

# **Leadership in Higher Education**

**– in difficult times**

**Lecture at Cardiff University's Regeneration**

**Institute**

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**Learning**

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Next week, I expect the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales to provide me with its Action Plan for the implementation of our strategy for Higher Education, *For our Future*.

They will do so three weeks before a budget that will set the context for UK public spending for the rest of this financial year, and a few months before we have a comprehensive spending review that will determine spending patterns for the bulk of this Parliament, and probably for the bulk of the next Assembly term to 2015. Also, a few months before the Browne review on tuition fees is published – with a considerable amount of jockeying already evident.

We are, so the new Chief Secretary of the Treasury tells us, in an age of austerity. And £200 million cuts in higher education in England announced yesterday have rammed that point home. So the focus of my lecture tonight is on the theme of leadership in difficult times. I will argue that the public spending backdrop makes our higher education strategy more relevant, not less; and that we need to see real leadership from within Higher Education institutions in Wales if we are to make the advances necessary.

I will be blunt and I will be candid. In the first six months I have been in this post, I have begun to wonder whether the Higher Education sector in Wales actually wants the Assembly Government to have a higher education strategy, or whether it even

believes that there is such a thing as a Welsh higher education sector. I am not alone in this view.

## **Slide 2**

A year ago, the Assembly's Audit Committee, as it was then called, said:

'Institutions appear not to recognise that the world has moved on since devolution in 1999, and that, to all intents and purposes, they are very much part of a Welsh HE sector and a wider Welsh public sector.'

Indeed, I am not clear – eleven years after the National Assembly was created, and thirteen years after our historic referendum vote - that the higher

education sector in Wales welcomes devolution or democratic accountability at all. Since our education agenda in Wales is based on the principle of democratisation, that is problematic. Our agenda is the completion the next phase of what Raymond Williams almost 50 years ago called 'the long revolution'. Indeed, let's remind ourselves of a phrase of Raymond Williams from that book:

### **Slide 3**

'We must certainly see the aspiration to extend the active process of learning, with the skills of literacy and other advanced communication, to all people rather than limited groups, as comparable in importance to the growth of democracy and the rise of scientific industry.'

Our agenda of democratisation relates to our ambitions to widen participation in HE still further; to a refocusing of the relationship between higher education and government; to the governance of HE institutions; and the role of HE institutions within their regions, their communities, and internationally.

Today I want to re-state some key principles that underpin our approach to higher education. But I will begin with a quick overview of the challenges facing me as Education Minister in general; then move on to higher education in Wales and its future.

I regard the job of Education Minister as one of the most challenging and one of the most interesting and important in government.

In principle, it should be quite simple. The job is to raise standards, to world-class levels, and to spread opportunity and equality of life-chances and outcomes. Ensuring that the resources are present for those who need them at the front line.

My mantra, as I have said before, is straightforward:

#### **SLIDE 4**

- Better implementation
- Fewer initiatives
- Keep it simple

I happen to think a small country should be able to do things smartly and simply.

The job of the Education Minister is to keep a sharp grip on the big picture, and not to get drowned by the detail of the day to day decisions within the system. To avoid 'distractors', in the language of the Canadian educationalist Michael Fullan, or as we would say, distractions.

In Wales, over the last decade, we have established a variety of exciting initiatives:

- Establishing the Foundation Phase –widely praised across the sector and across the world
- Creating the Welsh bacc – which Professor Anthony Seldon has described as in some ways 'actually superior' to the International Baccalaureate – with the curriculum broadened to include vocational pathways

- Developing the 14-19 learning pathways – a model that others say England should learn from
- Leading the way in grant support for university students
- With a strong two-language focus, with our first Welsh medium education strategy published last month.
- And a clear strategy for higher education, to which I will return

To add to these you may well have heard my statement in the Assembly Plenary this afternoon about the future direction of the Welsh National Bursary. We are delivering on our commitment to launch a national bursary framework based on

the principles of transparency and consistency across Wales.

We will incorporate the Welsh National Bursary within the higher education statutory student support system as an integral part of the Assembly Learning Grant and Special Support Grant, with eligible students receiving an increased level of award, wherever they study across the UK.

They will be phased in from 2011-12 and result in £600 per annum grant for eligible students with home incomes of less than £34,000. These will be funded by gradual reductions in HEFCW's grant. In return, institutions will be freed up to

spend a greater proportion of the tuition fee income in line with their missions.

Going forward, we should learn from, and fully engage with, international best practice. There is a clear Welsh direction, but that does not mean we should not learn from international best practice – from Scandinavia, from Scotland, from England, from Canada, the United States – wherever.

I am concerned more about standards than structures – except where structures get in the way of delivery.

Last week I published the PWC review of the cost of administering the education system. That will help us shape our budgets for the next financial year and

beyond. We need to make the best use of all of the resources available to us. I want to reduce bureaucracy, avoid duplication and ensure that as much funding as possible reaches the front line.

That review of funding for education in Wales aims to help streamline the education system, make it lean and effective, and ensure that we deliver the best possible service to our learners. The PWC review has specific implications for higher education, to which I will come.

As I have said before, the Assembly Government's Education budget can no longer be a Christmas Tree with presents for everyone. Money will follow One Wales commitments and Ministerial objectives.

The financial climate will be challenging. But it may also force us to think more deeply about priorities.

Over the last three decades, the language of individual choice and the market has come to dominate almost every level of public life and social discourse, including in higher education.

The reality of the present crisis – induced by unregulated markets – may enable us to focus more closely on the real limits to markets, the real limits to individual choice, and the need for real limits to competition, not least in higher education.

For example, as a society, we need to ensure that we are allowing certain kinds of priority subjects to be maintained in our higher education system in Wales. That is a constraint on choice. We have

made a positive decision to promote and protect the Welsh language and facilitate the growth of study through the medium of Welsh. That is a widening of choice, in that previous generations did not have that opportunity – but it is also a conscious policy decision which establishes certain requirements and obligations on providers.

This leads us back to ‘the language of priorities’ which as Aneurin Bevan told us, is ‘the religion of socialism’. You will be hearing a lot more about the language of priorities in the future.

So what does that mean for higher education?

First, a recognition that the development of higher education in any society will be influenced by public priorities.

Second, a recognition that choices are and always will be limited by resources. No institution has always taught and researched in every subject. But Governments will make strategic choices about the range of subjects that need to be maintained across a higher education system for economic and social well-being. That is why the HEFCW remit letter requires them to safeguard certain subjects and forms of provision across Wales.

Third, a collective responsibility – upon all of us – to eliminate unnecessary and nugatory competition if we are to develop excellence and quality in

research and learning throughout Wales. That is why, for example, HEFCW's remit letter requires them for the first time to submit an annual capital plan to me.

The language of priorities.

I will come back to this later, but let me re-state now some of the objectives of our higher education strategy, *For our Future*, launched last year by my predecessor Jane Hutt.

I want to begin by stating the obvious – as we know, there are numerous examples of international excellence in HE in Wales and some areas of outstanding strength, which is a cause for congratulations. But as my predecessor said in her

introduction to *For Our Future*, 'higher education in Wales needs to change, and change fast'.

I do want to acknowledge the successes of the Welsh Higher Education System:

- quality in teaching and learning recognised by the QAA
- student satisfaction levels higher in Wales than in England, as registered by the National Student Survey
- Wales is a popular place to study and a net importer of students
- It has one of the world's top one hundred universities, here in Cardiff
- We already have a better record for widening access compared with other parts of the UK

- We have world-leading research across Wales, not least in this institution
- A strong performance in spin-out activity and in graduate start-ups compared to our population level
- Reasonable performance in collaborative research funding and active patents

In terms of international excellence, Cardiff University, for example, rightly celebrates in its annual report Professor Julie Williams and her team's breakthroughs in the genetics of Alzheimer's Disease, and the involvement of the School of Physics and Astronomy in the international consortium which built the Herschel Space Observatory. The University has decided to focus on a small number of University Research Institutes

to build on existing international recognition. I welcome the fact that Cardiff has a vision 'to be one of the world's leading universities with an academic community recognised for its international distinction and impact.'

- I also welcome the fact that EADS has partnered with Cardiff University to establish a research fund which aims to create a lead UK / European location for advanced communications and performance engineering in Wales.
- This is an excellent example of work in this area, and Professor Simon Bradley, EADS, presented to the R&D Panel, chaired by the Deputy Minister for Science, Innovation and Skills, last week on the groundbreaking partnership between HE, business and Government that has made this

possible - 20 PhD students sponsored in Wales,  
Intellectual Property owned by the Foundation,  
large exciting projects with international partners  
and involving HEIs across Wales and far beyond  
but, with Cardiff University having a very important  
role at the heart of this.

We set out clear expectations of the HE sector in  
Wales in *For our Future*:

- Maximising participation, through better  
progression routes from post-16 to HE, a better  
balance of provision, not least in areas such as  
the Heads of the Valleys where participation  
rates are lower than they should be, improved  
part-time learning opportunities, and higher

skills delivered through the accumulation of qualifications on an accredited basis over time

- Continuing emphasis on and investment in the delivery of high quality teaching and support for students, including employability skills
- Stronger research performance, with research outcomes that are rigorous and internationally respected, contributing to Welsh, UK and international economic and social development, with greater scope for knowledge exploitation and spin-outs; reflected in the announcement by my predecessor last year of national priorities for research match funding, in the digital economy, the low carbon economy, health and biosciences, and advanced engineering and manufacturing. Lesley Griffiths as Deputy Minister for Science, Innovation and

Skills is currently undertaking a review of external R & D funding, including business and research council funding. Meanwhile the Assembly Government's Academic Expertise for Business programme is enabling Universities themselves to work and develop R&D link-ups with major companies and other niche businesses and spin outs. An agenda akin to that of NESTA in its report on the Connected University.

- Maintaining a strong cultural and civic role for Welsh higher education, in particular helping to develop international understanding of the Welsh experience

The UK higher education system has been one of the most effective and successful in the world.

However, we face big challenges :

- demographic change which will alter the structure of the student base and potentially the nature of demand
- increasing international competition in HE
- a medium-term period of financial austerity

The structure of HE in Wales does not necessarily help us to achieve our goals

## **SLIDE 5 AND 6**

- We have had more higher education institutions per head in Wales than any other part of the UK

but have failed to break free from the bottom end of the UK growth and prosperity table

- Our HE institutions are small compared with those just over the border
- For all the achievements of higher education institutions, they have had only a very limited transformative impact on our economy, and on our global presence and reputation
- We are not having a high enough impact in terms of the quality and quantity of our research
- For too many in Wales, higher education remains a distant, and irrelevant activity, clouded in mystery.

In response to these issues, the challenges identified by *For our Future* are clear. It is a

question of doing business differently in the future.

This means:

- changes to the nature of learning provision-at both undergraduate and postgraduate level;
- changes to the nature of how, when and where learning is delivered; and
- fundamental changes to working relationships with other institutions and organisations – universities, schools, FE colleges, employers, and voluntary organisations
- based on developing a regional dimension to planning and delivery of HE
- with funding flowing according to the priorities we have announced, as set out in the remit letter to HEFCW

We are clear in *For our Future* that we want HE institutions in Wales to play to their strengths, within the context of our overall goals. We recognise the autonomy of HE institutions, their ability to raise diverse sorts of funding, determine their own curricula, appoint staff and make their own judgements about how to respond to the demands of students and society. However, we have a responsibility to ensure that our own investment of around £450 million is effective in delivering the best value for Wales.

Our focus, in *For our Future*, is on the HE system as a whole, including HE delivered through FE institutions, adult learning and the OU. Our drive is for collaboration, and that has implications for the

leadership, management and governance of higher education.

I believe the legal and administrative set up we have gives us a halfway house. We have institutions that are on paper organisationally free but in reality would collapse without public funding support; that in theory are geared to be responsive and pro-active, but in reality appear, cautious and conservative.

A cautious and conservative sector is not what Wales needs right now. We are, after all, surrounded by countries whose HEIs are fighting for business.

Earlier this Spring I set out my concerns very clearly to HEFCW: that the current set up weighs heavily towards a situation where change only happens at a time, nature and pace that the leadership of individual HE institutions wants. It creates a sense of institutional protectionism.

Of course, talk of change produces some odd reactions.

I was told recently that I seemed to want to turn Aberystwyth University into Ceredigion Community College.

Well I don't.

And I defy anyone who has seriously read our strategy to draw that conclusion.

But it is symptomatic of the problem. I see too much “institutional” behaviour and not enough “leadership”. Such an approach embeds risk aversion, and dares not think the unthinkable until, perhaps, it is in a moment of crisis. That crisis may be upon us, in terms of UK public spending.

The challenge of public funding restrictions in the future could result in salami slicing within institutions to produce simply more of the same at less cost, or it could lead to driving change within and between institutions to deliver the strategic leap forward that is necessary. In this, as I shall say later, I think that

academics are actually often ahead of their institutional leadership.

Given the funding crises that may be ahead, it is worth remembering that the most powerful driver in institutional change in Wales has been – money. In 1972 Lampeter joined the University of Wales following the recurrent financial crisis it had faced.

## **SLIDE 7**

In 1987 it was UGC and political intervention that drove the merger of UC Cardiff and UWIST. Cardiff was in danger of closing on the eve of the 1987 General Election, as Nicholas Edwards recalled in his autobiography. Mrs Thatcher was against a bail-out of a university, and thought Cardiff should be

used as an example to the university world. Nicholas Edwards recounted:

‘At that time, the Welsh Office had no direct responsibility, financial or otherwise, for higher education in Wales, but in order to obtain an agreement I offered to find £1 million towards the required package and a deal was done’.

I am often reminded of that story when people tell me how essential it is that higher education should be funded by governments on an arm’s length basis.

We need to see HE in Wales

- collectively building sustainable research capacity and excellence;

- fully exploiting the combined strengths that real collaboration brings, including back office savings

It is important that this approach to collaboration becomes a central driver in shaping the future direction and structure of Welsh higher education.

If we are to be a small but smart country, it is critical that we focus resource on building leading edge research in national priorities. To build the economy of the future, Wales must proactively respond to current global challenges.

As the largest single investor in higher education in Wales, the Assembly Government is justified in

calling for a better return for Wales on the money we invest.

Earlier this spring I made it clear to HEFCW that we expect action on this agenda, and that they needed to consider whether their role as a buffer between government and HE institutions means that they act more as a moderator of policy rather than a deliverer.

For well rehearsed reasons the constitutional set up is what it is: an intermediary body to protect the autonomy and academic freedom of institutions from Government interference.

For my part, I am conscious that Wales is a small place. There is always the danger then that

processes are too cosy and there is not enough challenge in the system.

On the other hand, the smallness of Wales may be a good argument for a HEFCW. Certainly, I am pleased at how HEFCW has responded to the challenge of *For Our Future*, and I am pleased at the energy and commitment it has shown in developing its action plan.

On that note I am glad to be able to re-appoint Roger Thomas as Chair of HEFCW for a second three year term, and I hope that under Roger's leadership HEFCW will drive forward implementation of the strategy.

## **The challenge for HE Management**

There is going to be very little additional resource to invest, so we have to be looking at how we are going to get more out of the same or more out of less, even. The PWC report suggests there is a long way to go.

The managements of HE institutions will need to look very carefully to the deployment of resources in their own organisations. Academics have asked me a number of questions on this recently. One says 'do we really want more managers in higher education, and our professors to spend more time form-filling? Why is there so much bureaucracy in HE, when there are cuts in courses and departments?'

Another asked me why, following the merger of his institution with another one, when the size of the institution had doubled, no economies of scale had been achieved. Why did there continue to be so many internal committees where nominally decisions were made but in practice they were not, simply duplicating processes. This particular academic also had some interesting thoughts on the role of the QAA and its focus and timeliness in reporting.

PWC looked at the cost base of education for me, including the cost base of HE.

PWC concluded 'given that budget pressures in 2010-11 are expected to be significant, there is some urgency on timescales associated with reconfiguration of the HE sector infrastructure....To protect the quality and diversity of the front line services of teaching, research and knowledge transfer, a strategic approach to becoming a more efficient sector, whether that be through merger or collaboration is essential'.

PWC say that 'there have been some minor efficiency savings made through collaboration and the figure is unknown for mergers.' The Wales Audit Office in its report on HE collaboration of course concluded last year that the full potential for administrative collaboration had not yet been achieved. So this is not a new message.

PWC concluded that overall, some 48% of HE spending went on Learning and Teaching, including Research and Knowledge Transfer. The other 52% went on support services.

## **SLIDE 8**

That should concentrate the minds.

The staff breakdown of HE institutions is an interesting one, as this slide from your website shows.

Fewer than half the staff on the academic and research side.

## **SLIDE 9**

### **The challenge for HE Governance**

*For our Future* identified the need for radical change in the shape, structure and provision of higher education in Wales. Effective governance-at institutional and national level- is central to driving forward and accomplishing the step change that the new strategy requires.

*For our Future* called for a review of higher education governance that built on existing strengths, evaluated current shortcomings and, most importantly, considered future need.

If we are to make the changes needed; we also have to be willing to question what may not be needed. We do not want governing bodies that act simply as a bunch of cheer-leaders for university management.

I was interested to learn recently that some members of university governing bodies have been appointed on the basis of a phone call. Who you know not what you know. It appears that HE governance in post devolution Wales has become the last resting place of the crachach.

I take governance seriously.

Our review of higher education governance will carry out a thorough, rigorous and analytical consideration of:

- the purpose;
- the underpinning principles; and
- the operational and legislative framework of our current systems of governance in higher education.

I will expect the review to tackle the key issue of whether our existing forms of national and institutional governance match the needs, expectations and future requirements defined in *For our Future* and what changes may be required. To do this it will need to consider:

- the role that higher education governance should have in meeting the challenges and

delivering the actions identified by the new strategy;

- the nature, duties and framework of governance needed to carry out this role effectively into the future; and
- the changes to national and institutional governance required to meet these responsibilities.

We want a system of governance which reconciles the challenges of academic freedom with ensuring that institutions achieve greater success collectively in Wales.

We need to consider how we empower governing bodies of HE institutions to hold institutional management to account through proper scrutiny,

audit and leadership of the strategic planning process. Should there be a mechanism for appointing more members to governing bodies of HE institutions independently? Should support independent of HE management be given to members of HE institution governing bodies to enable them to carry out their task of holding HE management to account?

The governance implications of these challenges are clear. These issues need tackling as part of core institutional business and national and institutional governance must play a leading part in directing, supporting and scrutinising the attainment of these priorities.

At national level we have to ensure clear lines of direction from government and clear levels of accountability from the universities.

At institutional level Chairs and governors become central agents in supporting and taking responsibility for delivery of national priorities and the meeting of national needs. This should not be seen as a threat to institutional autonomy or interference with institutional leadership. Institutional autonomy is important-but with autonomy comes responsibility:

- it is important that Vice Chancellors and their executive teams have responsibility for the direction, change and management of their institutions.

- It is also important that institutional and national systems of governance hold them accountable for this.

As Professor Sir David Watson identified in the Leadership Foundation's magazine, the governing body's responsibility for stewardship incorporates ultimate responsibility for strategic direction and holding the institutional leadership to account.

Consequently, I will be expecting the Review of HE Governance to consider the following:

- What are the opportunities for improving this relationship between national and institutional governance and what alternative systems are there?
- How clear and defined are the lines of accountability to government and citizens so as

to ensure that HE provision meets national imperatives and responds to public need?

- How can we ensure that HE governance – nationally and institutionally-contribute to delivering a world class sector with world class subject departments and better research grant achievement and RAE performance?
- What role can governors play in overseeing, and supporting commitment to collaboration and regional planning and delivery?
- What current arrangements exist for the governance of collaboration, partnership and regional planning and what changes need to be made to ensure institutional governors have a part to play in regional planning?

- How well do current systems of governor scrutiny work and what changes are needed to ensure HE governors are fully empowered to support, guide and oversee institutional leadership in strategic direction, evaluating quality and auditing processes?
- How well does the current framework of governor recruitment incorporate the involvement of relevant stakeholders and the engagement and participation of staff and students?

These are some of the issues and questions that need to be addressed in detail. I was pleased to announce today that John McCormick has agreed to chair the review of HE Governance in Wales. As the former Secretary of the BBC between 1987 and

1992 and as Controller of BBC Scotland between 1992 and 2004, John brings with him considerable high level experience of working in, and leading, a national public service organisation. John originally joined BBC Scotland in 1970 from the Education sector. As an experienced chair of national bodies such as the Scottish Qualification Authority and the Edinburgh International Film Festival John also has considerable wider experience of national and organisational public sector governance, within the context of devolution.

His direct experience of governance within higher education institutions such as the prestigious Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama, Glasgow School of Art and the University of Strathclyde is also a critically important asset for this role as is his

experience of governance on the Board of the sector skills council Skillset. Additionally, his role as a Non Executive Director of Lloyds TSB, Scotland has equipped him with first hand experience of governance in the commercial/ for profit sector.

More recently his work for the BBC World Service Trust has given him experience in leading and delivering major national consultancy projects in a number of different countries.

John McCormick understands education; he understands devolution and he understands governance.

I am also pleased tonight to announce the appointment of Professor Merfyn Jones, the retiring

Vice-Chancellor of Bangor University, as Specialist Policy Adviser on Higher Education to the Welsh Assembly Government. Professor Jones' successful career in Higher Education both in the UK and Wales, his recognised scholarship and, above all, his long experience of leadership in the sector makes his appointment a significant asset. His report into higher education was decisive in shaping *For our Future* and setting the direction of Wales' higher education strategy.

## **Academic collaboration**

It is perhaps paradoxical that the academic community gets the notion of collaboration while HE managements give the impression that they have

been slow to secure the benefits of institutional collaboration.

I am encouraged at what I see in collaborative terms from the academic community:

- Historians across Wales coming together to promote a Welsh Institute of Historical Research, with the Arts and Humanities Research Council taking a close interest in this initiative. Under the leadership of Professor Huw Bowen, last year the historians established 'History Research Wales' as a pan-Wales collaborative venture. As Professor Peter Stead suggests, clearly initiatives such as the Copper Project and the Richard Burton Centre at Swansea point the way in which matters should progress.
- in media studies and media policy, for example, around the journal *Cyfrwng*;

- in Welsh writing through the medium of English;
- and not least in regeneration, of course, with the establishment of the Centre for Regeneration Excellence in Wales promoted by Professor Kevin Morgan and established last year with the support of the then Regeneration Minister, whoever that was, with Professor Dave Adamson, then of Glamorgan University, as its first Chief Executive.
- Through the Welsh Institute for Socio Economic Data and Methods (WISERD), a collaboration between economists, sociologists, geographers, political scientists and planners
- This progress is light years away from the fears, correctly expressed at the time by Professor Richard Wyn Jones, then of Aberystwyth, now of Cardiff's Wales Governance Centre, at the Eisteddfod in 2004, that 'the percentage of research work discussing aspects of life in Wales is startlingly low'. We are perhaps seeing that the grip of 'metropolitan provincialism' is being broken – that Welsh experience is capable of being seen

not as regional but as international in its implications and impact.

- Of course, we also have some excellent examples of research collaboration in the sciences as well, such as the Welsh Institute of Cognitive Neuroscience, supported by £5 million of Welsh Assembly Government money, involving Cardiff, Bangor and Swansea, increasing annual Research Council income, delivering a range of collaborative pilot projects and graduate school and staff development activity
- Our KESS –Knowledge Skills Economy Partnership – initiative is supporting research training and higher skills development packages for Universities in the EU Convergence funding area such as Bangor, Swansea, Aberystwyth and Glamorgan which will support an additional 176 PhDs and 160 Research masters, 80% in STEM subjects
- There is the Low Carbon Research Institute led by Cardiff, backed by £5 million from the Welsh Assembly Government,

staffed by researchers from Cardiff, Swansea, Glamorgan, Aberystwyth, Bangor and Glyndwr

- And the Welsh Institute of Mathematical and Computational Sciences, led by Swansea but involving researchers from Cardiff, Aberystwyth and Bangor

So academics are grasping the nettle. It is time for university administrations to follow them.

It might perhaps be timely to remind that audience of how we came to have a university sector in Wales in the first place.

It was a determined political act, resulting from the campaigning of a political movement. The voluntary approach, philanthropic funding and political pressure, creating initially a College in Aberystwyth. Then the creation of two further colleges, one in the north and one in the south, sanctioned by

the Aberdare report, in 1881, a result of political campaigning and political compromise.

When Aberystwyth opened its doors in October 1872 there was a celebration breakfast supplied by the Belle Vue Hotel. In his book, *The University Movement in Wales*, Professor J. Gwynn Williams, who taught me Welsh history at Bangor, wrote

‘It was of Dickensian amplitude, the tables heavy with hams and fowls, pies and jellies of all kinds, enough sustenance, perhaps, to face the day’s proceedings which included twenty-five speeches of varying length in English and an unspecified number in Welsh’

These were of course political responses to the social aspirations of the males of the emerging Welsh middle class.

In his book, Professor Williams quotes one of the key reformers Hugh Owen as saying the purpose would be 'to afford the Middle Classes of Wales the advantage of a Collegiate Education, based on unsectarian principles'.

## SLIDE 11

As Professor Williams wrote 'The Aberdare Report is preoccupied with the shopkeeper and the farmer, the commercial traveller and the small industrialist, together with a sprinkling of artisans.'

## SLIDE 12

Another reformer of the time, Thomas Nicholas, declared:

‘while in times past the ministry seemed to be the only outlet to native talent, the increase of trade, the introduction of Railways, the immense development of mining and manufacturing operations, the openings offered by competitive examination for the higher posts in the Civil and Indian services...invite the young man of education in our day to a thousand lines of honourable employment and promotion. The varied and comprehensive course of education which the University would supply would fit our young men for such openings.’

### **SLIDE 13**

Some of the debates from those times seem almost contemporary, as those seeking state support debated with the advocates of voluntarism. Take this from Y Cronicl in 1879:

‘it is not just to tax the poor to apprentice gentlefolk. They should pay for their education as do others for their apprenticeship.’

## **SLIDE 14**

As Gwyn Alf Williams wrote ‘This was the golden age of Liberal, Nonconformist, radical and Welsh-speaking Wales, when the Welsh ‘nation’ formed during the heyday of Victorian imperialism broke into political life, with the franchise reforms, the democratic revolution of the 1880s, the county councils, the first state secondary schools, the colleges, the University, the National Library and the National Museum of Wales’.

## **SLIDE 15**

Or Dai Smith 'There are connections to be made between the growth of a dynamic Welsh industrial economy with its bustling commercial class and the promotion of what were labelled, with increasing self-consciousness, 'Welsh qualities', 'Welsh ideals', between the foundation of a National University to foster these ideals and the projection of a nationalist Wales within an imperial system.'

## **SLIDE 16**

Kenneth Morgan has written 'Bangor and Cardiff were somewhat indirectly connected to the new patriotic movements of Cymru Fydd. Both were to some degree products of the demand for a new technical, trained class in Wales to run the new commerce and industry, and to enable Welsh graduates to respond to the cultural and social priorities of the British system.' Their support – and that of Aberystwyth too, of course

- came from mixed funding – government grant, popular subscription and industrial donations from people such as David Davies or the Marquis of Bute.

## **SLIDE 17**

The configuration of the nineteenth-century university system in Wales has of course left us with long-term structural consequences. As Gwyn Alf Williams wrote: 'In practical terms, most of the institutions of Welsh education which are regarded as central to a Welsh identity have been situated within and in response to, regions and ideologies remote physically and ideally from the regions in which the majority of the Welsh lived and had their being'.

No university needed, then, in the nineteenth-century configuration, for the industrial heartland of Wales. Indeed,

before the rise of coal, nineteenth-century reformers like Hugh Owen assumed that the site of a Glamorgan university would be at Swansea, not Cardiff.

So our long revolution continues. Where in the nineteenth century, Welsh educationalists were building a university system for the emergent middle-class, a small and elite version of the middle class, and 1960s reformers widened participation to the grammar school class, we are seeking to widen participation for the people as a whole. The democratisation of Higher Education.

The University Heads of the Valleys initiative would not be occurring without Government direction and investment. It will be genuinely transformative.

An area with one of the lowest levels of achievement, skills and – not surprisingly – self esteem in Britain. It sits just a few miles from one of Wales’s most prosperous and highly skilled regions making the contrast in fortunes all the more stark.

Our goals for the UHOVI are very high. This is not just about skills but about regenerating the heart and soul of a community.

As such, local authorities, FE providers and HE providers have come together not just to deliver higher education, but to transform the whole education and training infrastructure of the region – to maximise the opportunities on offer for young people, to help them progress to further education, higher education or the workplace, and create an identity for learning in the Heads of the Valleys that is not just fit for economic

purpose, but which reflects the cultural and historic wealth of the communities.

More than £110m of Welsh Assembly Government funding has been set aside to transform the opportunities and prospects for young people, local residents and businesses in the Heads of the Valleys region.

The funding is set aside to go toward three major projects – UHOVI, a partnership between the University of Glamorgan and the University of Wales, Newport, the Merthyr Tydfil Learning Quarter and the Blaenau Gwent Learning Works.

This represents a real commitment to the region, designed to provide new learning and skills opportunities, better local facilities and to attract new jobs to the Valleys.

UHOVI is working with Blaenau Gwent Council and Merthyr Tydfil Council. Together they are working with the Further Education sector, including Merthyr Tydfil College, Coleg Gwent, secondary schools and training companies to provide education opportunities at all levels across the region. With increased local access to learning and a greater choice of courses, more local people would be able to study right up to degree and postgraduate levels locally – and meet local business needs for skilled staff.

For the people of Merthyr Tydfil the proposals include a brand new College with bigger and better facilities for full and part-time learners, and a new University building as part of the creation of a new Learning Quarter in the heart of the town. Discussions are also underway regarding the development of other facilities for the town that will complement this.

For local people in Blaenau Gwent, the £112 million Learning Works initiative is planned to provide a new state-of-the-art Learning Zone for 16 plus education that would include a range of university courses. The plans also include new primary and secondary school provision, a replacement special school, a children family centre as well as a new sports centre and new performing arts centre.

UHOVI will provide new Glamorgan and Newport University courses in community venues, in the workplace and at colleges from 2010.

This is a major investment in widening participation and engagement in higher education. It will be tangible evidence of regeneration through higher education investment.

A suitable note on which to end a lecture on higher education supported by the Regeneration Institute.