



The All-Party Parliamentary **University Group**

University APPG meeting – Employability and Skills

18:00-19:30, Tuesday 23 October, Committee Room 2, House of Lords

Chair:

Roberta Blackman-Woods MP, Chair of the APPUG

Speakers:

Dinah Caine CBE, Chair of Council, Goldsmiths University of London

John Cope, Head of Education and Skills, CBI

Dr Bob Gilworth, President, Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services (AGCAS)

James Frith MP, MP for Bury North and Member of the Education Select Committee

Dinah Caine opened her presentation by stressing that a strong theme throughout discussions at Labour and Conservative Party Conferences was the 4th Industrial Revolution and the UK's preparations for it. She mentioned Brexit, the main theme of conference discussions, and explained how the likely reduction in immigration will increase the need for a trained domestic workforce. The country had survived and prospered through other industrial revolutions, but there needed to be more focus on the industrial strategy for a success to be made of this one she thought.

Dinah referred to her work serving on the Civic Universities Commission and noted their interim report had concentrated on highlighting adult education as an area that needs much more work; there were now 111,000 fewer students aged 25 and over in higher education than there were in 2012. This decline presented a material threat to the economy due to workers in several sectors facing the pressure of automation and the UK was behind competitor countries in terms of preparing for such changes. In terms of making progress, she thought universities were 'frozen' by current policies that focused predominantly on teaching traditional degree courses.

Turning to her work leading the education and skills programme of the Creative Industries Council, Dinah stated the creative industries were now worth almost £92 billion to the UK economy, which was more than various other high-profile sectors such as automotive and oil and gas put together. Jobs in the creative industries often combined STEM subjects (mainly digital) with creativity and were also far less likely to be at risk of automation than across the general labour market.

Policy makers often asked which specific skills gaps needed to be filled which was not a robust way of planning for the future given that many jobs of the future did not yet exist. The focus was on aligning skills with certain industries and prioritising some sectors over others, this contrasted with what had led to success in previous industrial revolutions where the need to bring science and art together was understood. She was also critical of the decline in creativity in the school curriculum due to various factors such as the EBacc and austerity. Linked to this, she questioned the decision to make apprenticeship standards

completely job specific at a time of massive change. Increasingly people were doing various jobs throughout their life she said, referencing Facebook Chief Operating Office Sheryl Sandberg's quote that "careers are a jungle gym not a ladder".

Finally she stated that although she broadly supported the introduction of the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) she thought there would be unintended consequences of linking economic benefits (i.e. salary) with teaching quality.

John Cope

John Cope began by explaining the CBI's unique role in the education and skills landscape and the close working they enjoyed with various organisations within the whole sector. Education was the first priority of the CBI's members due to the role it played in driving up productivity and social justice he said, before speaking about where the results of the latest trends survey put his members regarding skills need. The percentage of employers reporting they struggle to fill vacancies remained constant at 60%, and 75% predicted they would struggle with roles that required higher level skills.

In terms of the 2018 Education and Skills survey, John told members that 87% of those surveyed expected to maintain or grow the number of graduates they employed, and 80% of members valued a degree at 2.1 or first level above other qualifications.

Moving onto the work the CBI was undertaking with Universities UK, he referred to the rigidity of provision which was seen a barrier given that many employers valued 'just in time' training to fill forthcoming gaps rather than full three year degrees yet still wanted a high quality provider such as a university.

He described the apprenticeship levy as an incredible opportunity to expand provision of higher and degree apprenticeship whilst acknowledging the problems that had occurred. It was vital for degree apprenticeships to be valued by those offering careers advice. In terms of other policy developments, he spoke about the work the CBI was doing with other stakeholders such as the Association and Colleges, Treasury and Department for Education on a National Retraining Scheme, stressing it did not aim to create new provision but was instead focused on better signposting to existing provision.

Bob Gilworth opened his contribution by describing the trends that could be seen in university careers advice provision; according to a survey of AGCAS members just over 75% of university careers services are now managing placements and internships and this is one indicator of the trend towards being directly imbedded in provision rather than being a stand-alone service. He thought this was positive as it ensured a broader range of students were getting advice rather than just those that were already engaged and therefore more likely to do well entering the labour market.

He then spoke about the Careers Registration system which had been rolled out across 60 institutions in the UK and was focused on gaining a better understanding of students' starting points and journeys rather than their final outcomes. It allowed for targeted interventions at different stages. Data had shown that career planning made the biggest difference to students' outcomes and therefore professional careers advice was still hugely valuable he said, stressing that increasingly in the future individuals would need career management skills to navigate through the complex careers landscape.

Turning to the graduate outcomes survey that is replacing DLHE, he told members that for the first time it would include questions giving the 'graduate voice', asking students whether their degree outcome was good for them based on their own personal aspirations. He warned against a system that judged success on salary alone.

James Frith MP stressed the need for all people to benefit from the Fourth Industrial Revolution regardless of the different definitions given to it; the movement needed to be progressive and ethical with human and social evolution imparted to artificial intelligence. James then encouraged all attendees to submit evidence to the Education Committee's ongoing inquiry, which he described as significant, into the issue.

Lifelong learning does not take a linear form anymore and should be accessed through higher and further education throughout people's lives, leading to a higher form of training. He then said he was personally interested in examining how to ensure individuals could commission training for themselves having assessed their existing skills with their employers or trade union.