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Fact sheets on Britain

Further Education

Further education in Britain provides opportunities for voluntary educational and recreational activities for all people above school-leaving age (15; to be raised to 16 in 1972-73). Its provision is mainly the responsibility of local education authorities under the general supervision of the education departments—the Department of Education and Science (for England and Wales), the Scottish Education Department, and the Northern Ireland Ministry of Education (although there are some independent colleges and some which receive direct government grants). The system is distinctive for its flexibility: courses are at all levels, full-time and part-time, and may be vocational or non-vocational; they may lead to qualifications ranging from craft certificates to degrees. Further education by definition includes adult education (see below), youth services (described in Fact Sheet C/4) and higher education outside the universities (see Fact Sheet C/5) and colleges of education (broadly speaking, higher education is education leading to an examination of a standard above the Advanced level of the General Certificate of Education—usually taken at 17 or 18—and the Ordinary National Certificate—see Qualifications).

Colleges of Further Education

In England and Wales local education authorities maintain over 500 colleges which provide technical and commercial courses at every level and a number of courses for the General Certificate of Education (see Fact Sheet C/3); 40 farm institutes; and over 140 art colleges. They also maintain regional colleges where students work at or near degree level. In 1968 there were 25 regional colleges, but these, along with a number of technical colleges and art colleges, are being formed into 30 polytechnics—comprehensive institutions catering for students at all levels of higher education within the further education system. Eight polytechnics had been designated by November 1969. Though the Government intends to concentrate higher education outside the universities and colleges of education in the polytechnics, some full-time higher-level work will remain with other colleges, particularly in specialist fields, while higher education courses for part-time students will continue to be provided in many colleges not engaged in full-time higher education.

In addition to the institutions of further

education maintained by the local education authorities there are three agricultural colleges supported by direct grant from the Department of Education and Science, and four national colleges linked to particular technologies (administered jointly by the industry and the Department of Education and Science)—the National Leather-sellers College, the National College of Agricultural Engineering, the National College for Heating, Ventilating, Refrigeration and Fan Engineering, and the National College of Rubber Technology. (It is intended that the last two will be included in the proposed Inner London polytechnics.)

In Scotland there are about 90 local further education colleges, and 13 central institutions doing advanced work. Northern Ireland has 31 institutions of further education, nine of which conduct advanced-level courses.

Courses and Students

Further education courses may be full-time, sandwich (time: five years in length, generally consisting of alternate periods of about six months of full-time study in a technical college and supervised experience in industry), block release (on similar principles but for shorter periods), day release (generally attendance at a technical college for one day a week during working hours), and evening classes.

Sandwich courses are popular at advanced levels. At lower levels, day release and block release courses are replacing evening courses to a large extent and are becoming more widespread as a result of the Industrial Training Act 1964, under which training boards for an industry or group of industries may be established to promote and supervise standards of training (see Fact Sheet C/14). A board's recommendations on training for a particular employment covers the associated further education, and a board often (always in the case of young people requiring a year or more's training) makes it a condition of a training grant that young people should receive some further education, on day release or the equivalent, alongside their industrial training. In 1968 there were 26 training boards in operation with a total of about 16 million employees within their scope.

In 1968 there were over 3.5 million students enrolled in publicly aided colleges of further education in Britain. They included 275,000 on full-time and sandwich courses, 1.7 million on vocational part-time day and evening courses and 1.6 million in non-vocational evening classes (see Adult Education, below). There were, altogether, some 206,000 students on advanced courses.

Qualifications

For young school-leavers there is a wide variety of craft (and some art) courses lasting three to five years leading to qualifications of the City and Guilds of London Institute and the regional examining unions, and many commercial courses, including those for the Certificate in Office Studies. Courses of a more professional character are available for technicians or for those who aim ultimately at membership of a professional institution. There are also many courses in technical subjects and business studies for students with the Ordinary level of the General Certificate of Education, which lead, on a part-time basis, to National Certificates, and, on a full-time or sandwich basis, to National Diplomas. These courses, which are normally at two levels, Ordinary and Higher, are approved by joint committees representative of education departments and the appropriate professional bodies (for example, the Institute of Mechanical Engineers) and teacher organisations. The Ordinary National Certificates and Ordinary National Diplomas, usually taken between the ages of 16 and 19, are generally recognised as equivalent to the Advanced level of the General Certificate of Education. Above these in standard are the Higher National Certificates and the Higher National Diplomas—these last are recognised as attaining, within a more restricted field, a standard approaching that of a pass degree.

The highest awards for further education students are the external degrees of the University of London and the degrees of the Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA). The Council, whose powers extend throughout Great Britain, was established in 1964 to award degrees and other academic qualifications, comparable in standard with those granted by universities, to students who complete approved courses of study or research organised on a full-time, sandwich or part-time basis in establishments which do not have the power to award their own degrees. In 1968 there were over 200 CNAA degree courses, including 14 postgraduate courses. These catered for nearly 16,000 students.

Outside the universities the most senior awards in art are the Diploma in Art and Design, broadly comparable to a university pass degree, and, above this, the Higher Diploma in Art and the Higher Diploma in Design. These are administered by the National Council for Diplomas in Art and Design. The Scottish central institutions of art award their own diplomas, which are also recognised as equivalent to a pass degree.

To make known the opportunities in higher education within the further education system there has been in operation since 1966 a Further Education Information Service for England and Wales and Northern Ireland. This service, offered by local education authorities, polytechnics and other further education colleges and the Department of Education and Science, operates through August and September to provide 'A'-level school-leavers with up-to-date information and advice about vacancies in full-time degree and Higher National Diploma courses.

Adult Education

Most adult education comprises courses of mainly non-vocational education for people over 18. The courses are provided, either separately or in conjunction, by the extra-mural departments of universities, the Workers' Educational Association (WEA) and other voluntary bodies, and by local education authorities and residential colleges.

The residential colleges, the university departments and the voluntary bodies, such as the WEA, recognised by the education departments as competent to provide adult education, receive government grants. So too do various national bodies which promote educational activities of a non-political kind, such as the National Federation of Women's Institutes. Many of these bodies also receive grants from local education authorities.

An increasingly important share in the provision of adult education is being assumed by local education authorities. Most of it is on a part-time basis, mainly in the 8,500 or so evening institutes, which have a total of over a million students; and also in schools of art, adult education centres, community centres, village colleges, literary institutes and youth clubs. There are about 30 short-term residential colleges in Great Britain, maintained or aided by local education authorities, providing courses varying in length between a weekend and a fortnight.

The seven long-term residential colleges (including Ruskin College, Oxford, for example) provide courses of one or two years, some of which lead to a diploma. The colleges vary in character, although they all aim at providing a liberal education.

In general, courses at the highest levels in liberal studies are provided by the extra-mural departments of the universities and by the WEA.

Finance

Since most of the technical colleges and other further education establishments in Britain are either maintained or aided from public funds, tuition fees are moderate, and often nominal for young people under 18 years of age. Nearly all full-time students on advanced courses are helped by awards from local education authorities. The awards are generally based on the results of the General Certificate of Education or a corresponding examination; they are normally assessed to cover tuition fees and a maintenance grant, but parents who can afford to contribute towards the cost are required to do so. There are also some scholarships available from endowments, and others awarded under schemes organised by particular industries or companies for the most promising of their young workers.

Current expenditure by public authorities on further, including adult, education in Britain in 1967-68 amounted to over £212 million. Capital expenditure was over £47 million; and in the ten years to 1967-68 it totalled over £307 million.

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