

Education & Training discussion document – for SWAPU meeting March 14th

This is intended to help FSB Regions and Branches discuss the issues of Education and Training, in preparation for the SWAPU meeting of March 14th. Please let Vivienne Rayner have your thoughts, comments and suggestions for action by February 28th at the latest.

For the purposes of this discussion, Education will be taken to mean any course of study NOT directed to employment. Training will be taken to mean any course of study that is directly employment related.

Education

1. What do businesses expect from 'education'?

Please use exact descriptions like 'ability to communicate' or 'ability to accept criticism'.

It might be easier to consider expectations by age – eg expectations from a 16 year old, from an 18 year old etc.

2. Thinking about your own experience of young people in the workplace within the last 5 years, what has pleasantly surprised you? To what do you attribute the cause of the pleasant surprise – school, parents? If school, what was special/different about it?

3. Thinking about your own experience of young people in the workplace within the last 5 years, what has appalled you? To what do you attribute the cause – school, parents? If school, what was special/different about it?

4. 'Enterprise' is now supposed to be part of the school curriculum:

Enterprise education, as a key element of work-related learning, has been a statutory requirement at Key Stage 4 since last year.

The new entitlement includes the equivalent of five days' enterprise activity — for instance, setting up and running a real business — linked to existing activities such as work experience and business mentoring.

The funding will be distributed to schools through the Standards Fund. It will not be ring-fenced, in line with the New Relationship with Schools — but Ofsted inspections will cover the provision of enterprise education.

What it is:

Enterprise education consists of enterprise capability supported by better financial capability and economic and business understanding. Young people need opportunities to be enterprising through applying their knowledge, skills and attributes — to 'make their mark'

- a) Is this a good idea? Why do you say that? What is needed to make this idea work well?**
- b) What problems do you foresee? How could they be overcome?**
- c) Are you aware of any projects in your area? Do they have any particularly good points or bad errors that it is worth passing on?**

5. Young Enterprise (YE)

Like most of us, I thought 'Young Enterprise' was 'only' the scheme where groups of young people set up their own businesses and ran them for a year. They do everything from raising the finance to developing and market a product, through to the final business report, profit and loss etc. During the process, they are supported by business mentor – a volunteer from business.

However, if you go to the website at; <http://www.young-enterprise.org.uk/> , you can see how the programme has developed to include young people from age 4 to 19, plus entrepreneurship master classes and a graduate programme.

Many FSB members are involved as volunteers. Naturally they would not spend their time on something they did not think worthwhile. Tony Smith from Weston-super-Mare is involved and is highly complementary about the process.

If you have any members who are involved, it would probably be worth discussing key lessons to be learnt from YE for the 'Enterprise Programme' in schools.

6. Suggestions for Action

It is very easy to say what is wrong and what could be improved. The 'how' is much harder.

One of the reasons the FSB has gained respect is because we offer solutions and not just the sound bite whinge!

One of the outcomes of this policy development process should be a few well targeted actions that we can call on the Government, on the RDA, on education authorities or on local schools to undertake.

So, given the comments, thoughts and experiences detailed above what should the FSB be looking to change?

How do we change things?

What if anything, is the FSB and or its members prepared to do to help?

7. Careers advice

In our current policy we call for better Careers advice. We also call for Careers advice to be shaped by local labour market needs and the vacancies actually available. At the moment Careers advice is based around helping the individual decide what they want regardless of the possibilities of employment.

What do you think about this?

Recently, there was a call for careers advice to start with primary children.

What do you think about this?

8. **IAG or Information, Advice and guidance** is how the bureaucrats refer to Careers advice. There have been suggestions that the same people could advise employers on training needs as advise individuals on career choices.

What do you think about this idea?

9. Some time ago, the government announced a **target of 50% of those up to age 30 to gain a degree**. This has now been diluted to 'have experience of higher education'.

The FSB has opposed this target.

What do you think?

10. **Any other comments about the 'education' side of the debate?**

Training

11. 'Barriers' shows us that the **reasons small businesses do not get involved in training are cost, suitability of training courses and distance from place of delivery**. SW research has added lack of knowledge about what training would help the small business.

Are there any other reasons why small businesses do not get involved in training?

12. **Cost - One of the FSB's sayings is that one person's grant is someone else's tax increase**, so cost as a barrier to training needs to be carefully considered.

In the SW, apart from Cornwall, small businesses are more likely to use a private provider than a publicly funded FE college.

Why? Is it because that way they get what they want when they want?

Is the cost of training too much because it comes as a package rather than the precise bit the business wants?

Is the cost of the training high in relation to expected benefit to the bottom line?

For a small business, is the cost just too large a chunk of cash to pay out?

Government priorities are putting public money behind raising basic literacy levels to get more of our workforce able to read, write and do maths in an effective usable way. **Does this make sense to you?**

In what other ways should Government be helping businesses with training – cash grants, making the FE colleges change, and better basic education at school? How?

14. Suitability of training courses.

The FSB has been campaigning for 'demand- led' courses. Indeed, one of the reasons we think members use private providers is that they get what they want when they want it.

In this case, are we right in expecting FE colleges to be able to the same? Is it a realistic expectation, or are we just forcing them into competition with private providers, many of whom are our members?

How far is the SW problem one of small businesses unable to afford a private trainer being forced to take the offering of the local FE college or not bother?

How far does the lack of choice between FE colleges affect the situation?

One of the problems FE colleges tell us they suffer from is that when they ask businesses what they want, businesses don't know – but then nobody knows what they don't know. For this reason the FSB is looking forward to the brokerage scheme – it will provide credible, consistent feedback on the gaps in what is available. Meanwhile very few colleges that we are aware of take the simple course of noting unfilled requests for training as an indicator of unmet demand – and they want to teach us how to run a business!

Another issue around using FE colleges is their insistence that the whole course is followed, when a business might just need one small part.

Are we right to campaign for business to be able to access selected parts of courses?

We are told that to change this will require changing the funding and/or assessment mechanism. **Is it sufficiently important to try and get this changed?**

15. Distance from place of delivery.

Again, one of the reasons for using a private trainer is that the site of training delivery is more negotiable.

What are the real practical examples you and your members have encountered where distance has become a real issue? Concrete examples worked up into case studies can be very powerful tools when we are lobbying for change.

Does anyone have any examples where a college or training organisation has adapted its training delivery to make life easier for you and/or your trainee? Again examples of good practice, where we can say 'Such and such a college did this to help, why can't you?' are incredibly powerful in getting change.

Are there any other ways of dealing with 'distance' that you have found valuable?

16. You don't know what you don't know!

How do you find out what training will best help your business?

We have been lobbying for a skills brokerage provided by Business Links to assist businesses in working out what training they need to achieve their business plan and where they can access such training. **Does this make sense?**

What else would help businesses decide what training would actually be of benefit?

17 Any other comment you want to make about training?

Vivienne Rayner
27th October
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