

PROPOSALS BY GRIFFITH COLLEGE AS TO PRIVATE COLLEGE INITIATIVES TO ADDRESS HIGHER EDUCATION POLICY AND THE PROGRAMME FOR GOVERNMENT

This submission contains seven key proposals.

- 1. Addressing the Cassells projected increase in demand and costs thereof**
- 2. Tackling disadvantage by ensuring social inclusion in HE**
- 3. A pilot scheme to assess true cost of maintenance grants and registration fee for private college students**
- 4. Traineeships – focussing on positions not currently filled by Irish nationals**
- 5. Upskilling**
- 6. An Efficient Loan Scheme Model**
- 7. Promoting creativity and entrepreneurial capacity in students**

1. Addressing the Cassells projected increase in demand and costs thereof

The Cassells report projects a 29% increase in HEI places by 2028 at a capital cost of €5.8Bn and €1Bn in recurrent costs just to retain the current participation rate (see graph Appendix 1).⁽¹⁾ At least some of this could be provided in the private sector at no capital cost and at less recurrent cost to the Exchequer. If demand tapers off at the end of the next decade the private sector can respond quicker than the public sector which would be left with a staffing cost irreducible in the short term.

In addition who knows how education is going to be mediated in 10 years' time. Local, on-line and blended provision will likely be important.

Additionally, the question arises as to whether policy should focus on improving facilities for the already well provided in the HE sector or on improving facilities for the disadvantaged. The expansion of higher education opportunities has benefitted all social classes but particularly the middle and upper middle classes. In Dublin the participation rate ranges from as high as 99% in Dublin 6 to as low as 15% in Dublin 17².

We suggest that what is needed is

- (a) a scoping exercise to assess potential annual savings by using private sector capacity. We propose a joint working party made up of DPER, HEA, DES & HECA to assess capacity within the private sector to create additional HE places and the projected additional cost per place and
- (b) a research study on proposals for how employers, HEI's and Government might co-operate to create part of the additional required capacity through e-learning, mobile and blended learning, focussing on job relevant skills.

2. Tackling disadvantage by ensuring social inclusion in HE

Policy should focus on advancing the education standard of those currently excluded from HE. Only 19% of students exiting FE who apply to the CAO successfully gain access to higher education while 73% of leaving certificate students who apply gain such access.

Reform should focus on:-

- (i) Access from further education courses offered by ETBs.
- (ii) Job ready skills and work placement.

¹ Consultation Paper 1, Expert Group on Future Funding for Higher Education, page 27

² Consultation Paper Towards a new National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education page 30, HEA, Dublin 2014

It is expected that the cost will be much less than the average €9,000 per student in the public sector.^(3) A detailed and costed proposal on providing pathways from further education into private colleges written in the context of declared HEA policy is set out in Appendix 2.

3. A pilot scheme to assess true cost of maintenance grants and registration fee for private college students

We suggest the extension of maintenance grants and payment of registration fee to students of private colleges be undertaken as a pilot scheme to measure the true cost of this on a nationwide basis. The extension of grants to students of private colleges from low income families is unlikely to give rise to significant incremental cost due to cost savings of unemployment benefit, grants and registration fee savings arising from substitution from public to private sector and maintenance grants savings on students who would otherwise travel to the UK . A pilot scheme which could be introduced in Sept 2016 would reveal the exact net costs. (For details see Appendix 3).

4. Traineeships – focussing on positions not currently filled by Irish nationals

We should seek to grow our own young people to fill positions currently filled by non-nationals. Examples of industries where such potential exists are (i) Health Care, (ii) ICT, (iii) Retail,(iv) Catering, (v) Financial Services and (vi) Specialised knowledge on industrial machinery and production processes. Appendix 4 seeks to highlight the number of vacancies potentially available to highly trained and educated Irish individuals in this context. It also sets out the suggested approach to tackle the training deficit.

5. Upskilling

A collaborative scheme with employers whereby they agree in exchange for an upskilling course for one of their employees to recruit a new employee into the position vacated on promotion of the upskilled employee. Appendix 5 sets out proposed steps in such a collaborative scheme.

6. An Efficient Loan Scheme Model

An institution specific loan scheme for learners from low to middle income families, supported by the HEI's alumni. Student loan beneficiaries would be asked subsequently to become mentors of future beneficiaries and possibly trustees of the Scheme. This voluntary element would help ensure a high level of loan repayment. Appendix 6 details the proposed structure, funding, growth, interest and method of assuring efficient loan repayment.

7. Promoting creativity and entrepreneurial capacity in students

Appendix 7 sets out some thoughts on this objective under the following headings:

- (a) Defining the skills to be promoted
- (b) Obtaining industry input into skills definition and participation in the training process
- (c) Proposed entrepreneurship programmes

³ The cost per student in HEA funded institutions in 2011/12 was €9,576 according to the latest edition of Towards a Performance Evaluation Framework: Profiling Irish Higher Education, published by the HEA