



**Wales Centre for Public Policy**  
**Canolfan Polisi Cyhoeddus Cymru**

# **Maximising universities' civic contribution**

## **A policy paper**

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# Summary

- Civic engagement is widely used but often lacks a common understanding. This report provides clarity and context for civic mission in Welsh higher education.
- The concept of “the public good” underpins Welsh public policy; actions to strengthen universities’ civic mission builds upon that commitment.
- Universities’ potential for civic engagement in Wales is shaped by several factors: institutional origin and subsequent development, the Welsh, and UK, higher education policy context and the globalisation of higher education and the economy at large.
- Within Wales, the *Wellbeing of Future Generations Act* has an important role to play in shaping civic engagement although universities are not specifically name-checked within the scope of the Act.
- Whilst supporting a healthy balance between institutional autonomy and public accountability, there is a role for government steering public institutions, including universities, in order to meet the needs of Welsh society.
- Civic engagement is difficult to measure because of the absence of agreed definitions, and clarity around the most appropriate and meaningful indicators which can capture the contribution of universities to the public good.
- International experience provides examples of how to encourage civic engagement including national strategic frameworks, performance-based or targeted funding, institutional compacts and other incentive arrangements.
- Six recommendations are made:
  - Adopting a strategic vision for the PCET sector in Wales;
  - Including civic engagement as a formal aspect of universities’ performance;
  - Developing regional clusters of institutions as a means of strengthening place-based planning and decision-making between higher education and other parts of Welsh society and economy;
  - Incentivising collaboration between universities and other parts of the post-compulsory education sector;
  - Embedding and widening access and life-long-learning, including adult education, as intrinsic characteristics and responsibilities of civic mission;
  - Providing engagement funding for universities contingent on collaboration and alignment with Welsh national and regional priorities.

# Introduction

Down the ages, universities have served humanity well. They have acted as the cradle of knowledge, the fount of innovation and creativity, and the bulwark of civilisation. Today they stand at the centre of our societies, supporting people to achieve their personal development goals, providing the basis for a society rich in culture and social capital and providing the skills needed to serve our economies and maintain and enhance our living standards. It is because of that central role that universities are being asked to do more: to stretch beyond the traditions of teaching, research and scholarship, and to reach out beyond their walls, real or metaphorical, and connect with their communities and regions in ways that are novel, challenging and impactful.

In this paper, we understand universities' civic mission as their commitment to bettering the local and regional communities of which they are part. A civic mission is an acknowledgement that universities have an obligation to act in this way, and civic engagement is the process by which this is achieved. Civic engagement is not a new concept for higher education. Yet it is still a poorly understood one.

The broad concept of "engagement" can embrace "regional", "civic" or "community" engagement as well as "student engagement" through their active participation in learning (McCormick, Kinzie, & Gonyea, 2013). While students are key stakeholders in higher education, the former term refers to how universities as institutions interrelate with the society (Hazelkorn, 2016a, p. 44). Engagement with wider society has gained increasingly in significance in recent years. However, it is often treated as a separate activity, commonly referred to as the "third mission" after teaching and research. In this way, it is inferred that civic engagement is by definition an inferior mission rather than embedded holistically in the full-range of a university's roles and responsibilities (Goddard, 2009).

This tendency to compartmentalise civic engagement is problematic. How activities are categorised – and most importantly whether or not they are directly tied to incentive structures – has a clear effect on whether or not they are viewed as a priority. Given the nature of the grand challenges faced by society, and the need for coordinated

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action to address them, there is a strong case for an overarching understanding of universities' outward-facing activity as a single spectrum encompassing all activities from teaching and learning to research, and technology transfer to community and regional engagement. In other words, engagement should be understood as the horizontal activity linking and integrating these different activities rather than each operating in their own silo (Hazelkorn, 2016b, p. 73).

In this paper we draw on a wealth of experience and expertise across research, national and international policy making and higher education management. The paper explores the challenges and opportunities for enhancing the civic mission of Welsh universities and the Welsh post-compulsory education system more broadly. It is written as a provocation to policymakers, to universities, and to Welsh society and we set out six policy recommendations specific to the Welsh context.

## Debates around civic mission

### The Changing Policy Landscape

The demands on, and expectations of, colleges and universities are changing the relationship between them and governments almost everywhere. A number of issues come to the fore, most notably concerns about student performance, learning outcomes and employment opportunities; and the contribution of education and research, and its value and impact, for national and local objectives. In recent years, the concept of the "public good" has been a significant feature of these discussions, including the discourse around "we have a university in our city and region but what is it doing for us?" There are three inter-related issues:

- *Public attitudes* towards public services including education, vis-à-vis the quality of the service and the level of public funding required, etc.;
- Degree of *public trust* between different sectors of society; and
- *Public interest* in effective and efficient use of public resources, and the contribution and value to society.

Balancing the role and responsibilities of institutions and those of government can create tensions between institutional autonomy and public accountability: for example, for increasing widening participation and successful completion; for graduates ready to enter the labour market; for excellent research judged on scientific grounds and contributing to city and regional development in a holistic way by combining teaching and research-based activities. These tensions can be further exacerbated if/when institutions find themselves trying to navigate across different government departments with different policy demands and time horizons.

For Wales, devolution adds an additional level of complexity. In contrast to the more market-oriented system in England, Wales has prioritised “public good” responsibilities in its desire to shape a society and education system with distinct societal aspirations. Governance, regulation, quality assurance and performance review in Wales are overseen and monitored by a myriad of organizations, some of which are Welsh-based, while others operate within the broader English or UK post-compulsory system. The core architecture currently comprises the Welsh Government, HEFCW and ESTYN although this structure will change once the new Tertiary Education and Research Commission for Wales (TERCW) is initiated. Furthermore, within the broader UK-context, Wales liaises regularly with counterparts in Scotland, Northern Ireland and England. Changes made in those jurisdictions have implications for Wales, regardless of whether they are implemented in Wales or not.

The *Well-being of Future Generations Act* has the potential to tie all of these strands together. This innovative legislation provides for the delivery of seven core national well-being goals – a Wales that is prosperous, resilient, healthier, more equal, composed of cohesive communities with a vibrant culture and Welsh language that is globally responsible. The objective is to improve the social, economic, environmental and cultural wellbeing of the people of Wales. Formally, addressing the goals is a statutory requirement for national government, local government, local health boards and other specified public bodies.

While not name-checked amongst this group, universities should be front and central to delivering on these goals. They have much of the required expertise and research capacity and can influence present and future generations of students through their teaching of skills such as leadership, collaborative working, communication and critical thinking. It is they who can provide examples of ethical leadership, and it is they who have the scope for deeper and broader engagement with the communities in which they are embedded. Universities have the opportunity to embrace the Act’s messages, making civic mission central to their vision and mission; informing their strategies, actions and relationships; embedded in the way in which they are led, managed and organised (Goddard et al., 2016).

## University Civic Mission

This section provides an introduction to some of the main issues which underpin discussions regarding universities' civic mission, namely regional development and , universities as place-based anchor institutions, equality of access, and issues of public trust of public institutions.

### Anchor Institutions and Regional Development

A commonly referenced demonstration of civic engagement is the role universities play in regional development, a role that has been growing steadily in recent times. In drawing up policies for economic growth, many governments focus on regions, deploying strategies to encourage the rapid spread of knowledge and skills within a specific geographic area smaller than a country. The objective has been to generate a local innovation environment that can contribute to the competitiveness of established business and foster new industries and services, form part of a national and global innovation system with local socially beneficial spin-offs, and provide the basis for successful careers and lives.

The “triple helix” model of innovation, in which higher education, government and business collaborate, has been considered critical to economic development. However, it is now recognised that this model may not be the most effective approach. This is because the focus of university activity has been almost exclusively placed on working with business to maximise institutional income (Leydesdorff & Etzkowitz, 2001). Today, it is widely recognised that a “quadruple helix” model is needed. This model involves citizens and civil society organisations acting as both consumers and co-producers of knowledge, working alongside higher education, business and government in a highly collaborative, iterative and co-ordinated way to build place-based innovation ecosystems (Carayannis et al., 2012; Carayannis & Campbell, 2012). The “quadruple helix” can better attract, develop and retain human capital so people have the requisite knowledge and skills needed for communities to address societal grand challenges, such as environmental sustainability and social exclusion, which have both a global and local dimension (Goldsmith, 2018).

As demonstrated later in this paper, Wales and its constituent local communities experience some difficulties in retaining and attracting graduates from its universities. In this context the university, given its multiple strengths, can act as an “anchor institution”. Working with local employers, it can address the demand for graduates with the requisite skills, provide professional training, support knowledge exchange

and technological and organisational innovation. It is a de facto major employer recruiting locally as well as globally; it is a purchaser of goods and services; it is a contributor and provider of cultural activity; it is a source of advice to the community and as a 'place-maker' can act as a global gateway for marketing and attracting investment and mobile talent to the area, tying down the global in the local. In these ways higher education and regions mutually benefit from close interaction, identifying challenges and co-producing solutions. Such civic engagement can provide a significant and essential base of public and political support for higher education.

## Equality of Access

Universities have played a key part in broadening access to, and participation in, higher education. Whereas just 3.4% of young people attended university in the UK in 1950; participation rates today are closer to 49% (Department for Education, 2016). The challenge is to reach out to people and communities, who may be the first-in-their-family to consider higher education or who are so deeply alienated from society that attendance at university, or in many cases even completing second level education, is either not at all within their reckoning or seems so remote a prospect to them as to be incredible. Despite decades of initiatives, research continues to show how socio-economic characteristics, rather than merit, track students through the education system and into the labour market and in the process reinforce regional disparities (Crawford et al., 2016).

As we enter the 4<sup>th</sup> industrial revolution, advanced economies, such as Wales, will require a greater proportion of graduates while opportunities for those with low level skills will decline. Demand for people with high skills is now commonplace but there are also shortages in key areas of economic activity giving rise to the somewhat hyperbolic term "a global war for talent". In all these countries too, there are deep reservoirs of talent that are yet untapped. These can coincide with deep reservoirs of economic and social disadvantage.

And as people live longer, change jobs and careers more frequently – or may no longer be in the labour market due to changes in the world of work – there is a need for on-going educational opportunities for adults needing and wanting to retrain and/or refresh their skills and knowledge or participate in other types of learning.

Universities have a social responsibility to find ways through to such communities and individuals to develop strategies and pathways by and through which people of all abilities, ages, ethnicities and talents can be guided through the education system to

reach their full potential and contribute their skills, energies and commitment to wider society throughout their lives. New approaches are required, involving a deeper engagement with these communities experiencing socio-economic deprivation and people wanting to refresh their skills to, in the first place, make closer connections and then to support individuals towards achieving their potential. Universities are grappling with these challenges, but success is limited. Too often they have acted as gatekeepers – inappropriately pursuing higher rankings and global prestige in isolation from the society in which they are based (Hazelkorn, 2015).

## Public Trust

Many people feel marginalised from the benefits of a more globalised world due to a combination of factors including uneven economic growth, unequal access to societal public goods and opportunities, and growing disparities in social-cultural values (Inglehart & Norris, 2016). Many of the presumed certainties of life – such as the belief that each generation would be better off than the previous (Brown, Lauder, & Ashton, 2011) – are being challenged, provoking growing disenchantment with public institutions, with implications for universities (Algan, Guriev, Papaioannou, & Passari, 2017; Förster, Nozal, & Thévenot, 2017).

A recent survey by Edelman Intelligence shows Europe and the US facing a “collapse in trust in institutions” (government, media, business and NGOs) (Ries, Bersoff, Armstrong, Adkins, & Bruening, 2018), with variances according to social class and geography. Another survey by the Research Council of Norway reports almost 40% of the public think research simply reflects researchers’ own views (Myklebust, 2018), while a recent Gallup survey finds a significant decline in trust in American higher education since 2015 (Gallup, 2018). While universities continue to command greater support than other public institutions (Skinner & Clemence, 2017), the general trend is worrisome. It reflects, at best, a significant level of public indifference about higher education, suggesting the public is uninformed about higher education’s many functions and contributions (HEFCE, 2010; UPP Foundation, 2018, p. 5; Boland & Hazelkorn, 2018).

Further challenges to our societies are presented by climate change and unsustainable development. But, too often pursuit of global reputation and status has come at the expense of social responsibilities. Universities can be both part of the problem of globalisation as well as contribute to its solutions. As the Education Secretary, Kirsty Williams, has said, “...it is incumbent on universities to reflect on the distance between

campus and community exposed by the [Brexit] referendum. The urgency of now is to recapture a civic mission" (Williams, 2016).

Today's complex problems require holistic engagement between higher education and society, putting knowledge in service to society through teaching and learning, scholarship and research, collaboration, outreach and communication. Exercising its civic responsibility, the university can make a difference by leveraging its research capacity, its teaching of ethical behaviour and its advocacy for the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations many of which have a local as well as global dimensions.

As Calhoun argues, public support for universities is only given and maintained according to their capacity, capability and willingness to "educate citizens in general, to share knowledge, to distribute it as widely as possible in accord with publicly articulated purposes" (Calhoun, 2006, p. 19). Too often, academics "treat ... opportunities to do research not as a public trust but as a reward for success in past studies" (Calhoun, 2006, p. 31).

Higher education therefore needs to engage proactively and energetically with the communities in which it lives, and to first stem, and then reverse, the erosion of public trust in public institutions and the academy itself. In an age when so much that passes as information, but can all too often be misinformation, the university has a civic duty to instil in its students' key attributes of curiosity, a respect for knowledge and a capacity for analysis, and constructive scepticism and questioning about what is presented as information as well as a willingness to listen to, and appreciate, a range of viewpoints. Universities should proactively engage with local communities, building more and stronger coalitions of support. They need to harness the power of social media to promote values of ethical behaviour, tolerance and inclusivity and take those arguments into the public arena and to those who feel marginalised and dispossessed and the communities where they live.

# Global Context and Policy Choices

In this section we explore international policy trends. It concludes with a short summary of six countries – Finland, Hong Kong, Ireland, the Netherlands, New Zealand and Norway – chosen because they are comparable to Wales in terms of population size, political systems, and aspirations for linking higher education with social and economic development.

## Macro Trends

### Globalisation and Massification

Over the past thirty years or so, education and training systems have been transformed around the world. Several factors are driving this change. Globalisation has accelerated the pace of trade integration and competition between nations and world regions. The world economic balance is shifting, with emerging economies, particularly those in Asia, becoming major global players. Technology is also a significant factor; its disruptive influence is having a transformative effect on people's patterns of life and work. These changes are affecting the way in which people think and identify themselves and perceive and pursue their interests.

Our cities and regions are also being shaped by these exceptional demographic, cultural and technological changes. Today 83% of people in the UK live in towns and cities (Defra, 2016). No longer simply part of national systems, cities play an increasingly strategic role internationally, attracting mobile business and capital as well as students and professionals. The inflow of highly skilled migrants has become necessary in order to offset changes in the shape and size of the population and labour force. Multi-culturalism and cultural diversity are changing the social, cultural, ethnic and religious diversity of our societies.

These trends are both a cause and effect of the massification of post-compulsory education and training systems. Participation and enrolment in higher education has expanded considerably over the past century, and particularly since 1970. The number of students is forecast to rise from 4% of the world's population (aged 15-79 year old) in 2012 to about 10% by 2040 (Calderon, 2018, p. 187). This growth is driven by

evidence of the benefits of possessing high level skills and how having a high proportion of such people in a country benefits that country socially and economically, from higher participation in democratic structures to better individual health.

The benefits of massification, although spread widely, are not universal. We have allowed globalization to be accompanied by an unequal distribution of societal goods. As systems expand and more people participate in higher education, there is a tendency for colleges and universities to become both more differentiated and more hierarchically organized, paralleling the hierarchy of cities and regions. Thus, many people believe that globalisation itself has been the cause of society's problems. A more obvious culprit is to be found in the failure of public policy, and the education and training system itself, to recognise to recognise the dangers of globalisation and to respond adequately to the negative impact of what is otherwise positive for the majority of people.

These developments, combined with the challenges of people living and working longer, reinforce the importance of higher education's role in talent maximisation and knowledge production and sharing. The discourse around the globe takes slightly different forms in different countries, but essentially questions are being asked everywhere about the degree of transparency and accountability around student learning outcomes, graduate attributes and life-sustaining skills, the societal relevance of research and benefit that institutions bring to their communities and regions. *Towards a Socially Responsible University: Balancing the Global with the Local*, from the UN-sponsored Global University Network for Innovation (GUNI), points out that universities can be both part of the problem of globalisation through competition in the global academic market place and part of the solution through contributions to sustainable development and inclusive growth (Grau et.al, 2017).

## Recent Policy Developments

Recent decades have seen many governments adopt a range of policy instruments to help steer the education system. Since the 1990s, there has been a shift away from top-down approaches towards a combination of market-led and competitive mechanisms as the preferred way to regulate higher education systems, with government adopting a "steering-from-a-distance" approach (Dill, 1998, p. 362). Concerns about the limitations of autonomy and decentralisation in other domains, such as banking and financial services, alongside recognition of the importance education plays within the body politic, has more recently propelled a noticeable move

in favour of new forms of accountability and co-ordination (Jongbloed, Kaiser, Vught, & Westerheijden, 2018, p. 672).

Today, public value management is becoming the norm across a wide range of public services. This puts the achievement of public value at the core of collective decision-making. Engagement with a wide range of societal stakeholders and active participants helping “steer [...] networks of deliberation and delivery and maintain the overall health of the system” are seen as vital (Stoker, 2006, p. 49). While there are historic differences between centralist and devolved governance systems, in general governments are aiming to better align the responsibilities of public institutions more directly to the needs of society.

To that end, governments have adopted various mechanisms, such as national strategies, performance-based or targeted funding, institutional compacts and other incentive arrangements, to drive change, efficiency and public benefit in public services and in this regard higher education is no exception. The strategic dialogue or compact process upholds principles of institutional autonomy, and usually requires each institution to submit its own performance goals as part of a “negotiation” with government.

The essential features of this approach involve the government setting out the national objectives for the higher education system and the indicators of success. Each university is required to identify, in a draft compact, which of the national objectives it proposes to address. This will depend on their current strengths. The university’s draft compact will also set out the metrics against which the university proposes their performance be measured. The objective is to have a well-co-ordinated system of universities, each playing to their strengths, but combined, addressing national needs. The draft compact becomes a subject for discussion and negotiation with government or an appropriate state agency – a process often described as “strategic dialogue”, emphasising the extent to which the autonomy of the university is accommodated in the process. Typically, compacts span a three-year period during which, on an annual basis, performance is assessed in a follow-up strategic dialogue and funding decisions made. The funding approach differs in different jurisdictions from there being a fund of extra resources to be allocated according to performance to a situation where a percentage (usually not more than 10%) is at hazard if agreed performance targets are not met.

## International initiatives and policy choices

Internationally, engagement between universities and society and the economy is a significant political, policy and strategic issue, with many initiatives. At the supranational level, the OECD, focusing on the regional impact of providers, led an influential project exploring the relationship between higher education and its regions, and the drivers and barriers for engagement (OECD, 2007). This was based on a methodology of self-evaluation by universities and their partners followed by a developmental peer review. The EU has been particularly active in this area, producing a guide for regional authorities on *Connecting Universities to Regional Growth* (Goddard, 2011), and subsequent guides for universities and their partners on higher education and smart specialisation (Kempton, Goddard, Edwards, Hegyi, & Elena-Pérez, 2013). The lessons from these initiatives are now being transferred to the vocational education and training system because of the recognised importance of human capital.

In response to the growing need for international comparability and concern around greater transparency, there has been a growing usage of indicators and rankings. While problematic because of the use of proxies and controversial measures, they are nonetheless pervasive and are increasingly being used to assess, measure and compare civic engagement. Beginning in 2005, U-MAP, an institutional profiling instrument, included categories of knowledge exchange and regional engagement within its five dimensions. This methodology was applied to the EU-sponsored U-Multirank, which includes the number of students from, and graduates employed in, the immediate vicinity or region, the importance of local/regional income sources, the level of cultural activities, and income from “knowledge exchange” activities (e.g. licences, continuing professional development and start-up companies (van Vught and Ziegele, 2012). E3M identified ninety-five possible indicators under three different categories of engagement: continuing education, technology transfer and innovation, and social engagement. The OECD and EU have jointly promoted HE Innovate, a self-assessment tool for HEIs which wish to explore their innovative potential.

Global rankings have also begun to focus on engagement indicators with limited success. This is due to the absence of a common definition of engagement and an internationally comparable set of meaningful indicators (Hazelkorn, 2015; Benneworth & Zeeman, 2018).

In summary, national governments have also been busy promoting greater societal and economic benefit from closer engagement between education institutions and their communities/regions. As governments have extricated themselves from direct control, ownership and/or management of (public) services, they have stepped up their steering role, promoting greater accountability through closer alignment between the

education system and institutions, and societal and national objectives, and measurement of outcomes.

## International Examples

The following international examples illustrate these trends; the six benchmarked jurisdictions have similarities with Wales. There is also likeness with respect to the focus on economic and labour market activation initiatives and the policy levers adopted. Policy instruments employed by these countries include: national frameworks and priority-setting, performance indicators and/or other funding instruments, entrepreneurship education and work-based learning, research evaluation criteria aligned with national priorities, stakeholder appointments to governing or appointment boards, and regional councils.

**Finland** is a highly industrialised economy with high levels of per capita GDP but also with one of the greatest regional disparities in the OECD; economic inequalities and population aging have emerged as key policy concerns (OECD, 2014). The goal is to use the resources of science and research in a more efficient and effective way and contribute to sustainable regional growth. The performance funding model includes indicators related to meeting national and strategic objectives and encouraging co-operation. In order to boost regional engagement, competitiveness of regions as well as the quality and effectiveness of education and research and innovation, HEIs are urged to collaborate more actively with their local counterparts (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2016). This includes the formation of multi-campus university consortia, bringing together higher education institutions, municipalities and regional councils (University Consortia, 2013).

**Hong Kong**'s economic base is quite narrow and is principally dependent on a large and highly successful finance sector. Higher education in Hong Kong SAR includes all forms of postsecondary education. Since 2017, the Hong Kong government has made fostering collaboration with industry a top priority albeit different initiatives have been in train for the past decade. These include an earmarked annual fund for universities to build appropriate back-office infrastructure. Hong Kong's research assessment process takes impact seriously, and particularly values industrial or commercial sponsorship. Theme-based research grants require collaboration between several universities, and preferably with industrial partners.

**Ireland** has had a performance framework system since 2014 having been recommended by the *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030* (Higher

Education Strategy Group, 2010). The objective is to improve institutional performance through the development of a more formal process of establishing goals and associated metrics of performance, and to hold institutions to account against national overarching performance goals defined by the *Higher Education System Performance Framework* (DES, 2014, 2018b). A key component of the process, also strengthened by the *Action Plan for Education 2016-2019*, is how education “contributes to personal development as well as sustainable economic development, innovation, identifying and addressing societal challenges, social cohesion, civic engagement and vibrant cultural activities” (DES, 2018a, p. 2). As part of strengthening engagement, a Network of Regional Skills Fora (DES) was created, providing an opportunity for employers and the education and training system to identify emerging skills needs of their regions in a more structured engagement framework (OECD/EC, 2017).

**New Zealand**, in its *Tertiary Education Strategy 2014-2019*, sets out the Government’s long-term strategic plans for the entire tertiary sector, with a view to social, environmental, and economic outcomes. There are six priorities: delivering skills for industry, getting at-risk young people into a career, boosting the achievement of Māori and Pasifika, improving adult literacy and numeracy, strengthening research-based institutions, and growing international linkages. The Performance Based Research Fund (PBRF), similar to the REF in the UK, assesses research impact on the research environment within and outside of academia as well as community or end-user impact (Tertiary Education Commission, 2018, p. 52). The external research income component is a proxy measure of engagement and relevance to industry for the research undertaken at universities and some polytechnics. There are several targeted investment funds aimed at addressing social matters and the economy, such as Maori and Pasifika Trades Training, the Centres of Asia-Pacific Excellence, and the Entrepreneurial Universities competitive fund.

**The Netherlands** has a binary tertiary system, comprised of universities and universities of applied sciences, the latter offering professional or vocational oriented education. Civic and regional engagement is considered part of the valorisation agenda. The *Strategic Agenda for Higher Education and Research, 2015-2025*, identifies knowledge valorisation – the creation of economic and social value from knowledge and social benefit – as a key priority. The ambition is that by 2025, research universities and universities of applied sciences will form part of valuable and sustainable “ecosystems” alongside the secondary education sector, secondary vocational education, research institutes, government departments, local and regional authorities, companies, hospitals, community centres and sports clubs (Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, 2015, p. 95). Overall performance is monitored through a process of Performance Agreements (2013-2016), now called Quality Agreements (2019-2024); funding can be withheld if the plans do not meet the criteria

(Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, 2018). Significantly, the ministry with responsibility for higher education and city development has recently announced funding for “city deals” specifically to support collaboration between universities and municipalities (Leiden – Delft - Erasmus).

**Norway** is a sparsely populated country with a significant rural population, and so regional and local policy is an important issue. Universities and colleges are mandated to establish Councils for Co-operation with Working Life, and to be actively involved in developing and strengthening regional and local skills strategies and competence planning. Regulatory, funding, accountability and organisational policy levers aim to enhance labour market relevance and outcomes. Performance agreements, which build upon existing high levels of trust across society, are a way of enhancing quality, co-operation and diversity (Elken, Frølich and Reymert, 2016). The *Norwegian Qualification Framework for Lifelong Learning (NKR)* supports labour market relevance by facilitating transition between all levels of education and training, and demonstrating the skills graduates have obtained upon the successful completion of their programme (OECD, 2017, p. 135-169).

In summary, the key messages emerging from these international examples are:

- Leadership capacity is required across all partners with a view to creating a shared vision for the future;
- Different parts of the education system having the capacity to collaborate through neutral regional brokers as well as through joint projects and sharing facilities;
- The formation of clusters of education and research institutions to generate critical mass and the nurturing of social ties with other parts of the public sector and with business and the community that can help maximise the use of available resources;
- While research institutions, laboratories, and higher education institutions have knowledge generative capacity this is matched by building absorptive capacity in users.

A recurring theme is the clear belief in the contribution investment in research linked to innovation, alongside education and training, can make to the material wellbeing of people, and that economic empowerment can lead to greater personal empowerment and reduced disadvantage. The strategies however will be of limited, or no, value

unless they can reach the people who are most in need of them. And to do that will require not just research and innovation, and education and training strategies, but a comprehensive and well-co-ordinated set of strategies across a range of public services areas such as health, security and housing linked to territorial development. The PCET system – spanning 6<sup>th</sup> form, further and higher education, work-based learning, and adult and community education – has a crucially important role to play in providing a diverse body of students' learning opportunities, and the research firepower to underpin such strategies, and to reach out and into some of the most economically deprived communities of Wales.

## The UK Context

Until devolution, the development of individual universities in Wales and the system at large was shaped by UK policy in higher education and related domains such as research and innovation, health and territorial governance. Devolution has applied in varying degrees to some of these areas but, as in most countries, the current and future prospects for civic engagement are shaped by the inherited pattern of institutions. In Wales, the way the higher education system has or has not been steered by the UK Government to ensure public benefit also has an impact. It is therefore important to situate civic engagement in Wales in a UK context – past, present and future. In this regard we have to acknowledge the dominance of the English experience in shaping the policies and practice of the UK and the public discourse around the purpose of higher education and the traditional knowledge supply driven model (Brink, 2018). This narrative provides an important context for current discussion in Wales. In this regard it is important to distinguish between the specific case of civic universities and university engagement with civil society more generally.

## The Civic University and Civic Engagement

The English concept of the civic university has its roots in institutions that grew up in the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with financial support from business and the local community to underpin the industrial development of the cities of the midlands and northern England such as Manchester, Newcastle, Sheffield and Birmingham. In Wales, local campaigns led to the establishment of the University of Wales in 1893

through the union of institutions in Aberystwyth, Bangor and Cardiff. These pre-university institutions not only had direct links to the local economy through research and the technical education of the adult workforce but also contributed to the health and wellbeing of that workforce and to the vitality of local civil society, for example through the arts and public debate.

During the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, various commentators refer to the decline of the civic university ideal. As Scott notes “since the 1920’s, and with irresistible force from the 1940’s onwards, higher education in the UK has been subject to a process that can only be described as one of creeping nationalisation” (Scott, 2014, p.220-221). Many factors conspired to lead the early civic universities to turn their backs on their places. These included: the growing importance of educating an increasing national professional class; the professionalisation of the academic career which privileged fundamental research in evermore specialised fields and theory over practice; increasing state funding, initially via the University Grants Committee; the promotion of an Oxbridge ideal of the university with its anti-urban/anti technological bias; and finally, the diminution of provincial civil society as London re-asserted its dominance in UK polity (Vallance, 2016, p. 20).

A key feature of the expansion of English higher education has been the lack of any central planning, and territorially blind formula funding mechanisms. The formula funding left little opportunity for government to steer the system, and correspondingly led to a strong hierarchy of institutions focusing on London and the South East of England. Key developments included:

- The incorporation of local authority-controlled polytechnics (which had played a strong place-based role) into the national higher education system;
- The introduction of the Research Assessment Exercise which privileged the generation of new knowledge over its application and used academic judgement to strengthen the established hierarchy of universities and which (incidentally) led to the concentration of research funding into London and the South East of England;
- The establishment of new universities in many smaller communities primarily to meet a target of 50% participation in higher education by 18-21-year olds but to the neglect of adult education; and
- Creating social class and non-geographical targets for widening participation, focused on younger age groups.

Civic engagement thus came to be seen as a third and by definition inferior and optional mission. While it was important for newer universities, they had less resource to invest in their places than the established universities. A small stream of funding through the Higher Education Innovation Fund (HEIF) was established but it has been formulaic, based on past income generation not necessarily related to local needs. Attempts to establish a contracting system within HEIF were abandoned as too interventionist. Nevertheless, HEIF has encouraged a wider definition of engagement that goes beyond collaboration with business to embrace working with the community and voluntary and creative sectors. There is a vibrant network of individuals (academics and professional support staff) supported by the National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement formerly funded by HEFCE but now supported by Research England. This entirely voluntary network plays a key role in sharing experience of across the sector.

## **Civic Engagement, Devolution, Industrial Policy and Austerity**

Over the past ten years, and in response to the depth and prolonged nature of the Great Recession, there have been calls for a re-invention of the civic university albeit now operating in a globalised economy. This led, in part, to the creation of an independent Commission on the Civic University (UPP Foundation , 2018). Such calls are underpinned by an increasing body of academic work (e.g. Goddard, 2009; Goddard, Hazelkorn, Kempton and Vallance 2017; Grau et al., 2017). The demands for re-invention cannot be separated from a discourse around devolution in England, arguments for more place sensitive industrial policy, and the local consequences of austerity in the public finances. Indeed, developments outside of higher education have had implications for the sector, especially when put into the context of the increasing marketisation and globalisation of English higher education. Much of this discourse is applicable to Wales.

The establishment of ten Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) in England in 2002, with a single pot of funding, weighted by regional needs and drawn from many departments of state, was a key devolution step within England. The RDAs encouraged a step change in civic engagement by English universities in their regions, and indirectly steered the system, by encouraging the formation of regional associations or clusters of universities from across the institutional hierarchy working together in the field of economic development and widening participation in higher education through national programmes like *Aim Higher* (Goddard & Vallance, 2013).

Although further education was and is funded, managed and regulated separately from universities, the regional associations encouraged dialogue between the two sectors. The RDAs were able to match European Structural Funds and support major transformational projects such as Science Cities linked to the established redbrick universities in Manchester, Birmingham and Newcastle. In particular, RDAs were able to operate in a multi-level governance structure to provide a territorial dimension to sectoral industrial policies.

The abolition of RDAs in 2010 (and the Welsh Development Agency in 2006) and their replacement (in England) by 39 business-led Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) has driven devolution to a very local, and in some places sub-optimal level in terms of industrial clusters and university clusters, and the functioning of local labour markets. The LEPs sit alongside local authorities, which now have little capacity in non-statutory areas, most notably economic development. This localism has been offset in some areas by the bottom-up creation of Combined Authorities with directly elected mayors and the possibility of negotiating City Deals with central government that give the authority devolved powers in specific fields. There are parallels in Wales with city region deals in Cardiff and Swansea. Universities have been represented on LEP boards and involved in shaping City Deals in combined authorities and have contributed to developing Local Industrial Strategies with LEPs. Across England there are many examples of universities taking on functions and services previously performed by cash-strapped local authorities (for example, museums and galleries).

The UK Government recently introduced a national industrial strategy with “place” as one of the five founding principles; there are also four grand research and innovation challenges, which implicitly have a place dimension: AI & the data economy; the future of mobility; clean growth; and the ageing society. A *Strength in Places Fund* (UKRI) to which universities in partnership with business, public bodies and the community and voluntary sector can bid, is driven by a recognition of the need to bridge the north-south business innovation divide and tackle the needs and opportunities in “left behind” communities through inclusive growth strategies as advocated in the independent Industrial Strategy Commission (2017).

In relation to inclusive growth, universities have played an important role. In its evidence gathering activities, the Civic University Commission has found an extensive range of activities undertaken by universities to support disadvantaged communities within cities and wider regions, including rural areas. But the Commission has observed that much of this activity is ad hoc, undertaken by individual academics below the radar of institutional managers, which leaves them vulnerable to the vagaries of academic and personal circumstances. While most universities have engagement strategies, few have integrated engagement and place-based strategies developed

with quadruple helix partners and internal matrix organisational frameworks integrating teaching, research and engagement.

## Civic Engagement and the Higher Education Market

Much of what is called “public good” activity in universities was enabled by the injection into the system of additional funds from student fees. At a time of public spending cuts elsewhere, universities have been able to invest in activities for the public benefit. Many universities have become leading actors in the economic, social and cultural development of their communities and this is recognised by local people. According to a YOUNGOV opinion survey sponsored by the Civic University Commission in ten British Cities, 58% of citizens were on average “proud” of their universities but this figure differed significantly by social group and between cities, with those less civically involved holding the universities in less esteem (UPP Foundation, 2018, p. 4).

The focus of the *Higher Education and Research Act 2017* on strengthening the higher education market place, together with the removal of the cap on home student numbers, may inadvertently undermine the capacity of institutions to contribute to the local public good. Many institutions have grown home and overseas student numbers rapidly and invested heavily in their campuses through debt-based financing. However, a combination of factors, including on-going underlying weaknesses in the UK economy, may curtail further growth. A 2018 survey of opinion amongst Vice Chancellors regards institutional failures or closures, greater stratification and specialisation of provision as “quite possible”, acknowledging that changing fortunes are likely to result in the “strong getting stronger while the very weak are under considerable threat.” Critically, many of the universities in most difficulty from falling numbers and mounting losses are located in “disadvantaged towns and cities where their closure would be politically and economically disastrous” (Boxall & Woodgates, 2018, p. 15).

Brexit is an additional pressure on non-metropolitan places across the UK (Exiting the European Union Committee, 2018). Research suggests that higher education was the “predominant factor dividing the nation”, along with the degree of economic disadvantage, with respect to how people voted during the Brexit referendum, particularly in England and Wales (Zhang, 2018, p. 313; Goodwin & Heath, 2016). This suggests that in parts of the UK those who feel left behind by globalisation do not

recognise the civic contribution of universities. This could have significant implications for vulnerable universities in places where they are the key anchor institution (Goddard, Coombes, Kempton, & Vallance, 2014).

These developments present a challenge to the civic engagement agenda, especially in the absence of tools to steer the system in the public interest. Since the dissolution of HEFCE, oversight of the English sector is split between the student competition regulatory authority, the Office for Students (OfS), and UK Research and Innovation (UKRI). This is recognised at a high level in the MOU between OfS and UKRI which notes the importance of “different funding and regulatory systems...to support and enhance the immense value universities in England generate for individuals, for cities and regions, and for our economy and society nationally and globally” (OfS/UKRI, 2018). This suggests a potential opportunity for universities to use the teaching and student outcomes metrics within the TEF (e.g. in relation to work-based learning, internships, student volunteering and graduate outcomes) as a driver for civic engagement. Indeed, the OfS has recently announced call for bids from universities and colleges in a region to collaborate in helping graduates work locally (OfS, 2018). Likewise, REF Impact funding and the proposed Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF) both have an implicit place-based dimension.

## The Welsh Context

Civic engagement in Wales has to be seen within the context of the challenges facing Wales as a nation within the UK as well as the place of Welsh universities in the UK higher education system. The Welsh *Future Trends Report 2017* covers population; health; economy & infrastructure; climate change; land use and natural resources and society and culture. It notes that:

for many reasons, governments, both local and national, have traditionally tended to focus on individual policy areas when seeking to deliver benefits to the population ... [The future task] ... will only be successful if it is collectively owned and managed by all the organisations needing to build a better understanding of the factors that should influence their decision making. Welsh Government will now work with our colleagues across the wider public sector, with academia and with other interested stakeholders to develop a resource that we can all make regular, active and effective use of (Welsh Government, 2017, p. 3).

The report highlights the importance of the *Well-being of Future Generations Act* and the UN *Sustainable Development Goals* and name-checks HEFCW (in the process of being replaced by the Tertiary Education and Research Commission for Wales). However, apart from the mention of “academia” (presumably individual scholars), there is no specific reference to the potential of Welsh education institutions being mobilised individually and collectively to address these challenges. Underpinning many of these issues is that of human capital – for example the fact that the proportion of the Welsh population with qualifications at all levels is below the UK average and that a third of graduates from Welsh universities leave Wales for employment after graduation. This failure to recognise the contribution that universities could make can partly be attributed to the context within which the Welsh higher education system has evolved and is currently funded and regulated.

## **Welsh Higher Education Policy**

Welsh higher education has been characterised from its earliest days by a commitment to the people of Wales. Today’s universities are the inheritors of a tradition that was built on public subscription and which prized the provision of lifelong learning opportunities for local people. Yet that mission has become increasingly clouded as we have entered the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Closures and contractions of lifelong learning departments have been emblematic of a shift in emphasis away from the original mission of civic universities in Wales, just as challenges from new forms of work come into play. This, and other grand challenges demand a better connection between the social and economic spheres. In contrast to the diminishing role of universities in their communities in England, the Welsh Government has begun to sow the seeds for a renaissance.

*Towards 2030: A Framework for Building a World-Class Post-Compulsory Education System* for Wales noted weak linkages between universities and society, and across the PCET system. In addition to strongly recommending the formation of a single governance framework (e.g. TERCW), capable of ensuring greater education and learner pathways, it recommended that “civic engagement should be embedded as a core mission, and become an institution wide-commitment for all post-compulsory institutions (Hazelkorn, 2016c, p. 55).

The HEFCW report *Innovation Nation: On Common Ground* has showcased a range of civic engagement case studies loosely grouped under the following headings:

- Leading places

- Working with schools
- Active citizenship
- Social enterprise and innovation

The report notes a profusion of terms commonly used to describe interaction between universities and external audiences (HEFCW, 2018b). Many of these terms reflect financial and performance metrics, and institutional governance and management structures. They range from “civic mission” to being “good corporate citizens”, from “innovation” to “impact”, and “knowledge transfer” to “community engagement”. These differences are significant because in practice they are not necessarily synonyms. Achieving “impact” is usually linked to research and requirements under the REF; institution-level corporate citizenship is viewed as interchangeable with academic-level community engagement.

Funding drivers are central to establishing holistic and integrated civic engagement. In this respect the UK practice dominates, notwithstanding the opportunities in Wales to deviate from this. In the case of research all Welsh universities participate in the Research Excellence Framework (REF) that determines total baseline (QR) funding from the UK Government. The Welsh Government already uses its discretionary powers over the allocation mechanism to individual institutions, which allows it to pursue Wales-specific priorities, albeit within the competitive context of wider UK and international trends in higher education. It could do similarly with respect to civic mission and assign greater weight to those aspects of REF such as “impact” and “research environment” that reflect could civic engagement.

In terms of teaching and learning, universities are required to submit a “fee and access plan” to HEFCW, with institutions’ inclusion within the UK student loan system dependent upon approval. Plans must set out an institution’s objectives for the “promotion of higher education”. This includes:

- More effective engagement with private, public or voluntary bodies and communities in Wales;
- Improving the quality of learning and teaching, with reference to the quality of the student experience;
- Strengthening the employability of Welsh graduates;
- Promoting Welsh higher education more effectively internationally;

- Delivering sustainable higher education; and
- Raising awareness of the value of higher education to potential students.

These provisions incorporate many activities that could contribute to the civic mission but the student experience and learning outcomes remaining preeminent.

Welsh universities are consciously and strategically steered with reference to the rest of the UK, as well as international drivers. They cannot ignore either the TEF – which is not compulsory in Wales – or the REF, which are major points of comparison in the competitive higher education marketplace, nationally and internationally. Recognition of this circumstance has hitherto constrained the transformative potential of any Welsh civic mission strategy such as a dedicated fund for this purpose. The *Review of Government Funded Research and Innovation in Wales* had already observed that phasing out of knowledge exchange funding had potentially disadvantaged Welsh universities vis-a-vis England (Reid, 2018).

In England, Higher Education Innovation Funding (HEIF) is awarded annually to higher education institutions on a formula basis. A total of £210m has been allocated for 2018-2019, comprising £163m from the science and research budget and £47m from the Office for Students' teaching budget. This can be worth up to some £4m annually for an institution, given good performance on metrics in the *Higher Education – Business and Community Interaction Survey* (HE-BCI) and positive assessment of the required institutional knowledge exchange strategy (HESA). Since 2017-2018, the HEIF budget has included a recurrent allocation (currently £50m) for specific contributions to the Industrial Strategy, for which, institutions are required to develop additional plans. It is instructive to view the Welsh Government's recent release of £1.8m civic mission funding, worth a maximum of £280,000 for the highest-paid Welsh university, in light of these figures (HEFCW, 2018a).

The *Review of Higher Education Funding and Student Finance Arrangements in Wales* (Diamond, 2018), in addition to the above Reid review, raised the prospect of reintroducing dedicated innovation and engagement funding, with Reid proposing the extension of this fund to include further as well as higher education institutions. Reid also recommended that while funding "should include the vital civic mission of universities", it should "be distributed to universities on the basis of performance metrics, to incentivise universities to attract the highest levels of external income through collaborations with businesses and other partners" (Reid, 2018, p. 5). This inevitably will reward the institutions able to attract funding from large companies with deep pockets rather than SMEs and the community and voluntary sectors where the needs for support are greatest.

The monitoring structure proposed in *Maximising the Contribution of the Post-Compulsory Education and Training System to the Achievement of Welsh National Goals* similarly distinguishes between the economic impact of universities from the broader innovation and research goal (Weingarten, 2018). It does not however allow for a distinct domain for other societal impacts. In this respect, the aforementioned Reid report and the Higher Education and Business Interaction Survey (which has underpinned HEIF allocation) focus on metrics which largely, although not exclusively, give greatest weight to past income-generating activities rather than future needs.

In contrast, the *Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015* provides opportunities to develop a more holistic forward-looking framework for the evaluation of civic mission activity. The Act has introduced an innovative approach to policy implementation, in that it explicitly requires each public body to work towards delivery of all seven of its well-being goals. As one of the forty-four bodies subject to the Act, HEFCW is required to abide by its terms, salient features of which are discussed below. Despite universities not being directly bound by it, all the above-mentioned reviews have highlighted the importance of greater engagement between universities, and across the PCET sector more broadly, as being indispensable to the future of Wales.

The comprehensive and mutually reinforcing nature of the well-being goals, combined with the *Innovation Wales* (Welsh Government, 2013) and *Science for Wales* (Welsh Government, 2012) strategies, have considerable potential to make a direct impact on universities. Although *Innovation Wales* recognises that “innovation does not only exist in the fields of science and technology”, *Science for Wales* privileges a relatively narrow understanding of the innovation milieu that overlooks the essential role of the arts and humanities in addressing “grand challenges”. The strategic approach also shows a lack of spatial granularity at a local level, failing to distinguish the needs and opportunities in different regions and, in any comprehensive sense, the full potential of their respective universities.

## Civic Engagement in Place

In considering what might constitute an appropriate university civic mission, a geographical perspective is of critical importance. The local and regional contexts within which universities operate vary considerably, shaping the demographics of the available student pool, the economic and social prospects of graduates, and the wider local priorities to which civic engagement activities might be addressed. And while higher and further education capacity in some local authority areas is considerable, in others there is limited (or no) direct presence. If the challenges and opportunities in

different parts of Wales are very different, then so too are the most appropriate roles for the universities in those places.

While local context is a crucial consideration in the development of civic mission strategies, the importance of inter-regional and cross-border relationships cannot be overlooked. We note, for example, that although Wales is currently a net importer of students, and captures a share of graduates from elsewhere in the UK into the Welsh labour market, it remains a net exporter of graduates. Where universities' relative orientation to local, UK and international student markets varies according to institutional type, research relationships span borders due both to institutional type and geographical location. Key cross-border relationships include GW4, a joint venture focused on collaborative research, infrastructure and workforce development with universities in the West of England, and the Mersey Dee Alliance, a government-university partnership directed at delivering a strategic approach to social, economic and environmental issues.

Civic mission activities also involve governance arrangements which include twenty-two local authorities, as well as two City Deal-supported city regions encompassing fourteen of those authorities. As the English experience, which followed the replacement of the RDAs with LEPs shows, overly fractured agenda setting and delivery arrangements can be sub-optimal. Universities' engagement in regional collaborations therefore need to reflect the operation of local labour markets and contribute to the evolution of regional innovation systems

In 2016, the Future Generations Commissioner issued a call for the Capital Region City Deals to put "mechanisms in place to ensure that community voice is a key driver of the developments that will come about through this programme" (Howe, 2016). It is precisely this type of role – combining, for example, the sector's political neutrality with academics' community contacts, interdisciplinary working practices and research capacity – that universities can readily fulfil. Yet, while benefiting from higher education participation at Board level, it is unclear whether universities' full potential in the city region structures for Cardiff and Swansea is being tapped. A further question highlighted by the City Deal arrangements in south Wales – but one that has a more general salience for higher education providers – is how improved collaboration can be encouraged between institutions where a competitive mind-set might otherwise prevail.

The territorial dimension to the *Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015* constitutes a particularly important part of the governance landscape that could be relevant to civic engagement by universities. The Act includes a statutory requirement for establishment of Public Services Boards (PSBs) in each local authority area to

contribute to the delivery of its seven well-being goals. PSBs are required to undertake an assessment of well-being in their area, and to prepare a local well-being plan based on their findings. The plan must contain local well-being objectives in line with the seven national well-being goals, and steps for meeting them. Non-statutory participants or other partners may offer, but cannot be required, to deliver objectives. Progress reporting is required annually.

It is a notable omission that HEFCW's Well-being Statement contains no analysis of the spatial context for, or differences in offer between, Wales' eight universities. Although HEFCW has no direct control over individual institutions' activities, and the sector itself is not directly implicated in the Act, an overview of the sector through the lens of the Act could provide a useful framework for considering its civic mission contribution. This accords with other recommendations that universities support the notion of the well-being goals as "guiding principles" (but not "specific objectives") for investment (Reid, 2018). One option that could potentially achieve this balance is to make innovation and engagement funding contingent upon acceptance of a submitted institutional strategy – as is the case for England's HEIF – and for that strategy to make reference to national and regional priorities as laid out in the *Future Trends Report* and the local PSB's well-being plan.

HEFCW is clear on the degree of autonomy that Welsh universities, which are designated as "charities, private bodies and independent of government", hold in the allocation of the funding they receive:

It should be noted that institutions are not required to replicate HEFCW's approach to establishing allocations when making their own internal allocations. We expect that decisions on detailed resource allocations to departments and courses will be made strategically by institutions in the light of local circumstances and priorities and with due regard to the potential impact of allocations in terms of their statutory responsibilities, including for equality and diversity, as well as other Welsh Government priorities (HEFCW, 2018, p. 13).

This is significant because it is not only what universities are asked to do but how they go about organising it that should be considered in any effort to create a truly civic university. Unless internal governance structures – from time allocation models to incentives and promotion criteria – serve to support its engagement activities, a civic mission will remain a secondary consideration to other, more pressing and better aligned goals. Indeed, as we have argued elsewhere, establishing a civic university can require deep-seated institutional change that embeds working with the outside world in the academic heartlands of teaching and research (Goddard, Hazelkorn, Kempton and Vallance, 2016).

# Policy Recommendations

The discussion above covers a wide range of issues. Current political developments, nationally and internationally, set the context for an examination of policy options. Balancing policy and governance requirements with respect to shaping system-level objectives and targets with Welsh national needs and ambitions of individual sectors and institutions are an additional factor.

How can the Welsh Government, acting with its universities and other stakeholders, including the wider PCET system, give meaningful expression to the civic engagement role so that it is mainstreamed into the mission?

What follows are six key, high-level, recommendations which draw on recommendations from recent policy reports and international experiences referenced above. The intention is to ensure a coherent, integrated approach that does not lead to the siloing of teaching and learning, research and innovation, and engagement and civic mission into three distinct and parallel sets of activities, competing for money, time, and status. Rather, the ambition is to encourage an embedded approach, whereby civic mission is part of the core role and responsibilities of universities, as institutional citizens of and for Wales.

## Recommendation 1: Develop a strategic vision for the post-compulsory education and training system

Over recent years, a wide range of different reports and recommendations have been published about the post-compulsory education system, and Welsh society. This includes, *inter alia*: *Towards 2030: A framework for building a world-class post-compulsory education system for Wales* (2016), *Review of Government Funded Research and Innovation in Wales* (2018), *The Review of Higher Education Funding and Student Finance Arrangements in Wales* (2018), and *Maximising the Contribution of the Post-Compulsory Education and Training System to the Achievement of Welsh National Goals* (2018). In addition, the *Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015* provides an important vision for the future of Wales.

While each report makes an important contribution to public policy, they do not equate to having a strategic vision and plan for the future of the Welsh post compulsory system. Such a plan is essential in order to bring about a holistic approach to the education and training, and research and innovation systems. Instead, there is

potential for policy confusion, with each report having distinctive and potentially conflicting recommendations when viewed from the perspective of civic engagement. Indeed, in the absence of a strategic view, neither the government nor the institutions can monitor their performance or contribution to Welsh society.

It is strongly recommended that the Welsh Government undertake a systematic review of the PCET system in Wales, which recognises the different roles and responsibilities of institutions within a diversified PCET education system, aligned with the objectives of Wales and its constituent sub-regions. The aim should be to produce an overarching vision and strategy for the system-as-a-whole which meets the needs of Welsh society going-forward.

## **Recommendation 2: Use institutional compacts as a vehicle to promote civic engagement**

All six of the countries discussed in this report employ a combination of negotiated institutional compacts and performance funding. The framework is usually bolstered by a strategic plan as mentioned above. In Ireland, for example, the government has produced a *Strategic Framework* with clear objectives which feed directly into a Strategic Dialogue process.

In Wales, the *Tertiary Education and Research Commission for Wales* (TERCW) will become the new governing agency for post-compulsory education and research. It will also become the vehicle for managing the performance management process as recommended by the report *Maximising the Contribution of the Post-Compulsory Education and Training System to the Achievement of Welsh National Goals* (2018), in line with the overall objectives of the *Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015* (Weingarten, 2018, p. 10-11). Civic engagement should be made a specific element of this performance management process. Of the six objectives set out in the Weingarten report, four have direct relevance for civic engagement—widening access, innovation and research, learning value added and promotion of Welsh language and culture. These could be employed as performance indicators for the wider higher education system.

Civic engagement would thus become one of the national objectives of the Welsh Government within a performance management system for higher education. As with the other national objectives, each institution would be invited in the first instance to set out in a draft compact how it proposes to address the issue of civic engagement, given its mission and strengths. A difficulty presented is what performance indicators

and performance targets can an institution propose and government deploy. Given the cross-cutting nature of civic engagement, it is likely that these will cross reference other aspects of proposed compacts, equity of access being an obvious one. Other indicators could include: the nature and extent of engagement with the business and cultural sectors in their region; collaboration with other institutions and other levels of the education and training system; the programmes they develop and provide relating to ethics, environmental justice and sustainable development.

On an annual basis the universities would report on their performance to the TERCW, who would in turn produce an annual report to government on the performance of the sector. Drawing on performance under the headings referred to above, the TERCW would be in a position to advise the Government on the strength and scope of civic engagement. A strong focus on achieving and measuring outcomes should be adopted, with funding aligned with performance. There should be triennial self-evaluations and peer reviews along the lines of the OECD process referred to earlier.

### **Recommendation 3: Develop regional clusters of institutions as key enablers of regional development**

Wales has a dispersed population outside of the main metropolitan area of Cardiff. Regional diversity has created social and economic disparities, shaped by demographics and labour market opportunities. An important aspect of civic engagement, and a key determinant of success, is the extent to which the universities collaborate with each other, with other elements of the education system, in particular across the PCET system, and with other stakeholders. Finland, Norway and Ireland have each focused considerable policy attention on the role of education as an anchor institution in each region, collaborating with other key stakeholders.

Public Services Boards (PSBs) are a statutory requirement of the *Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015*. Rather than creating a new structure, this recommendation urges building on what already exists. . Using the PSBs as the underpinning platform, over-arching collaborative education and research hubs, centred around the universities, could be created. These would have critical mass, especially in regions which lack the capacity to attract and retain talent, and act as magnets to mobile business and capital.

The regional clusters with a clearly identified co-ordinating hub would bring together sub-regional constituent organisations, including PSBs, with the capacity to ensure greater macro-level planning and strategic development. All universities, and PCET

institutions, should be mandated to work collaboratively, and together, to actively participate in these hubs with clear objectives with respect to regional development and providing the skills and competences required to make an impact on sustaining social and cultural life across Wales.

## **Recommendation 4: Strengthen links within the PCET system and across the education system as a whole**

Widening access and successful participation should be an intrinsic component of an engaged regional agenda supported by PCET institutions working collaboratively. New Zealand advocated the *Learning for Life* policy agenda which led to the “removal of false or outdated distinctions between ‘education’ and ‘training’, or between ‘academic’ and ‘vocational’ learning” (New Zealand Productivity Commission, 2017, p. 16.)

Building on responsibilities and capacity of the new TERCW to bring the whole PCET system together, the objective would be to create a seamless post-secondary system, embracing the vocational and higher education, overseen by a common governance framework. Those developments accord with the general shift to re-skilling and lifelong learning and the necessity for mapping learning and career pathways through the broader education continuum. This would ensure an integrated, coherent set of educational programmes and access points for any learner and enable students of all ages and ability to participate actively and successfully, regardless of personal circumstance.

## **Recommendation 5: Use civic engagement as an instrument to promote equity of access to higher education**

A special opportunity and challenge for universities, in terms of civic engagement, arises in respect of creating the conditions to enhance equity of access. A civic engagement approach can support access to, and participation in, higher education by young people from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, from adults who never had the opportunity to pursue higher education programmes, and from people, young and not so young, of all abilities.

Equity of access is an international policy objective evident in all the countries reviewed for this report. At European level, the Bologna Process emphasises the objective of

strengthening the drive for social inclusion and ensuring that higher education is more representative of the whole of society – including men and women, urban and rural dwellers, and members of all socio-economic groupings. Equity of access has profound personal, social and economic impacts.

Engagement between universities and colleges with families and schools, aimed at strengthening relationships and communication and presenting the institutions as welcoming to people of all backgrounds, is key to developing student, parent and community aspiration and achievement. This will require universities to work with ALL schools, including primary and secondary, in the area served by each co-ordinating hub. Such engagement would help break down misconceptions about, and in-built prejudice and hostility towards, colleges and universities and to present them as friendly and open places where there is room for people from all backgrounds.

Teachers are central to the success of all students, but especially those who come from families and communities who suffer from socio-economic disadvantage. Initial teacher education programmes should ensure that their students are educated to appreciate the unique role of the teacher as professional in providing for the holistic development of students. They should also ensure that these students appreciate the challenges their own students experience daily in accessing education and in particular the challenges students from underrepresented groups have to overcome to attend higher education - and the challenges they themselves present to the education and training system. These objectives should also be clearly articulated as outcomes of continuing professional development (CPD) programmes. Guidance counsellors, mentoring, especially by successful graduates from similar backgrounds and programmes focused on parents, especially mothers, are among the suite of initiatives employed in other jurisdictions.

Universities should be required to give practical expression to the concept of lifelong learning. They should enhance programmes for equity of access to, and participation in, higher education with a special focus on adults who need to acquire skills relevant to evolving job markets and contribute to civil society throughout the life. But universities cannot do this on their own. They will need close co-operation with all levels of the education system as well as with broader public services, most obviously health, housing and social care, and those responsible for territorial development.

## Recommendation 6: Provide “seed” funding

A central thesis in this paper is that civic engagement should be mainstreamed into the activities of HEIs and should be a core element informing their mission. For the civic university ideal the issue of funding should be irrelevant, other than through a performance management process outlined earlier. However, while some elements of civic engagement are well embedded in higher education, others are not and civic mission as an objective of higher education is still a relatively recent development. Accordingly, it needs specific support in order to encourage take-up and to identify and disseminate best practice, including establishing processes for institutional change.

This could be achieved through the creation of a special fund for a limited period of time which could pilot some of the previous recommendations, most notably develop the case for a single programme of action contributed to by various departments of the Welsh Government that could facilitate mainstreaming in the long run and underpin collaborative partnerships. The institutions would be invited to put forward costed proposals. Decisions about funding would give the Welsh Government the opportunity to steer the system. Conditions of funding should be that: proposals must be highly collaborative with other institutions and relevant stakeholders; institutions must participate actively in a regional cluster; and institutions must have plans to develop their management structures to incentivise and deliver civic engagement. In this way best practice is shared and collaboration can become habit forming.

## Conclusion

The global and national landscape in which universities operate is changing dramatically. A combination of demographic, economic and labour market changes, globalisation and internationalisation have changed education provision, providers and students, and the relationship of higher education to the state and society. One of the biggest transformations is the extent to which the towns and cities in which our colleges and universities are located are themselves globally connected to other parts of the world through trade, tourism and technology. Education has played a significant role in this connecting process, and will continue to do so.

As a critical component of social, economic and cultural systems, our universities have multi-dimensional and different roles, impacting in varying degrees on their policies

and practice of civic engagement. They provide educational programmes thereby enhancing the social capital and skills of citizens; undertake research and discovery thereby contributing to new ideas and innovation; and contribute to wider policy concerns such as the vibrancy of our democratic structures, the vitality of the arts and creative industries, business innovation, social equity and public health, all of which are relevant to city and regional development in the round.

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## Abbreviations

HEFCW – Higher Education Funding Council for Wales

HEI – Higher Education Institution

HEIF – Higher Education Innovation Fund

KEF – Knowledge Exchange Framework

LEP – Local Enterprise Partnerships

PCET – Post-compulsory Education and Training

RDA – Regional Development Agencies

REF – Research Excellence Framework

TEF – Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework

TERCW – Tertiary Education and Research Commission for Wales

UaS – Universities of Applied Sciences

UWTSD – University of Wales Trinity Saint David

