

New Challenges; New Chances

It helps people feel a new sense of purpose and pride in the present and hope for the future.

Opportunities for adults to gain new learning and skills throughout life… and the positive engagement of people with their communities… are preconditions of personal growth and social mobility. They are guarantors of the values upon which our democracy is founded.

Where now for Lifelong Learning? Supply, Need, Demand

SUPPLY: desolate landscape?

- Provision severely reduced in both FE and HE
- Part time financial equity, though very welcome, will work against lifelong learning in two significant ways:

1. students studying for less than 30 credits not eligible for loans
2. no longer incentive to charge below pro rata

Where now for Lifelong Learning?
SUPPLY

- high-fee culture could be up to £750 for a ten week 10 credit course

- science and social science –funding all but eliminated

- can’t expect reintroduction of funding

Where now for Lifelong Learning?
NEED

- axiomatic that learning is a lifelong process
- need is increasing and widening
- life changes are greater, more frequent and less predictable
- increased life expectancy: extension in initial and later stages
- period of economically productive life squeezed

Where now for Lifelong Learning? NEED

- community need
- criticism of policy in recent years: lack of commitment to community learning
- political rhetoric: ‘big society’, citizenship

Where now for Lifelong Learning?
DEMAND

- demand strong – but not well articulated
- big cuts in FE, HE
- 1.5 million affected
- surprising not more protest?

New directions for lifelong learning: Provision; funding; short-term projects; market

Many negative aspects:

- provision is in a poor state
- no new funding for foreseeable future
- local or short-term projects – too precarious
- can’t be market led - prices out all except high cost CPD especially non-traditional and less advantaged

Possible directions for lifelong learning Positives?

Provision:

- still some good public programmes
- where formal provision ended, some small local programmes
- demand still strong

Possible directions for lifelong learning: funding

- no new funding for foreseeable future
- but can we attach lifelong learning to other political initiatives?
- realising the Big Society, Citizenship and Community require what used to be called ‘liberal adult education’

Possible directions for lifelong learning: funding

Some aspects of need are recognised

e.g. link to health and wellbeing

it contributes to older people's health and quality of life by enabling them to stay physically and mentally active and preserve their independence

John Hayes: Foreword to *New Challenges New Chances*

Possible directions for lifelong learning
Short-term projects:

- can’t build system on short-term projects
- but sustain some of the achievements of short-life projects?

  Beacons for Public Engagement

  Lifelong Learning Networks

Possible directions for lifelong learning: market

- cannot just be market led
- universities/FECs strapped for cash as never before
- after introduction of variable fees HE providers tended not to charge pro rata part time fees
- can we convince them still to do this?

Need to convince HEIs affordable lifelong learning provision is worth it – how?

A possible example:

growing evidence of value of civic engagement:

- mutual benefits to HEI and community
- engagement in city/region development
- community engagement projects
- can include research as well as teaching

(*Reinventing the Civic University*, NESTA, 2009)

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